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I. United States

1. ROK-DPRK War Scenarios

LA Times (Barbara Demick, "SEOUL'S VULNERABILITY IS KEY TO WAR SCENARIOS," Seoul, 05/27/03) reported that any US strike on the DPRK may provoke a catastrophic retaliation against the ROK's capital. When the US military tries to explain the difficulty of using force to stop North Korea's development of nuclear weapons, the oddly poetic phrase it turns to is the "tyranny of proximity." The phrase, which has been in the lexicon of the US forces in the ROK for years, stems from the imposing array of conventional artillery that the DPRK have dug into the hills just north of the demilitarized zone, a mere 30 miles from this capital city of 12 million. The nightmare scenario is that if the US opts for a more forceful approach to curb the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, the DPRK would retaliate not only against the 38,000 US troops stationed in the ROK, but also against the ROK itself. The DPRK last Tuesday bluntly reminded the ROK of its vulnerability when an envoy threatened the ROK with "unspeakable disaster" if it sides with the US in the crisis. The comment underscores the degree to which the ROK is being held hostage. Although the DPRK later apologized, it goes a long way toward explaining the predicament of the ROK's new president, Roh Moo Hyun, as he tries to walk a fine line between a menacing neighbor and his country's most important ally. At their recent summit in Washington, Roh and President Bush did much handshaking and smiling. But behind the outward bonhomie, they were able to agree on little more than the basic view that nuclear weapons are bad and that a diplomatic solution is preferable to war. The ROK has consistently urged the US to show more patience toward the DPRK and have made it clear that they would prefer that Bush officials not speak openly about the use of military strikes against the DPRK. To some extent, the differences boil down to this: where one sits affects how one thinks. "Given the geography of the Korean peninsula, there is no alternative to resolving this issue but dialogue," said ROK Foreign Minister Yoon Young Kwan at a recent meeting of foreign correspondents. For the moment, the Bush administration is pushing hard on the diplomatic track, and another round of talks with the DPRK and others is expected to be announced shortly, according to diplomats. Options short of attack that are also under discussion include a naval blockade and economic sanctions. But the military option hovers over the ROK, quietly depressing stock markets and bond ratings. Even the slightest, off-the-cuff comment by Bush or Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld can rattle the financial markets. The ROK is nervous as well about the Pentagon's determination to move the main US garrison out of Seoul within the year and then start relocating 2nd Infantry troops from the demilitarized zone, or DMZ. Estimates of the damage that could be inflicted by a DPRK attack range from bad to apocalyptic. Lee Yang Ho, defense minister during a similar nuclear crisis in 1994, said one computer simulation conducted during his term projected 1 million dead, including thousands of Americans. "It is assumed that if the US were to strike North Korea that the North Koreans would fight back," Lee said. "All industry would be destroyed, gas stations, power plants. This is such a densely populated area that even if North Korean artillery were not very accurate, anyplace you would hit there would be huge numbers of casualties." US military experts who have contemplated strikes on North Korea agree. A senior US intelligence officer speaking on condition of anonymity said that any war on the peninsula would be far deadlier than what took place in the desert terrain of Iraq.

2. DPRK Japan Warning

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA WARNS JAPAN OF "FATAL FIASCO" IF IT BLINDLY FOLLOWS US," Tokyo, 05/27/03) reported that the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency said that Japan will "meet a fatal fiasco" if it continues to blindly follow US policy. It said Japan's cabinet had approved a statement defending US use of cluster bombs in Iraq, saying the targets were "carefully selected" and that the US military "strove to prevent civilians from falling victim" to them. "This was nothing but Japan's shameful act of flattery and servile support for its master, the US," said the report Tuesday, quoting a commentary in the North Korean ruling party mouthpiece Rodong Sinmun. "Japan's act of supporting and shielding the US use of weapons of mass destruction indicates that it will leave no means untried for overseas aggression as the US does," it said. "The Japanese authorities are well advised to bear in mind that if they continue acting blindly to the tune of the US out of their senses, they will only meet a fatal fiasco," the report said. A Japanese foreign ministry spokesman said the statement, passed by the cabinet on May 7 in response to an opposition legislator's question, merely "acknowledged" the US stance, however, and did not amount to approval. The US has drawn criticism from rights groups for its use of cluster bombs in Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflicts. The weapons explode and release hundreds of smaller bomblets that disperse over a wide area. Three US soldiers were injured in early May when a suspected US cluster bomb exploded inside a major US base in northern Iraq.

3. PRC-Russia Presidential Relations

Agence France-Presse ("PUTIN BUILDS BOND WITH CHINA'S HU, SAYS RELATIONS ARE PEAKING," Moscow, 05/27/03) and CNN News ("PUTIN, HU ISSUE NORTH KOREA WARNING," Moscow, 05/27/03) and BBC News ("PRC PREMIER IN RUSSIAN DEBUT," 05/27/03) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao has held informal talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin at the start of his first foreign tour. Hu said he had chosen Russia as his first destination since becoming head of state in March because of the importance the PRC attached to relations with Russia. The two men met at Putin's Novo-Ogarevo residence where they planned an informal dinner ahead of Tuesday's talks which are expected to focus on bilateral trade and a proposed oil pipeline between the PRC and eastern Siberia. Hu and Putin appeared relaxed as they appeared before reporters, both accompanied by their wives. Putin said he had a "personal relationship" with the PRC premier and that he and his wife Lyudmila were "especially pleased to receive our PRC friends not just in Russia, not just in Moscow, but here at our home". He praised Hu as an experienced politician, with a high regard for Russia. Russia is the first and longest leg of Hu's tour, and his visit there is designed to underline the importance of the relationship between the two nations, and help forge closer economic ties. Under President Jiang, the PRC and Russia developed a so-called "strategic partnership", but while Russian arms sales to the PRC have boomed in recent years, other bilateral trade has grown more slowly. Hu is being accompanied in Russia by a large delegation including his wife Liu Yongqing, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and Minister of Commerce Lu Fuyuan.

