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I. United States

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1. DPRK Blast

Reuters ("DIPLOMATS REPORTEDLY TO VISIT N.KOREA BLAST SITE", 2004-09-15) reported that eight foreign diplomats in the DPRK have been given permission to visit the site of a mysterious blast Thursday, Japan's Kyodo news agency said on Wednesday. Britain's ambassador in Pyongyang, David Slinn, and diplomats from the Czech Republic, the European Union, India, Mongolia, Poland, Russia and Sweden would go to the site accompanied by DPRK Foreign Ministry officials, Kyodo quoted Slinn as saying. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is being very cooperative" in keeping with the spirit of the recent visit by British Foreign Office minister Bill Rammell, Slinn had told Reuters by telephone earlier.

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2. ROK on DPRK Blast

Yonhap ("SATELLITE "SUCCESSFULLY" PHOTOGRAPHS NORTH BLAST SITE", 2004-09-15) reported that a ROK satellite successfully photographed Wednesday (15 September) the site of a massive explosion in the DPRK last week, a state-run aerospace institute said. Earlier Wednesday, the ROK intelligence agency said a mushroom-shaped cloud that coincided with the huge blast might have been an "unusual form of natural cloud", rather than the by-product of a nuclear test. "There is a possibility that (the cloud) was an unusual form of natural cloud, given the weather conditions

there at the time, besides the possibility of blasting to build a hydroelectric power plant," the National Intelligence Service said in a report to the National Assembly. Also on Wednesday, a state-run South Korean geological institute also raised the possibility that the reports of an explosion were due to unclear satellite pictures.

Reuters ("S.KOREAN SPIES SAY BUILDING WORK BEHIND NORTH BLAST", 2004-09-15) reported that a huge explosion in the DPRK last week may have been due to a combination of demolition work for a power plant and atmospheric clouds, the ROK's spy agency said on Wednesday. "There is a possibility of demolition work for a hydroelectric plant in the Kimhyungjik county and also a possibility of natural clouds of peculiar shape," the National Intelligence Service said in a rare statement to parliament's intelligence committee. ROK officials have said signs of a large explosion were detected in the area last week but the government had not been able to verify the cause.

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3. US - ROK Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("SIGNS POINT TO POOR COOPERATION BETWEEN KOREA, U.S. INTELLIGENCE ", 2004-09-15) reported that suspicion has been raised that the ROK is not fully cooperating with the US in determining the cause of the massive explosion that took place in Kim Hyong-jik County, Ryanggang Province, DPRK on Sept. 9. It has been learned that Korea has not been provided with important information from the US government that may help determine the cause of the accident. In connection with the criticism that there are some problems with the cooperation between the ROK and the US, Lee Jong-seok, deputy head of the National Security Council, said during a meeting with the press, "The Korea-U.S. relationship is based on mutual trust. Thus, we give what we need to give and take what we need to take."

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4. DPRK Nuclear Talks and the US Election

The New York Times ("NORTH KOREA TO WAIT OUT ELECTION IN U.S., THEN TALK, DIPLOMAT SAYS", 2004-09-15) reported that the DPRK is waiting out the American presidential election in order to bargain with the winner over its nuclear weapons program, according to a British diplomat who left the DPRK capital. "The North Koreans were saying they were still committed to the six-party talks process, but weren't prepared to commit to a date," the diplomat, the Foreign Office minister Bill Rammell, told reporters at the Beijing airport on Tuesday after his four-day visit to Pyongyang. One factor "is the timing of the American presidential election," Mr. Rammell said, according to Reuters. "I made clear to them my view that whoever wins the presidential election - whether it's President Bush or Senator Kerry - North Korea will be faced with broadly the same strategic policy from the United States, and this isn't just about the United States." In Washington, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell bolstered that view in an interview with Reuters, advising the DPRK: "I wouldn't waste the time waiting for something different to happen." He added, "It's my belief that they will see the same group of individuals working on this problem after the first week of November."

