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1. Six Party Talks

Donga Ilbo ("DPRK REJECTED SIX-PARTY TALKS TOMORROW", 2007-09-18) reported that the sixth six-party talks, which were scheduled to be held in Being, PRC from September 19, have been delayed due to the disagreement of the DPRK. The host country, the PRC, said on Monday that it would be impossible to hold the talks on September 19, and they would discuss the new date with the other parties. The DPRK was the only country to be object to the date. Experts point to the recent reports of major US media that the DPRK had moved their nuclear facilities to Syria as the reason for the DPRK's delay. Other sources say the DPRK is upset over the delayed shipments of energy assistance from the PRC. Beijing said earlier that it would start providing 50,000 tons of heavy oil before the end of August. The new date for starting the talks is likely to be September 21 or 25. Translated from Korean.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("US BELIEVES NKOREA TALKS WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT WEEK", 2007-09-18) reported that US officials believe the next round of talks with the DPRK over its suspect nuclear program will only be delayed by a week, the State Department said. US envoy Christopher Hill "expects to travel to an envoys-level meeting of the six-party talks probably next week. We'll see. We'll see if it's next week," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack. McCormack said it was up to Beijing to set a new date, but added "we fully expect that there will be an envoys-level meeting of the six parties coming up ... maybe as early as next week." (return to top) Yonhap ("N.K. NON-PROLIFERATION ISSUE TO BE PART OF SIX-PARTY TALKS: U.S", 2007-09-18) reported that the DPRK's obligation to nuclear non-proliferation will be part of the next round of the six-party denuclearization talks, the US State Department said as press reports continued tying the DPRK to Syria. "When we talk about a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and North Koreans getting rid of their nuclear program, that means in all its aspects," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters. (return to top)

2. Inter-Korean Summit

Yonhap News ("WILL DELAY OF SIX-PARTY TALKS AFFECTS INTER-KOREAN SUMMIT MEETING?", 2007-09-18) reported that concerns have arisen about the negative effect of the postponement of the six-party talks on the Second Inter-Korean Summit Meeting which is planned for October 2-4. If the reason for the delay is merely because of the postponement of shipping heavy oils as is suspected, the delay would not matter much. However, if the talks are put off beyond the summit meeting, that would cause a big concern. One of the government authorities said that he expects to get positive results from the six-party talks and the summit meeting should be to confirm those results. It is even more serious if the meeting is held while they are still struggling with six-party talks. One of government source pointed out that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun will have a hard time dealing with the nuclear issue with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il, and other issues which should also be discussed could be ignored. Translated from Korean.

(return to top) The Associated Press ("SKOREA'S ADVANCE TEAM HEAD TO NORTH", 2007-09-18) reported that a team of ROK officials crossed into the DPRK for talks with officials there on details of a rare summit set for next month, the Unification Ministry said. The 35-member advance team will arrange details of the summit venue, itinerary and accommodations for the ROK delegation. The team was to return Friday. The ROK plans to send a second team to the DPRK next Thursday, according to the ministry. (return to top)

3. PRC HFO Shipment to the DPRK

Kyodo ("CHINA BEGINS OIL SHIPMENTS TO N. KOREA FOR 2ND-STAGE STEPS", 2007-09-18) reported that the PRC said it has completed the first shipment of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil it has promised to DPRK, confirming the start of assistance to the country in exchange for the second phase of its denuclearization. DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Yong Il, meanwhile, began a visit to the PRC for talks that may cover the topic of when to hold the next round of six-party talks for ridding the DPRK of its nuclear program.

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4. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap News ("DPRK TO EXPAND SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AFTER THE SUMMIT MEETING", 2007-09-17) said that a law by the National Assembly supporting infrastructure development may be needed so that the DPRK can implement a policy on expanding their Special Economic Zone (SEZ). According to a report by the Korea Institute for Economic Policy, since the DPRK-US relationship tends to be improving and the DPRK keeps on moving toward abandoning its nuclear program, the DPRK is likely to put more effort on expanding the SEZ after the summit meeting. They also reported that even though the only way to overcome the economic crisis in the DPRK is to get support from the ROK and from international society, the DPRK is yet not ready to open the door to foreign intercourse for political reasons, but only to expand the SEZ. Translated from Korean.

(return to top) Yonhap ("FORMER S. KOREAN PRESIDENT URGES SEOUL, WASHINGTON TO TAP INTO N.K. RESOURCES", 2007-09-18) reported that former ROK President Kim Dae-jung urged his government and the US to tap quickly into the DPRK's economic resources, suggesting that otherwise, the PRC may gain a competitive edge in the area. Speaking at the National Press Club in downtown Washington, the former dissident-turned-president said the upcoming inter-Korean summit should be of great interest to both the ROK and the US because of Pyongyang's economic potential. (return to top)

5. US-ROK Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("CONGRESS TO GET KOREA FTA IN 2008", 2007-09-18) reported that the free trade agreement with the ROK will be the last of four trade pacts to go to the US Congress for ratification, the top US trade negotiator said, suggesting that it will be put off until next year. US Trade Representative Susan Schwab said, "I am hopeful that congressional action on the agreements with Colombia, Panama and then Korea will follow in short order."