4. DPRK Drug Smuggling

CNN News ("POLICE LINK HEROIN TO NORTH KOREA SHIP," Melbourne, Australia, 05/27/03) and BBC News (Dominic Hughes, "NORTH KOREA SHIP 'HEROIN HAUL FOUND,'" Sydney, Australia, 05/27/03) reported that Australian police say they have found another 75 kilograms of heroin that were smuggled into the country by a DPRK ship seized in a raid last month. Australian special forces boarded the freighter, the Pong Su, after 50 kg of heroin were found in a vehicle in April, sparking a diplomatic row between the two countries. A police spokesman says the 75 kg of heroin were found buried in bushes on the south-east coast of Australia. It is the same area in which 50 kg of heroin

were seized from a vehicle in April. Diplomatic row The spokesman says this latest batch appears to be identical in form and packaging. Together the drugs haul is one of the biggest ever recorded in Australian history. Police believe the drugs came from the Pong Su, which was raided by Australian special forces after the first batch of heroin was discovered. About 30 crew members were arrested and charged with drug smuggling. They included an official from the DPRK' ruling Workers' Party, which led to a diplomatic row after the Australian Government issued a protest to the DPRK. Australia is one of the few Western countries to maintain formal contacts with Pyongyang, but this incident has tested that relationship. It has also been cited by officials in the US, who say it is evidence the DPRK Government is involved in illegal activities, including drug smuggling.

5. ROK DPRK Humanitarian Aid Delay

The Associated Press (Sung-Hun Choe, "SOUTH KOREA MAY SLOW NORTH KOREA RICE SHIPMENTS," Seoul, 05/27/03) reported that toughening its stance on the DPRK, the ROK said Tuesday it would delay shipments of badly needed rice aid for the DPRK if Pyongyang escalates tensions over its nuclear ambitions. During inter-Korean talks on economic cooperation last week, the ROK agreed to provide the DPRK with 400,000 tons of rice this year to help ease chronic food shortages. The agreement came amid tensions on the Korean Peninsula, roiled by the DPRK's suspected development of nuclear weapons and its resistance to US-led international efforts to keep the peninsula nuclear-free. Asked by ruling party lawmakers if the rice shipments would continue even if the nuclear standoff deteriorated, Vice Finance and Economy Minister Kim Gwang-lim the shipments would have to be delayed. Kim made the remark in a meeting with members of the ruling Millennium Democratic Party. The ROK had previously said shipments of humanitarian aid should not be linked to political tension. Also Tuesday, the ROK expressed regret over the DPRK's threats of "unimaginable disaster" if it confronts the DPRK. The DPRK was upset over a recent US-ROK summit that called for consideration of "further steps" if the DPRK escalates nuclear tensions. Despite the threat of delays, the ROK's Red Cross on Tuesday said it will ship the DPRK 15,000 tons of fertilizer this week. The delivery is the first of 200,000 tons the ROK has promised to donate to the DPRK by the end of June.

6. PRC-Tibet Relations

BBC News (Holly Williams, "TIBET ENVOYS IN BEIJING FOR TALKS," 05/27/03) reported that two envoys of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, have arrived in Beijing on a visit aimed at rebuilding relations between the PRC and Tibet's exiled government. Negotiations between the two sides broke down in 1993, and have been stuck in a gridlock for nearly a decade. But there are signs that the standoff might finally be beginning to thaw. The Dalai Lama says he just wants autonomy for Tibet within the PRC. But leaders in Beijing accuse him of being a separatist, intent on fighting for an independent Tibet. It is highly unlikely that the Dalai Lama's envoys will resolve that issue in their talks this week. But this is the second time that officials from Tibet's exiled government have visited the PRC in the last 12 months, and both sides seem to be making concessions. The PRC has made a show of releasing Tibetan political prisoners, while the Dalai Lama recently turned down an invitation to Taiwan.

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA REPLACES HEADS OF TIBET GOVERNMENT," Beijing, 05/27/03) reported that the PRC has replaced the heads of Tibet's local government and legislature in a reshuffle aimed at promoting economic development and combating the influence of the exiled Tibetan Buddhist leader the Dalai Lama, an official newspaper reported. The Tibet Daily didn't say when the new appointments were made, but said the new leaders were presented at a meeting of the regional government on May 19. The report appeared in the paper's May 20 edition,

seen in Beijing on Tuesday. There was no indication that the appointments heralded any change in policy toward the region. Regional Communist Party chief Guo Jinlong, who is a member of China's majority Han ethnic group, remains the region's top official, the report said.

7. SARS Vaccine Discovery

CNN News ("EXPERTS TO TEST 'SARS VACCINE,'" Hong Kong, 05/27/03) reported that scientists in Hong Kong and the PRC have developed a potential vaccine for SARS which they will soon test on animals, a microbiologist on the team has said. Laboratories worldwide have been racing to find a cure and a vaccine for the deadly respiratory disease, which has infected over 8,200 people around the world, killing 729 of them, since it emerged in southern PRC in November. Guan Yi, an assistant professor of microbiology at the University of Hong Kong, said the team will soon test the vaccine on monkeys. "We cannot tell when the vaccine will be safe or effective in humans," he told Reuters. He could not say how long the experiments would take. Guan said scientists had cultured the SARS virus in their laboratories and will kill or inactivate it for the tests. "We will then purify them to guarantee there is no live virus before testing them on animals. We will then see if the cultured virus will stimulate the production of antibodies," Guan said. The presence of antibodies would theoretically provide some measure of immunity against SARS, which is caused by a member of the coronavirus family, which also causes the common cold. Experts have said it would take years before any such product could be made commercially available, if at all. If the virus is mutating rapidly, as some scientists argue, a vaccine may take much longer to develop or may not be effective at all. Scientists at the University of Hong Kong said last week that the virus likely jumped to humans from the civet cat, a delicacy for centuries for many people in southern China. Their tests showed that viruses found in the exotic animal were very similar to the coronavirus found in SARS patients. A World Health Organization official later warned that it was too early to jump to firm conclusions that the civet cat was the definite reservoir or host for SARS.

