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United States

1. US 2003 Defense Spending

US House Republicans pushed for approval of the biggest increase in military spending in a generation on Thursday. US lawmakers moved toward a vote even as Democrats objected to provisions in the US\$383 billion measure outlining 2003 defense spending that would exempt the military from major environmental laws. While lamenting the lack of wider discussion, Democrats mindful of the war on terror were eager to show support for the overall bill's increased military spending. "This legislation will allow us to wage war effectively in the year ahead," said House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., but "this is symptomatic of a pattern we have seen in the last few months, with a majority that wants to close down debate on issues that are critical to the American people."

"US Defense Spending" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, US)

"US 2003 Defense Spending" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, US)

2. Russia-US Nuclear Arms Reduction

=US Undersecretary of State John Bolton will return to Moscow to try to hammer out final details of the nuclear arms reduction agreement Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President George W. Bush hope to sign at their summit later this month, the Foreign Ministry said Wednesday. Bolton is scheduled to meet with Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov on Monday to work on the arms deal as well as a joint statement on shared strategic goals. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and Secretary of State Colin Powell will continue the talks next Tuesday and Wednesday in Reykjavik, Iceland, where they will attend a meeting intended to discuss a new relationship between NATO and Russia.

"Russia-US Nuclear Arms Reduction" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 8, US)

3. US-Russia Joint Effort Against Dirty Bombs

The US and Russia on Thursday agreed to try jointly to tighten security on radioactive material that could be used in "dirty bombs." US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham said that after nearly three days of talks with Alexander Rumyantsev, head of Russia's Atomic Energy Agency, the two governments would establish a task force to examine the issue and recommend remedies. "Perhaps the most important step we took this week was an agreement to work together to protect the security of radiological sources that might be used to develop so-called dirty bombs. This will be a new logical extension of the work we're already doing together in protecting nuclear materials" in Russia, Abraham said.

"US-Russia Joint Effort Against Dirty Bombs" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. ROK Party Resignation

ROK President Kim Dae-jung quit his ruling party Monday and apologized for a recent series of corruption scandals involving his sons and some confidants. Kim's decision does not affect his single five-year term, which ends in February. Under the constitution, he cannot seek re-election. "I can't find words to describe my apologetic feeling," Kim said in a statement read by his chief of staff, Park Jie-won. "I and my wife spend every day in agony." Kim said his decision to leave the Millennium Democratic Party was to free himself from domestic politics and concentrate on state affairs, including the upcoming soccer World Cup, presidential election and other key elections.

"ROK Party Resignation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, US)

2. ROK Domestic Politics

Former prime minister Lee Hoi-chang chosen on Friday as presidential candidate for the ROK's main opposition party vowed to lead the cleanest government in history if elected in December. Lee launched his anti-corruption platform days after President Kim Dae-jung apologized for controversies involving his sons and resigned from the ruling Millennium Democratic Party (MDP). "Being governed by the corrupt and incapable once is enough," Lee, 66, said in a hoarse voice before a crowd of hundreds of cheering party faithful as he accepted his nomination. "I will do my best to come up with the cleanest government in our history."

"ROK Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, US)

"ROK Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 8, US)

3. Japan-DPRK Relations

The DPRK has indicated its willingness to resume suspended normalization talks with Japan through unofficial meetings, government sources said Wednesday. Japan and the DPRK have maintained unofficial contact at various levels intermittently since November, and the DPRK has suggested that resumption in negotiations would be possible if certain conditions are met.

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, Japan)

4. DPRK Mystery Boat

Japanese ships returned from the wreck site of a sunken suspected DPRK spy boat on Wednesday, finishing a weeklong investigation that found weapons and bodies and could further complicate the already difficult relations between Japan and the DPRK. During the search, which began May 1, divers found two corpses, four guns and an undisclosed number of ammunition cartridges. Japan suspects the boat was a DPRK spy vessel or drug runner, and had hoped the investigation would provide conclusive evidence. Japan Coast Guard spokeswoman Hisako Nakabayashi declined comment Wednesday on whether clear links had been made with the DPRK however.

