

92.1.17
The Times

Seoul gets new Tokyo apology

By DAVID WATTS
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

KIICHI Miyazawa, Japan's prime minister, offered a new apology to South Korea yesterday amid growing protests and the announcement of a government enquiry concerning the second world war exploitation of primary school girls by the imperial army.

The eruption of emotion over the use of "comfort girls" by the Japanese threatens to overshadow Mr Miyazawa's visit to South Korea which began yesterday. The main issues on his first overseas trip as prime minister include that of South Korea's ballooning trade deficit with Japan — now running at almost \$9 billion (£5.2 billion) a year, or 3 per cent of GNP.

The visit, which is intended to help to set the stage for a new, post-Soviet Union role for Japan in the Pacific, is also being undermined by the weakening of Mr Miyazawa's political power base at home because of a scandal. The Japanese press yesterday claimed a fourth politician in the ruling Liberal Democratic party received funds from a property developer. An aide admitted accepting money on behalf of an MP.

At a banquet given by President Roh Tae Woo, Mr Miyazawa apologised for the "suffering and sorrow" that imperial rule had caused.