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5. DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA LOOKS TO DELAY NUCLEAR TALKS", 2004-09-15) reported

that the DPRK is looking for an extended delay in resuming negotiations over its nuclear weapons program and even told the PRC there was no point in continuing the six-sided talks at all, a senior US official says. The talks, which recessed in late June, had been expected to be resumed by the end of September. But the DPRK has sought one-on-one talks with the US and has decided to wait until at least after the Nov. 2 presidential elections to start talking again, the US official said Tuesday. The PRC already has concluded that negotiations would not resume this month as planned, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The Bush administration is inclined to expect a delay until after the election.

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6. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("RUSSIA CANCELS ROUND OF N. KOREA TALKS", 2004-09-15) reported that the next round of six-nation talks on the DPRK's nuclear program will not be held as hoped this month, a senior Russian official said Tuesday. "The Russian side unambiguously believes that it would be correct to hold this round at the end of September, as was decided during the third round in Beijing. But for a series of reasons, it can't be done," Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alekseyev was quoted as telling the Interfax news agency. Alekseyev said all six nations "must work together and make efforts to pull the fourth round off as early as possible," Interfax reported. He reiterated that any date agreed to by all nations would be acceptable to Russia. Alekseyev added that Moscow wanted to see "movement in both directions." "The main partners in these negotiations are, in our opinion, (the DPRK) and the United States, and we believe that both sides must show patience, common sense and a desire to find mutually acceptable solutions," Alekseyev was quoted as saying.

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7. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Kyodo ("N. KOREA SHOULD NOT DELAY 6-PARTY TALKS OVER BUSH'S REMARKS: HOSODA", 2004-09-15) reported that the DPRK should not seek to delay the next round of six-nation talks on its nuclear weapons programs by citing US President George W. Bush's verbal attacks on the DPRK leader Kim Jong Il, Japan's top government spokesman said Wednesday. He said the DPRK cannot be allowed to use Bush's remarks as "an excuse" to delay the process, and that the talks must be held whenever necessary. Hosoda said, "We cannot be optimistic about holding the next talks within September."

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8. DPRK - Japanese Relations

United Press International ("JAPAN PLANS BILATERAL TALKS WITH N.KOREA", 2004-09-15) reported that Japan's Foreign Ministry is preparing to hold bilateral talks with the DPRK this month, as hopes fade for six-nation talks to take place before November. Tokyo has requested working-level talks with Pyongyang in Beijing on Sep. 29-30, at which it hopes to obtain answers to a list of 150 questions concerning 10 missing Japanese nationals. Pyongyang has not officially confirmed the dates, the Asahi Shimbun reported Wednesday. The DPRK claims that eight of the 10 are dead, and that there is no record of the other two entering the country.

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9. Japan on ROK Nuclear Disclosure

Chosun Ilbo ("JAPANESE PRESS SLAMS S. KOREAN NUKE EXPERIMENTS", 2004-09-15) reported that the Japanese press posted editorials Wednesday slamming the ROK's nuclear experiments. Japan has shown a great interest in and concern over the issue since it was first raised on Sept. 2. Ashahi Shimbun said in its Wednesday editorial that the experiment was done in a small scale and had nothing to do with earnest weapons development, but the fact itself that it took place in the ROK, a democratic country that is an important US ally, delivered a big blow to the international community, which is making every effort to deter nuclear proliferation. In connection with the ROK government's failure to monitor research sites, the paper also criticized that the ROK could not be trusted concerning its system to deter nuclear proliferation. The Yomiuri Shimbun also said in its editorial that at this moment, the ROK's nuclear experiment had nothing to do with nuclear weapon development, but that does not mean Korea can be forgiven, and added that if the IAEA does not deal with Korea in strict fairness, it could encourage the DPRK and Iran to develop nuclear weapons, which would constitute the collapse of the nuclear non-proliferation system.

