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CONTENTS

I. United States

1. ROK on DPRK-US Relations
2. PRC-Russia Oil Export
3. Russia-US on Nuclear Iran
4. PRC Human Rights
5. Russia SARS Case
6. PRC SARS Spitting Policy
7. Japan Second Earthquake
8. Japan Capital City Relocation Project

II. Republic of Korea 1. Research on DPRK Newspaper Rodong Sinmun
2. Reduction of Required Term in Army in DPRK
3. ROK's Regret on 'Disaster' Statement of DPRK
4. US Enhancing Defense in ROK
5. 'Tough Measure' is Sanction to DPRK
6. Commencement of Fertilizer Supply
7. DPRK Heroin Smuggling

III. Japan 1. Japan Military Emergency Legislation
2. Japan's Role in Iraq Reconstruction
3. US Bases in Japan
4. US Ambassador on Japanese Economy
5. Defense Agency's Misuse of Personal Data
6. Japan Domestic Politics
7. Japan-RF Relations

I. United States

1. ROK on DPRK-US Relations

Reuters (Paul Eckert, "SOUTH KOREA ENVOY SEES US, NORTH IN BROAD TALKS," Seoul, 05/29/03) reported that the US appears ready to talk with the DPRK about their nuclear crisis, but the setting should be multilateral -- not the one-to-one talks the DPRK demands, Seoul's envoy to Washington said on Wednesday. Ambassador Han Sung-joo, who served as Seoul's foreign minister during a first nuclear face-off a decade ago, also said that the ROK's new government would be less indulgent toward the DPRK and anti-US activists than its predecessor.

"North Korea is in a position where it has to talk with the US and the others, and I don't think the US is in any mood to have bilateral talks with North Korea," Han told Reuters. "I think in the US right now the direction is toward having another meeting with North Korea, hopefully with a larger number of participants, but if necessary, three or four," he said. In Washington on Tuesday, Secretary of State Colin Powell rebuffed a DPRK proposal to hold multilateral talks apparently including the ROK and Japan after one-to-one talks with the US. Han, one of his country's leading foreign policy scholars, said the US did not want to see a repeat of its earlier dealings with the DPRK. The DPRK later recanted or revised what US officials said had been admissions it had secret nuclear programs.

2. PRC-Russia Oil Export

CNN News (Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "CHINA, RUSSIA ANCHOR TRADE TIES," Hong Kong, 05/29/03) reported that Presidents Hu Jintao and Vladimir Putin's much-awaited agreement to export Siberian oil to the PRC will help anchor ties with Russia on solid commercial benefits. In a joint statement issued after their summit at the Kremlin, the two leaders also agreed to give a big push to trade and other economic cooperation. International affairs experts in the PRC think closer ties in trade and energy will help prevent the Sino-Russian "strategic partnership of cooperation" from becoming too vague. The statement, carried in the official PRC media on Tuesday, cited the need to forge a "fair and democratic world order" against the backdrop of a rise in "power politics and unilateralism." PRC Academy of Social Sciences expert on Russia Zheng Yu pointed out the construction of a pipeline to pump Siberian oil to the northeast PRC oilfield of Daqing was highly significant. Zheng said at the initial stages, 20 million tonnes of crude could be shipped annually, and the capacity could be increased to 30 million tonnes at a later stage. Pushing up volume Russian businessmen and engineers will also be involved in the mammoth project to transport gas from western provinces to the industrialized coastal region. PRC and Russian experts agree that the current level of bilateral trade -- just short of US$12 billion last year -- is not commensurate with the partnership relationship between the two neighbors. Both governments have indicated a wish to push up the trade volume to the region of US$20 billion in 2003. According to Beijing-based international affairs expert Wang Yizhou, the PRC's economic ties with Russia are lagging between those with the US and Japan by large margins. Professor Wang said boosting Sino-Russian trade would prevent the Sino-Russian strategic partnership from becoming "insubstantial and hollow."

