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I. United States

1. DPRK Announces Nuclear Deterrent

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA SAYS IT HAS TURNED PLUTONIUM INTO NUCLEAR WEAPONS", 2004-09-28) reported that the DPRK has turned plutonium from 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods into weapons to serve as a deterrent against a possible nuclear strike by the US, a DPRK official said Monday. Without specifying what kinds or the number of weapons the nation has, Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su Hon said the DPRK had been left with "no other option but to possess a nuclear deterrent" because of US policies that he said were designed to eliminate his country. "We have already made clear that we have already reprocessed 8,000 wasted fuel rods and transformed them into arms," he said. When asked if the fuel had been turned into actual weapons, not just weapons-grade material, Choe said: "We declared that we weaponized this."

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2. DPRK Announces Nuclear Deterrent

The Associated Press ("MINISTER: N. KOREA HAS NUCLEAR DETERRENT ", 2004-09-28) reported that the DPRK says it has turned the plutonium from 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods into nuclear weapons to serve as a deterrent against increasing US nuclear threats and to prevent a nuclear war in northeast Asia. Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su Hon provided details Monday of the nuclear deterrent that he said the DPRK has developed for self-defense. "Our deterrent is, in all its intents and purposes, the self-defensive means to cope with the ever increasing US nuclear threats and further, prevent a nuclear war in northeast Asia," he told a news conference after his speech. Nonetheless, he said, the DPRK is still ready to dismantle its nuclear program if Washington abandons its "hostile policy" and is prepared to coexist peacefully.

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3. DPRK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA WARNS ON WAR ON PENINSULA ", 2004-09-28) reported that the DPRK warned on Monday that the danger of war on the Korean peninsula "is snowballing"

and blamed the US for intensifying threats to attack the DPRK and destroying the basis for negotiations to resolve the dispute over Pyongyang's nuclear program. But Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su Hon told the UN General Assembly's ministerial meeting that the DPRK is still ready to dismantle its nuclear program if the US abandons its "hostile policy" and is prepared to coexist peacefully. At the moment, however, he said "the ever intensifying U.S. hostile policy and the clandestine nuclear-related experiments recently revealed in South Korea are constituting big stumbling blocks" and make it impossible for the DPRK to participate in the continuation of six-nation talks on its nuclear program.

Washington Post ("NORTH KOREA RESISTS TALKS ON NUCLEAR ARMS MEETING BY U.S. ELECTION IS UNLIKELY", 2004-09-28) reported that the DPRK said Monday that it will not resume talks on its nuclear weapons program until the Bush administration ends its "hostile policy" against the DPRK and the ROK publishes complete details of its secret efforts to produce nuclear-weapon-grade fuel. The new conditions, which were outlined by the DPRK's vice foreign minister, Choe Su Hon, in a speech before the 191-member UN General Assembly, have diminished the prospects of talks aimed at resolving the nuclear standoff before the US presidential election, according to diplomats.

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4. DPRK Military Activity

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA STEPS UP ACTIVITY AT MISSILE BASES: REPORT ", 2004-09-28) reported that increased activity has been observed at about 10 missile bases in the DPRK, and this could be seen as preparation for a launch, a Japanese press report said Sept. 26. But the presence of missiles themselves and their launch pads have not been confirmed, the major daily Yomiuri Shimbun said, quoting Japanese and US government sources. "The chances of an actual Rodong missile launch are slim. We can't rule out the possibility that the activity was just a large-scale military drill," the daily quoted one senior official as saying.

Yomiuri Shimbun ("N. KOREA ARMY UNUSUALLY ACTIVE SINCE EXPLOSION", 2004-09-28) reported that the DPRK army units have been unusually active since earlier this month, when a large explosion was observed in the northern part of the country, government sources said. The government, which suspects the DPRK may be preparing to launch a Rodong ballistic missile, believes the military maneuvers and the explosion may be linked, and has started gathering intelligence on the matter, the sources said. According to the sources, spy satellite imagery taken earlier this month revealed that the DPRK military units were assembling at several sites, including a ballistic missile base in the east of the country.

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5. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("U.S. REMAINS COMMITTED TO SIX-WAY TALKS: STATE DEPARTMENT ", 2004-09-28) reported that the US will remain committed to the six-way talks over the DPRK's nuclear arms program although it sees little chance of their resumption before the end of this month, a US State Department official said Monday. Adam Ereli, deputy spokesman of the State Department, said it is unlikely that the fourth round of talks will be held this month with only three days remaining, but the US government still wishes to see the next round of talks held in the near future.