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10. IAEA Japan Inspections

Donga Ilbo ("IAEA CURTAILS NUCLEAR INSPECTIONS IN JAPAN ", 2004-09-15) reported that the Japanese government unveiled that IAEA's Integrated Safeguards to reduce the frequency of inspections in Japan's nuclear facilities to less than half will go into effect from September 15. The IAEA officially notified Tokyo of the reduction in inspections frequencies, saying, "Japan's nuclear development is confined to peaceful use, and we reached the conclusion that Japan would not divert it for military use such as producing nuclear weapons." Tokyo announced that in the case of light-water reactors, the current level of more than four sessions of inspections is expected to be decreased to two.

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11. IAEA ROK Inspection

JoongAng Ilbo ("IAEA COMING TO SEARCH FOR LOST URANIUM ", 2004-09-15) reported that an international nuclear inspector team coming to the ROK next week will be trying to discover what happened to 12.5 kilograms (27 pounds) of purified uranium, which the ROK government cannot account for. The Foreign Ministry announced yesterday that five or six IAEA officials will visit the ROK starting Sunday and tour the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute in Daejeon and a research plant in northern Seoul. A senior government official said, "This is not additional inspection but a supplementary inspection." The official made a distinction between additional and supplementary, saying he expected there to be no further revelations of ROK breaches of international agreements.

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12. ROK on Nuclear Experiment Disclosure

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREAN MINISTER TO ADDRESS U.N. ON NONPROLIFERATION COMMITMENT ", 2004-09-15) reported that the ROK's foreign minister will visit New York next week to address the UN, his office said Wednesday (15 September). Ban Ki-moon will deliver a

keynote speech before the UN General Assembly on 24 September, reaffirming Seoul's commitment to nuclear nonproliferation, the ministry said in a statement. In New York, Ban will also hold a series of bilateral talks with his counterparts from about 10 countries, including the US, Japan, Austria, Italy and Mexico, the ministry said. A meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is also scheduled. "Minister Ban plans to clarify our position on this nuclear material extraction issue while reaffirming our government's firm nonproliferation commitment," the ministry said.

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13. DPRK Economic Reforms

Yonhap ("N. KOREA UNDERGOING REFORM, NEEDS MORE AID: RELIEF AGENCY OFFICIAL", 2004-09-15) reported that the head of an international relief agency's Pyongyang office said Tuesday that the DPRK is going through various economic changes induced by its reform measures two years ago, but claimed most of the country's people still depend on international aid for survival. In an exclusive interview with Yonhap News Agency, Marcel Wagner, country director of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in the DPRK, said the DPRK is slowly, but surely, experiencing a number of economic changes such as the spread of marketplaces and street vendors and a large increase of imported goods throughout the communist country.

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14. Inter - Korean Relations

Yonhap ("NORTH KOREAN CAPITAL ASKS FOR SEOUL'S HELP IN REPAIRING BUILDINGS", 2004-09-15) reported that DPRK officials have asked the Seoul metropolitan government to help them repair old apartments and buildings in Pyongyang, a Seoul official said Wednesday 15 September. "While discussing measures for a Pyongyang-Seoul friendly football match, officials from North Korea's National Reconciliation Council asked whether Seoul could help them in repairing buildings," said a Seoul official. "But the request was not a precondition for the friendly football match," the official added. The request was for the repair of old or dilapidated apartments and buildings in the DPRK capital, he explained.

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15. Inter - Korean Border Tensions

Yonhap ("DISMANTLEMENT OF BORDER PROPAGANDA FACILITIES DELAYED", 2004-09-15) reported that stalled works by the militaries of the rival Koreas to dismantle propaganda facilities along their heavily-armed border are not expected to resume for the time being, an official said Wednesday. In early June, the two Koreas agreed to take a set of measures to ease tension along the Cold War's last frontier, including removal of propaganda signboards and broadcasting facilities, by Aug. 15.