3. Russia-US on Nuclear Iran

Los Angeles Times (Paul Richter and Greg Miller, "RUSSIA STEPS UP PRESSURE ON IRAN," Washington, 05/29/03) reported the US and Russia increased pressure on Iran on Tuesday, with Moscow asking Tehran to confirm that it is not secretly developing a nuclear bomb and the White House demanding that the regime do more to halt the activities of Al Qaeda terrorists within its borders. In a strong signal of alarm about Iran's alleged bomb-building efforts, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov said that his government is concerned about "serious unresolved questions in connection with Iran's nuclear research." He spoke after meeting in the Russian capital with Iranian Ambassador Gholamreza Shafei. Russian officials said they also pressed the Iranians to

sign an agreement with the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, that would put the Tehran regime under closer international scrutiny. President Bush is scheduled to fly to St. Petersburg this weekend for talks with Russian President Vladimir V. Putin on several issues. The Russian actions were viewed in Washington as a welcome boost to US efforts to curb Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Tensions between the US and Iran have been exacerbated by American allegations that Iran may be harboring terrorists responsible for the May 12 suicide bombings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, that killed 34 people. Senior US officials have been debating whether to toughen US policy toward Iran.

4. PRC Human Rights

BBC News (Francis Markus, "CHINESE ANGER AT STUDENT'S DEATH," Shanghai, 05/29/03) reported that several prominent academics in the PRC have written to the standing committee of the country's formal parliament, the National People's Congress, calling for an investigation into the case of a young man apparently beaten to death in a holding center for illegal migrants. Although SARS has dominated the headlines in the PRC for weeks, the story of Sun Zhigang has still managed to find a space in the newspapers. Sun Zhigang's fate has raised profound issues ranging from the abuse of power, to the way the PRC's prosperous cities treat those who arrive looking for a better life. He was a young man from central PRC who, like so many others, went down to the booming southern province of Guangdong to work. But his untimely death has stirred strong feelings. Sun Zhigang, who was a university graduate, was detained by the authorities in a holding centre for illegal migrants, even though he was not an illegal migrant and had a job - he just did not have the right papers on him. A friend brought along the papers, but he continued to be held until he was apparently beaten to death in mysterious circumstances. Stirred up by the case, several academics have written to the National People's Congress. In the latest appeal, five prominent legal scholars called for an investigation into the case. Others have argued that the holding system itself may be unconstitutional

5. Russia SARS Case

Reuters (Jeremy Page, "RUSSIA REPORTS FIRST SARS CASE WITH HU IN TOWN," Moscow, 05/29/03) reported that Russia confirmed its first case of SARS on the border with the PRC on Wednesday in a major embarrassment for visiting PRCPresident Hu Jintao as he tried to convince the world his country can contain the disease. Just hours earlier, Hu told students in Moscow that the PRC had taken strict measures to stop the spread of the virus and could maintain rapid economic growth despite warnings that SARS could knock up to two percentage points off GDP growth. Hu is in Russia on the first leg of a four-nation tour designed to boost his international profile and repair the damage done by an official cover-up of the SARS outbreak, which started in the southern province of Guangdong. On his first trip overseas since becoming president in March, he will rub shoulders with world leaders, including US President George W. Bush, at celebrations this weekend marking the 300th anniversary of St Petersburg, Russia's second city. But in a blow to Hu's public relations campaign, Russia announced its first case of SARS in a man living in Blagoveshchensk on the Amur river, which forms the frontier with China. He had been under observation for weeks. "On the basis of medical analysis, this morning we received information confirming the first SARS case on Russian territory," a spokeswoman for Russia's top epidemiologist, Gennady Onishchenko, said by telephone. Russia had closed checkpoints on parts of the border with the PRC and Mongolia until June 4, Itar-Tass news agency said. "The diagnosis is indisputable, it is SARS," Interfax news agency quoted Onishchenko as saying. "This is our final answer."

