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United States

1. US Missile Defense Developments
The US has no plans to arm anti-missile interceptors with nuclear explosives, a defense official told Congress on Wednesday, but he acknowledged that "some people are thinking about it." A top science adviser to the Pentagon has said that scientists are studying the idea of using nuclear explosions to wipe out incoming missiles. Air Force Lieutenant General Ronald Kadish, director of the US Missile Defense Agency, said his agency has no current plans to use nuclear weapons. "We have no part of our program that involves nuclear-tipped interceptors," Kadish told a committee of Congress. William Schneider Jr., a top science adviser to the Pentagon as chairman of the Defense Science Board, told the Washington Post last week that US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld had approved studies of nuclear-tipped missile interceptors.
"US Missile Defense Developments" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, US)

2. Bush Renews Calls Against "Axis of Evil"
US President George W. Bush on Wednesday renewed his call for action against "axis of evil" states that produce weapons of mass destruction and support terrorism, saying "the world must confront them." Bush said the world faced a great threat from "a small number of outlaw regimes" which own or develop biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. However, Bush did not name any of the countries directly.
"Bush Renews Calls Against 'Axis of Evil'" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, US)

3. Russia-US Nuclear Disarmament

A nuclear arms deal on the agenda of next month's US-Russian summit for the first time will include ways to verify the dismantling of the warheads themselves, arms control analysts said Tuesday. Earlier arms control agreements contained controls to verify the dismantling of nuclear submarines, missiles and bombers, but not warheads, said Rose Gottemoeller, an arms control expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "In this new agreement there will apparently be some measures to monitor warheads cooperatively," Gottemoeller said. "This is a very welcome innovation in the strategic arms control process and the first in many years."

"Russia-US Nuclear Disarmament" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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4. Russia-NATO Ties

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that as Russia boosts ties with NATO it will also maintain close links to the PRC in an effort to strengthen global stability. Putin is scheduled to sign an agreement on closer ties between Russia and NATO in Rome on May 28. In an apparent attempt to assuage the PRC's concerns about a growing rapprochement between Russia and the West, Putin said that Moscow would maintain close links with the PRC, whom it has described as a "strategic partner." Simultaneous development of Russia's cooperation with NATO and friendly Russian-PRC ties will help strengthen global stability, Putin said.

"Russia-NATO Ties" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, US)

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5. Russia Nuclear Reactor Developments

Russia plans to build 10 nuclear reactors in foreign countries over the next decade, Deputy Atomic Energy Minister Bulat Nigmatulin told Interfax news agency on Thursday. "Russia is already building five nuclear reactors abroad, including in China, Iran and India," he was quoted as saying. "In the future, we can expect to build another five nuclear reactors." He did not name which other countries might be interested. The cost of building a nuclear reactor is about $US800 million to US$900 million, Nigmatulin said.

"Russia Nuclear Reactor Developments" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

Korean Peninsula

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1. Inter-Korean Relations

Parliament leaders Lee Man-Sup, speaker of the ROK's National Assembly, and Kim Soo Hak, a parliamentary leader from the DPRK shook hands at a meeting of Asian parliament leaders in the PRC city of Chongqing on Thursday, Xinhua said. "I'm convinced, along with summit-level talks, inter-Korean parliamentary talks will open up a new chapter in the history of Korea," a smiling Lee told Kim. Kim added he hoped the two parliaments would call upon both governments to implement their April 6 joint declaration pledging to revive their rapprochement process, which has been frozen since last year.