8. Japan Earthquake

LA Times (Mark Magnier and Hisako Ueno, "LARGE QUAKE ROCKS JAPAN," Tokyo, 05/27/03) reported that a strong earthquake hit northeastern Japan on Monday evening, sparking fires, snarling communications, halting bullet trains and causing skyscrapers to sway in Tokyo, about 250 miles south. Nearly 80 injuries were reported, including six listed as serious. According to Japan's Meteorological Agency, the temblor was a magnitude 7, the most powerful to hit the country in more than two years. The shaker was roughly equivalent in magnitude to the 1995 Kobe earthquake, also known as the Hanshin Awaji quake, which killed more than 6,400 people. A big difference between the two, however, was that this one struck in a far less dense area of Japan known for its farms, fishing villages and relatively small cities. With the epicenter approximately 12 miles off the coast of Miyagi prefecture and approximately 44 miles beneath the sea, the quake's destructive force was blunted. "It is absolutely inconceivable that there could be damage similar to that after the Hanshin Awaji earthquake," Yoshitada Konoike, minister of disaster management, told a news conference in Tokyo. Thousands of people were stranded as inspectors checked roads and train tracks for damage. Service on the Tohoku bullet train line was canceled for at least 24 hours, according to Kyodo news agency, after cracks were found in the system's infrastructure. Hundreds of people slept in trains in Sendai station. Several dozen people were hurt, mostly by broken glass and falling objects, according to police reports; six of the injuries were described as serious. Three fires broke out, one at a power substation and two in homes. An estimated 35,000 homes lost power temporarily, although most had their electricity switched back on within an hour. Phone systems were snarled, 10 families evacuated their residences fearing landslides, and government-owned broadcaster NHK reported one highway in northeastern Japan shut down completely.

9. PRC Dissidents and Terrorism

The Associated Press (Elaine Kurtenbach, "CHINA ACCUSES TWO DISSIDENTS OF TERRORISM," Beijing, 05/27/03) reported that the PRC accused two pro-democracy activists from the US and New Zealand on Tuesday of plotting terrorist attacks - a charge denied by a prominent US-based dissident. Authorities arrested the pair, US citizen Benjamin Lan and Sun Gang of New Zealand, after they arrived in Beijing this month on what dissidents said was a mission to promote democracy. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said they were thought to be involved in "some violent, terrorist acts" at the instigation of an unspecified "hostile organization" abroad. "Given that their activities have violated relevant laws of China, they have been detained in accordance with law and the case is under investigation at this moment," Zhang said at a regular news briefing. The spokeswoman gave no other details. The US and New Zealand embassies confirmed that the two are in PRC custody. Lan and Sun belong to the China Federation Foundation, a recently formed pro-democracy group based in California. Peng Ming, a prominent US-based dissident and a member of the group, said Lan and Sun were to conduct "propaganda work" on promoting democracy. He said they also were to investigate China's outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome. The two had planned to set up a branch of their group in Beijing and to publicize the organization, but had no intention of committing any violence," Peng said in a telephone interview from San Francisco. "The accusation that the two were planning terrorist activities has no basis," he said.

10. Japan Domestic Politics

The Japan Times (Reiji Yoshida, "OPPOSITION MERGER TALKS FALTER," 05/27/03) reported that Japanese Liberal Party chief rejects Diet group offer from DPJ Following six months of negotiations, merger talks between the Democratic Party of Japan and the Liberal Party broke down Monday, with Liberal Party President Ichiro Ozawa rejecting the DPJ's proposal to form a joint Diet group as a first step. The DPJ, which has been beset by internal feuding -- between anti-Ozawa and promerger lawmakers -- submitted the Diet group proposal in the hope that it would help smooth out the differences between the two groups. For Ozawa, however, the upcoming general election appears to count for more than political unity. He rejected the proposal during a meeting Monday afternoon at the Diet building with his DPJ counterpart, Naoto Kan. He stated that the formation of a joint Diet group would force his party to abandon some of its key policies, while the two parties would still have to campaign separately in elections. "It would greatly undermine the Liberal Party's ability to sell our uniqueness to voters," Ozawa said told a news conference after the meeting. He also said the DPJ proposal did not include any specific reference to the timing of a future merger. He was particularly critical of that there was no reference to whether the merger might take place before or after the next House of Representatives election, which must be held by June 2004.

11. Japan Cigarette Machines

The Japan Times ("HEALTH OFFICIALS WANT THEIR CIGARETTES," 05/27/03) reported that half the cigarette machines in the health ministry building will remain in place despite calls for them to be removed, due to demands from employees who smoke, ministry officials said Monday. On May 1, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry introduced a law that aims to curb secondhand smoke in public places. Many criticize the ministry for preaching to the public while failing to remove health hazards from its own premises. The debate over the ministry's cigarette machines began last November after a member of a council deliberating on tobacco policies noted it odd that the health ministry has the machines while promoting public health, the officials said. Currently, there are eight tobacco vending machines in the building, which the health ministry shares with the Environment Ministry. The ministry's Health Services Bureau, which is in charge of tobacco policies,

has urged the removal of all the cigarette machines to demonstrate the ministry's stance. But the bureau faced strong opposition from smokers who complained that the ministry should not take away its employees' amenities. The ministry reached an agreement with the Environment Ministry to remove half the machines before "World No Tobacco Day" on Saturday. The health ministry has already introduced smoking and nonsmoking sections in the building. "Local government office buildings have gone ahead with a complete smoking ban," said Bungaku Watanabe, 65, who represents a nongovernmental organization that advocates banning smoking in public places. "The ministry's decision is pitiful," Watanabe said. "It should change its mind-set and realize that if strict regulations are taken, it will not only save people concerned about (secondhand) smoke, but also smokers who want to quit but cannot."