6. PRC SARS Spitting Policy

The New York Times (Elizabeth Rosenthal, "SARS MAKES BEIJING COMBAT AN OLD BUT UNSANITARY HABIT," Beijing, 05/29/03) reported that as Liu sped along the path at Bei Hai Park here, the rumbling in his throat became louder and more intense. A restaurant cleaner, Liu had a dollop of phlegm to dispose of, and was rushing around the lake to go out the park's west gate. "No one would dare spit in here these days. You'd get fined a lot and no one's paying wages," explained Liu, who declined to give his full name but said he had recently been laid off because SARS had decimated his restaurant's business. "In the past no one cared. You spat where you liked. But with SARS everyone's paying a lot of attention." In its battle against severe acute respiratory syndrome, the PRC is tackling a unique challenge. Spitting is a longstanding PRC tradition, and spitting potentially spreads SARS. As a result, to supplement temperature checks and hand-washing posters, the PRC government has contributed a new weapon to the world's war against SARS: little white plastic spit bags that are handed out in parks and malls, the hardware for a wide-scale antispitting campaign. Last week on Wanfujing, a shopping street, volunteers dressed as Lei Feng, the legendary Chinese soldier and do-gooder, pressed bags into the palms of passers-by. At the gate of Bei Hai Park last weekend, pretty girls wearing sashes promoting the 2008 Olympics staffed a table where bags were dispensed. The bags read: "Spitting on the ground is dangerous to your health, and spit contains infectious diseases. But with one small bag in your hands, your health will always be invincible." This week the Communist Party Central Committee's Spiritual Civilization Office gave its imprimatur to the war against spit, issuing a "Directive on Launching Activities to Transform Vile Habits." But old habits die hard, and in the PRC there is hardly a more ingrained habit than this one. In recent years the government has begun several campaigns to discourage the habit but until now has met with only limited success.

7. Japan Second Earthquake

Agence France-Presse ("ANOTHER QUAKE SHAKES NORTHERN JAPAN," Tokyo, 05/29/03) reported that an earthquake measuring 4.4 on the Richter scale shook northern Japan as the region experienced hundreds of aftershocks following a major quake two days earlier, the Meteorological Agency said. There were no immediate reports of damage or injury due to the latest quake. The epicenter of the most recent quake, which struck at 6:24 am Wednesday (2124 GMT Tuesday), was located off the coast Miyagi prefecture, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) northeast of Tokyo. The quake was about 70 kilometers deep, the same as a 7.0 Magnitude quake felt Monday evening, the agency said. As many as 274 aftershocks had occurred by 9:00 am (0000 GMT) Wednesday, the agency said. Of those, 124 were strong enough to be felt by humans, the agency said.

8. Japan Capital City Relocation Project

The Japan Times ("DIET PANEL GIVES UP EFFORTS TO FIND SITE FOR NEW CAPITAL CITY," 05/29/03) reported that a Japanese House of Representatives panel considering whether to relocate the core functions of the central government outside of Tokyo on Wednesday gave up trying to select a candidate site before the current Diet session adjourns next month. Although the panel has stated that efforts to resolve the matter should continue, Wednesday's decision is widely perceived as the effective shelving of the 12-year-old project. Plans to move the capital's core functions out of Tokyo were inspired by the late 1980s asset-inflated bubble, which led to skyrocketing land prices in the capital. Momentum for the grand project has subsided in recent years, however, as the nation's economic problems have mounted. In a report submitted to Lower House Speaker Tamisuke Watanuki, the committee proposed creating a joint consultative panel with the House of Councilors to discuss a watered-down idea to relocate the branches to a number of cities. As the Diet adjourns

in three weeks, however, it appears almost certain that the relocation issue will be carried over to the next regular session. Many in the ruling coalition have said they believe it will be difficult even to set up the proposed joint consultative panel before the current session ends on June 18. The issue of relocating the capital has been on the political agenda since 1990, when land prices were sky-high due to Japan's real estate bubble. In 1999, an advisory body to the prime minister's advisory panel recommended three candidate sites -- Tochigi-Fukushima, Gifu-Aichi and Mie-Central Kinki -- where the legislative, administrative and judicial branches traditionally centered in Tokyo could be relocated. The Lower House capital relocation panel said it favors the idea of relocation, but the report says the committee has been unable to agree on a single candidate site.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Research on DPRK Newspaper Rodong Sinmun