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6. US - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("EXPERT (CHARLES PRITCHARD) SAYS US SHOULD HOLD BILATERAL TALKS WITH N KOREA ON TOP OF SIX-WAY TALKS ", 2004-09-28) reported that a former US State Department official on Monday argued the ongoing six-way talks to resolve the standoff over the DPRK's suspected nuclear development program must be accompanied by bilateral talks between the US and the DPRK. Jack Pritchard, who served as special envoy to the DPRK for President George W. Bush, claimed the talks between the US, Japan, PRC, Russia and the two Koreas are very "important", but not enough to convince the DPRK that it needs to give up its nuclear arms program. The former US official claimed the talks will not be able to bring a "peaceful or diplomatic" end to the standoff, saying the talks must be complemented with two-way talks between the US and the DPRK.

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7. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Xinhua ("CHINA REMAINS HOPEFUL ABOUT RESOLVING KOREAN NUCLEAR ISSUE THROUGH SIX-PARTY TALKS, SAYS FM SPOKESMAN", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC has not abandoned the hope of resolving the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula through the six-party talks, Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said at a routine press conference here Tuesday. Kong said the PRC is convinced that the mechanism of six-party talks is effective in achieving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula as well as its peace and stability. The PRC hopes that the next round of six-party talks could be held as early as possible, Kong said, pledging the PRC will, as always, play a constructive role and continue to do active persuasion and promotion work.

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8. Sino - DPRK Relations

The Associated Press ("SENIOR N. KOREAN OFFICIAL TO VISIT CHINA ", 2004-09-28) reported that the DPRK's No. 2 leader Kim Yong Nam and other senior leaders from the DPRK will visit the PRC in mid-October, Japanese media reported Tuesday. PRC State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan told Japanese reporters that Kim, the president of his country's Supreme People's Assembly, would soon head a high-level delegation of officials to the PRC, Kyodo News said. An unidentified PRC Foreign Ministry official said the trip would take place in the middle of the month. The trip was likely timed to coincide with the 55th anniversary of PRC-DPRK ties on Oct. 6, Kyodo reported.

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9. IAEA on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Associated Press ("U.N. PRESSES N. KOREA ON ARMS", 2004-09-28) reported that the UN nuclear watchdog agency demanded Friday that the DPRK end its nuclear weapons program and urged the country to allow agency inspectors to police the scrapping of its arms programs. The conference has no authority to enforce resolutions, but the texts reflect international concerns about two potential flash points.

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10. Inter - Korean Relations

Yonhap ("SEPARATED FAMILIES MOST IMPORTANT INTER-KOREAN ISSUE: OFFICIAL ", 2004-09-28) reported that the ROK's vice minister of unification urged the DPRK government Tuesday to increase cooperation for reunions of families separated since the Korean War over half a century ago. While stressing the reunion of separated family members as the most "urgent and important" issue in inter-Korean relations, Vice Minister Rhee Bong-jo said the DPRK will gain the trust of the international community if it "shows active cooperation in solving the issue." Rhee's comments came on the occasion of Chuseok, one of the country's biggest holidays, when Koreans traditionally hold services to pay homage to their ancestors.

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11. ROK Export Controls

Joongang Ilbo ("EXPORT CASES TO PROMPT NEW CONTROLS ", 2004-09-28) reported that the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy said yesterday it has discovered several cases in which sensitive dual-use goods slipped through export controls and reached the DPRK and Libya. Officials said steps are being taken to improve the approval process. The ministry said four cases of unauthorized exports of "strategic" materials that can be used for weapons in addition to industrial uses have occurred in recent years. Among them was 107 tons of sodium cyanide, which eventually reached the DPRK by way of the PRC.

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12. DPRK on Koguryo Historical Revisionism

Yonhap ("N.K. REITERATES CLAIM THAT KOGURYO WAS KOREAN KINGDOM", 2004-09-28) reported that the DPRK on Tuesday reiterated its claim that the ancient kingdom of Koguryo, whose origin and history have been at the center of a diplomatic row with the PRC, belongs to Korean history. The state-run Korean Central News Agency, a mouthpiece of the DPRK government, claimed "Koguryo was the most powerful state in the Korean history," in an article titled, "Koguryo, Pride of the Korean Nation." "It was the first feudal state built in Korea by the descendants of the ancient Korean tribe," the news agency reported, claiming the kingdom covered "a vast territory and created an advanced economy and culture."