12. DPRK on Japan-US Relations

The Korean Central News Agency of DPRK ("JAPAN DENOUNCED FOR BLINDLY SIDING WITH US," Pyongyang, 05/27/03) reported that the Japanese government in a "written answer" approved at its recent cabinet meeting blindly sided with the US It asserted that "the US carefully selected the targets of cluster bombs in consideration of their nature and strove to prevent civilians from falling victim to them." It means that the US use of cluster bombs does not pose an international problem as they were dropped technically in the Iraqi war. In this regard Rodong Sinmun today in a signed commentary says: This was nothing but Japan's shameful act of flattery and servile support for its master, the US The Japanese authorities are so obsessed with the idea of toeing the US line that they took the lead in openly shielding the US genocide, a target of the international community's condemnation. It is obvious that it is a bad habit of Japan to blindly support and flatter the US as a servant does his master. The point at issue is for what Japan behaves so. The Japanese authorities are keen to whip the charriot of overseas military aggression under the US umbrella of "anti-terrorism" strategy. Japan's act of supporting and shielding the US use of weapons of mass destruction indicates that it will leave no means untried for overseas aggression as the US does. But the Japanese authorities are well advised to bear in mind that if they continue acting blindly to the tune of the US out of their senses, they will only meet a fatal fiasco.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Multilateral Solution for DPRK Nuclear Problem

Joongang Ilbo (Kim Young-sae, "NORTH SUGGESTS 2-TIER MEETINGS," Seoul, 05/26/03) reported that meetings DPRK appeared to be backing a bit further away on Saturday from its insistence that the issues related to its development of nuclear weapons were strictly between itself and US. An announcement by DPRK's Foreign Ministry, carried on the country's state-run media, said that it would be willing to accept a multilateral dialogue if bilateral talks with US preceded those multiparty discussions. The statement came as US President George W. Bush and Junichiro Koizumi, Japan's prime minister, concluded their discussions in Texas and called for "tougher measures" against DPRK if it takes any steps to worsen the present situation. "There are issues that concern purely North Korea and the United States," DPRK said in a statement carried by the Korea Central News Agency. "The two countries should sit down to hold honest discussions about the other's policy." In Texas, US and Japanese leaders said the international community would have to apply "tougher measures" if the situation worsens. Speaking after a two-day meeting at Mr. Bush's ranch, the two leaders did say they were confident that diplomacy now under way would lead to a peaceful resolution. They also called for the expansion of that diplomacy to include ROK and Japan in formal meetings with DPRK. Japan appears to be insisting on a seat at the table; ROK has said it would not

insist on being included if the question of its attendance interfered with substantive discussions. Neither has PRC been in a hurry to invite others; Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue was quoted by the Xinhua News Agency on Friday as saying the first step must be another round of three-way talks in Beijing. ROK officials have pointed out that US has also backed off its earlier position that it would not talk about its relationship with DPRK until DPRK shed its nuclear ambitions and programs, but suggested that the backpedaling was only enough to get some form of talks going. ROK's ambassador to US, Han Sung-joo, was in Seoul for meetings last week, and said there is no chance that US would agree to talk with DPRK one-on-one.

2. Rice Aid and DPRK Nuclear

Joongang Ilbo ("OFFICIAL LINKS RICE HELP WITH NUCLEAR PROGESS," Seoul, 05/26/03) reported that ROK senior Unification Ministry official hinted over the weekend that ROK would not be averse to using rice aid to DPRK as a bargaining chip. He said a ROK delegation in Pyeongyang last week had told DPRK that such shipments might be suspended if DPRK aggravates the nuclear situation. He asserted that DPRK's later pledge to facilitate shipments of the 400,000 tons of rice that ROK has agreed to send was DPRK's tacit acceptance of that policy. The official said the rice shipments were humanitarian assistance, but that it would be difficult to continue them if tensions over nuclear weapons escalated. ROK plans to send 100,000 tons of rice to DPRK monthly beginning in June; the agreement signed last Friday says that schedule could be changed.

3. DPRK Problem Out of UN

Joongang Ilbo (Kim Chong-hyuk, Lee Chul-hee, "US TO KEEP NORTH PREBLEM OUT OF UN," Washington, 05/26/03) reported that Assistant U.S. Secretary of State James Kelly said the North Korean nuclear problem will not be sent to the United Nations Security Council but will be dealt with through multinational talks. Speaking to the floor leaders of the Millennium Democratic Party and the Grand National Party on Wednesday, Mr. Kelly expressed doubt about the Security Council's ability to deal effectively with the DPRK problem, since its membership contains many countries with no apparent direct stake in the issue. A round of multilateral talks took place in Beijing last month, six months after the revelation of a new covert DPRK nuclear program. US representatives, led by Mr. Kelly, sat down with PRC and DPRK officials for three days of exchanging position statements, with no negotiations to resolve the standoff. Future talks should include more countries, Mr. Kelly was quoted as saying, such as Australia, Russia and the European Union. He also hinted at the early inclusion of ROK, saying he hoped that he did not have to go to Seoul next time to report on the discussions as he did in April. US military forces on Thursday carried out a training exercise to move a Marine battalion stationed in Okinawa, Japan, to the Korean Peninsula. More than 600 Marines took part in the exercise designed to move the force rapidly by high speed vessel from Okinawa to the North Gyeongsang city of Pohang in less than 24 hours, a USFK spokesman said. He said it was part of a routine exercise conducted twice a year.

4. USFK Promoting New System of Arsenal

Chosun Ilbo (Yoo Yong-won, "USFK SMARTING ITS BOMBS," Seoul, 05/26/03) reported that USFK has started transforming many of the conventional bombs in its arsenal into smart bombs by adding JDAM devices, US military newspaper Stars and Stripes reported Saturday. The devices use the global positioning system technology. The report quoted Lance L. Smith, commander of the 7th Air Force in ROK, as saying that upgrading the bombs would boost the effectiveness of close air support and help to stop enemy attacks.

5. DPRK Leader's Often Inspection on Military Bases

Chosun Ilbo (Kim Min-cheol, "KIM JONG IL MAKING MILITARY ROUNDS," Seoul, 05/26/03) reported that as tension rises between US and DPRK due to the nuclear crisis, DPRK's leader Kim Jong Il is inspecting military forces more frequently - once in every three days. ROK official at the Unification Ministry said Sunday that among the total 36 inspections that Kim has made this year, 27 were military-related. The official also said that after Kim emerged April 3 after withdrawing from public appearances for 50 days, he has made 23 inspections, 18 military-related. On Friday Kim inspected the 1973rd unit, DPRK's central broadcasting agency reported Saturday. On Tuesday he visited the 762nd and 671st units; on Monday he inspected the 292nd unit.

