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I. United States

1. US Congress DPRK Visit

The Associated Press (Ken Guggenheim, "CONGRESSMEN LEAVE FOR NORTH KOREA VISIT," Washington, 05/29/03) reported that six US lawmakers hope to ease tensions with the DPRK in the first visit by US officials since a crisis began last fall over the country's secret nuclear program. They will tell DPRK officials that economic aid and trade lie ahead if Pyongyang abandons its nuclear program and improves relations with the US, said the delegation leader, Rep. Curt Weldon, R-Pa. "We are on a fact-finding mission to open doors for dialogue," Weldon said at Andrews Air Force base shortly before leaving Wednesday. Weldon stressed that the lawmakers weren't traveling as Bush administration envoys and wouldn't negotiate. He said the administration neither encouraged nor tried to prevent the trip. On Tuesday, the lawmakers discussed the DPRK with Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly. "This is not an attempt to undermine or circumvent the president's message that the nuclear crisis can be resolved only through a multilateral effort," Weldon said earlier in an interview. North Korea wants one-on-one talks with the US. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the lawmakers were not carrying a message from the administration. "We, of course, look forward to hearing from them on their return," he said. The lawmakers expected to arrive in Pyongyang on Friday and leave Sunday for the ROK. They expect to meet with the DPRK's No. 2 leader, Kim Yong Nam, but were told they would not meet with top leader Kim Jong Il. Other members of the delegation are Reps. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., Jeff Miller, R-Fla. and Solomon Ortiz, D-Texas.

2. US Asia Troop Realignment

The LA Times (Esther Schrader, "US TO REALIGN TROOPS IN ASIA," Washington, 05/29/03) reported that the US Pentagon is shifting to smaller, more mobile forces to confront new challenges. Among the changes, it may seek to base ships off Vietnam. The Pentagon is planning a broad realignment of troops in Asia that may include moving Marines out of Japan and establishing a network of small bases in countries such as Australia, Singapore and Malaysia where the US has never had a permanent military presence, senior administration officials say. The moves in Asia, designed to include the transfer of troops away from the demilitarized zone in the ROK, represent the third phase of a sweeping plan by the Pentagon to reposition US forces around the world to be closer to areas it considers unstable while cutting the US presence in Cold War-era strongholds such as Germany. The shift is also likely to lower the US military's profile in areas where its presence has provoked resentment and become a troublesome political problem, such as Seoul and the Japanese island of Okinawa. The change is already underway in the Middle East, where US forces have largely pulled out of bases in Saudi Arabia and Turkey over the last month, and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where the Pentagon has moved rapidly to establish bases in territories formerly controlled by the Soviet Union. "Everything is going to move everywhere," said Douglas J. Feith, undersecretary of defense for policy. "There is not going to be a place in the world where it's going to be the same as it used to be We're going to rationalize our posture everywhere - in Korea, in Japan, everywhere."

3. PRC Russia UN Reforms Joint Statement

Reuters (Andrei Shukshin, "RUSSIA, CHINA CALL FOR REFORMS AT UNITED NATIONS," Moscow, 05/29/03) reported that Russia and the PRC called on Thursday for reform of the United Nations to uphold its pivotal role in world affairs. Both countries are permanent veto-wielding members of the U.N. Security Council, the organization's decision-making body circumvented by the US decision to go to war in Iraq without explicit U.N. backing. Moscow and Beijing restated their commitment to the world body at a meeting of presidents from the six nations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which also includes four ex-Soviet states in Central Asia. "The United Nations can and should be reformed in line with the rapidly changing situation in the world, priority being given to

the need to solve in an effective way the problems of world politics and security," a post-summit declaration said. No specifics were given in the statement. But heads of state, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao, stressed they wanted to see the U.N. Security Council preserve its key position. "It is fundamental to recognize the important role of the United Nations and the U.N. Security Council in solving major international problems," the document said.

