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1. Inter-Korean Summit

Joongang Ilbo ("PEACE TREATY IS AT THE TOP OF ROH'S SUMMIT AGENDA", 2007-09-11) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun's highest priority in next month's summit meeting will be to

discuss an eventual peace treaty with the DPRK, but raising the DPRK nuclear issue would only hinder the talks, he said. "This is not on the level of a mere proposal. It's the key agenda of this summit meeting," Roh told reporters while discussing the peace treaty overtures. The president also said that at the inter-Korean meeting there could be an announcement signaling the beginning of the negotiation process.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Times ("US ASSURES BETTER NK RELATIONS IF DENUCLEARIZATION PROGRESSES", 2007-09-11) reported that the US said that it would embark on a "different kind of relationship" with the DPRK should the DPRK go forward with a denuclearization deal. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack reiterated that the "core issue here is denuclearization... If you are able to make progress on that, i.e., complete the second phase action disablement and coming through with full declaration then what you will see from us as well as from others is the beginning of a different kind of relationship between North Korea and the rest of the world."

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3. DPRK Nuclear Program

The Associated Press ("U.S. NUCLEAR EXPERTS VISIT NORTH KOREA", 2007-09-11) reported that US, Russian and PRC nuclear experts began a rare visit to the DPRK Tuesday to examine ways of disabling the country's main nuclear facilities so they can no longer produce bombs. The seven-member US delegation crossed into the DPRK by land from the border village of Panmunjom, said David Oten, spokesman for the US military in the ROK. During a five-day visit, the three-nation team plans to visit the DPRK's main nuclear complex at Yongbyon to determine how to disable facilities there under a February international accord.

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4. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

The Asahi Shimbun ("ANTI-TERROR BILL TO LIMIT SDF'S ROLE", 2007-09-11) reported that the ruling coalition, desperate to get around opposition moves to block an extension to Japan's anti-terrorism mission in the Indian Ocean, will propose new legislation that does not require Diet endorsement for Self-Defense Forces operations there, sources said. The controversial provision will likely generate an uproar, especially in the Upper House, where Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) holds sway with minor opposition parties.

(return to top) The Associated Press ("ABE'S POPULARITY FALLS AGAIN AS AFGHAN ROW RUMBLES ON", 2007-09-11) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has suffered another plunge in his popularity, a poll showed Tuesday, as the opposition refused to back down in a row over support for US-led troops in Afghanistan. His cabinet's approval rating is now back at just 29 percent, close to the level seen soon after his party's July election mauling, according to a weekend survey by the Yomiuri newspaper. (return to top)

5. Japan Space Program

Reuters ("JAPAN COUNTS DOWN TO LUNAR PROBE LAUNCH", 2007-09-11) reported that Japan is

preparing to launch this week its first lunar explorer, in a bid to get the country's space program back on track after a string of failures in the last decade. Japanese scientists are also hoping the project will keep them one small step ahead of the PRC and India, both of which are also planning lunar missions.

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6. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN PRESIDENT DEFENDS UN REFERENDUM", 2007-09-11) reported that Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian defended his plan for a controversial referendum on UN membership for the island, a move deemed provocative by Washington and Beijing. Chen said Taiwan would continue on the path to democracy, which he called a "road of no return for the 23 million people in Taiwan." "Whether one likes it or not, the people of Taiwan are entitled to the right of referendum," Chen told the opening session of an international seminar on human rights in Tibet.

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7. Hong Kong Election

Agence France-Presse ("HONG KONG'S EX-DEPUTY LEADER ANNOUNCES PRO-DEMOCRACY TILT", 2007-09-11) reported that the woman once described as "Hong Kong's conscience" said she will fight an election for the first time, in an effort to galvanise the pro-democracy movement in the former British colony. Anson Chan, the former deputy leader of the territory, will stand in an upcoming by-election in one of the city's few openly contested seats, to try to reinvigorate democrats struggling to win universal suffrage.

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8. PRC Unrest

The Associated Press ("THOUSANDS OF EX-SOLDIERS RIOT IN CHINA", 2007-09-11) reported that thousands of demobilized PRC soldiers rioted last week at training centers in at least three cities in an extremely rare series of coordinated demonstrations, a human rights group said. Former troops smashed classrooms, overturned cars and set fires to protest their poor living conditions, the Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy reported. These were the first incidents reported involving former soldiers, who are usually deferential and loyal to the PRC.

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9. PRC Economy

The Associated Press ("CHINA'S TRADE SURPLUS JUMPS 33 PERCENT", 2007-09-11) reported that the PRC's trade surplus jumped nearly 33 percent in August to its second-highest monthly level, according to data released Tuesday, adding to pressure on Beijing to ease currency controls and narrow its yawning trade gap. The August trade surplus was $24.97 billion, up from $18.8 billion in August 2006, the Chinese customs agency said on its Web site. That surpassed July's $24.4 billion but fell short of the all-time high of $26.9 billion in June. Economists expect the PRC's trade surplus to rise steadily despite promises to ease currency controls and restrictions on imports.

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