Joongang Ilbo (Lee Young-jong, "FROM NORTH NEWSPAPER, A HISTORY BARED," Seoul, 05/28/03) reported that "The Rodong Sinmun is the window to North Korea. It holds the past, present and future of the regime," said Professor Kang Sung-yoon of the Institute for North Korean Studies at Dongguk University Tuesday. Mr. Kang is leading a 30-strong group of academics that has undertaken a two-year project to comprehensively study 54 years' worth of the daily newspaper of the North Korean Workers' Party, spanning 1949 through 2005. Professor Koh Yu-hwan of DPRK is also on the team. The Rodong Sinmun was founded on Jan. 1, 1945. The team held the interim seminar at Dongguk University Tuesday, in which six papers that studied the November 1, 1945 edition to editions from April 1950 were made public. New findings concerning DPRK were disclosed; for example, contrary to speculation that idolization of the late leader Kim Il-sung began in the 1950s, the Rodong Sinmun revealed that DPRK was moving to build a Kim Il-sung statue in 1949. The research project is not without hurdles, the foremost of which is obtaining back issues of the Rodong Sinmun. The researchers had to travel to the Beijing Library, where they photocopied 100 daily editions from 1949 that were missing from the archives of the South Korean Ministry of Unification. Next, the team will compare what they have with microfilm of the newspaper at the Institute of Developing Economies in Tokyo, Japan.

2. Reduction of Required Term in Army in DPRK

Joongang Ilbo (Lee Young-jong, "NORTH REDUCES REQUIRED TERM IN ARMY FROM 13 YEARS TO 10," Seoul, 05/28/03) reported that DPRK has cut the terms of military service from 13 years to 10 years for men and from 10 years to seven years for women. It is believed to be the first time the mandatory service period has been cut. The change was enacted by the Supreme People's Assembly on March 26; the information was acquired by the ROK government recently. Military service in DPRK was set in 1958 as 42 months for the army and 48 months for the air force. But the actual terms of service were known to range from five to eight years. The period was extended in 1993 by former leader Kim Il Sung to 10 years. By an amendment in 1996, the period was again lengthened to 13 years for men. The amendment required men to serve until they reach 30 years of age; the age for women was set at 26 years. North Koreans begin military service when they graduate from high school. The March amendment also introduced formal conscription, scrapping what had officially been a voluntary enlistment system. A senior analyst with the Korea Institute for National Unification, Jeung Young-tai, said shortening the period of service would result in a reduction of about 200,000 from the North Korean armed forces. The South Korean Defense Ministry estimates those forces to be about 1.17 million.

3. ROK's Regret on 'Disaster' Statement of DPRK

Chosun Ilbo (Gwon Gyeong-bok, "SEOUL RESPONDS TO 'DISASTER' THREATS," Seoul, 05/28/03) reported that ROK government expressed official regret Tuesday that DPRK had repeated its "disaster" threats. DPRK had said during the fifth inter-Korea economic talks held in Pyongyang last week that if ROK pushed forward with the "further steps" discussed at the ROK-US summit, it would face "unspeakable disaster." Although DPRK later tried to explain that the statement did not constitute a threat, it continued with similar messages through various channels. An official at the Ministry of Unification said that ROK regretted DPRK's continued threats despite DPRK's explanation that the statement was made to prevent unfortunate situations from befalling both DPRK and ROK. DPRK must realize that provocative words and actions are liable to lead to misunderstandings, do not help inter-Korea development and run counter to the spirit of the Joint Declaration, he said.