4. DPRK Humanitarian Aid Myths

The Japan Times ("PYONGYANG NOT MISUSING FOOD AID: EXPERT," 05/29/03) reported that the DPRK does not have a military as powerful as is often reported by international media, and there is no evidence that humanitarian aid has been diverted to the military and the country's elite, a British expert on DPRK affairs said Thursday. Hazel Smith conducted aid operations for 18 months in the DPRK between 1998 and 2001, during some of the worst years of famine there. She said the reports of 3 million people dying from starvation and 300,000 DPRK refugees being in the PRC are exaggerated. The DPRK had a population of about 22.27 million in 2000, according to U.N. estimates. "All food aid is primarily designated for children under 17. Generally, adults have to rely on food from domestic sources," which explains why DPRK adults would say in interviews they have not received any international food aid, Smith said. She made the comments in Tokyo during a speech on "media myths" surround the DPRK at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. To prove that aid did reach them, Smith quoted a 2002 UNICEF survey showing improvement of nutrition in DPRK children. The military and elite are unlikely to need international food aid, she said, because the army has priority in receiving both food harvested domestically and food aid from countries such as PRC and the ROK and the elite have the money to buy better food. On the military, Smith said she is unaware of any evidence that the DPRK possesses nuclear bombs, but added she believes it has the technological potential to produce the weapons if it has the resources. The DPRK's military expenditures in 2000 totaled about $2 billion, calculated at the nominal exchange rate, compared with the ROK's $12.5 billion and Japan's $44.5 billion, Smith said, quoting data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies. According to Smith's calculations using the black market exchange rate, "For its million-man army, (North Korea) spends $20 a year on each soldier." This comes to a total expenditure of about $20 million, she added. Smith was an adviser to the World Food Program and now works at the United Nations University in Tokyo.

5. Japan on DPRK-Japan Relations

The Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "KOIZUMI VOWS NOT TO BE COWED BY NORTH KOREA," Tokyo, 05/29/03) reported that Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Thursday it is important to send a strong message to the DPRK that it cannot blackmail the international community with threats of building a nuclear arsenal. He stopped short of advocating economic sanctions against the communist nation, however. Koizumi said that Japan should study stronger missile defenses, but must remain committed to its long-standing policy of using the military strictly for self-defense. "The DPRK tends to come up with provocative words and statements" regarding their development of nuclear weapons, he said in an interview with The Associated Press and a small group of reporters. "They have made statements that are like blackmail," he said. "It is important for us to approach them, to work on them, to make them understand that such a position is meaningless." Although Koizumi said Japan still wants to resolve the DPRK issue peacefully, he added that he believes "there is a need to accelerate research into missile defenses." Japan also is considering purchasing the latest Patriot missiles from the US.

6. DPRK ROK Warship Accusation

Reuters (Samuel Len, "NORTH KOREA ACCUSES SOUTH OF SENDING WARSHIPS NORTH," Seoul, 05/29/03) reported that the DPRK accused the ROK of sending warships across a disputed sea border and warned Seoul further moves could lead to "irrevocable serious consequences", ratcheting up tensions on the divided Korea peninsula. The DPRK's warning, carried by the official KCNA news agency, followed what the ROK Defence Ministry said was three successive days of incursions into southern waters by DPRK fishing boats, most recently on Wednesday. Tensions have been high on the Korean peninsula for more than seven months, since the US said the DPRK had revealed it was pursuing a secret nuclear arms program. Even before that, there had been clashes between the two Koreas at sea. Last June and in 1999 there were deadly naval gun battles in the same Yellow Sea area off the west coast -- prime fishing grounds especially during the June crab catching season. KCNA said a series of ROK naval vessels of various types had crossed into what it said were northern waters in the past three days. "The ceaseless infiltration of warships into the waters where serious military conflicts occurred last year cannot be construed otherwise than a premeditated and deliberate provocation on the part of the ROK military to spark one more new shocking incident in these waters, joining the US imperialists in their desperate 'nuclear racket'," it said.