"Inter-Korean Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, US)

2. ROK Fighter Jet Project
US aerospace company Boeing Co. won a US$4.5 billion contract Friday to build 40 F-15K fighter jets for the ROK's air force, the ROK Defense Ministry said. Boeing's F-15K beat out the Rafale made by French firm Dassault in the competition to build a fleet of new jets for the ROK air force by 2009, the ministry said in a news release.
"ROK Fighter Jet Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, US)

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3. DPRK-US Relations
Despite tension over their 1994 Geneva Agreement, the US has not presented to the DPRK specific dates for nuclear inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, ROK Foreign Minister Choi Sung-hong said Wednesday. Choi, in a news conference after meeting with US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, said that the US, while still insisting that the DPRK provide explanations for its nuclear activities in the past, had yet to propose inspection deadlines to the DPRK.
"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, ROK)

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4. DPRK-Japan Relations
Members of the Japanese Red Army who had been protected by the DPRK will likely be expelled after the Red Cross talks between the DPRK and Japan, which are scheduled to take place this month. The Japanese leftists, blamed for a string of terrorist attacks in the 1970s and 1980s, received asylum in the DPRK after hijacking a Japan Airlines passenger jet and landing it in DPRK in March 1970. Shin Ji-ho, a researcher at the Samsung Economic Research Center, said the DPRK hopes to improve relations with Japan and the US by severing ties with the terrorist group.
"DPRK-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, ROK)

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5. DPRK-Japan Red Cross Talks
Japan and the DPRK will hold Red Cross talks in Beijing at the end of this month in the first meeting between the two countries for more than two years. The meeting will take place on April 29 and 30, both nations said Thursday. "There are humanitarian issues between Japan and North Korea and we hope the meeting will become an important step towards settling them," Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda told a news conference. The DPRK's Korean Central News Agency said the talks would cover an "investigation into those missing and the home-visit of Japanese women in the DPRK." The last Red Cross meeting was in March 2000.
"DPRK-Japan Red Cross Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

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6. DPRK View of Inter-Korean Dialogue
The DPRK said Thursday that inter-Korean relations could be at risk unless the US drops its hostile policy against the DPRK. On Thursday, the DPRK Korean Central News Agency accused the US of adopting a "policy of strength" and "policy of Cold War" designed to obstruct the reconciliation process on the divided Korean peninsula. "The inter-Korean relations may deteriorate again and independent reunification of the nation may be delayed, accordingly, unless that policy of the US imperialists is frustrated," said the news agency.
"DPRK View of Inter-Korean Dialogue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

7. DPRK-US Relations
US ambassador to the ROK Jack Pritchard said on Thursday that the US is still awaiting word from the DPRK on resuming dialogue. US President George W. Bush, during a February visit to Seoul, called for talks and said he had no intention of attacking the DPRK. Thomas Hubbard said that the US hoped contacts would pave the way for talks on outstanding questions, including missile proliferation and a 1994 nuclear agreement. "Ambassador Pritchard will engage in talks with the North Koreans whenever they are ready. We have not heard from them yet directly on that subject, but as we've said we're prepared to meet any time, any place," Hubbard said. "What we're looking for is a first general meeting with the North Koreans and then hopefully was can agree on a formula for ongoing negotiations," he said.
"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

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8. Inter-Korea Economic Relations
Inter-Korean trade reached around US$88 million for the first quarter of this year, a 15% increase from last time. The volume of import was slightly over US$51 million, a 66.5% increase from last year but exports were reportedly down to US$37 million or a 19.7% decrease according to the Unification Ministry in Seoul on Wednesday.
"Inter-Korea Economic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, ROK)

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9. DPRK's ADB Participation
Despite the ROK government's desire to invite the DPRK to the annual Asian Development Bank (ADB) assembly, the US, ADB's largest shareholder, is still opposed to the participation of what it labeled a terrorism-sponsoring state, officials said Wednesday. The ROK has hoped the ADB will arrange for the DPRK, which applied for ADB membership in 2000, to attend the meeting slated for early May in Shanghai, as an observer. Diplomatic watchers earlier said chances appeared higher this year for the DPRK to attend the ADB assembly, citing the fact that the meeting is scheduled to take place in the PRC, DPRK's closest ally, and that the DPRK recently agreed to resume dialogue with US.
"DPRK's ADB Participation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, ROK)

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10. ROK Presidential Nomination
Former dissident Roh Moo-Hyun virtually secured the presidential nomination of the ROK's ruling party after his main rival withdrew from the race. Roh came from nowhere in recent weeks to overtake Rhee In-Je in the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) primaries, forcing Rhee to announce his withdrawal from the race on national television earlier Wednesday. The ROK is to hold a presidential election in December.
"ROK Presidential Nomination" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, US)