4. US Enhancing Defense in ROK

Chosun Ilbo (Yoo Yong-won, "US BOLSTERING DEFENSE ON PENINSULA," Seoul, 05/28/03) reported that US has notified ROK's defense minister about a plan to send equipment but not troops for one heavy brigade to a local port, where it would be stored on three or four transport vessels, an informed source said this week. The move is seen by some analysts as part of plan by Washington to safeguard against an emergency situation should the talks with DPRK to settle the nuclear crisis break down. The equipment would comprise 130 tanks and infantry fighting vehicles and 110 other vehicles, along with supplies and ammunition. The vessels would be in the 40,000-60,000 ton class. ROK government will take an earnest approach about whether to accept this proposal, as well as determining details like place and time, while bearing in mind the sensitivity of the issue with relation to DPRK, the source said. US also decided to bolster its defenses here by deploying an additional 16 PAC-3 Patriot missiles in addition to the 48 Patriots already on the peninsula. The move would more effectively counter DPRK's ballistic missiles. USFK is also planning to build an additional landing strip at Osan air base to enable quicker movement of forces and equipment if an emergency were to occur. Also, it wants to upgrade the forward-deployed 2nd Infantry Division to SBCT (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) status, to make its forces lighter and more mobile. US is also studying plans to send an SBCT unit to ROK this summer for a military exercise. A USFK official said the transformation to SBCT was in line with America's long-term plans to reorganize and reduce its troop count here while strengthening its fighting power and deterrence effect at the same time. He denied that the plans were related to the nuclear issue with DPRK. But some experts said the moves seemed to be designed to prepare for a possible worsening of the crisis.

5. 'Tough Measure' is Sanction to DPRK

Chosun Ilbo (Kwon Kyung-bok, "'TOUGHER MEASURES' MEANS SANCTIONS," Seoul, 05/28/03) reported that the Japanese government has clarified that the "tougher measures" that were articulated at the US-Japan summit and would be taken if DPRK heightens the nuclear threat include economic sanctions. ROK government official quoted Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi as telling South Korean Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan by phone this week that it was decided during the US-Japan summit that if DPRK increases its nuclear threats, harsher measures including economic sanctions would be taken. US President George W. Bush and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had warned that tougher measures would be taken if DPRK acts to heighten the nuclear crisis, including reprocessing spent fuel rods. Still, no specific plans were revealed.

6. Commencement of Fertilizer Supply

Chosun Ilbo (Kwon Kyung-bok, "FIRST BOATLOAD OF FERTILIZER READIED," Seoul, 05/28/03) reported that ROK government will begin sending the 200,000 tons of fertilizer it promised DPRK by shipping 15,000 tons on Thursday from Yeosu port in ROK Jeolla province to DPRK's Nampo port. A total of 38,300 tons will be sent by June 2. ROK Red Cross sent a letter Tuesday to the chairman of the DPRK Red Cross, Jang Jae Eon, informing him of the schedules for the fertilizer shipments, which will go in five stages. DPRK asked for fertilizer during the 10th minister-level talks in Pyongyang, held April 27-30. ROK agreed to send the fertilizer as humanitarian support.

7. DPRK Heroin Smuggling

Chosun Ilbo (Burke Josslin, "MORE HEROIN FROM PONG SU FOUND," Seoul, 05/28/03) reported that Australian police have found another 75 kilograms of heroin that were smuggled into the country by the North Korean ship seized in a raid last month, the BBC reported this week. The 75 kilos of heroin were found buried in bushes on the southeast coast of Australia, the report quoted a police spokesman as saying. It is the same area in which 50 kilograms of heroin were seized from a vehicle in April, just before the ship, the Pong Su, was apprehended. The later batch was said to be identical in form and packaging to the earlier one.

III. Japan

1. Japan Military Emergency Legislation

The Japan Times ("UPPER HOUSE TAKES ON WAR CONTINGENCY BILLS," 05/20/03) reported that the House of Councilors began debate on a set of war contingency bills. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi appeared before a plenary session of the Upper House to explain the amended bills, containing a new definition of situations in which Japan would be considered under armed attack. He said the bills "will not change the nation's exclusively self-defensive security policy, and we will continue efforts to generate understanding abroad about the significance and the roles" of the bills. The coalition divided possible military strikes into two categories -- "military attack situations" and "predictable military attack situations." The first is defined as situations in which Japan faces "actual military strikes or apparent dangers," which would allow mobilization of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), and the second is described as situations in which military strikes can be expected, which would allow the SDF to go on standby.