"DPRK Mystery Boat" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 8, US)

"DPRK Mystery Ship" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

"DPRK Mystery Ship" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, US)

"DPRK Mystery Ship Dispute" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, Japan)

5. Inter Korean Economic Talks

The DPRK abruptly called off the inter-Korean economic cooperation talks Monday, one day before their planned start, blaming its action on "reckless" remarks by ROK foreign minister Choi Sung-hong. The DPRK delegation released a statement citing comments attributed to Foreign Minister during his visit to Washington last month. It insisted that the ROK was responsible for the cancellation. Choi repeatedly stressed Monday that the Washington Post report distorted his remarks and urged prompt resumption of inter-Korean talks. The DPRK demanded that Choi apologize, but the ROK has no plan to do so.

"Inter Korean Economic Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, ROK)

"US on DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, ROK)

"DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

"US View of DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

"DPRK-ROK Economic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, US)

"Inter Korean Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, ROK)

6. DPRK-KEDO Negotiations

The DPRK said a team from the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) had arrived on Tuesday for talks on how to push forward a deal to build atomic reactors for the DPRK. "A KEDO delegation arrived today by air to participate in the negotiations of experts for the implementation of the agreement of light-water reactors signed between the DPRK and KEDO," the DPRK's official KCNA news agency said in a one-sentence report.

"DPRK-KEDO Negotiations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

7. DPRK-Japan Relations

A top DPRK diplomat said Saturday that if "certain conditions are fulfilled" the DPRK could normalize ties with Japan. "I believe there are chances for official ties with Japan if Red Cross talks turn out smooth and the Japanese government is sincere about addressing its crimes in World War II," said Pak Yong-yon, vice director of the Japan Bureau of DPRK's Foreign Ministry. But Pak added that normalization of ties with Japan is not the DPRK's official stance, but his personal opinion as the official in charge of seeking compensation from Japan for its crimes during its occupation of the Korean Peninsula through the end of World War II.

"DPRK-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, ROK)

8. Arirang Festival in DPRK

More than 100,000 students and citizens of the DPRK were busy at the May 1 Stadium Monday, preparing their performance for the Arirang Festival, a two-month extravaganza of mass gymnastics and the arts designed to attract foreign tourists. The performance started at 8 pm with a popular DPRK song, "Glad to Meet You," gushing from the loudspeakers. "Arirang Festival in DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, ROK)

9. ROK Intelligence Silencing?

Hwang Jang-yop, the highest-profile defector ever from DPRK, has agreed to decline an invitation to testify before the US Congress in Washington, in return for 300 million won (US\$235,400) pledged by the ROK. The daily said ROK's National Intelligence Service played on Hwang's determination to complete his life's study of Juche -- the ideological foundation of the DPRK regime. The intelligence agency promised to pay for an institute to study the ideology, the newspaper said. The pledge was contained in a formal agreement dated January 13 and reviewed by its reporters, the paper said. The intelligence agency denied that it had made any deal with Hwang, the newspaper said.

"ROK Intelligence Silencing?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, ROK)

10. ROK-DPRK Relations

The fourth reunion of separated families between ROK and DPRK started at Mount Kumgang on the afternoon of April 28. Ninety-nine senior people from ROK met with 186 people from the DPRK separated families, said the report. It reported that the round of reunion would be divided into two parts. The first part would be held on April 28-30, and the second part would be on May 1-3.

"DPRK-ROK Visitations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, US)

"ROK-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, PRC)

11. DPRK Defections

A total of 312 DPRK citizens have defected to the ROK in the first four months of this year, said the ROK government intelligence agency Saturday. The figure was more than half of the total for all of last year, when 583 DPRK citizens fled to the ROK, and equaled the 312 refugees who fled in 2000. In 1999, 148 DPRK citizens fled to the ROK, up from 71 in 1998. Most DPRK defectors have said they fled hunger and political repression. In April alone, 74 DPRK defectors made it to the ROK, said the National Intelligence Service in a news release.