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13. Russia Energy Supply

Associated Press ("ENERGY-POOR ASIA LOOKS TO RUSSIA FOR OIL, GAS NEEDS ", 2004-09-28) reported that Asia needs energy and lots of it: Japan is one of the world's top oil importers, the booming PRC economy is close behind and the ROK and India are major consumers. But with instability feared in the Middle East and prices rising, Asian officials at an energy forum Tuesday cast their eyes on another source of crude oil and natural gas: Russia. "Now is the time for Asia to look toward Russia to decrease its dependence on Middle Eastern oil," Minoru Tamba, a former Japanese ambassador and adviser to the Institute of Energy Economics, told the Asian Energy Forum in Tokyo on Tuesday.

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14. Japan Cabinet Reshuffle

Washington Post ("KOIZUMI REPLACES KEY MINISTERS MOVE SEEN AS BID TO BOOST POPULARITY, QUICKEN PACE OF REFORMS", 2004-09-28) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reshuffled his cabinet on Monday, replacing several top ministers in an effort to boost his popularity, consolidate political support and quicken the pace of reforms in the world's second-largest economy. Among those replaced was Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi. Koizumi named a former education minister, Nobutaka Machimura, as her replacement. Koizumi also named Yoshinori Ono as defense minister. In addition, the prime minister boosted the political clout of his ally in the LDP, Taku Yamasaki -- a former defense minister who faced a sex scandal two years ago and was voted out of office last November -- by naming him as a special adviser. Yamasaki and Ono are close associates.

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15. US on Japan Cabinet Reshuffle

Agence France-Presse ("US EAGER TO WORK WITH NEW JAPANESE CABINET TO BOOST TIES", 2004-09-28) reporting that the US wants to work with the new cabinet unveiled by Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to strengthen ties with its key Asian ally, the State Department said. Commenting on the reshuffle, deputy State Department spokesman Adam Ereli noted that Japan was a key US ally and partner and "we have a strong relationship and we look forward to developing it and strengthening it further. "We look forward to working with the newly appointed ministers as well as the returning ones" in the cabinet, Ereli said.

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16. US Troop Realignment

Yomiuri Shimbun ("U.S. TO TRIM JAPAN FORCE, SENATE TOLD BY TOSHIYUKI ITO, YOMIURI CORRESPONDENT", 2004-09-28) reported that Adm. Thomas Fargo, commander of the US Pacific Command, told the US Senate on Thursday that the US had been holding talks with Tokyo with a view to reducing the number of US troops stationed in Japan. Speaking before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Fargo was the first US military commander to mention scaling back the US military presence in Japan. Sources said the proposed realignment was likely to lead to a reduction in the presence of the US military in Okinawa Prefecture, including the number of US marines. The prefecture hosts the bulk of U.S. forces in Japan.

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17. US - Japanese Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("JAPAN LIFTS BAN ON POULTRY IMPORTS ", 2004-09-28) reported that Japan lifted its ban on poultry imports from the US states of Delaware, Maryland, and Rhode Island, the Agriculture Ministry said Tuesday. No new cases of avian influenza had been found in those states since final efforts were made to prevent the spread of the disease, meaning poultry from the areas could be allowed back into Japan, the ministry said in a news release. Japan will continue to prohibit poultry from Connecticut, New Jersey and Texas, however, because eradication of the flu hadn't been confirmed in those areas, it added.

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18. Japanese Yasukuni Shrine Visit

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN'S NEW FOREIGN MINISTER DEFENDS KOIZUMI'S WAR SHRINE VISITS", 2004-09-28) reported that Japan's newly appointed foreign minister defended Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to a controversial war shrine which have enraged neighboring countries. Nobutaka Machimura, in his first public comments since being appointed in a cabinet reshuffle on Monday, said it was "natural" for Koizumi to pay homage at the Yasukuni shrine. "I think it is natural for a Japanese prime minister to vow to the spirits (of fallen soldiers) that he is making wholehearted efforts for lasting peace," said Machimura. "Various nations have various ways to honor" their war dead, he added.

