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United States

1. Rumsfeld on US-ROK Military Alliance and DPRK

US plans to boost its military potential on the Korean Peninsula over the next four years -- and make a concerted effort to strengthen its security alliance with the ROK, said US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. He did not offer any specifics. But addressing the US-Korean Business Council, Rumsfeld on Tuesday expressed confidence that the present DPRK regime will eventually collapse, and the country will join the ranks of democratic societies. However, he stressed that in the interim, the US and the ROK must continue to build on their strong relationship and make efforts to strengthen regional security

Rumsfeld full statement can be found:

"US-ROK Military Alliance" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

"US Rumsfeld on DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

2. US-ROK-Japan DPRK Monitoring and Inspection System

Japan, the US and the ROK will embark on establishing an international inspection system to verify that the DPRK is dismantling its nuclear arms program once it announces an intention to do so, Foreign Ministry officials said Thursday. Senior officials from the three countries will discuss the details of the verification system at a meeting on Monday and Tuesday in Tokyo, the officials said. The envisaged system involves experts from various countries including the three nations as well as from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the officials said.

"US-ROK-Japan DPRK Monitoring and Inspection System" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

3. US Missile Defense Development

The cost of the US's national missile defence system is likely to spiral higher, and the system's effectiveness could be impaired, because the Pentagon is pushing to get the program operational by the end of next year, congressional investigators say. The General Accounting Office said this week that introducing untested technologies before they were fully developed could drive the program well beyond Pentagon estimates. The GAO report said the Missile Defence Agency had developed and tested only two of 10 vital technologies needed for the ground-based shield, to be built in Alaska and California. The MDA maintains it will have five more ready by the middle of next year, but the GAO found they would be integrated into the final system before they had been fully demonstrated. The Defense Department has budgeted approximately \$10 billion a year over the next five years to fund the missile defence program, and congressional appropriators last week approved \$9.1 billion to be spent next year on the system. The portions in Alaska and central California will cost an estimated \$21.8 billion through to 2009, \$6.2 billion of which has already been spent. "US Missile Defense Development" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

4. DPRK US Servicemen Remains Recovery

The US Department of Defense issued a release stating remains believed to be those of four American soldiers missing in action from the Korean War have been recovered by two teams of US specialists. A joint team operating near the Chosin Reservoir in the DPRK recovered two sets of remains believed to be those of US Army soldiers from the 7th Infantry Division who fought against PRC forces from November-December 1950. Approximately 1,000 Americans are estimated to have been lost in battles of the Chosin campaign.

The official release can be found:

"DPRK US Servicemen Remains Recovery" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

5. US Firms on DPRK Nuclear Standoff

Asia Pulse ("US FIRMS URGE EARLY END TO N.KOREAN NUCLEAR STANDOFF," Washington, 09/24/03) reported that the resolution of the DPRK nuclear standoff is a vital factor in ensuring a stable investment climate and overall confidence in the ROK market, American and Korean business leaders said in a joint statement released here Tuesday. The statement, released at the end of the 16th annual plenary session of the Korea-US/US-Korea Business Councils, said that elimination of the DPRK nuclear threat is needed in order for South Korea to successfully position itself as a key regional business center. The two councils issued a separate joint statement on the importance of a US-Korea bilateral investment treaty, or BIT, calling for a renewed effort to find creative approaches to the outstanding differences that hold up conclusion of a BIT. "The conclusion of a US-Korea BIT would bring tangible benefits to both countries," the statement, which will be delivered to appropriate senior members of both governments, said.

"US Firms on DPRK Nuclear Standoff" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK on US Nuclear Diplomacy

The DPRK told the US to "buckle down" and resolve the nuclear crisis by dropping its "hostile" policy towards the DPRK. Pyongyang blames US "hostility" for the nuclear impasse and says Washington pays lip-service to diplomacy while hiding its real intention to resolve the stand-off by military force. "The US would be well-advised to stop such foolish an act as digging its own grave, make a bold switchover in its anachronistic hostile policy ... and buckle down to solving the issues between the DPRK (North Korea) and the US including the nuclear issue," said Minju Josun, the official newspaper of the DPRK cabinet.