"DPRK Defections" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, US)

12. DPRK International Trade Fair

The 5th Pyongyang International Trade Fair took off Monday with the attendance of over 160 companies from 15 nations including PRC, Japan, Russia, Britain, Italy and more, reported PRC Radio International. "Riaoning province and Jilin province alone had 100 companies flocking to the exhibition slated till Thursday," the PRC media said and added that the goods submitted by the companies include automobiles, machine tools, construction resources, textiles among other goods. Ri Kwang-gun the DPRK's trade minister said in his opening speech for the exhibition that the aim of this year's trade fair lies in strengthening friendly relations and cooperation with other nations, the report said.

"DPRK International Trade Fair" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, ROK)

People's Republic of China

1. Hu Jintao US Visit

Vice President Hu Jintao ended his first visit to the US with a taste of cutting-edge US technology on Saturday. Hu rounded off his six-day visit -- which took him to Washington, New York, San Francisco and Hawaii -- with a visit to the San Francisco area's famed Silicon Valley where he met with top industry players. Before flying out of here for Beijing, Hu and his delegation paid a visit to the Intel Corp., the world's largest maker of semiconductors on Friday.

"Hu Jintao US Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, US)

"PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, PRC)

2. Hong Kong Crackdown

Hong Kong has charged three political protesters with organizing an unauthorized rally, the first such prosecutions since the territory returned to the PRC. "This is a retrogressive move in democratization," said Sunny Lo, Associate Professor at the Department of Politics and Public Administration at University of Hong Kong. The charges could trigger a new legal battle over the constitutionality of the Public Order Ordinance, which requires protesters to seek prior police approval. The Basic Law contains an article requiring Hong Kong to enact laws to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against Beijing. The local government has been considering the issue but has not yet enacted such laws.

"Hong Kong Crackdown" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, US)

3. Taiwan Missile Tests

The Taiwanese army fired four missiles at targets in a military exercise amid calls from President Chen Shui-bian for rapprochement with the PRC. The army first launched a US-made Hawk surface-to-air missile which successfully intercepted a target towed by a drone, or an unnamed aircraft, off this southern military base on Friday. Two other Hawks and a locally made Tienkung II were also launched to separately destroy three other targets some 25 kilometers (15 miles), 35 kilometers (21 miles), and 90 kilometers (54 miles) away. Chen urged the PRC to stop the arms race while hailing the units involved in the drill.

"Taiwan Missile Tests" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, US)

4. DPRK Asylum Seekers

A major diplomatic row loomed Thursday after Japan protested the entry by PRC police and forcible capture of two DPRK asylum-seekers in its mission in Shenyang. Five DPRK defectors tried Wednesday to enter the Japanese Consulate in Shenyang, but reportedly three were blocked by PRC guards at the gate. Two were able to enter the mission's compound, but were dragged out by the policemen, eyewitnesses said. All five were in PRC custody Thursday afternoon. "It is a violation of the Vienna Convention," Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said. Japan's deputy foreign minister, Yukio Takeuchi, summoned PRC's ambassador in Tokyo, Wu Dawei, to complain of the intrusion.

"DPRK Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, ROK)

"PRC-Japan DPRK Refugees" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, US)

"DPRK Asylum-Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, Japan)

"New DPRK Defectors in PRC" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, US)

"DPRK Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 8, US)

5. Cross-Straits Relations

Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said on Thursday he will send a delegation from his ruling party to the PRC later this year to jump start negotiations between the PRC and Taiwan. "The two sides must reopen the door to negotiation so as to reduce misunderstanding and miscalculation," Chen said during a visit to the front-line island of Quemoy. "The first step to resume talks is to exchange visits." Chen said he planned to send his Democratic Progressive Party's director of PRC affairs department to the mainland after he takes over as party chairman on August 1.

"Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, US)

6. US Sanctions on PRC

Underscoring growing concerns about Iran, the Bush administration has decided to impose new sanctions on PRC, Armenian and Moldovan companies accused of aiding Iran's alleged weapons of mass destruction programs, a senior US official said on Wednesday. The US Congress would be formally notified soon of the decision, which is being taken under the 2000 Iran Nonproliferation Act. The PRC responded on May 16 at a US decision to slap sanctions on its companies for alleged weapons transactions with Iran, calling the move unreasonable. "We oppose the unreasonable sanctions by the US, if the news is for real," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kong Quan told a news conference.