III. People's Republic of China

1. SCO Summit

China Daily (Shao Zongwei, "FM SPOKESMAN: SUMMIT NOT TO COVER EXPANSION," 05/23/03, P1) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said on May 22 the upcoming Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) summit in Moscow will not discuss its expansion, although a number of countries - including India and Pakistan - hope to join. "The SCO is at an initial stage and is faced with a lot of work concerning the development of its mechanisms. Therefore its members have decided not to admit new members for the time being," said Zhang, adding that it will follow the principle of openness and accept more members in the future. The May 29 summit will ratify a number of documents on the development of the SCO, including the mechanism of meetings of heads of state and prime ministers, the establishment of a secretariat in Beijing by the end of this year, and decide on the SCO secretary-general, said the report.

2. PRC-US Relations on Religious and Human Rights Issue

China Daily (Xiao Jiao, "RELIGIOUS LEADERS SLAM US REPORT," 05/23/03, P1) reported that PRC religious leaders on May 22 lashed out at the US Commission on International Religious Freedom after the commission attacked PRC's religious situation in a report they said was based on hearsay and conjecture. Chen Guangyuan, chairman of the China Islamic Association, said the chapters concerning PRC in the report are so unfair and blind to the truth. "The past two decades were a golden period for religious activities in China. The situation in China cannot be denied through the fabrications of some people across the Pacific," Chen said. In an annual report issued early this month, the US commission - a federal government agency - accused PRC of being "a particularly severe violator of religious freedom." Gao Ying, a Protestant pastor in Beijing and a member of the China Christian Association standing committee, said: "Every criminal is subject to punishment by the law, whether or not he is religious," according to the report.

China Daily ("US TOLD NOT TO EXPLOIT TIBET ISSUE," 05/22/03, P1) reported that PRC on May 21 asked the US to stop interfering in China's internal affairs via the issue of Tibet. The report said the US Government submitted a presidential report on the Tibet issue to Congress earlier this month, expressing the hope that the PRC Government would resume dialogue with the Dalai Lama as soon as possible. Asked to comment on the presidential report, PRC foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said that Tibet is part of China, and the Tibet issue is an internal affair of China. The presidential report - required by the US legislature - made "imprudent" remarks about Tibetan affairs, she said. It constituted a violation of the basic principles of international relations and of the three joint communiques between the two countries as well as interference in PRC's

internal affairs, the spokeswoman added. PRC strongly opposes such intervention, Zhang said.

3. PRC-Japan Relations

China Daily ("HU: BUILD ON GOOD TIES WITH JAPAN," 05/20/03, P3) reported that President Hu Jintao said on May 19 in Beijing that he hoped the politicians of PRC and Japan would jointly promote Sino-Japanese good-neighborly co-operative relations. Hu, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks during a meeting with the secretaries-general of the three ruling parties in Japan - Taku Yamazaki of the Liberal Democratic Party, Tetsuzo Fuyushiba of the Komei Party, and Toshihiro Nikai of the New Conservative Party. Vice-Premier Huang Ju and State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan also met the Japanese guests separately. Hu said Sino-Japanese ties had seen notable development since the two countries established full diplomatic relations, which had benefited the two peoples and contributed to the peace, stability and development of Asia as well as the world. In accordance with the principles enshrined in the joint statement, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and the joint declaration between PRC and Japan, Hu said, the two sides should constantly expand good-neighborly co-operative relations. Hu hoped the statesmen of the two countries would, by drawing lessons from history, looking towards the future, aiming at long-term interests and the entirety of bilateral relations and conforming to the historical trends, jointly push forward good-neighborly co-operative ties, said the report.

China daily (Wu Yixue, "ACKNOWLEDGE WAR CRIMES IN COURTS," 05/23/03, P12) reported that a lawsuit seeking compensation for PRC victims of germ warfare committed by the notorious Unit 731 was heard for the first time on May 20 in Japan's Tokyo Higher Court. It was the second trial accepted by a Japanese higher court after the Tokyo District Court rejected the appeal for compensation. The Tokyo local court, which handled the lawsuit in August last year, acknowledged that the Japanese army did conduct germ warfare against PRC, but it also ruled against the PRC plaintiffs on the grounds that the Japanese Government was not liable to pay compensation or apologize to the victims. That was an irresponsible and absurd judgement, the report said, however, it seems that the Japanese Government has become accustomed to shirking its war responsibilities. Last Thursday, the Tokyo District Court rejected compensation claims from PRC people for health damage caused by chemical weapons that Japan's army left behind in PRC after World War II. The Tokyo Higher Court has now accepted the second appeal from PRC plaintiffs for redress, and this time it is expected to do the right thing by the PRC victims and international justice, said the report.

4. PRC's Diplomatic Maneuvers

People's Daily ("PRESIDENT HU TO BEGIN PRESIDENTIAL OVERSEAS TOUR," Beijing, 05/21/03, P1) reported that President Hu Jintao will pay state visits to Russia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia and attend the leaders' informal dialogue meeting between the North and the South in Evian, France from May 26 to June 5, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue announced on May 20. During his tour, President Hu will also attend the third Summit Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member nations to be held in Moscow, and the celebrations of the tri-centennial anniversary of the establishment of the city of St. Petersburg, Zhang said at a regular press conference. This is the first overseas trip by the PRC president since the country's new central leadership took office. During his visits, President Hu will have extensive contacts with foreign leaders and noted figures from all circles, exchange views with them in a deep-going way on bilateral relations and major international issues of common concern, and sign a series of important documents of cooperation. Hu's visit will further enhance the friendly and cooperative relationship between PRC and the relevant countries and will promote regional and international cooperation, said the spokeswoman.

5. US Security Measures

China Daily ("SENATE BACKS STUDY OF LOW-YIELD NUCLEAR WEAPONS," Washington, 05/22/03, P12) reported that the US Senate on May 20 backed the scrapping of a decade-long ban on researching "mini-nuke" weapons, but Democrats condemned the measure and said it would spur a new arms race and heighten the risk of nuclear warfare. The Senate voted by 51 to 43 to uphold a request from President George W. Bush to repeal the ban on research into and the development of tactical nuclear weapons with one-third or less of the force of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in World War II that killed more than 100,000 people, the report said. The defense bill that the House of Representatives was to consider on May 21 already has similar compromise language on the warheads with a yield of less than 5 kilotons. The Senate voted after Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld pressed for a green light to study smaller nuclear weapons, but Democrats said it was foolish to think the administration would invest in research into the weapons without any intention of producing them, said the report.