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19. Sino - Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("CHINA ENVOY RAISES CONCERN OVER JAPAN LEANING TOO MUCH TOWARD U.S.", 2004-09-28) reported that PRC Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi expressed concern Tuesday that Japan is emphasizing the alliance with the US and apparently shifting away from a focus on the UN, members of Japan's Social Democratic Party said. Japan 'has been putting emphasis on the Japan-US alliance,' Wang said in a meeting with SDP leader Mizuho Fukushima, referring to remarks made by Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Monday, according to the members. Wang also suggested Japan may damage its own interests in Asia if Koizumi continues controversial annual visits to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo.

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20. Sino-Armenian Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, ARMENIA TO PROMOTE BILATERAL TIES", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC and Armenia are willing to expand exchanges in various fields to promote comprehensive development of cooperation, according to the Sino-Armenian joint statement issued here Monday. The statement, signed by PRC President Hu Jintao and visiting Armenian President Robert Sedrakovich Kocharyan, says both sides speak highly of the fruitful cooperation between the two countries in political, economic, trade, scientific, technological, cultural and other areas since the forging of diplomatic ties in 1992.

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21. Sino - South African Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, SOUTH AFRICA TO ENHANCE EXCHANGES, COOPERATION: CHINESE LEADERS", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC will work with South Africa to promote bilateral relations, said the PRC's top legislator Wu Bangguo and Premier Wen Jiabao here Tuesday at separate meetings with South African Vice-President Jacob Zuma. Cooperation has been fruitful in the fields of politics, trade, economy, culture, education and technology, Wu said, adding that the NPC and the National Assembly of South Africa have set up sound cooperative relations and played an important role in promoting bilateral friendly cooperation.

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22. Cross Strait Relations

Voice of America ("REPORT: TAIWAN TEST FIRES MISSILE", 2004-09-28) reported that Taiwan is reported to have developed and successfully test fired surface-to-surface missiles that could hit parts of the PRC. The newspaper quotes military sources as saying the weapons could hit cities in coastal or interior PRC. It is not clear from the report how many missiles have been manufactured or if any have been deployed. Development of the missiles is a sensitive issue because Taiwan has previously pledged to buy or develop only defensive weapons.

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23. PRC, Singapore on Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("CHINA, SINGAPORE SAY WORLD MUST HELP CALM TAIWAN ROW", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC and Singapore on Monday urged the international community to help calm Beijing's dispute with Taiwan over its push for independence. In separate speeches to the United Nations, the PRC said the world body should help "contain" pro-independence activities in Taiwan, while Singapore warned that the pro-independence push could engulf the region in a Beijing-Taipei war. "We expect you to continue supporting the Chinese government's efforts for peaceful reunification and join us in containing the pro-independence activities in the interest of stability in the Strait and world peace," said Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, without elaborating.

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24. Singapore and Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("PROTESTS AFTER TAIWAN FM SAYS SINGAPORE 'SIZE OF BOOGER'", 2004-09-28) reported that Taiwan Foreign Minister Chen Tan-sun has sparked an outcry after he derisively described Singapore as "a country the size of a booger", officials said. Chen was responding to comments from Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo, who had told the UN General Assembly that an independence drive by certain Taiwan groups would lead to war with mainland PRC. "Even a country the size of a booger brazenly criticized Taiwan and former president Lee Teng-hui in the United Nations," Chen said in Taiwanese dialect. "It was nothing but an effort to embrace China's 'balls', forgive me using such a word," Chen said.

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25. US on Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("US TELLS TAIWAN NOT TO FUEL TENSIONS WITH CHINA", 2004-09-28) reported that the US delivered a soft rebuke to Taiwan, telling it and the PRC not to fuel cross-strait tension after Taiwanese Premier Yu Shyi-kun threatened massive retaliation for any PRC attack on the island. "We would prefer to see comments that focus on dialogue as opposed to references to the use of force or other unilateral moves," deputy State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said when asked about Yu's weekend comments. He said the US opposed any action -- by either Taipei or the PRC -- that could heighten such tensions and urged both sides to resolve their dispute through dialogue and not force. "Our position is that we oppose moves by either side that would increase tensions across the Taiwan Strait," Ereli said.