"US Sanctions on PRC" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 8, US)

"PRC Response to US Sanctions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, US)

7. PRC-US Relations

The PRC reacted sharply on Thursday to a move by pro-Taiwan members of the US Congress to invite the Taiwan's president, Chen Shui-bian, to Washington. An invitation could spark a new diplomatic row over Taiwan. PRC spokesperson Kong Quan said on Thursday that an invitation would contradict official US backing for the one-China principle, which states Taiwan is a part of China. "The position of the Chinese government on this question is very clear: There are three joint communiques between China and the United States, and US leaders have repeated for many times that they will honour the one-China principle," he told a news conference.

"PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 09, US)

8. PRC Navy Ships in ROK

Two frigates became the first PRC military vessels ever to make a port call in the ROK. The maiden stopover by the 2,393-ton ships in this western ROK port comes as the ROK and the PRC mark the 10th anniversary of diplomatic relations. The four-day visit was in return for the first visit by ROK navy ships to Shanghai last October. "Let's be a messenger of peace and lay a bridge of friendship," said a statement released by the PRC navy delegation which was welcomed by ROK navy officials and ethnic Chinese. The two ships, Jiasing and Lian Yun Gang, carrying missiles and helicopters, will be open to the public on Thursday and Friday.

"PRC Navy Ships in ROK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 8, US)

9. Cross-Strait Economic Relations

Taiwan mapped out on Tuesday a multibillion-dollar plan aimed at boosting economic growth and bringing down near record unemployment to counter rising competition from the PRC. Premier Yu Shyi-kun said the plan, titled Challenge 2008, would improve the island's economic health in six years. "When Communist China hosts the Olympics in 2008, the world's attention will be on Asia. Communist China as a host will also attract attention. We do not want to be marginalised," Yu told a news conference. The T\$2.65 trillion (US\$77 billion) six-year plan will boost economic growth to at least five percent on average and slash its near record high jobless rate to below four percent. But the plan did not detail where the funds would come from or where they would be spent.

"Cross-Strait Economic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

10. Chen Shui-bian on Cross-Straits Relations

Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said on Tuesday he does not expect a breakthrough in relations with Beijing if PRC's heir apparent Hu Jintao assumes power. "Of course, some things change, but it's very difficult to have excessive expectations that there'll be a breakthrough in bilateral relations after he takes over," Chen expressed. Chen also remarked that it was "very strange" for the 59-year-old vice president to be anointed PRC's heir apparent without democratic elections. Commenting on Hu's trip to the United States last week, Chen said: "There was nothing special ... nothing new." Chen also remarked, "There will be people with more influence than him," apparently referring to Jiang, who is expected to continue calling the shots after stepping down. "He's too prudent and frightened. It's very difficult to expect that he will have independent thinking and judgment, or be himself," Chen said.

"Chen Shui-bian on Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

11. Jiang meets Bush Senior

PRC President Jiang Zemin told former President George Bush on Tuesday that the PRC will never allow Taiwan to declare its independence. President Jiang Zemin also reiterated an offer to negotiate with Taiwan, but only on a condition that Taiwan's leaders have thus far refused to accept: that the island and the PRC mainland are parts of "one China." "I've said many times, as long as the Taiwan authorities accept the one China principle, the two sides can resume negotiations and dialogue. The former president, former first lady Barbara Bush, and his former national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, were invited by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, a government-backed body.

"Jiang meets Bush Senior" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

12. PRC-US Military Relations

The US and the PRC are planning talks to see if they can improve military cooperation. Pentagon spokesperson said on Friday that the decision came during a meeting on Thursday between Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and PRC Vice President Hu Jintao. A PRC spokesperson said afterward that the two sides agreed to resume military exchanges. But US officials said on Friday that the PRC characterization was misleading because the Rumsfeld-Hu decision was only an agreement to hold talks.

"PRC-US Military Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, US)

13. Taiwan WHO Bid

Taiwan on Monday launched its sixth straight annual bid to join the World Health Organisation (WHO), but frustrated by the PRC's diplomatic embargo said it would apply as a "health entity" to avoid a sovereignty dispute. "Some countries may not recognise Taiwan politically, but Taiwan's rights to participate in the WHO cannot be denied," Foreign Minister Eugene Chien told a news conference. "Our participation in the WHO is not to challenge Communist China or to promote Taiwan independence," Chien said.