"DPRK on US Nuclear Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

"DPRK Relations with US, ROK and Japan" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, PRC)

2. ROK-US Military Alliance

The US plans to boost its military potential on the Korean Peninsula over the next four years - and make a concerted effort to strengthen its security alliance with the ROK, said US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The administration of President George W. Bush had been assured that the ROK "will compliment those investments with improved capabilities of their own." The US military is reorganizing its posture in the ROK, pulling key units away from the demilitarized zone where they could be vulnerable to a surprise artillery strike from the North, and consolidating its 37,000-strong force around several key hubs farther south. The redeployment is seen as a prudent move since the DPRK keeps more than 60 percent of its 1.2-million-strong army within 100 kilometers (65 miles) of the DMZ, according to defense officials. In his address, Rumsfeld assured that while the size and shape of the US footprint in the region might evolve, US determination to defend the region will not wane.

"ROK-US Military Alliance" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

3. ROK on ROK Troops in Iraq

The ROK's foreign minister said on Wednesday that "national interests" should be given the highest consideration in the government's decision on a US request to send troops to Iraq. "We have to decide whether to dispatch troops to Iraq after comprehensively taking into account cost versus profit, moral justification, public opinion and the international situation," Yoon said in a meeting with ROK correspondents here. Asked which factor will be given the highest consideration, Yoon said if he had to choose one he would say it is "national interests."

"ROK on ROK Troops in Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

4. US ROK Spy Planes

The US military successfully test-launched unmanned spy planes newly brought to the ROK to boost deterrence against the DPRK, officials said. The US 8th Army said its "Shadow-200" unmanned aerial vehicles were airborne for several hours after taking off from a US military base, 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of Seoul. "The maiden flights ended in success," said a spokesman for the US 2nd Infantry Division, a frontline unit belonging to the 8th Army. The spokesman declined to give the exact number of the US remotely-controlled surveillance planes deployed in the ROK but said "several" were put into operation.

"US ROK Spy Planes" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

"US DPRK Spy Plane Deployment" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

5. ROK DPRK Summit Scandal

Six prominent ROK officials were convicted Friday of secretly transferring money to the DPRK ahead of a historic 2000 summit, the first to be punished in a scandal that tarnished the image of a Nobel Peace prize-winning former president. The six, including two key figures in the administration of former President Kim Dae-jung, were given suspended prison terms immediately after the conviction by the Seoul District Criminal Court. The ruling means the officials will not likely serve their sentences unless they are convicted of the same crime again. It is not clear if they will appeal. The court found them guilty of secretly paying \$100 million in violation of the ROK's strict foreign currency regulations.

"ROK DPRK Summit Scandal" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

6. DPRK on IAEA Calls for Nuclear Safeguards

The DPRK has rejected calls by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to dismantle its nuclear program, accusing the UN nuclear watchdog of acting as a stooge for the US. At a general conference in Vienna of its 137 members on Friday, the IAEA passed a resolution urging the DPRK "to promptly accept comprehensive IAEA safeguards and co-operate with the agency in their full and effective implementation." It urged the DPRK to dismantle "any nuclear weapons program" it might have. But on Tuesday the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) dismissed the resolution as "unworthy of consideration." "We don't accept such an unjust resolution and declare it null and void," KCNA said in a statement.

"DPRK on IAEA Calls for Nuclear Safeguards" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

7. ROK IAEA Board of Governors

The ROK has been newly elected to the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) board of governors, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said Monday. Members of the U.N. nuclear watchdog endorsed the election through a unanimous vote Thursday at a plenary session of its annual general conference in Vienna.

"ROK IAEA Board of Governors" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

8. ROK New Administrative Capital

The ROK's new administrative capital, scheduled to be built in the Chungcheong region by 2013, will likely be designed to accommodate a population of about 500,000 and occupy a space of over 66 million square meters, experts said at a seminar Wednesday. At a public seminar organized by a presidential commission on the new administrative capital project and the Korea Planners Association, urban-planning experts urged the government to construct the new administrative capital at an "independent" site, rather than on the outskirts of an existing large city. Prof. Kim Hyun-soo of Daejin University said that a population of around 500,000 will be most ideal for the new capital city from an urban planning perspective with regards to self-sufficiency, infrastructure and financing.