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16. DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("SEVEN OUT OF 10 NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS WANT TO EMIGRATE: SURVEY ", 2004-09-15) reported that seven out of 10 DPRK defectors living in the ROK said they want to emigrate to the US, Canada or Australia, according to a poll Wednesday. The survey of 100 defectors

conducted by the Segye Times found that four out of 10 defectors are dissatisfied with their new life in the capitalist ROK and hope to emigrate to other countries. Asked if they would go back to the DPRK if they were given a chance to legally do so, 33 percent said they were willing to go, an indication that they failed to adjust to life in the ROK.

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17. US on Religious Freedom in the DPRK

Kyodo ("N. KOREA, SAUDI ARABIA ON LIST OF STATES WITHOUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM", 2004-09-15) reported that the US State Department on Wednesday issued an annual report on religious freedom around the world, accusing the DPRK, Saudi Arabia and six other countries of failing to guarantee freedom of religion.

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18. ROK National Security Law Debate

Chosun Ilbo ("AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR ABOLITION OF NATIONAL SECURITY LAW ", 2004-09-15) reported that Amnesty International released a recommendation letter Wednesday, asking the ROK to abolish or basically review the National Security Law in this plenary session of the National Assembly because the law goes against international human rights standards. The organization said it understood that the ROK government was paying keen attention to its national security in a situation where it confronted the DPRK. But national security issues cannot be used to oppose or deny the freedom of expression, the basic right of human, argued Amnesty International.

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19. KEDO LWR Project

Korea Times ("KEDO TO COMPENSATE KOREAN COMPANIES", 2004-09-15) reported that the ROK government is seeking ways to compensate private companies in the ROK that have suffered financially due to the halted construction of two light-water reactors in the DPRK, officials said Wednesday. "We are consulting with KEDO's board members over compensation for losses from idle manpower and equipment," said a Seoul official involved in the $4.6 billion project of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, an international consortium established in 1994. To prevent further financial loss, the official also said that the Seoul government will demand Pyongyang lift its ban on the removal of equipment set up by ROK companies at the site in Kumho, eastern DPRK.

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20. ROK - Iranian Relations

Asia Pulse ("S.KOREA, IRAN SIGN AGREEMENT FOR EQUAL PORT USE", 2004-09-15) reported that the ROK and Iran have signed an agreement to enable their ships to receive equal treatment at each other's ports, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fishery said Wednesday. The signing made at the end of a Saturday meeting between working-level officials will take effect after their maritime ministers approve it, according to the ministry.

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21. ROK Human Rights

International Herald Tribune ("UN RIGHTS CHIEF PRAISES SOUTH KOREA ", 2004-09-15) reported that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, praised the ROK for its human rights record at one conference on Wednesday, then met ROK human rights activists at a concurrent conference to discuss related issues. At the opening day of a two-day UN Seminar on Good Governance Practices for the Promotion of Human Rights, which began here Wednesday, Arbour told Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon that the ROK was a "flagship for the protection and promotion of human rights," the Yonhap news agency reported. The DPRK is not being discussed at the four-day conference. "We are concerned, but we have no partner there," Kjaerum said, referring to the lack of a human rights body there.

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22. ROK - Russian Relations

Interfax ("RUSSIA, SOUTH KOREA PREPARE GAS AGREEMENT ", 2004-09-15) reported that Russia and the ROK are preparing to sign an intergovernmental gas cooperation agreement. The Russian Industry and Energy Ministry said in a press release that this issue was discussed during Russian-ROK consultations in Moscow on Tuesday. During the consultations, special attention was paid to developing gas export pipeline systems in Eastern Russia, the main principles of Russian-ROK gas cooperation, and also a mechanism for agreeing candidates for authorized organizations from the Russia and ROK sides. The sides have preliminarily agreed that a Russian-ROK summit should be held in Moscow on September 21-22 this year.