"Taiwan WHO Bid" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, US)

14. PRC-Japan Relations

PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said on April 29 that the PRC will supervise Japan's investigation of a sunken ship in the East China Sea. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other domestic laws, the PRC claims sovereignty and jurisdictional rights over the shipwreck area, which is within the PRC exclusive economic zone, Kong said. The PRC and Japan have consulted over the issue, he said, noting that the Japanese side conceded PRC sovereignty and jurisdictional rights over its exclusive economic zone. However, Japan promised to take effective measures in preventing the pollution of the marine environment, and to report the underwater investigation progress and results. Hence, the PRC would not object to the underwater investigation by the Japanese side, he said.

"PRC-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, PRC)

15. Cross-Strait Relations

Chen Yunlin, director of Taiwan Affairs Office of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said on April 25 in Beijing that the PRC is willing to provide fresh water to Jinmen (Kinmen), Mazu (Matsu) and Penghu islands. Chen said, the island province has suffered its worst drought in 10 years, especially in Jinmen, Mazu and Penghu areas where water shortage has threatened people's daily life. The central government is extremely concerned with this situation and would like to ship fresh water as soon as possible to Jinmen, Mazu and Penghu from Fujian Province, the official said.

"Cross-Strait Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, PRC)

Japan

1. Japan Anti-terrorism

Eight ministries and agencies including the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) announced Tuesday the formation of an intragovernmental liaison committee to coordinate moves to freeze the assets of terrorist groups. The committee is expected to promote more efficient sharing of information about terrorist groups, giving the ministries and agencies that handle financial and economic affairs ready access to data gleaned from investigations conducted by the National Police Agency and the Public Security Investigation Agency. The committee will involve bureau director-general-level representatives from all eight ministries and agencies, including the Financial Services Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Cabinet Secretariat. (Nikkei)

"Japan Anti-terrorism" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 8, US)

2. Japan Defense Bills Debate

Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi urged Parliament to pass bills to strengthen Japan's military, saying Tuesday that the country has to be prepared for the possibility of foreign attack. Japan's ruling coalition submitted last month three bills that would expand the country's military role and give the government new powers in case of foreign attack. The package is designed to give greater latitude to the prime minister and the military in time of emergency. Parliament has until mid- June to vote the bills into law. "Japan must be ready before something happens, not after," Koizumi said as debate opened Tuesday. But opponents of the proposal say its definition of what constitutes an emergency is dangerously vague, a flaw which they say could easily lead to abuses of power and potentially of civil rights.

"Japanese Security Legislation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, Japan)

"Japanese Defense White Paper Draft" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 10, Japan)

"Japan Defense Bills Debate" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

3. Japan Domestic Politics

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi pledged on Tuesday to take steps to stem the scandals that are eroding his public support and casting doubts on his commitment to reform. Koizumi steered clear, however, of overtly urging a former heavyweight in the main ruling party to resign over the latest in the many scandals that have dogged Japanese politics for decades. "I think political scandals damage the public's confidence in politics. I want to hold discussions on what needs to be done to prevent this kind of thing happening," Koizumi told a parliamentary panel. "I think more needs to be done."

"Japan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, US)

4. Japanese Logistical Support for US

Japan will probably not send an Aegis destroyer to assist the US-led antiterrorism campaign in Afghanistan, as requested by the US, a senior ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmaker stated last Wednesday. Fumio Kyuma, acting chairman of the LDP Policy Research Council, said in a discussion hosted by a Washington think tank that it would be very difficult to dispatch a destroyer equipped with the sophisticated Aegis air defense system "considering the current situation."

"Japanese Logistical Support for US" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, Japan)

5. Japanese Security Legislation

Just under half the respondents to a recent poll said new legislation governing Japan's response to a foreign military attack is necessary, according to Kyodo News. Regarding a set of three bills submitted to the Diet in April, 49.8 percent of respondents said such legislation is necessary, while 38.3 percent said it is unnecessary. At the same time, 47.2 percent said the three bills should not be passed during the current Diet session, while 39.1 percent said they would be comfortable with the passage of the bills. The telephone survey was conducted last Wednesday and Thursday and covered 1,755 people, 1,045 of whom responded.