"ROK New Administrative Capital" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

9. DPRK Trade Fair

With the microphones broken and toilets damaged, a most unusual capitalist-style trade fair was launched in the DPRK. Over a four-day period last month, about 20,000 curious North Koreans filed through a cavernous exhibition hall here to ogle seldom-seen products such as imported chocolates and wireless telephones. By the standards of Asian trade shows, the event in the DPRK capital was rather small and dowdy, offering a hodgepodge of products. Of even greater interest to the North Koreans than the products were the foreign visitors themselves. The DPRK interpreters at the fair said they had volunteered to work for free for the chance to practice their English. One of them confided to a reporter that there was only one instructor at Pyongyang College of Foreign Languages who is a native English speaker, and that teacher had a British accent. "Since we are having political troubles with the US, we don't study American English but British English in schools. But I want to learn American English because the language is easier and more comfortable to speak," the DPRK interpreter said.

"DPRK Trade Fair" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

"DPRK Trade Fair" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, US)

10. DPRK Thailand Asylum Seekers

Police at the Chiang Saen border crossing in Chiang Rai have been placed on high alert following the arrest yesterday of five DPRK asylum-seekers on charges of illegal entry. Chiang Saen Police Superintendent Lt-Col Apichart Kaewpumpuang said patrols have been stepped up on the Mekong River, which serves as a natural boundary between Thailand and Laos. There have been reports that more than 1,000 DPRK asylum-seekers in southern China are waiting to enter Thailand through Laos. Earlier this month, four refugees appeared at a press conference in Bangkok pleading for asylum in the US, citing religious and political persecution at home. They were assisted by two Christian pastors - a Korean-American and a German - who claimed to have an extensive network in the US. The pastors said they were trying to bring down the DPRK regime by creating a situation where people would flood across the border into China.

"DPRK Thailand Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

11. DPRK-ROK Relations

ROK and DPRK military officials on September 17 agreed to use the roads being built through the western and eastern areas of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) as new temporary roads. The agreement was clinched at the 8th Inter-Korean Military Authorities' Meeting held on September 17 on DPRK's side in the truce village of Panmunjom. The two sides agreed to use two sects of the Gyeongui road and Donghae road as new inter-Korean temporary corridors when the construction work of the two sects finish, said the report.

"DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, PRC)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC-DPRK Relations

One of the PRC's top DPRK policy planners said on Friday a peaceful solution to the North's nuclear standoff with the US was still a long way off. "There's going to be a long way to go," Fu Ying, director general of the department for Asian affairs in the PRC Foreign Ministry, told reporters. "It's a very difficult issue. It has a long history and a very complicated background and intertwined interests. I think it's not going to be an easy path." Fu said the parties had yet to discuss a date for another round of negotiations, despite media reports following the August talks that the countries would meet again in October or November.

"PRC-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

2. PRC's Army Development

The PRC on September 16 rejected reports that its troops were building up on its border with the DPRK. The army's movement was part of a longstanding plan to unify border controls nationwide, Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said. Kong said the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had taken over guard duties along the border with the DPRK from the armed police, noting that it had been decided years ago to turn over the job to the PLA's border guard unit to bring it into line with other parts of PRC's land border. The changes were "based on requirements of the law of the PRC to unify the form and streamline the system of national land border administration," he said. "It is a normal adjustment that has been carried out after many years of preparation by the relevant parties."

"PRC's Army Development" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, PRC)

3. PRC WMD Proliferation

Australia wants the PRC to move beyond multilateral arrangements in the effort to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction, with Defense Minister Robert Hill warning the PRC that "traditional" non-proliferation agreements are "not foolproof". Senator Hill, in China on a five-day visit, issued the warning to China's new Defence Minister, Cao Gangchuan, as an apparent prelude to an invitation to the PRC to join the so-called Proliferation Security Initiative. The US-led group of 11 nations, including Australia, proposes going outside the United Nations to co-operate on intercepting aircraft, land vehicles and ships on the high seas suspected of carrying WMD. Australia has worked hard to win at least tacit approval from the PRC for the plan, and is likely to be seeking input from PRC intelligence sources.

"PRC WMD Proliferation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

4. PRC-US Military Relations

PRC's Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan will visit the US in the second half of next month, Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said on September 18 in Beijing. Kong, declining to say if nuclear issues regarding the DPRK will be on the agenda, said the visit is still under discussion. Military exchanges between PRC and the US play an important part in bilateral relations and are conducive to deepening mutual understanding and expanding consensus, Kong said at the regular news briefing. He also noted that the two countries should properly handle occasional problems and friction in bilateral trade relations.