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11. ROK New Economic Chief
ROK President Kim Dae-Jung named a reformist as the new finance and economy minister. Jeon Yun-Churl, chief of the presidential staff, replaced Jin Nyum who resigned Saturday to take part in provincial elections. The president's special assistant for political affairs, Park Jie-won, will take over Jeon's current post. Lee Ki-Ho, a former senior presidential advisor for economic affairs, will be the president's special assistant for economic, welfare and labor affairs.
"ROK New Economic Chief" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

12. ROK-US Relations

The ROK's foreign minister left Tuesday for Washington where he will discuss the allies' policy toward the DPRK which earlier this month agreed to revive reconciliation efforts with the ROK and start talks with the US. Foreign Minister Choi Sung-hong is scheduled to meet Secretary of State Colin Powell and President George W. Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, during his April 16-21 visit, Choi's office said in a statement. It will be Choi's first visit to the US since he took the post in a Cabinet shake-up in January.
"ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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13. Russia-DPRK Relations

Russian President Vladimir Putin has sent DPRK leader Kim Jong-il a letter, the DPRK 's official KCNA news agency reported on Tuesday. KCNA did not give details of the letter. KCNA said that Kim had received Vladimir Yakovlev, governor of Russia's second city of St Petersburg, on April 15 and hosted a dinner for a Russian delegation. "(Yakovlev) courteously conveyed to leader Kim Jong-il a...letter of Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin," the news agency reported. Yakovlev is scheduled to visit Seoul later this week to meet ROK officials.
"Russia-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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14. DPRK Defections

The ROK has reported the arrival of 24 more defectors, including a school teacher and three families, from the DPRK. The arrivals brought the number of DPRK defectors to have reached the ROK this year to 238. Last year, a record 583 people defected.
"DPRK Defections" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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15. Inter-Korean Family Reunions

The ROK and DPRK have agreed to revive reunions of divided family members this month, after a visit to Pyongyang by a special envoy from the ROK prompted a resumption of dialogue between the nations, the Korea Red Cross said on Sunday. Under the agreement, 100 ROK citizens will visit the DPRK's Kumgang mountain resort for three days starting on April 28 and 100 DPRK citizens will come to an undecided venue in the ROK in the following three days, the agency said in a statement.
"Inter-Korean Family Reunions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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16. Arirang Festival of DPRK

The DPRK's Arirang Festival will be scaled down to a domestic event, a high- ranking ROK government official said Monday. DPRK had been touting the two- month event, scheduled to begin April 29, as a magnet for at least 200,000 foreign tourists. DPRK had planned 50 performances, each to be seen by 4,000 tourists, and observers had estimated that it might earn US$80 million if the festival were an international success.
"Arirang Festival of DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, ROK)

People's Republic of China

1. China Air Crash Accident

US aviation officials joined ROK and PRC investigators Wednesday to seek the cause of Monday's Air China crash that killed 126 people. The ROK government's emergency countermeasure center and six investigators from the US National Transportation Safety Board and the US Federal Aviation Administration showed the black boxes of the downed airliner to reporters. Investigating the cause of the accident, the ROK is focusing on possible pilot error. The PRC, in contrast, is suggesting that foul weather was the primary cause of the crash. The PRC's Xinhua News Agency described Gimhae airport's facilities as outdated.

"China Air Crash Accident" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, ROK)
"China Air Crash Accident" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, ROK)
"PRC Airliner Crash in ROK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)
"PRC Air Crash" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, ROK)
"PRC Air Rescue Work" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, ROK)

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2. US View on PRC Intelligence

Chief of US military forces in the Asia-Pacific Admiral Dennis Blair said Thursday the US and the PRC needed to share more intelligence to combat terrorism. "We're at the position right now where we have to go...down to some of these very specific details. Who's getting on that plane, what name the person is using, when are they arriving here," Blair said in a speech to a business audience in Hong Kong. "We haven't achieved really that level of intelligence exchange with China which we have with other countries," he said.