6. Across Taiwan Straits Relations

People's Daily ("ALL ATTEMPTS TO SEPARATE CHINA WILL FAIL: FM SPOKESMAN," Beijing, 05/20/03, P4) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said May 19 that the refusal by the World Health Assembly (WHA) to give Taiwan observer status demonstrates that no attempt to make "two Chinas" or "One China, One Taiwan" will succeed. Zhang noted that this was the seventh time the WHA had turned down Taiwan-related bills. The World Health Organization (WHO) was a special organ of the UN that was only open to sovereign states, as Taiwan a province of China, it was ineligible to join the organization or participate in the WHA. The central government of China had always attached great importance to and been very much concerned about the health and safety of all PRC people, including Taiwan compatriots, Zhang said. After the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) on the island, the central government and mainland compatriots had taken a series of measures in promoting information exchanges and material aid across the Taiwan Straits, she said. The central government had allowed WHO experts to do research in Taiwan and Taiwan health technicians to attend SARS-related technical meetings organized by the WHO. Taiwan's access to health information and technical aid was unrestricted. Zhang said the Taiwan authorities this year had moved a few countries to put forward Taiwan-related proposals to the WHA. These moves violated relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, and went against the WHO's tenet and principles and would inevitably and naturally be rejected by the WHA.

7. DPRK-ROK Relations

China Daily ("PYONGYANG AND SEOUL AGREE ON RICE, RAILWAYS," 05/24-25/03, P8) reported that he DPRK and the ROK wrapped up their most contentious talks in years on May 23, setting aside days of bickering about Pyongyang's nuclear program to agree on rice aid for the DPRK and the restoration of railway links. ROK will send the DPRK 400,000 tons of rice, and the two sides agreed to reopen North-South railway links and to break ground for a joint industrial park in June, as a report from Pyongyang said.

8. PRC-Russian Ties

China Daily ("HU: RAISE SINO-RUSSIAN TIES TO NEW HEIGHT," 05/24-25/03, P1) reported that President Hu Jintao said in Beijing on May 23 that PRC and Russia will work to take their strategic partnership to a new high, when interviewed by Renat Abdullin, first deputy director-general of

Russia's Interfax New Agency, and Andrey Bystritskiy, vice-chairman of the State-owned RTR television company. Hu said he will have an in-depth exchange of views with Russian President Vladimir Putin on bilateral ties and on major regional and international issues during his upcoming visit to Russia to strengthen mutual political trust and enhance mutually beneficial cooperation. PRC Government and leaders value Sino-Russian relations and will continue to adhere to the principles and policies of bilateral good-neighborly cooperation, irrespective of changes in the international situation. Expressing his gratitude to the Russian government and people for their understanding and support for the PRC people's fight against SARS, Hu said PRC is willing to enhance exchanges and cooperation with the international community to make a positive contribution to the fight against SARS. During the interview, Hu also answered questions on counter-terrorism efforts, Iraq and the nuclear issue of the DPRK, said the report.

9. PRC's Commentary on Relations with Russia

China Daily (Hu Qihua, "VISIT HIGHLIGHTS MATURE SINO-RUSSIAN TIES," 05/26/03, P4) carried a commentary on the upcoming PRC President Hu Jintao's visit to Russia, saying that the visit will aim to map out a blueprint for the growth of PRC-Russia ties and write a new chapter in the strategic partnership. Observers in Beijing agreed that Hu's visit to Russia, which begins today, is a sign of a more mature, practical relationship that builds on the treaty of good-neighborliness and friendly co-operation signed by the two countries in 2001. Before his visit, Hu said in an interview with Russia's Interfax News Agency that PRC is willing to join hands with Russia to usher in the future and mark a new era of bilateral co-operation that benefits both countries and peoples. In response to the fear of the "China threat" which has become a constant theme in Russian media and politics, Beijing will also work hard to reassure Moscow that PRC's rise as an economic and strategic power poses no threat. Improving economic and trade co-operation will help consolidate the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, the article said. PRC and Russia share similar stances on current international situations and major regional issues. Analysts believe that, during this visit, Hu and Putin will stress their common stance on post-war reconstruction of Iraq, the nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula, and the Middle East conflict. Hu said in his Interfax interview that he would have an in-depth discussion with Putin on bilateral ties and on major regional and international issues, as they raise the Sino-Russian strategic partnership to a "new high," according to the article.

IV. Japan

1. Japan-DPRK Relation

The Japan Times ("LDP EYES LAW REVISIONS TO SQUEEZE NORTH KOREA," 05/15/03) reported that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on May 14 deliberated proposed legal revisions that would allow Japan to impose economic sanctions on the DPRK, party lawmakers said. The proposed revisions by a group of junior lawmakers, which include halting remittances by Korean residents of Japan to the DPRK, are in response to various issues involving the DPRK, including the abduction of Japanese nationals and that country's nuclear arms development, according to the lawmakers. House of Councilors member Ichita Yamamoto and his colleagues, as part of an LDP policymaking study group on North Korean diplomacy, earlier compiled the revisions to the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law. The proposed revisions, however, had not been brought up for discussion with the LDP's foreign affairs division. Yamamoto and his group then sought cooperation late last month from senior LDP members, including Secretary General Taku Yamasaki, to have discussions on the proposed amendments at a joint session of the LDP's foreign affairs, treasury and finance, and economy, trade and industry divisions. In the meeting at LDP headquarters on May 14,

Yamamoto stressed that the proposals are not meant to impose economic sanctions, but to create a mechanism to enable Japan to do so, the lawmakers said. Lawmakers were split on the proposals, with proponents saying Japan's imposition of economic sanctions would strike a sufficient blow against the DPRK, while others argued there is no knowing what the DPRK would do if the law is revised. Separately, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda told reporters the government welcomed the party's move to deliberate on the revisions. He added, however, that it is important to consider other nations' views. Later in the day, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi also said the government is not considering economic sanctions for the time being. He said it one thing for the party to discuss such measures and quite another whether such debates should lead to immediate actions by the government.