"PRC-US Military Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, PRC)

5. Relations Across Taiwan Straits

The PRC's Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said on September 18 that the latest rejection of a proposal on Taiwan's "representation" in the UN shows once again that the one China is the basic principle generally observed by the international community. "There is only one China in the world, and the Chinese mainland and Taiwan belong to one China. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of China cannot be severed," Kong said. It is in the fundamental interests of China to safeguard national unity, Kong added in the report. "Relations Across Taiwan Straits" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, PRC)

6. US PRC Port Visit

Two US Navy ships have arrived at a port in southern PRC for a visit aimed at building trust and reducing misunderstandings between the navies of the two countries, a US naval official said. The calls by the USS Cowpens and USS Vandegrift to the Zhanjiang port are part of a series of exchanges between the two militaries for the past few years, Lieutenant Commander Mike Brown said. It is the first time US Navy ships have been allowed to visit the PRC Navy's South Sea Fleet headquarters in Zhanjiang in southern Guangdong province, Brown said. In return, a PRC naval ship and a support ship will be allowed to visit the US territory of Guam for the first time this year, Brown said. The schedule for the visit has not been finalized. "US PRC Port Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, US)

7. US on PRC Human Rights Record

US Secretary of State Colin Powell berated the PRC on Monday for not doing enough to improve its human rights record but thanked Beijing for its efforts on the DPRK. A State Department official said Powell had urged PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing during talks at the State Department to make Beijing act on promises made at US-PRC human rights talks last December.

"US on PRC Human Rights Record" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, US)

8. PRC Solid-Fuel Satellite

The PRC has successfully test-fired its first four-stage solid-fuel rocket capable of putting small satellites into space on short notice, the official Xinhua news agency reported. The launch of the Pioneer I rocket on September 16 at north PRC's Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center makes the PRC only the third country capable of developing such rockets, after the US and Russia, a spokesman for China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp (CASIC) told Xinhua. The rocket is capable of putting payloads of up to 100 kilograms (220 pounds) into orbit around the earth to help with resource exploration, environmental monitoring and surveys, the spokesman said.

"PRC Solid-Fuel Satellite" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

9. PRC-Hong Kong Relations

Hong Kong's super tycoons and their heirs apparent have headed for Beijing on an annual pilgrimage with added significance this year as PRC rulers try to prop up support for the city's unpopular leader. Asia's richest entrepreneur Li Ka-shing, Henry Fok and Gordon Wu are among more than 80 people in the delegation, the latest in a string of Hong Kong's movers and shakers who have been invited to the PRC's capital in recent weeks. PRC President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao are expected to receive the tycoons on Saturday, when they will be asked to throw their weight behind Tung and help preserve stability in Hong Kong.

"PRC-Hong Kong Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

10. PRC First Manned Spacecraft Launch

The PRC's first manned spacecraft could be launched "as early as next month" from a site in the remote northwest and will probably contain one crew member, the state-owned People's Daily reported today on its Web site. It gave no further details about a timetable for the craft, Shenzhou-5, which the government had said earlier would fly with a PRC crew aboard by next year. The flight will probably last 24 hours, the newspaper said. The mention of the timing in an article about China's dreams of manned spaceflight was the most specific signal yet that a launch was imminent.

"PRC First Manned Spacecraft Launch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

11. PRC-Russia Oil Pipeline Deal Postponement

Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov said a long-awaited 2.5-billion-dollar oil pipeline deal with Beijing had been postponed, but Moscow was still committed to helping the PRC meet its energy needs. Russia was still conducting technical and environmental studies for the construction of a 2,400-kilometer (1,500-mile) pipeline from its Angarsk oil fields in Siberia to refineries in northeastern China's Daqing city, Kasyanov said. "I personally believe in order to better improve the basic technical plan and meet the environmental needs we still need three or four months of time," he said in a press conference after meeting his PRC counterpart Wen Jiabao. "Can you say this is a postponement? Yes, you can." The project has been discussed for some 10 years, with many expecting a Russian decision during Kasyanov's visit.

"PRC-Russia Oil Pipeline Deal Postponement" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

12. US-PRC Currency Battle

The PRC's top foreign exchange regulator said the country's exchange rate system is its own internal affair and that foreign interference is not welcome, state media has reported. The remarks by a spokesman for the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, carried in several mass-circulation dailies Tuesday, marked some of the most strident rhetoric so far in the row over the value of the yuan. "The exchange rate system and policy are a country's internal affair and no other country has the right to interfere," the unnamed spokesman said according to the Beijing Youth Daily.