"US View on PRC Intelligence" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

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3. PRC Missile Buildup

The PRC lacks the military muscle to occupy Taiwan by force, but its accelerating deployment of missiles across the Taiwan Strait could prompt a worrisome arms buildup, US commander for the Pacific Admiral Dennis Blair said Thursday. "These missiles can cause a great deal of destruction to Taiwan," Blair told an audience of local business leaders. "They cannot make a decisive military difference yet, but if they continue to increase in number and accuracy there will come a time when they threaten the sufficient defense of Taiwan." That could prompt the US to further consider Taiwan's defense needs, Blair said. Blair told reporters earlier Thursday that worries of armed conflict between the two sides have been overblown. "I see far more stability and consistency in the underlying military relationships than perhaps you get by reading some of the accounts," Blair said.

"PRC Missile Buildup" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

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4. Cross-strait Relations

Taiwanese engineers who design semiconductors, missiles, jet fighters and submarines may be barred from working in the PRC, Taiwan's government said on Thursday. The restrictions are part of a plan to prevent the PRC from getting access to technologies developed in Taiwan, the National Science Council said in a statement. Under the National Science Council's plan, engineers involved in computer chip design, or in some aspects of silicon wafer technology, could be barred from working in the PRC, the statement said. The Council will send the plan to the Cabinet next week for approval, the statement said.

"Cross-strait Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

5. Taiwan WHO Membership
Taiwan took its battle for inclusion in the World Health Organization (WHO) to Washington, hoping to enlist firm US support for an intensifying campaign that has upset the PRC. The island's Health Minister Lee Ming-liang met senior US officials during his visit, including Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, ahead of next month's World Health Assembly, the WHO's most important meeting. Taiwan is expected to press for inclusion in the UN body as an observer under the legal designation "health entity."
"Taiwan WHO Membership" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, US)

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6. Taiwan's View of Cross-Strait Relations
Taiwanese envoy to the PRC Koo Chen-fu expressed that the PRC and Taiwan should follow the example of the Koreas and restart long-stalled talks. In a speech marking the ninth anniversary of a historic PRC-Taiwan meeting in Singapore, Koo noted that earlier this month the DPRK offered to renew talks with the ROK. "North and South Korea are ready to start a new round of contacts and dialogue," Koo said. "I think we should seize this and urge the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to be just like the Koreas and leave this low point behind us."
"Taiwan's View of Cross-Strait Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, US)

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7. PRC US Navy Port Call Approval
The PRC has approved a US navy port call in Hong Kong after denying permission last month for a similar visit, a US consular spokesperson in the territory said on Monday. However, spokesperson Barbara Zigli declined to give further details of the expected visit.
"PRC US Navy Port Call Approval" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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8. Taiwan Military Document Declassification
Taiwan's military has declassified documents about the island's secret plans to retake the PRC mainland in the 1950s - including a plan to fire nuclear artillery shells at a PRC port. Hoping the US military would provide it with nuclear weapons technology, the Taiwanese army drew up a plan in 1958 to fire nuclear shells at the PRC's southern port of Xiamen from the nearby Taiwanese- held islet of Kinmen the documents read. The report said the US military first worked on the plan with Taiwan's army but later backed off, fearing such an attack could cause a heavy death toll in the PRC and could also prompt the PRC to seek nuclear technology from the Soviet Union.
"Taiwan Military Document Declassification" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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9. Kissinger on PRC-US Relations
Thirty years after he helped to broker a Cold War thaw with the PRC, former national security adviser Henry Kissinger said Monday that the US must not let "needless disputes" upset ties with the PRC. Kissinger criticized those in the US who say the PRC is a rising threat to US interests and call for a stronger stance against the country. "Those who believe that confrontation with China can be a national strategy ... do not understand the dynamics of the current and foreseeable international system," Kissinger said. "We have extraordinary opportunities. We must not squander them in needless disputes."
"Kissinger on PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