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23. ROK, PRC, Japanese Energy Demand

Energy Intelligence Group, Inc. ("UNUSUAL ELECTRICITY DEMAND PATTERNS IN CHINA, JAPAN, KOREA", 2004-09-15) reported that while the PRC surprised its own energy analysts by getting through the summer with less growth in power usage, and therefore less disruption to electricity supply, than projected, Japan and the ROK surprised in the opposite direction. Both experienced unforeseen surges in electricity demand, due mainly to hot weather in Japan and rapid economic expansion in the ROK. Both Japan and the ROK also experienced severe nuclear outages, putting more of the onus for meeting this demand growth on gas. By contrast, China Radio International has quoted a government official as saying that the shortfall in generating capacity relative to demand in the PRC since June has been only 20,000 megawatts, rather than the 30,000 MW forecast.

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24. Sino - Japanese Military Relations

Reuters ("REPORT: JAPAN PM ADVISERS SEE CHINA MILITARY THREAT", 2004-09-15) reported that in a move that could further chill ties between the two Asian powers, an advisory panel to Japan's prime minister will say the PRC should be described as a military threat in a defense review, the Nihon Keizai newspaper reported on Wednesday. The Japanese business daily said the 10-member private advisory panel to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has decided to call the PRC a military threat in a report to be compiled by the end of September. Japan has not previously officially designated the PRC, one of the world's five nuclear powers, as a military threat. Pointing to a steady

rise in the PRC's defense budgets, the advisory panel is considering expressing "caution" about chances of a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait between the PRC and Taiwan, the paper said.

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25. Sino - Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("CHINA PLAYS DOWN ANNIVERSARY OF START OF JAPAN'S OCCUPATION", 2004-09-15) reported that PRC officials have declined to back or join events planned for this Saturday to mark the 73rd anniversary of the start of Japan's occupation of northeast PRC, a primary event organizer said Wednesday. The National People's Congress and the State Council Legal Office over the summer "politely refused" proposals for an anniversary similar to those of other World War II-affected countries, according to a statement from the 9-18 War Research Association of Beijing. PRC citizens harboring resentment against Japan have appealed to the National People's Congress for a war remembrance day similar to those held in Japan and the US. PRC officials, although publicly pressuring Japan to atone for its wartime atrocities, quietly want to please Japan, analysts note.

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26. PRC on Democratic Reforms

The Associated Press ("CHINA'S HU SPURNS WESTERN POLITICAL MODELS", 2004-09-15) reported that President Hu Jintao warned in a speech Wednesday that imitating Western political systems would lead the PRC to "a dead end." Hu spoke on the eve of a key Communist Party meeting, rarely a forum for genuine debate. He underscored that fact in his speech by urging legislators to stick to the party's lead. "History proves following blindly Western political systems would lead China to a dead end," Xinhua cited Hu as saying at a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the PRC's ceremonial legislature. Hu has called in earlier speeches for more "socialist democracy" and responsiveness to public needs. But analysts say that is unlikely to include any tolerance for opposition parties or letting the PRC public elect its leaders.

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27. PRC Party Meeting

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA CRACKS DOWN ON PETITIONERS, DISSIDENTS AHEAD OF PARTY MEETING", 2004-09-15) reported that the PRC has intensified its crackdown on petitioners and dissidents ahead of a key party meeting starting Thursday, with protestors and human rights groups reporting brutal beatings by police. In the weeks ahead of the Communist Party's Central Committee plenum, police have rounded up thousands of petitioners who came to Beijing to air their grievances. Many activists said the frequency of the arrests and the level of brutality in detention was unprecedented. New York-based Human Rights in China last week said some 36,000 people have been rounded up since early September. It said many were brutally beaten and herded into a gymnasium in an apparent move to ensure public order before the party meeting.

