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1. US set to lift ban on military exercises with NZ, Audrey Young, NZH, 09-0--10

The United States is poised to drop its ban on military exercises with New Zealand. The move will be a significant step in a thaw in the NZ-US relationship that has accelerated since Barack Obama became President a little over a year ago. Mrs Clinton announced last year that intelligence-sharing co-operation between the two countries had also resumed. The ban on military exercises, imposed by former President Ronald Reagan, has been in place since 1985. It was one of the reprisals for the anti-nuclear policy - now law - that banned nuclear armed or powered American military vessels from New Zealand ports.

2. Rich nations 'ganged up' in Copenhagen, John Garnaut, Age, 11-01-10

China has no regrets over its abrasive negotiating tactics at Copenhagen, saying the ''key lesson'' rich countries should take from the conference is that China cannot be pushed around. In the first

detailed, post-Copenhagen interview with the Western media by a Chinese official, climate change ambassador Yu Qingtai told The Age that the summit was ''a step in the right direction''. But he repeatedly accused rich countries of ganging up on China.

3. Japan pins whale row on Gillard, Peter Alford, Australian, 11-01-10

Japan has risked an open breach with the Rudd government by hitting back hard at Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard's handling of the whaling confrontation in the Southern Ocean. Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials have accused Ms Gillard of aggravating the whaling controversy between Tokyo and Canberra, and called for Australian action to prevent further illegal activities by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. This is the toughest public stance a Japanese government has taken towards Australia on Antarctic whaling -- or any other issue -- in recent times and is also highly unusual in singling out for criticism a senior member of a friendly government.

4. New Afghan cabinet picks still generate resistance, Alissa J. Rubin and Sangar Rahimi, NYT, 09-01-10

President Hamid Karzai made a second effort to fill his cabinet, nominating 16 new ministers a week after Parliament had rejected most of his first choices. But several Parliament members said they were as unimpressed by the new slate, which included many political unknowns, as they were with the first one. Their displeasure could prolong the stalemate that has left Afghanistan without a fully functional government since the widely criticized presidential election last summer.

- U.N. envoy Eide warns U.S., allies not to ignore civilian goals in Afghanistan, Colum Lynch, Washington Post, 07-01-10

5. China willing to spend big on Afghan commerce, Michael Wines, NYT, 29-12-09

Behind an electrified fence, blast-resistant sandbags and 53 National Police outposts, the Afghan surge is well under way. But the foot soldiers in a bowl-shaped valley about 20 miles southeast of Kabul are not fighting the Taliban, or even carrying guns. They are preparing to extract copper from one of the richest untapped deposits on earth. And they are Chinese, undertaking by far the largest foreign investment project in war-torn Afghanistan. While the United States spends hundreds of billions of dollars fighting the Taliban and Al Qaeda here, China is securing raw material for its voracious economy. The world’s superpower is focused on security. Its fastest rising competitor concentrates on commerce.

- China builds closer ties to Afghanistan through Wakhan Corridor, Russell Hsiao and Glen E. Howard, China Brief Volume: 10 Issue: 1, Jamestown Foundation, 07-01-10

6. Renegotiating the South Korea-US nuclear pact, Lee Byong-Chul, Asia Sentinel, 11-01-10

South Korea's unprecedented acquisition of a US$20.4 billion contract to develop nuclear power plants for the United Arab Emirates is fuelling hopes of at least short-term economic development with regard to nuclear energy-related industries. The acquisition of the contract also marks the beginning of a new relationship with the United States over nuclear power. The largest single construction contact Seoul has ever won, it makes South Korea the world's sixth exporter of nuclear plants.

- Resources on the UAE nuclear energy program & 123 agreement, UAE Embassy, Washington
- UAE selects Korea Electric Power corp. team as prime contractor for peaceful nuclear power program, WAM – Emirates News Agency, 27-12-09
- The United Arab Emirates nuclear program and proposed U.S. nuclear cooperation, Christopher M. Blanchard and Paul K. Kerr, Congressional Research Service, 28-10-09, [PDF, 231KB]
- Policy of the United Arab Emirates on the evaluation and potential development of peaceful nuclear energy, United Arab Emirates, [PDF, 258KB]
- KEPCO/KHNP, Indonesian nuclear power proposals, Nautilus Institute

7. Australia helps REDD projects in Jambi, Adianto P. Simamora, Jakarta Post, 06-01-10

Indonesia and Australia are set to launch the first-ever forest carbon project in Jambi following the adoption of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) scheme at the recent UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen. The A$30 million project, to be launched this month, will be held in production, protected, conservation and communal forests in the province. "This will be the first REDD application in communal forests," Wandojo Siswanto, head of the Forestry Ministry's climate change working group told The Jakarta Post. He said the Jambi projects would help form policies on the sharing of financial benefits between the central government, local administration and the local communities in the province.

8. Abdurrahman Wahid, the Indonesian Republic, and dynamics in Islam, Theodore Friend, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Jan 2010

Abdurrahman Wahid, known as Gus Dur, died on 30 December 2009 at the age of sixty-nine. The genial complexity of his character, which drew millions to him, was not adequate to the pressures of the presidency. But his life, career, and elements of caprice contain abundant clues for anyone who would understand modern Sufism, global Islam, and the Republic of Indonesia. He enjoyed a young Australian biographer referring to him in the Chinese way as a "drunken master." But his brief presidency was a failure of style far more than a triumph of originality. To reconcile tradition and contemporaneity while anticipating the future: that is the task of political leaders, and religious leaders as well. Gus Dur applied himself with verve to these needs in both dimensions, never deterred by appearing heterodox, often finding expression for ways forward that others felt were perilously eccentric.

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