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6. EU-ROK Trade Relations

Donga Ilbo ("THIRD ROUND OF KOREA-EU FTA NEGOTIATIONS IN FULL SWING", 2007-09-18) reported that Kim Han-soo, the ROK's chief delegate to ROK-EU FTA negotiations, said, "Now the 'give-and-take' negotiations between the two counterparts are beginning in full swing." He said, "The third round will serve as a touchstone that will determine whether the general negotiations will be concluded quickly." The two parties wrangled that day over tariff and customs in commodities sector, clearances, trade facilitation, the services sector and e-commerce.

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7. Japan Government

The Asahi Shimbun ("AS CANDIDATES MAKE ROUNDS, SEPT. 25 PICKED FOR DIET VOTE", 2007-09-18) reported that On Sept. 25, Japan will have a new prime minister. Officials from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and coalition partner New Komeito agreed that the Shinzo Abe Cabinet would resign on Sept. 25 and a new prime minister would be chosen in the Diet the same day. The new prime minister is expected to form his Cabinet either on Sept. 25 or 26.

(return to top) Reuters ("JAPAN LDP SUPPORTERS FAVOR FUKUDA FOR NEXT LEADER", 2007-09-18) reported that Yasuo Fukuda appeared to be a shoo-in to become Japan's next prime minister but his rival, hawkish former foreign minister Taro Aso, vowed to battle on against all odds. The 71-year-old former cabinet minister has emerged as the clear frontrunner in a party leadership race against Aso, 66. A survey by the Sankei newspaper showed that 60.3 percent of voters who support the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) favored Fukuda, double the 29.8 percent backing for Aso. (return to top)

8. Fukuda on SDF, Constitutional Revision

Kyodo ("FUKUDA WANTS LASTING SDF DISPATCH LAW, TO SHELVE CONSTITUTION REVISION", 2007-09-18) reported that Yasuo Fukuda, a former chief Cabinet secretary widely tipped to become Japan's prime minister next week, said he hopes to seek legislation to enable the overseas dispatch of Japanese troops at any time, doing away with the current requirement of passing special measures laws for each occasion. Fukuda also indicated he will effectively shelve discussions about revising the pacifist Constitution in three years' time, a campaign pledge made by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party as part of outgoing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative political agenda.

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9. Japan-PRC Cooperation on African Aid

Kyodo ("JAPAN, CHINA HOLD 1ST HIGH-LEVEL TALKS ON COOPERATION FOR AFRICAN AID", 2007-09-18) reported that Japan and the PRC held their first high-level talks to discuss how the two countries can cooperate in providing development assistance to Africa, Japanese government officials said. Japan is hoping to use the meeting to explore possible cooperation on aid for Africa with the PRC, having in mind the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development that will be hosted by the city of Yokohama in May next year.

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10. US, PRC and the CTBT

Reuters ("U.S., CHINA URGED TO STOP HINDERING ATOM TEST BAN PACT", 2007-09-18) reported that the US and PRC should show leadership and ratify the decade-old Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty so it can take effect, the president of a CTBT review conference said. Some 100 treaty members at the meeting were expected later in the day to issue a declaration calling for ratification from 10 laggard signatories to transform the 1996 accord from an informal moratorium into a binding document. Backing from the US and PRC, both permanent members of the UN Security Council, is urgent, said Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno of Costa Rica, which with Austria co-chaired the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT.

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11. Beijing Redevelopment

The Los Angeles Times ("BEIJING EVICTING DISGRUNTLED CITIZENS FROM 'PETITIONERS VILLAGE'", 2007-09-18) reported that residents of Beijing's "petitioners' village," an area of cheap hotels and makeshift houses where the poor and downtrodden gather in search of justice, are bracing for the bulldozers. For several generations, it has been a repository of the pain and frustration felt by those who come to Beijing to appeal to national authorities to right perceived wrongs. Large white notices posted in recent days warn residents of the Fengtai district to vacate the area by noon Wednesday to make way for a new road and overpass complex leading to the nearby Southern Railway Station.

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12. PRC Bird-Flu Outbreak

Reuters ("CHINA CONFIRMS NEW BIRD FLU OUTBREAK", 2007-09-18) reported that the PRC has confirmed an outbreak of the H5N1 bird flu virus among ducks in an outlying district of the southern city of Guangzhou. The ministry said on its Web site that 36,130 ducks had been culled following the outbreak in Guangzhou's Panyu District. "At present, the epidemic has been bought under effective control," it said. The strain was confirmed as a subtype of the H5N1 strain by the National Avian Influenza Reference Laboratory, the ministry added.

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13. PRC Journalist Freed

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE JOURNALIST FREED AFTER TWO YEARS", 2007-09-18) reported that a PRC journalist imprisoned for two years for posting politically sensitive essays on the Internet said Sunday he had been released. Li Yuanlong, 47, was detained in September 2005 and convicted of "inciting subversion of state sovereignty" for his essays carried by several overseas websites banned in China. Li told AFP he was released Friday on completion of his jail term and insisted on his innocence.

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