Kyodo ("JAPAN MAY ATTACK FOREIGN BASES IF AGGRESSION CLEAR: KOIZUMI," Tokyo, 05/20/03) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi indicated Japan could possibly attack foreign missile bases if the Japanese government determines that another country intends to attack Japan from them and is indeed preparing to do so. "If we determine that a foreign country has a clear intention to invade Japan...we could not just let the Japanese people be harmed by doing nothing," Koizumi told a parliamentary debate. The premier made the remarks at a special committee of the House of Councillors in which lawmakers are discussing a controversial set of war contingency bills. Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba made similar remarks in a Diet session in January.

2. Japan's Role in Iraq Reconstruction

Kyodo ("JAPAN TO GIVE ADDITIONAL $50 MIL. AID FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION," Tokyo,

05/21/03) reported that Japan will present a new aid package to Iraq worth a total of about $50 million as part of efforts to help rebuild the war-ravaged country, and is also urging that an international conference to discuss aid for Iraq take place as soon as possible, Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi said. In announcing the new measures on Iraq's humanitarian and reconstruction concerns, Kawaguchi said the monetary assistance will be allotted through international and non-governmental organizations for various services including hospital, power rehabilitation and education. According to the new package, Japan will allot about $6 million through the UN Development Program to create 35,000 jobs in Iraq, including debris clearance. Some $10 million will be given to the UN Children's Fund to assist in rebuilding schools and providing school supplies, which is expected to benefit about 1 million children in three cities and surrounding areas. A further $30 million will be disbursed for four projects -- rehabilitation of national power distribution, emergency aid for hospital rehabilitation and equipment, emergency water and sanitation rehabilitation, and reconstruction of public facilities. Japan is also preparing to dispatch a mission comprising officials from both the private and public sectors to the Middle East country. Kawaguchi told reporters that Japan intends to move on to full-fledged reconstruction aid to Iraq in the future, when the security situation improves, a transitional government capable of accepting aid is set up, and Iraq's debt issue is resolved.

3. US Bases in Japan

The Asahi Shimbun ("GINOWAN POLL FUELS ANTI-BASE HOPES," Ginowan, 05/20/03) reported that Yoichi Iha, an independent supported by opposition parties, was elected mayor of Ginowan, a city that often comes under national attention because it hosts the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. The victory of the 51-year-old reformist rekindled hopes among residents harboring anti-base sentiments. Japan and the US agreed in 1996 on the return of the airfield in Ginowan to Japan within seven years -- a decision prompted by anti-base uproar over the 1995 rape of an Okinawan girl by US servicemen. The central and prefectural governments this year are to decide where to relocate the air station. Mayor Iha, however, says the US should not only return the land in Ginowan, but should also give up plans to relocate the facility's functions. Iha has also criticized Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine for pushing plans to relocate the air station to Nago in northern Okinawa. "The physical distance (between the mayor and the assembly members) is small and I feel at home," Iha said May 14, after his first policy speech in the city assembly. "But there is another kind of distance," he said, referring to the many assembly members from the conservative bloc.

4. US Ambassador on Japanese Economy

The Asahi Shimbun ("POINT OF VIEW/ HOWARD H. BAKER, JR.: THE PATH TO PROSPERITY FOR THE U.S. AND JAPAN," 05/19/03) reported US ambassador to Japan Howard H. Baser's comment on Japanese economy. He said, "Our alliance has proved strong in the face of challenges from Iraq and global terrorists. I believe we can also take satisfaction from our efforts on the economic front -- we have come a long way. No one should doubt that a robust Japanese economy is a critical priority for the United States. [...] Just as the experience in the United States has shown, if special interests take control of financial and regulatory reform, the market will not function. The success of the Industrial Revitalization Corporation of Japan (IRCJ) and important structural reforms will necessitate confronting Japan's vested interests. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has pledged to pursue 'reform without sanctuary.' He has also pledged to keep the IRCJ free from political influence. Japan's partners, the markets and the people of Japan will be watching and willing the prime minister to stand firm." Baker then stated at the end of his article, "As the two leaders of the world's largest economies meet again, as partners and as friends, they will discuss our common goals of peace and prosperity, including both countries' global responsibilities and roles as economic engines

of growth. The leaders' meeting is a reminder that our countries, like our leaders, are good friends and strong partners."