7. US Fighter Jet ROK Crash

The Associated Press ("US FIGHTER JET CRASHES IN SOUTH KOREA," Seoul, 05/29/03) reported that a US F-16 fighter jet crashed Thursday in the ROK, but the pilot ejected to safety, the US Air Force said. A woman on the ground suffered minor injuries. The plane crashed soon after taking off from the Osan Air Base, 30 miles southeast of Seoul, said spokeswoman Sgt. Norma Terry. A statement from the military said a 58-year-old woman who worked on the base suffered bruises on her right arm "due to debris" from the crash but did not give details. She was treated and released from a base hospital. The cause of the crash was under investigation. The pilot's name was not released.

8. PRC Tiananmen Square Appeal Rejection

The Associated Press (Elaine Kurtenbach, "CHINA REJECTS TIANANMEN SQUARE APPEAL," Beijing, 05/29/03) reported the PRC denied an appeal Thursday by families of people killed during the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protest for reassessment of the military crackdown, saying stability remains the country's top priority. Each anniversary of the June 4, 1989, military assault sparks debate, at least in the dissident community, over the communist leadership's condemnation of the demonstrations as "political turmoil" requiring suppression by force. In a letter Thursday to the PRC's top prosecutor, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, 117 family members renewed demands that former Premier Li Peng, who recently retired as chairman of the national legislature and the communist party's No. 2 leader, be held legally responsible for the killings. Li has been blamed by victims of the government crackdown because he declared martial law on national television two weeks before the military pushed its way into Tiananmen Square, killing hundreds and ending seven weeks of protests. Signaling the government's unwillingness to reconsider the issue, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said the communist party leadership would stand by its earlier condemnation of the protests. "This conclusion will remain unchanged," Zhang said. "Stability has always remained the top priority for China."

9. PRC SARS 'Superspreader'

The Washington Post (Philip P. Pan, "A 'SUPERSPREADER' OF SARS HOW ONE WOMAN TOUCHED OFF BEIJING OUTBREAK," Taiyuan, PRC, 05/29/03) reported that a woman in Taiyuan had been running a 104-degree fever for nearly a week, and the city's best doctors were stumped. They suspected the 27-year-old businesswoman was suffering from a new flu rumored to have appeared in southern PRC, but knew nothing about how to treat it. So the patient and her family decided to go to Beijing. It was a simple decision, the woman recalled recently, because the nation's best hospitals were in Beijing, only 250 miles to the northeast. Her husband and a friend rode with her in the ambulance, while her mother and a doctor followed in a car. The trip took nine hours, including a delay caused by a flat tire. At the time, in late February, the PRC government was still trying to hide the outbreak of the disease now known as SARS. There was no way the woman, who asked to be identified only as Yu, could have known she was carrying the new virus or predicted that PRC authorities would later say she was the first person to bring SARS to Beijing. Neither she nor her companions wore masks, gloves or other protective gear on the journey. And when she checked into the People's Liberation Army No. 301 Hospital after midnight on March 1, the staff seemed equally uninformed and unprepared. The hospital placed her in a general ward with other patients, she said, and the doctors and nurses took no special precautions while examining her. Thus did the world's worst outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome begin. Yu passed the virus to her family and friends, to other patients and doctors and nurses, who then spread the disease to countless others in Beijing, eventually undermining the government's cover-up and prompting a crisis that has shaken the ruling Communist Party. As of yesterday, SARS had infected 2,514 people in Beijing and killed 175 of them. Other people brought SARS to Beijing, too. But authorities say this daughter of urban intellectuals in impoverished Shanxi province was the first "superspreader" to arrive in Beijing. She and her family were treated in three hospitals, and all three emerged as early centers of the epidemic. Now the outbreak appears to be slowing, and Beijing's Patient Zero is back home in Taiyuan, the provincial capital of Shanxi. A slender young woman with long, black hair, Yu appears to have made a full recovery, though her eyes are slightly puffy, perhaps from tears. The disease killed both her parents, and on the sleeve of her white blouse is a black button with a Chinese character, a traditional symbol of mourning. "What we've been through is misery and misfortune that we never could have expected," said Yu, who asked that only her surname be used to protect her privacy and make it easier to speak freely. She emphasized that she was not criticizing the government. But her story highlights much of what went wrong in the early stages of the SARS outbreak in Beijing, and she said she hoped people in the PRC and elsewhere could learn from it.