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28. PRC Domestic Dissent

The Associated Press ("CHINESE DISSIDENT RELEASED FROM PRISON", 2004-09-15) reported that a member of a would-be PRC opposition party said Wednesday that he has been released from

prison after completing a five-year sentence for subversion. Former environmental protection bureau technician Xu Guang said he was resting at his parents' home in the eastern city of Hangzhou after his release Tuesday from Zhejiang province's Qiaosi prison. "Because of the suffering I endured in prison, my physical condition is very weak so I need to take care of my health at home," said Xu, 37, who joined the China Democracy Party around the time of its founding in 1998. Li, a 46-year-old computer technician, was sentenced to three years in a labor camp in 2000 after he and 22 others wrote to Shanghai's mayor appealing for the release of another arrested party member.

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29. Hong Kong Election Probe

Reuters ("HK GOV'T TO PROBE ELECTION VOTE COUNT DISCREPANCIES", 2004-09-15) reported that Hong Kong's government has ordered a probe into vote counting discrepancies from Sunday's legislative election, the latest in a string of blunders that have embarrassed the local PRC-backed administration. Constitutional Affairs Secretary Stephen Lam said late on Tuesday that the government's electoral office would investigate reports of counting discrepancies in a few non directly-elected seats. "According to reports, there are apparent discrepancies between the reported voter turnout figures and the actual number of votes counted in respect of a few functional constituencies," Lam said. He did not spell out what would happen if the reports of voting discrepancies were true.

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30. Hong Kong Elections

The Associated Press ("HONG KONG OFFICIAL SAYS ELECTION WAS FAIR", 2004-09-15) reported that poorly designed ballot boxes led to voting irregularities in Hong Kong's legislative election, but that problem and others still to be investigated did not affect the outcome, the territory's electoral chief said Wednesday. Electoral Affairs Commission Chairman Justice Woo Kwok-hing insisted that Sunday's contests were run fairly and openly, with results that are not in dispute. Pressure mounted over the numerous procedural problems, but Woo did not directly answer questions at a news conference Wednesday about whether he should resign. Two leading Hong Kong newspapers said in editorials Wednesday that the electoral irregularities cast doubts on the credibility of the election, which returned a new 60-member Legislative Council.

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31. PRC on Tibetan Autonomy

Reuters ("DALAI LAMA ENVOY VISITS CHINA FOR AUTONOMY TALKS", 2004-09-15) reported that the Dalai Lama's special envoy has arrived in the PRC for talks on the exiled spiritual leader's aspirations for Tibetan autonomy, the third such visit in three years, officials in Washington said on Tuesday. The PRC Embassy in Washington played down the visit, saying it was a private visit to see relatives. But the International Campaign for Tibet, an advocacy group where Gyari is also a board member in Washington, said Tibetans hoped the talks would go beyond the confidence-building meetings of the previous two visits. "The Tibetans are looking for some kind of overture showing that the Chinese are looking forward. You can't engage in a sense of confidence-building indefinitely," campaign president John Ackerly said.

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32. US on Tibetan Autonomy >/b>

The Associated Press ("U.S. APPLAUDS DALAI LAMA GROUP IN CHINA", 2004-09-15) reported that the State Department welcomed on Tuesday the arrival in the PRC of a delegation representing the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader. Special envoy Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari and his delegation were scheduled to hold talks on the possibility of a substantive dialogue on Tibet. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the administration continues to discuss with PRC leaders the need for dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives to resolve long-standing differences. "The administration will follow this visit with great interest and we look forward to hearing more at the conclusion of the talks," Boucher said.

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33. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN ACCUSES CHINA OF RUDE INTERFERENCE AT PARALYMPICS GAMES IN ATHENS", 2004-09-15) reported that Taiwan accused the PRC on Wednesday of pressuring the organizers of the Paralympics Games in Athens, Greece, to force the president's wheelchair-bound wife to give up her credentials as the leader of the Taiwanese delegation. First lady Wu Shu-jen led the Taiwanese team to Athens this week and had planned to attend the games' opening ceremony Friday as the group's leader. But the event's organizers have asked her to hand over her credentials because of apparent pressure from the PRC. Her husband, President Chen Shui-bian, is unable to make many foreign trips because of the PRC's pressure, so she often represents him on visits to America and Europe.