5. Defense Agency's Misuse of Personal Data

The Japan Times ("557 CITIES GAVE SDF PRIVATE TEEN INFO," 05/20/03) reported that more than 550 municipalities across Japan have provided the Defense Agency with registered personal data on teenagers that should not have been divulged, Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba said on May 19 at the House of Councilors special committee on privacy protection. He said that 557 cities, towns and villages supplied data at the request of the agency to assist the Self-Defense Forces' (SDF) recruitment activities. The SDF received information from those municipalities, including the occupations of teenagers' parents, which does not appear in registration cards that anyone can access under the Basic Resident Register Law, Ishiba said. Such cards only contain residents' names, addresses, dates of birth, and gender. According to the report, 431 municipalities provided information on the heads of families with children of recruiting age, mostly between 15 and 18. Eighty-eight municipalities provided information on the parents and 162 municipalities provided information on their membership in residents' associations. Norihiko Akagi, deputy chief of the Defense Agency, said obtaining information about the parents of teenagers was necessary to determine what time SDF officials should visit their homes for recruitment efforts. Defense Agency officials have said this method of gathering data has been practiced since the mid-1960s, and that more than one-third of municipalities have agreed to provide data to the agency.

6. Japan Domestic Politics

Mainichi Daily News ("KOIZUMI UNDER PRESSURE TO RESHUFFLE CABINET AMID 'ECONOMIC EMERGENCY'," 05/20/03) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is under pressure to make changes in his economic policies and reshuffle the Cabinet to deal with what anti-Koizumi forces call an "economic emergency" after his regime decided to inject pubic funds into troubled Resona Holdings. If Resona's receipt of taxpayers' funds for survival triggers more bank trouble involving the "Big Four," such as Mizuho Financial Group, Koizumi will face an uphill battle to gain re-election as president of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) later this year. Anti-Koizumi forces within the LDP, such as the largest faction led by former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, are demanding the prime minister change his reform-oriented economic policies in the wake of the Resona trouble. Shizuka Kamei, former LDP policy council chief, said that the economic reform policies of Koizumi failed when the government decided to inject funds into Resona on May 17. Koizumi's right-hand man in his economic policies is Financial and Economic Minister Heizo Takenaka, who has tried to prompt banks to write off bad loans under his "hard-landing" regulation measures as part of economic structural reforms. Former LDP Secretary General Hiromu Nonaka demanded on May 17 that Takenaka be axed apparently because he believes Takenaka's hard-line approach was behind the government's decision to put Resona under state control. Another bigwig in the LDP-led coalition, Komeito Secretary General Tetsuzo Fuyushiba, suggested on May 17 that he would ask Koizumi to remove Takenaka by reshuffling his Cabinet. But Koizumi is trying to stick to his guns by defending Takenaka because removal of the financial tsar means Koizumi admits the failure of his economic and financial policies.

7. Japan-RF Relations

Kyodo ("KOIZUMI SET TO INVITE PUTIN TO JAPAN IN OCTOBER," Moscow, 05/20/03) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who is scheduled to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in

St. Petersburg later this month, is expected to ask him to visit Japan in October, informed sources said. Japan is eyeing an unofficial visit by Putin, either before or after he attends an Asia-Pacific forum summit scheduled to take place in Bangkok in October, according to the sources. It is unclear whether Putin will accept the invitation. Officials in Moscow claim it will not be easy for Putin to schedule a visit to Japan, given that there is an election in December for the State Duma, the lower chamber of the Federal Assembly, along with a presidential election in March.

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of other NAPSNet resources.
We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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