Kyodo ("PYONGYANG SPY SHIP DISPLAYED IN KAGOSHIMA," Kagoshima, 05/18/03) reported that a salvaged North Korean spy ship involved in a shootout with Japan Coast Guard patrol boats in 2001 went on display at a Kagoshima City dock. The ship, which sank after the exchange of gunfire and was raised in September, will be displayed for some 3,000 selected viewers, the coast guard said. It is also displaying a smaller boat, a water scooter and weapons that were recovered. The vessel is scheduled to go on public display at the Museum of Maritime Science in Tokyo for four months starting May 31, the coast guard said earlier.

2. US Bases in Japan

Mainichi Daily News ("112 SCHOOLS CANCEL OKINAWA TRIPS ON WAR FEARS," Naha, 05/15/03) reported that over 110 schools have cancelled their planned school excursions to Okinawa Prefecture since the US-led war against Iraq amid fear that US bases in the island prefecture could be targets of terrorist attacks, local government officials said. "We would like to promote public relations on opportunities of learning the importance of peace and other attractions of the prefecture in a bid to make up for the loss of visitors," an official of the Okinawa Prefectural Government's tourism and resort bureau said. If other entities are included, 189 group tours to Okinawa Prefecture for more than 22,000 people were cancelled over the two-month period.

Kyodo ("OKINAWA ASKS MARINES NOT TO REFUEL AT CIVILIAN AIRPORT," Naha, 05/17/03) reported that the Okinawa Prefectural Government asked the US Marine Corps to cancel its plan to use Shimojijima airport, a civilian airport in the town of Irabu. Ryoko Arakaki, head of the Okinawa governor's office, made the request during a telephone call to Col. Ron Yowell, prefectural officials said. The US Marines asked if six CH-46 helicopters and a refueling tanker plane could land at the airport to refuel on May 17 between 2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. The aircraft will be on their way back from a joint drill with Philippine forces, and will return to the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station in Ginowan, some 275 km northeast of Shimojijima Island. Yowell reportedly told Arakaki it would be difficult to cancel the plan but they will consider it until the last moment, the officials said.

The Japan Times (Eric Johnston, "OSAKA READY TO MAKE AEGIS CRUISER FEEL UNWELCOME," 05/17/03) reported that Osaka municipal officials said they will ask the US to withdraw its request to sail an Aegis cruiser into Osaka bay later this month, citing concerns over a possible terrorist attack. "The recent attack in Saudi Arabia plus the anger many Osaka residents feel toward the US for the war on Iraq is still fresh," an official at the city's port authority said on condition of anonymity. On May 12, US Consulate officials in Osaka unofficially informed the city of plans for the USS Cowpens, a 9,600-ton cruiser equipped with the Aegis air-defense system that is forward-deployed at the US Navy base at Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, to visit Osaka between May 31 and June 4. The purpose of the visit, according to the port authority, was to allow crew members to relax and the ship to refuel. US Consulate officials refused to answer questions about the planned visit, saying that it has not been US policy to discuss such visits since the terrorist attacks on New York and

Washington in September 2001. Under the Japan-US Security Treaty, the US has the right to use any facility in Japan it deems necessary for its operations, whether or not local governments agree to the use of those facilities. Visits by US naval ships to the Kansai region are particularly sensitive. In April 2002, the USS Blue Ridge, also forward-deployed to Japan, entered Osaka harbor despite an official request from the port authority not to do so. Since 1975, the neighboring Kobe port has required all foreign naval vessels entering the harbor to declare formally if they are carrying nuclear weapons, which the US refuses to do.

Kyodo ("U.S. MARINE ACCUSED OF ATTEMPTED RAPE IS GRANTED BAIL," Naha, 05/17/03) reported that the Naha District Court granted bail to a US Marine Corps major accused of attempting to rape a woman in Okinawa Prefecture last year. The court approved the fourth request for bail for Major Michael Brown, 40. In the request, Brown's lawyer, Toshimitsu Takaesu, argued that the woman involved has forgiven Brown for the incident. On Dec. 4, he voluntarily submitted himself for 4 1/2 hours of questioning by Okinawa Prefectural Police. He was indicted Dec. 19. Brown, based at Camp Courtney in Gushikawa, was released on bail of 10 million yen, Takaesu said. The prosecution accuses Brown of attempting to rape the woman in her car in Gushikawa. In his trial, which began in March, Brown admitted being with the woman early on Nov. 2, 2002, when the incident allegedly took place, but has denied the charges against him. His lawyer is demanding that the case be dismissed. In court, the woman earlier testified that she wanted to drop the charges but Japanese police and prosecutors pressured her into pursuing the case.

3. Japan-US Cooperation in Military Emergency

The Japan Times (Nao Shimoyachi, "BILL ON U.S. COOPERATION IN ATTACK NEEDED: ISHIBA," 05/17/03) reported that the Japanese government should quickly prepare legislation to enable smooth cooperation with US forces based in Japan in case of an enemy attack, Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba said. "It is important to give a legal guarantee allowing US forces to act in an emergency situation as soon as possible," Ishiba said. "We need to have a full discussion with the Foreign Ministry on the issue," as it has jurisdiction over the matter. Military emergency bills passed through the Lower House on May 15 do not include detailed provisions for cooperation with US forces in case of a military emergency in Japan. One of the bills stipulates that a legal framework for such cooperation should be completed "as soon as possible." Ensuring cooperation with the US forces during an attack on Japan "will enhance the effectiveness of the Japan-US Security Treaty," Ishiba said.

4. Japan's Role in Iraq Reconstruction

The Japan Times ("NGOS AIDING IRAQ TO GET 700 MILLION YEN," 05/17/03) reported that the Japanese government said it will offer 700 million yen in aid to Japan Platform, a network of non-governmental organizations providing humanitarian support to Iraq and neighboring nations. Japan Platform medical personnel are treating refugees mainly in northern Iraq and Jordan. Another 18 million yen will be provided to the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, an NGO in Jordan, and 10 million yen to CARE International, an international NGO, to help them transport medicine and medical equipment to Iraq.