Japan

1. Japan Domestic Politics

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and his party suffered a new blow Friday as the speaker of parliament's Upper House resigned over an aide's alleged scandal and a poll showed support had eroded further. Upper House speaker Yutaka Inoue stepped down from his position as speaker after threats by opposition parties to boycott business in the chamber. Inoue, in a closed-door session with ruling and opposition lawmakers Thursday, denied allegations by a magazine this month that an aide had received hefty kickbacks from a construction firm in connection with a public works project.
"Japan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, US)

2. DPRK-Japan Abductions

Japan said on Wednesday that it is trying to arrange talks with the DPRK for later this month on the issue of abducted Japanese nationals. Asked whether Japanese and DPRK Red Cross officials would hold talks on the issue by the end of this month, top government spokesman Yasuo Fukuda told reporters: "Yes, we are making adjustments in that direction."
"Japan-DPRK Abduction Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, US)
"DPRK-Japan Abductions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, Japan)
"Japanese Abduction Victims" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 18, US)

3. Japanese Logistical Support for US

Japan and the US agreed Tuesday to hold a meeting in Tokyo in early May to confirm the need for Japan's armed forces to continue supporting the US military campaign in Afghanistan, Japanese officials said. The US told Japan that the US military's need for support will continue because the fight against the al-Qaeda network is expected to last beyond May 19, the end of the term of the deployment. The Japanese government is seeking to extend the support duration. Japan also called on the US to improve the implementation of the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement and redouble efforts to prevent rape and other crimes committed by US service members in Japan.
"Japanese Logistical Support for US" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, Japan)

4. Japanese New Envoy to CD

Political science scholar Kuniko Inoguchi is the newly appointed ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In explaining her dedication to her new post, Inoguchi proposed that ordinary people be allowed to have a say in policy- making for disarmament. She also suggested a disarmament fund be established and called on schools to put more emphasis on ways of achieving disarmament. Inoguchi said, "I want to convey the notion of sustainable disarmament. I hope to persuade the United States to commit to this."
"Japanese New Envoy to CD" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, Japan)

5. Japan Domestic Opposition to Defense Bills

Faced with strong resistance from the opposition, the Japanese government submitted legislation to beef up military authority in case the country is attacked. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi presented a set of three bills to the Diet, bills that would expand Japan's military role and give the government new powers in case of foreign attack, a day after his cabinet approved the documents at a special meeting. With a majority in parliament, the three ruling parties -- Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party, the New Komeito Party and the Conservative Party -- hope to pass the bills during the current Diet session, which ends June 19. But most opposition parties have vowed to abolish the bills.

"Japanese Homeland Defense Bills" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 19, Japan)
"Japan Domestic Opposition to Defense Bills" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, Japan)
"Japan Homeland Defense Bill" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

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6. East Asia Free Trade Area

Japan is considering establishing an East Asia free-trade zone well ahead of 2010, Japanese trade ministry officials said Saturday. The envisioned free- trade zone would encompass Japan and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as the PRC, the ROK, Hong Kong and Taiwan. While some circles in Japan see the PRC's rapidly expanding economy as a threat, Japanese manufacturers have been moving to locate parts of their operations in the PRC, and bilateral platforms for dialogue to prevent friction have developed, notably in relation to the recent dispute over farm produce.

"East Asia Free Trade Area" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, Japan)

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7. MSDF and Mystery Ship

Japanese Defense Agency plan to change the legal framework under which the Self- Defense Forces (SDF) vessels are dispatched to investigate unidentified ships, agency sources said Monday. The move is an attempt to avoid criticism that the agency has excessively broadened its interpretation of "research purposes" under which SDF vessels have been dispatched. It is also aimed at ensuring they can be promptly dispatched in emergencies.

"MSDF and Mystery Ship" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 17, Japan)

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8. Japan Koizumi Approval Ratings

Support for Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has stopped falling on the back of a four percent rise in endorsement from women, a poll showed Tuesday. Supporters outpolled detractors 42 percent to 40 percent, a reverse from the last survey two weeks ago, when non-supporters, at 44 percent, outnumbered supporters at 40 percent, an Asahi Shimbun poll said. However, "There has been no significant recovery since the rapid drop in popularity following the dismissal of former foreign minister Makiko Tanaka," the paper said.