"Japanese Security Legislation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 7, Japan)

6. DPRK-Japan Relations

The DPRK strengthened signs it is seeking better relations with the outside world on April 30, agreeing to intensify a search for missing Japanese nationals Tokyo says were abducted decades ago. A Japanese official hailed the agreement as a step towards upgrading relations with DPRK, although the DPRK has said several times before it would look into the missing Japanese, said the report. A Japanese Foreign Ministry official said that April 30's agreement could mean the DPRK would use its state-controlled media and a poster campaign to help trace the missing Japanese, it reported.

"DPRK-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, PRC)

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 6, Japan)

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

Human Rights Watch has warned that factional fighting is threatening the process for the selection of Afghanistan's new government. The daily Dawn reports that a rocket hit an uninhabited area near a US Special Forces base in eastern Afghanistan. Warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar reportedly escaped a missile fired from a Predator drone aircraft. Coalition forces searching for Osama bin Laden dug up 23 graves in a cemetery in Afghanistan and took DNA samples from the corpses. Afghan warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum has announced plans to free 400 Pakistani prisoners suspected of involvement with the Taliban. Two Afghans found guilty of killing three people including Meena Kishwar Kamal, one of the founding leaders of Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), were executed in Pakistan. The daily News reports that some 40,000 Afghan refugees stranded in no man's land at Afghan-Pakistan border near Chaman may return to their homes.

"Current Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

Indian government believes that there is no decline in cross-border infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir. The US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, however, believes that cross-border infiltration has gone down. The Indian army reportedly destroyed two explosive-laden vehicles of the Pakistani army.

"News" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

2. Analysis

Commentator Raja Mohan believes that the "only credible option for India is to simultaneously signal its readiness go to war to end cross-border terrorism and a willingness to seriously negotiate on Kashmir." In an article for the daily Hindu, K.K. Katyal finds it difficult "not to be pessimistic about the course of India-Pakistan relations in the near future."

"Analysis" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

Pakistan and India

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

Fourteen people, including 11 French nationals, were killed in Karachi when a suicide bomber drove into a Pakistan Navy bus and exploded some incendiary device. The Pakistani police have so far arrested more than 100 people in connection with its investigations of the bombing. The Pakistan government has not ruled out the possibility of Al Qaeda's involvement in the bombing and warned of more attacks.

"Pakistan: Domestic Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

2. India: Domestic Situation

More people have been killed in the continuing communal violence in Gujarat. Dionne Bunsha's essay in Frontline looks at the dire condition of Muslim families now living in relief camps. Another essay in the same magazine examines the anti-Muslim hate campaign launched by extremist Hindu parties. The Indian government has reacted strongly to international condemnation of religious violence and has stated that India will "not be spoken to from any position of assumed superiority or morality."

"India: Domestic Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Newspapers reported continued political unrest and violence in Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian government extended the judicial remand of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader Yasin Malik. Shiv Sena activists also manhandled Malik when he was taken for a hospital check-up. Six people were hurt when Indian police fired teargas to disperse crowds protesting the attack on Yasin Malik.

"Internal Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

2. India and Pakistan

Hizbul Mujahideen, one of the largest groups engaged in military operations in Kashmir, has expelled three senior commanders including its former military commander in Kashmir Majid Dar. Sudha Ramachandran believes that if the Indian government moves "cautiously, it can draw Dar's faction to participate in the elections."

"India and Pakistan" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

Regional News

1. Burma

According to Bertil Lintner of the Far Eastern Economic Review, the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi may not lead to "substantial political change any time soon." "Burma" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

2. Nepal

Many security personnel and Maoist insurgents were killed in the continuing war in Nepal. Rita Manchanda's essay in Frontline, an Indian magazine, gives some background and details of the civil war in Nepal. "Nepal" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)

3. Iran

Iran is reportedly developing Shahab-4, a missile with a 2,000 km range. "Iran" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #17)
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