10. Taiwan SARS Status

BBC News ("TAIWAN REPORTS MORE SARS CASES," 05/29/03) reported that Taiwan reported 50 new SARS infections on Thursday, the biggest increase in six days. But the rise was less alarming than it first appeared, said Steve Kuo, spokesman for Taiwan's SARS Control Committee, because 40 of the cases had previously been suspected SARS infections which had been upgraded. The latest figures bring the total number of probable SARS cases on the island to 660, with the number of deaths remaining at 81. On Wednesday, World Health Organization experts said the island had "caught up" with the outbreak, and was close to controlling the virus. The PRC reported three new SARS cases on Thursday, and a further two SARS deaths. The virus, which originated last year in China's Guangdong province, has now killed a recorded 323 people on China's mainland, with more than 5,000 people becoming infected. Hong Kong said three more people had died and two others had become infected with the disease. Signs of hope During the past week, the number of SARS cases in Taiwan has been dropping - with an average of only 10 new cases a day - and officials have become increasingly confident that the worst is over. Taiwan's health minister Chen Chien-jen said on Thursday that he hoped the WHO travel advisory against the island would be lifted by June 20, 2003.

11. Russia SARS Case

The Washington Post (Peter Baker, "RUSSIA CONFIRMS 1ST SARS CASE 25-YEAR-OLD PATIENT RECOVERING NEAR CHINA'S BORDER," Moscow, 05/29/03) reported that Russian health authorities confirmed today that a man from a border region near China has SARS, the country's first diagnosis of the flu-like virus. The report came on the third day of a visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao, who pledged his country would eradicate the disease. The 25-year-old patient was recovering, and doctors said there was no indication that the disease had spread since the man first was hospitalized on May 1.

12. PRC Domestic Economy

The Associated Press ("CHINA CONSIDERS FURTHER BANK BAILOUT," Beijing, 05/29/03) reported that the PRC government is considering a further bailout of the PRC's big four state-owned banks to help reduce their huge burden of bad loans, a top regulator said Thursday. Officials had warned that an earlier 270 billion yuan ($32.7 billion) bailout was a "last supper" for the banks and ordered them to take responsibility for repairing their own loan portfolios. Under the bailout, 1.4 trillion yuan ($170 billion) in bad loans were transferred to four asset management companies. However, asked at a news briefing Thursday if another injection of capital was likely, Banking Regulatory Commission chairman Liu Mingkang said: "We are considering this right now." The National People's Congress, approved the creation of the new regulatory body in March to take over supervision of the banking system from the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank.

13. Japan Domestic Economy

Dow Jones (Jonathan Soble, "JAPAN MOF HAYASHI CALLS FOR AUSTERITY IN NEXT FISCAL YEAR BUDGET," Tokyo, 05/29/03) reported that Japan's government must stick to its commitment to austerity in compiling next fiscal year's budget, a top Finance Ministry official said Thursday, underscoring recent comments by Finance Minister Masajuro Shiokawa. "We must keep on the reform track," Administrative Vice Minister Masakazu Hayashi told a regular press conference. Finance Minister Masajuro Shiokawa said Tuesday he hopes to draft a budget for the fiscal year from April 2004 that is no bigger than the Y81.79 trillion budget for the current fiscal year, Kyodo News reported. The comment was Shiokawa's first reference to his policy on the fiscal 2004 budget. Work on the budget expected to begin from next month. Hayashi declined to make the same pledge, but said the MOF would try "to rein in (budget outlays) as much as possible."