"PRC on Currency Exchange Rate" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

"US-PRC Currency Battle" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

13. PRC-Russia Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The PRC, Russia and the four Central Asian members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) anti-terrorism grouping have forged an agreement here to strengthen trade ties between the six countries. The premiers of the PRC, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday set out the SCO budget for 2004, which will be used to fund a Beijing secretariat and an anti-terrorism center in Tashkent from January 1. "The six prime ministers signed a guiding document today on the long-term multilateral economic and trade cooperation of the SCO," PRC Premier Wen Jiabao said. Wen further proposed setting up an SCO free trade zone to "promote the facilitation of trade and investment" within the grouping.

"PRC-Russia Shanghai Cooperation Organization" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

14. PRC SARS Monitoring Network

The PRC Premier Wen Jiabao will use a regional meeting in Indonesia next month to suggest the establishment of an Asian monitoring network for epidemics, a ranking official said. Wen will make the proposal when he goes to a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on the island of Bali from October 6 to 8, said Fu Ying, director general of the foreign ministry's Asian Affairs department. The proposal comes as the PRC and the region brace themselves for the possible reappearance of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome as the weather turns colder.

"PRC SARS Monitoring Network" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

15. Dalai Lama PRC Visit

The spiritual leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, said he was willing to do almost anything to settle the issue of Tibet, even if it meant going to China personally. "To find a mutual agreement or solution, I am ready to meet the PRC leadership or, if I get a chance, to meet the Tibetans inside Tibet and explain or clarify my position," he told the Voice of America, a US government-funded broadcasting service. "I believe this would be very beneficial," he stressed, rejecting the notion he had any separatist designs. "I have reiterated like a mantra that I am not seeking independence, I am not trying to separate Tibet from China," he said. "I am only seeking a genuine autonomy for Tibet, but the PRC leadership has a hard time believing what I am saying. This is why a face-to-face meeting is very important." The Buddhist spiritual leader pointed out that the situation was so urgent that he is ready to send his envoys to the PRC for talks at any time.

"Dalai Lama PRC Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

Japan

1. DPRK-Japan Relations

The DPRK said Friday that it was gradually heading for a clash with Japan as Tokyo refused to break with the US and soften its hard-line policy toward Pyongyang. The newspaper of Pyongyang's ruling Workers Party, Rodong Sinmun, said that agreement between the leaders of the DPRK and Japan made at summit talks last year was in jeopardy. The newspaper warned in a commentary that there could be an "unavoidable" war between the DPRK and Japan unless the tense situation is properly addressed, although it said Pyongyang sought to improve ties. "Japan's policy to stifle the DPRK is now getting more pronounced as the days go by," Rodong said. "Consequently, the relations between the DPRK and Japan are inching close to the phase of clash."

"DPRK-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

"DPRK-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, PRC)

2. Japan on DPRK at UN General Assembly

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi took the DPRK to task at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, calling on Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program. "The development and possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea must never be tolerated," Kawaguchi said in a speech to the annual gathering of world leaders in New York. "Japan once again urges North Korea to immediately and completely dismantle all of its nuclear development programs in a verifiable and irreversible manner," she said.

"Japan on DPRK at UN General Assembly" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

3. Japan Iraq Troop Deployment

The Japan Times ('OKAMOTO TO ASSESS IRAQ SECURITY,' 09/06/03) reported that the Japanese government is sending Yukio Okamoto, a foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, to Iraq to check security conditions and determine how the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) can contribute to rebuilding the country. Okamoto was to be dispatched last month, but the mission was postponed due to worsened security conditions, such as the bombing of the United Nations' headquarters in Baghdad. "I would like to see what kind of humanitarian assistance we can offer and check other conditions, including the political and security situations," Okamoto said.

"Japan Iraq Troop Deployment" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, Japan)

"Japan Iraq Troop Deployment" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, Japan)

4. Japan Domestic Politics

Support for the cabinet of Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi leapt above 60 percent according to three opinion poll results. The polls were conducted immediately after a cabinet reshuffle on Monday. The Nihon Keizai Shimbun economic daily showed support surging 20 percentage points from a month earlier to 65 percent, the sharpest gain yet for the premier. Koizumi's approval was buoyed by the recent rise in the stock market and his appointment of "young and capable" lawmakers to key party and cabinet positions, the paper said. The Yomiuri Shimbun put support for the cabinet at 63 percent, up six points from a similar poll last month. But the leading paper noted 55 percent of respondents said Koizumi should shift the focus of his economic policies to boost growth, with only 30 percent supporting structural reforms as the top priority.