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34. Taiwan Assassination Attempt Investigation

The Los Angeles Times ("ELECTION-EVE SHOOTING TO BE INVESTIGATED", 2004-09-15) reported that Taiwan's opposition-dominated parliament voted again to set up an independent body to investigate the election-eve shooting of President Chen Shui-bian, overturning an objection by the Cabinet. Lawmakers voted 114 to 0 to reject the Cabinet's veto and approve formation of a powerful 17-member committee to investigate the attack on Chen, which the opposition says may have been staged to win sympathy votes. He was slightly wounded.

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35. Sino - Pakistani Relations

The Associated Press ("PAKISTAN NAVY TO GET FOUR FRIGATES FROM CHINA", 2004-09-15) reported that Pakistan will buy four frigates from the PRC and build additional submarines in a bid to expand its war fleet, even as tensions with archrival India have eased in recent months, the country's navy chief said Wednesday. Admiral Shahid Karimullah, who confirmed the deal with the PRC, said Pakistan was trying to narrow the gap with India in conventional arms. He said Pakistan was still negotiating with the PRC for a US$750 million (euro 614 million) loan to pay for the frigates. The PRC is one of Pakistan's main suppliers of defense equipment. The long-standing cooperation between the two countries includes PRC assistance in building tanks for Pakistan's army as well as a nuclear power-plant.

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36. Sino - US Trade Relations

Reuters ("SNOW SAYS CHINA TRADE GAP TOO BIG", 2004-09-15) reported that US Treasury Secretary John Snow said on Tuesday the US trade deficit with the PRC was too large, less than a week after the government reported that the overall US trade gap hit its second-highest monthly level ever in July. At a speech in New York, Snow also said the PRC was falling short on its enforcement of US intellectual property rights. The deficit with the PRC is too large, we know that," Snow said. "I don't think it's sustainable."

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37. PRC Economy

The Associated Press ("CHINA REPORTS SLOWER GROWTH IN INVESTMENT", 2004-09-15) reported that spending in the PRC on construction, factory equipment and other fixed assets rose 30.3 percent in the first eight months of the year over the same period last year, the government reported Wednesday, noting limited progress in cooling soaring investment. The report, citing the National Development Reform Commission, said the figures indicated that government efforts to cool redundant and speculative investment in some sectors were yielding results. The PRC's leaders have been trying to rein in economic growth that hit 9.6 percent for the first half of this year, worrying that the boom could ignite inflation and other financial problems.

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38. US Media on DPRK Blast

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. MEDIA STILL SUSPICIOUS ABOUT N.K. EXPLOSION", 2004-09-15) reported that some US media and experts continue to raise suspicions about both DPRK and ROK. In a piece featuring Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) president David Albright on Tuesday, however, CNN raised suspicions concerning the official explanations of both DPRK's major explosion and mushroom cloud and ROK's uranium enrichment experiments. The Los Angeles Times said, "ROK didn't have a full-fledged weapons program, but clearly they wanted to hedge their bets." NBC reporter Andrea Mitchell claimed critics of the Bush administration's DPRK policies were saying that it was possible that ROK may have started its own nuclear program out of insecurity brought about by the White House delaying negotiations with DPRK for too long.

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39. US on DPRK Blast

Chosun Ilbo ("POWELL SAYS NORTH KOREA'S EXPLANATION ON BLAST SQUARED WITH WASHINGTON'S VIEW", 2004-09-15) reported that US Secretary of State Colin Powell says DPRK's explanation that last week's explosion was demolition work for a power facility, not a nuclear test, was in line with what Washington saw. In an interview with the Reuters news agency, Powell said the information that DPRK gave is consistent with what the US saw -- that it might have been planned demolition of a mountain for a hydroelectric project. On ROK's uranium experiment, conducted four years ago, Powell said the U.S. does not consider the issue to be a serious concern and rejected the notion of Seoul pursuing nuclear weapons development.

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