14. Japan-ROK Free Trade Talks

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN HOPES TO START FTA TALKS WITH SOUTH KOREA," Tokyo, 05/29/03) reported that Japan is negotiating with the ROK to start talks this year aimed at forging a bilateral free-trade agreement (FTA). Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will propose the plan to Roh Moo-hyun when the ROK president visits Tokyo on June 7, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said Thursday. Koizumi aims to include specific details, such as the starting date for the negotiations, the newspaper said. Private sector businesses in Japan and the ROK have been stressing the need for an FTA, the Nihon Keizai said. Japan got its first FTA in November 2002, with Singapore. The government is working on similar pacts with other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and with Mexico.

15. UN Disarmament Affairs

The Japan Times ("JAPANESE TO HEAD UN DISARMAMENT," New York, 05/29/03) reported that U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has named Nobuyasu Abe, Japan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, as undersecretary general in charge of the U.N. Department for Disarmament Affairs, the U.N. press office said Wednesday. Abe, 57, who will succeed Jayantha Dhanapula, will take up his post as undersecretary general for disarmament affairs July 1. The department deals with disarmament issues, covering weapons of mass destruction, small arms, mines and other conventional weapons. According to the Foreign Ministry, Abe will be the fifth Japanese to serve as a U.N. undersecretary general. One is currently serving: Kenzo Oshima, who is in charge of humanitarian affairs and emergency relief. Oshima is scheduled to leave his post June 30. In a statement released Thursday, Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi welcomed Abe's appointment. "I hope Abe will make good use of his vast experience and make good contributions to U.N. disarmament work," she said. Abe was born in Akita Prefecture in 1945. He joined the Foreign Ministry after dropping out from the University of Tokyo. He has served in a number of senior positions, including as deputy head of the ministry's Economic Bureau and minister to the U.N. He was appointed ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 2001.

II. Japan

1. Japan Military Emergency Legislation

The Japan Times (Nao Shimoyachi, "PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE ABILITY NEXT ON AGENDA?," 05/23/03) reported that the war-contingency bills that now appear headed for Diet passage by mid-June leave open a number of questions on the future direction of national security policy, including the scope of cooperation with the US military in cases of emergencies overseas. Government leaders are eager to review the nation's post-World War II defense posture in light of new security threats, including a possible missile attack from the DPRK, with talk about a pre-emptive strike capability no longer taboo. But critics accuse the government of trying to widen the parameters dictating the nation's capacity to defend itself without addressing the sensitive issue of whether this violates the war-renouncing Constitution. Following the Lower House passage of the bills, various groups, including associations of lawyers and scientists, voiced concern over the legislation. They mainly focused on how the government, confronted by a war scenario, could infringe on the basic rights of the people, including appropriating private property. Tetsuo Maeda, a professor at Tokyo International University and an expert on security issues, said it is "comical to assume that people's rights will be protected in times of war," because these rights would naturally be sidelined. Critics also point out that the vague definition of "anticipated military attack situations" leaves room for Japan to take part in combat operations overseas in the name of self-defense -- by joining US military action against the DPRK, for example. The government has explained that the attack situation stipulated in the war-contingency bills could "coincide with" an emergency situation in areas surrounding Japan, raising concerns that the proposed legislation could pave the way for joint action by the SDF and the US military in a war outside Japan.

The Japan Times ("FUKUDA SEES COLLECTIVE DEFENSE," 05/23/03) reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda voiced hope that a future Cabinet will pursue a different interpretation of the war-renouncing Constitution, thus allowing Japan to engage in collective defense with its allies. Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba confers with Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda as an Upper House committee debates war-contingency bills. "I don't know when in the future, but I think maybe the time will come for a Cabinet to make the decision," Fukuda told a special House of Councilors committee on war-contingency bills now making their way through the Diet. "I am praying that such a time will come soon." On the capability to attack foreign bases, Ishiba stated that, although it is legally possible for Japan to possess this capability, the Self-Defense Forces do not currently possess the ability. Regarding the chances of the SDF using weapons during

peacekeeping operations, Ishiba said, "It is constitutionally and legally accepted in cases where there is organized and planned use of military force and when it is kept to the minimum needed at times when no other options are available."