"Japan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

"Japan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 24, 2003, US)

"Japan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 23, 2003, US)

"Japan Domestic Politics " (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, Japan)

5. Japan Earthquake Status

Two powerful earthquakes, one of them measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale, rocked northern Japan, injuring around 480 people and forcing thousands more to evacuate their homes, officials and news reports said. The bigger quake, the strongest to hit Japan in almost nine years, occurred at 4:50 am (1950 GMT Thursday). Its focus was located some 80 kilometers (50 miles) off the southeastern coast of Hokkaido island and 42 kilometers below sea-level, some 750 kilometers north of Tokyo, the Meteorological Agency said.

"Japan Earthquake Status" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, US)

"Japan 8.0 Earthquake" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 25, 2003, US)

6. Japan on September 11th

Japanese officials marked the second anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the US by pledging that the nation will continue to fight terrorism in cooperation with the international community. Claiming that a series of counterterrorism measures taken over the past two years have been bearing fruit, Senior Vice Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told a separate news conference that Japan is determined to promote steps to fight terrorism. US Ambassador Howard Baker said in a statement, "As we pause to remember the tragedy of two years ago, Americans find great consolation and strength in the sincere and unstinting support of our friends and partners in Japan."

"Japan on September 11th" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, Japan)

7. Japan Constitutional Revision

Four candidates for the presidency of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) each appeared positive about the possibility of revising the war-renouncing Article 9 of Japan's Constitution. Speaking on a morning TV show, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who is seeking re-election as LDP leader in the Sept. 20 party poll, and the three challengers said Article 9 should be amended because it is too vague. The prime minister declined to comment on exactly when the government would start work on rewriting Article 9, but said the party is seeking to draft a proposal for the change in 2005, to mark the 50th anniversary of the party's establishment.

"Japan Constitutional Revision" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, Japan)

8. Japan New US Navy Commander

Rear Adm. Frederic R. Ruehe assumed the top post of the US Navy in Japan, with about 500 people, including members of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), attending his inauguration ceremony. In the ceremony on the Blue Ridge, the command ship of the Navy's 7th Fleet, Ruehe took over as commander of the naval forces in Japan from his predecessor, Rear Adm. Robert Chaplin. Since March, Ruehe has served concurrently as commander of Amphibious Force 7th Fleet and Amphibious Group One.

"Japan New US Navy Commander" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, Japan)

9. Japan Nuclear Fuel Tax

The Japanese government plans to approve proposals by two cities to tax spent nuclear fuel left by their local power plants, officials said. The decision by the Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications Ministry will pave the way for Kashiwazaki, Niigata Prefecture, and Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, to impose the tax. In March, Kashiwazaki became the first local government to pass an ordinance to tax spent nuclear fuel and it plans to begin levying the tax in October. The municipal government plans to impose a tax of 480 yen per kilogram of fuel, which is projected to generate around 2.6 billion yen in tax revenues over the next five years. Sendai plans to impose a tax of 500 yen per 1 kg of spent nuclear fuel at a power plant run by Kyushu Electric Power Co.

"Japan Nuclear Fuel Tax" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 26, 2003, Japan)

10. ROK-Japan Relations

In a gesture of reconciliation with its former colonial ruler, ROK said on September 16 it would remove the last import barrier for Japanese movies, pop songs and video games beginning next year.

"ROK-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, PRC)

11. Japan Nuclear Reactor

A nuclear reactor in the Hokkaido village of Tomari sprung a coolant leak over the weekend, but no radioactive material seeped out of the facility, according to officials of Hokkaido Electric Power Co. The primary coolant leak occurred at the regenerated heat exchanger room at the Tomari nuclear power station's No. 2 pressurized water reactor, the officials said. About 140 liters of primary coolant had leaked for 16 hours inside the reactor, capable of producing up to 579,000 kilowatts of electricity. It is the first time that primary coolant has leaked at this power plant.

"Japan Nuclear Reactor" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 22, 2003, Japan)

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