5. Japan Domestic Politics

The Japan Times (Junko Takahashi, "DIET SESSION WILL NOT BE EXTENDED: KOIZUMI," 05/17/03) reported that the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said on May 16 that he is not

considering extending the current Diet session beyond its 150-day run and told his Cabinet to try to have all government-proposed bills approved by the June 18 close. Koizumi's comments, during an informal meeting with his ministers, came one day after war-contingency bills, one of two key items on the legislative agenda for the current session, cleared the House of Representatives. Koizumi's remark, however, was not taken at face value within the ruling coalition. "We're still sparring on the issue," a senior coalition source said, adding that whether the session will need to be extended will not be decided until after Koizumi returns from his trip to the US and the Middle East on May 26. Some in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are still seeking an extension to secure enough time to deliberate other key issues, including a law enabling the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops to Iraq to assist in postwar reconstruction and extending the mandate of the antiterrorism law beyond its expiration in November. Taku Yamasaki, LDP secretary general and Koizumi's political ally, favors extending the session, because that would give Koizumi the upper hand over opponents within the LDP who are calling for a Cabinet reshuffle.

6. Japan's Chemical Weapon in WWII

The Japan Times ("CHINESE HURT BY JAPAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS LOSE CASE," 05/16/03) reported that the Tokyo District Court on May 15 rejected compensation claims for health damage caused by chemical weapons the Imperial Japanese Army left behind in China after World War II. Five Chinese plaintiffs from Heilongjiang Province filed the suit in 1997 seeking a total of 80 million yen from the Japanese government for health problems they suffered after being exposed to poison gas agents they claimed were left behind by the Japanese military. The exposure occurred over a 37-year span, between 1950 and 1987, the lawsuit said. The ruling was the first to determine the extent of responsibility of the government for at least 700,000 bombs armed with chemical agents -- mainly mustard gas and lewisite, an arsenic-based fluid that causes blisters -- that the defeated Imperial army left behind in its rush to get out of China. Presiding Judge Takashi Saito acknowledged that the plaintiffs suffered from exposure to the chemical weapons produced and left behind by Japan. However, Saito said it was difficult for the government to investigate or retrieve the weapons in time to prevent the health damage suffered by the plaintiffs, given that Japan did not sign a peace treaty with the PRC until 1978 and the Chinese government called for disposal of the weapons only in 1990. Japan has denied any responsibility, claiming it had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the weapons and, anyway, was unable to conduct a search because the sites were outside of Japan's jurisdiction. After reading his ruling, Judge Saito added that despite his legal decision to clear the government of any responsibility to pay damages, "I believe its political and moral responsibility is a different matter." The Chinese plaintiffs and their lawyers expressed anger over the ruling. A Chinese lawyer who supported the plaintiffs said several hundred thousand Chinese are closely watching the court decision, adding that he will launch an investigation into thousands of others who suffered similar health damage. The plaintiffs will appeal the ruling. Their lawyers urged the government to make a "political decision" to help the victims of poison gas left behind by the military.

7. Nuclear Experts on Nuke-Free Korean Peninsula

The Japan Times (Brad Glosserman, "A REGIME TO QUELL NUCLEAR FEAR," Las Vegas, 05/18/03) reported that "a Korean Peninsula Nuclear Verification Regime" was proposed at a meeting of nuclear-energy experts from the Asia Pacific region. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), a network of think tanks that Pacific Forum CSIS of Honolulu helped to found a decade ago. The Nuclear Energy Experts Group (NEEG) focuses on questions and problems surrounding the nuclear-energy industry in the Asia Pacific. NEEG has visited facilities across the region. Chinese scientists, for example, were extremely

impressed with the candor and information they received two years ago during a visit to the Rokkasho reprocessing plant in Japan. The meeting this time was held in Las Vegas -- close to the Yucca Mountain high-level waste repository, where the US government plans to store spent nuclear fuel and other forms of highly radioactive waste. The verification proposal, by John Olsen, a scientist at the Cooperative Monitoring Center of Sandia National Laboratories, is aimed at bringing all concerned countries into the effort to ensure that the Korean Peninsula remains denuclearized. Olsen anticipates the establishment of a multilateral institution to verify denuclearization of the Peninsula, nonweaponization of nuclear materials and the implementation of safeguards (with the International Atomic Energy Agency). Moreover, any grand bargain with the DPRK will have to address economic issues and provide energy supplies to the country, and the bulk of that aid will come from its neighbors. Finally, a key component of any deal will be security guarantees for the DPRK. Bringing other countries into that process should allay North Korean fears and make those guarantees more credible in the long run. The regime could become the core of an institution that deals with the region's growing problem of nuclear waste. It is estimated that 29,370 tons of spent fuel accumulated in Asia from 1960-2000; another 21,240 tons are expected in this decade. (This is just spent fuel; there are other forms of waste, too.)

8. Japan-South Pacific Relations

Associated Press ("PACIFIC LEADERS WRAP UP SUMMIT," Naha, 05/18/03) reported that pacific island nations seeking to balance development and security agreed at a summit in Okinawa on May 17 to a joint plan that focuses on eliminating illegal guns, money and drugs and taking better care of the environment. Leaders and ministers from Japan and the 16-member Pacific Islands Forum wrapped up the second day of the two-day summit. The Pacific Island bloc comprises Australia, New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. This year, regional security dominated the proceedings. Officials from Australian and New Zealand have voiced concerns that trouble spots in the region are vulnerable to international terrorism following the bombings on the Indonesian island of Bali that killed 202 people in October. Many of the island nations are impoverished and have suffered violent uprisings in recent years. Some are heavily dependent on income from the tax-haven business and have been criticized for lax laws, enforcement and surveillance. Japan, Australia and New Zealand will help smaller nations disarm and provide job training for militants who have been blamed for much of the unrest on the islands, the statement said. The countries also agreed to halt money laundering and trafficking in people and illegal drugs, promote trade, address toxic and other waste problems and protect fragile ecosystems, such as coral reefs. This year, there were no aid pledges, as there had been in the previous gathering, but Fijian Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase said Tokyo was committed to providing more help. Meanwhile, Qarase expressed concern that a global shift toward freer trade in the World Trade Organization would leave small, poorer nations unable to compete. He also criticized Japan for transporting nuclear waste through waters near the islands, although he guardedly approved of a $10 million cleanup fund set up by the Japanese government.

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