2. Japan's Role in Iraq Reconstruction

Kyodo ("KOIZUMI CONSIDERING BILL TO DISPATCH SDF TO IRAQ," Waco, Texas, 05/24/03) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said he is considering introducing a bill that would authorize Self-Defense Forces (SDF) personnel to be dispatched to Iraq. Given that the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on May 22 to lift a 13-year-old economic embargo and promote the reconstruction of Iraq, Koizumi told reporters, "If the current laws are insufficient, we will fully consider whether there is a need for new legislation." Koizumi and his Cabinet ministers had repeatedly said the government had yet to decide whether to submit such a bill, adding that it will first do whatever it can within the framework of current legislation.

3. US Bases in Japan

The Asahi Shimbun ("FORMER U.S. MILITARY SITES TO BE SOLD TO PRIVATE SECTOR," 05/24/03) reported that with state finances swamped by debt, the Japanese Finance Ministry plans to sell land once used by US forces to the private sector, ministry officials said. The nine properties the government plans to sell are in and around Tokyo. Their total area is about 400 hectares. The land, which includes the 94-hectare site of the former Tachikawa airport in Tokyo, is currently unused. The sales plan will be included in a final report being compiled by a subpanel of the Fiscal System Council, which advises the finance minister. From there, the ministry will ask local governments to work out utilization plans for the nine locations, including potential sales to private companies. If the land is suddenly put on the market, however, land prices in the vicinity could fall sharply, dealing a serious blow to local business. To prevent that, the ministry intends to carefully evaluate utilization plans worked out by local governments.

Kyodo ("BUSH TO STUDY CIVILIAN USE OF YOKOTA BASE," Crawford, Texas, 05/25/03) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and US President George W. Bush agreed to study the possibility of allowing civilian aircraft to use the US Air Force's Yokota base in western Tokyo. "We will let bureaucrats (start) talks" on the feasibility of making the airport available for civilian use, Koizumi told reporters after his talks with Bush at the president's private ranch in Crawford, Texas. It was the first time the US administration has reacted positively to the suggestion that the base be converted into a joint civilian-military airport -- something that Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara has been demanding. Following the talks, Koizumi and Bush also said they agreed on the need to reduce the heavy US military presence in Okinawa, which accounts for less than 1 percent of Japan's territory but hosts about three-quarters of US military facilities in the country.

Kyodo ("U.S., JAPAN EYE RELOCATION OF MILITARY HOUSING COMPLEX," Tokyo, 05/26/03) reported that Japan and the US have been discussing the possible relocation of a US military housing complex in Negishi to Ikego, both in the Yokohama area of Kanagawa Prefecture, government sources said Monday. The US military residential area in Negishi, covering 43.1 hectares, is one of four locations in the city of Yokohama being used by the US forces in Japan on which bilateral negotiations are being held concerning their partial or full return to Japan. Under the envisioned plan, the Negishi complex will be moved to the Yokohama side of another US military residential area in Ikego, which straddles Yokohama and Zushi in Kanagawa Prefecture, the sources said. The two governments will hold a meeting of the facility coordination panel of the joint Japan-US committee as early as June, and aim for an agreement within the year, they said. However, the plan

involving the Negishi residential area is expected to draw opposition from Japanese residents near Ikego, many of whom opposed the construction of a US military housing facility there from the 1980s.

4. Extradition of Chinese Gangster

Mainichi Daily News ("JAPAN TO ASK U.S. FOR EXTRADITION OF CHINESE GANGSTER," Saitama, 05/22/03) reported that Saitama police will ask their US counterparts to extradite a Chinese man accused of fatally gunning down the leader of a Japan-based Chinese mafia group, officers have said. He Jiazhong, a 28-year-old former member of the exiled Chinese criminal group, Adi, has been put on Interpol's international wanted list after he shot dead Adi's leader, Zhang Mingsheng, in Kawaguchi, Saitama Prefecture. Saitama Prefectural Police officers learned on May 21 that he has been in US custody since being arrested for possessing a forged passport at Los Angeles airport in March. They plan to arrest him for murder charges when he is extradited to Japan.