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26. PRC on Cross Strait Relations

Xinhua ("CHINESE SENIOR LEADER STRESSES "ONE CHINA" POLICY PRIOR TO NATIONAL DAY HOLIDAY", 2004-09-28) reported that Senior PRC leader Jia Qinglin on Tuesday called on compatriots from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao to uphold the "one China" policy, encouraging them to make efforts to realize the PRC's "peaceful reunification." Jia, chairman of the National Committee of CPPCC, stressed that the two sides across the Taiwan Strait should strengthen exchanges, enhance common understanding, adhere to the basic principle of "peaceful reunification" and "One China, Two Systems," principle, and fight against any conspiracy by Taiwan separatists and to maintain the PRC's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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27. US on PRC Media Arrest

Associated Press ("CHINA PROBED ON TIMES RESEARCHER ARREST ", 2004-09-28) reported that the State Department is seeking clarification from the PRC about the status of Zhao Yan, a New York Times researcher who reportedly was arrested in Shanghai on charges of passing state secrets to foreigners. "We are concerned about this case and its implications for journalists working in China," deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said Monday. "We have raised it both in China, through our embassy to the foreign ministry, and here in Washington to the Chinese embassy." U.S. officials are expressing concern for Zhao's welfare and telling PRC officials that a free press is needed for development of a free society, Ereli said.

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28. PRC on Journalist Arrest

Associated Press ("CHINA REJECTS INQUIRIES ON DETENTION ", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC on Tuesday said "outside forces should not interfere" in the case of a detained PRC reporting assistant for The New York Times after the US government asked Beijing to clarify his status. "Zhao Yan is a Chinese citizen. He is suspected of illegally possessing state secrets," Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said at a regular news briefing. "Without doubt, this is a Chinese domestic issue. Outside forces should not interfere with it." A friend of Zhao who spoke on condition of anonymity said last week that he was believed to be under investigation as the possible source of a report by the Times on Sept. 7 that former President Jiang Zemin had offered to resign from a key military post.

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29. PRC Energy Supply

Voice of America ("CHINA EXPLORES EASING DEPENDENCE ON OIL IMPORTS", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC, the world's second-largest consumer of oil after the US, is ever more hungry for energy. Its economic boom is the driving force, as more of the PRC's 1.3 billion people buy cars and home appliances for the first time. The PRC's leaders, concerned by growing dependence on imported oil, are looking at ways to switch to alternative sources of energy. The government has set an ambitious deadline: to generate 10-percent of its energy from renewable sources such as wind power or hydroelectric plants by 2010. The commitment draws praise from environmentalists like Yu Jie at the Greenpeace office in Beijing. "The Chinese government is thinking about renewables much

more than before. I think a lot of elements are getting together to push the Chinese government to go further and faster," he says.

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30. PRC Economy

The Associated Press ("REPORT: CHINA EXPECTS GROWTH ABOVE TARGET", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC's economy should grow at an annual rate of between 8 percent and 9 percent this year, state media reported Tuesday, citing a top statistics official. Earlier this year, Beijing set an official growth target of 7 percent for this year. Officials have ordered banks to curb lending and have tightened controls on land use in an effort to bring booming investment under control and limit inflation. Despite those measures, the country's gross domestic product, or GDP, soared 9.7 percent in the first half of the year. Officials have said they expect growth to slow in the second half of the year, but not by enough to meet the official target.

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31. PRC Reform

Agence France-Presse ("CRITICS DEBUNK PARTY'S PLAN TO BUILD UP ITS RULING CAPABILITIES", 2004-09-28) reported that the PRC's ruling Communist Party has issued a lengthy policy paper on way to reverse its waning popular support, citing corruption and "hostile forces" as issues that could end its 55-year grip on power. But critics Monday faulted the paper for a glaring lack of details on political reform and ways to root out corruption. "The Central Committee is acutely aware of the corruption in the party and that the power of officials is the cause of corruption; they also recognize that they do not have the confidence of the people," social critic and journalist Gao Yu told AFP.

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32. UNEP in the PRC

Xinhua ("UNEP TO ENHANCE COOPERATION WITH CHINA ON ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION", 2004-09-28) reported that the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) will enhance its cooperation with the PRC to combat environmental degradation in the world's most populous country, UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer said here Tuesday. "UNEP is going to expand its national office in China and cooperate more with the country in its efforts for sustainable development," said Toepfer. Zeng pledged that China, as a responsible developing country, will strictly abide by its international obligations and actively participate in and push forward international cooperation on environmental protection.

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