5. Japan-DPRK Relations

Mainichi Daily News ("JAPAN TO CLAMP DOWN ON EXPORTS OF MISSILE COMPONENTS TO N. KOREA," 05/22/03) reported that Japan will clamp down on illegal exports of missile components to the DPRK following revelations that parts smuggled into the Stalinist state were used to produce ballistic missiles, top government officials said. "We must strictly respond to such illegal transactions," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters. "Customs and other authorities concerned are cooperating closely in strictly monitoring North Korean-registered vessels that make port calls in Japan. While sharing relevant information, we'll uncover illegal acts," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda said. Specifically, the government will strictly enforce regulations under which it requires businesses to gain permission from authorities to export technology that can be used to produce weapons of mass destruction. The move follows a recent testimony in a US Senate hearing that missile parts were transported by a North Korean cargo-passenger ship that frequently travels to Japan.

6. Japan Personal Information Protection Bills

Mainichi Daily News ("JAPAN PASSES PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION BILLS," 05/23/03) reported that a package of five controversial personal information protection bills, which are feared to threaten freedom of the press, were passed into law on May 23. The ruling coalition comprising the Liberal Democratic Party, Komeito and the New Conservative Party voted for the bills at a plenary session of the House of Councillors while the four opposition parties voted against them. The package comprises three laws that cover private businesses, government organizations and independent administrative agencies, respectively, a law on the establishment of a panel that deals with appeals by alleged violators and a law concerning enactment of other relevant laws. The law regulating private businesses requires them to publicize the purpose of using personal information, and imposes restrictions on their provision of such information to other organizations and individuals. Cabinet ministers in charge are authorized to issue recommendations or orders to businesses dealing with personal information. Those who refuse to follow ministers' orders could face up to six months in prison or a fine of not more than 300,000 yen. The legislation stipulates that ministers in charge must not exercise their authority to issue orders to those who provide information to the media. Critics have warned that the government may arbitrarily interpret the laws to excessively intervene in the activities of private companies, particularly the news media, noting that the bills do not clearly define businesses that deal with personal information. "The legislation is

aimed at regulating not only the mass media but also all the citizens' freedom of speech and expression," Miki Myochin, chairwoman of the Japan Federation of Press Workers' Unions, said.

7. Japan Domestic Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("POLL: CABINET APPROVAL RATING RISES TO 48%," 05/26/03) reported preliminary results of the telephone poll of about 2,000 eligible voters nationwide showed about 48 percent said they support the Koizumi administration -- up from 45 percent in the April 19-20 poll. Around 37 percent said they did not approve of the administration, a slight change from 38 percent in the previous poll. Asked to cite the Cabinet's positive points, around 21 percent said "the prime minister's political stand," up from 18 percent in April. About 15 percent chose "diplomatic and defense policies," a rise from 11 percent. About 45 percent, up from 42 percent in April, cited economic and employment policies as negative points. Support for the opposition Democratic Party of Japan also improved to about 9 percent -- the second highest since Koizumi took office in April 2001, the poll shows.

Mainichi Daily News ("LIBERAL PARTY, DPJ CALL OFF MERGER TALKS," 05/26/03) reported that the leaders of two opposition parties, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the Liberal Party, agreed Monday to call off ongoing negotiations on a possible merger. The decision was made after Liberal Party leader Ichiro Ozawa rejected an offer made by the main opposition DPJ to form a parliamentary alliance to prepare for a future merger. In the top-level meeting Monday afternoon, Ozawa told his DPJ counterpart, Naoto Kan, that he could not accept the proposal because the DPJ had not agreed to merge with Liberals before the next House of Representatives election.

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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