"Japan Koizumi Approval Ratings" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, US)

9. Japan-PRC Relations

Japan wants to create standing committees to discuss agriculture and three other sensitive trade issues with the PRC under a proposed framework for bilateral economic talks, Japan's government officials said on Thursday. Japanese officials say the creation of panels on agriculture, intellectual property, light manufacturing goods and quarantine systems is necessary because these areas could strain bilateral trade relations at any time. Japan's prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi, hopes to agree on the framework with PRC Premier, Zhu Rong Ji during their meeting slated for Friday, the officials said.
"Japan-PRC Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, Japan)

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

President Pervez Musharraf was quoted in Indian and Pakistani newspapers as having told a German magazine that Pakistan might use nuclear weapons against India "as a last means of defence." India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee refused to comment on the story. Russia has stated its commitment to help India develop nuclear energy.
"Related News and Analysis" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

Afghanistan's interim government has reportedly foiled an attempted coup by alleged supporters of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami. Hezb-e-islami has denied involvement in the attempted coup. The Aghan interim authority reportedly did not inform the International Peacekeeping commanders of the arrest of alleged plotters. There were also reports of an assassination attempt on Afghan Defence Minister Muhammad Qasim Fahim. Writing for the daily Dawn, Najamuddin Shaikh argues that the successful implementation of the Bonn Agreement would be in Pakistan's interest.
"Current Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

2. Reconstruction

International agencies have issued an appeal to donors for $128 million for humanitarian aid.
"Reconstruction" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

3. Humanitarian Issues

A UN team is investigating three mass graves found in Bamiyan. The UNHCR estimates that 400,000 Afghan refugees will return from Iran during the current year. An estimated 150,000 refugees have already returned from Pakistan. UNHCR is reportedly running out of funds to facilitate the return of Afghan refugees. Afghan civilians hurt by US bombings have demanded compensation.
"Humanitarian Issues" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. Analysis
In his essay for the daily Dawn, Ghulam Umar, a retired Pakistani General, urges India to pull it troops back from the border.
"Analysis" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

2. Kashmir Situation
Indian and Pakistani newspapers reported continued political violence and unrest in Jammu and Kashmir. According to unnamed official sources about 4,000 Pakistani militants are waiting for the opening of mountain passes to cross into Kashmir. A report in the daily Hindustan Times states that 38,104 weapons, including 23,500 AK type rifles and 9144 pistols and revolvers were recovered between January 1990 and December 2001.
"Kashmir Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

Pakistan and India

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation
President Pervez Musharraf has announced that a referendum asking for the extension of his tenure for five years will be held later this month. He has also stated that the government would make "essential" amendments to the Constitution before the scheduled general elections in October. A report in the daily News suggests that the October elections will be held on a non-party basis. Pakistani political parties, as well as newspapers, have sharply criticized the planned referendum. The constitutional legality of the referendum is also uncertain. The Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca has stated that the US considers the planned referendum an "internal matter" for Pakistan.
"Pakistan and India" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

2. India: Domestic Situation Communal violence continued in the Indian
state of Gujarat. Well know social activist Medha Patkar was mobbed at Sabarmati Ashram that was founded by Gandhi. Newspapers had different opinions on the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's recent visit to Gujarat. Many Indian politicians, social activists, and historians have called for a nation- wide movement against communalism. Sumanta Banerjee's essay in the Economic and Political Weekly argues that India is a "soil fertile with religious prejudices and hatred."
"India: Domestic Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka
In his first press conference in twelve years, Velupillai Prabakaran, the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), indicated his openness to renouncing the armed struggle. Sudha Ramachandran's essay in the Asia Times takes a brief look at the life of Prabakaran. The peace process in the country has made possible the opening of the main highway connecting the north with the south of the country.
"Sri Lanka" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)

2. Nepal
Many deaths were reported as the violence in Nepal continued. Nepali political parties have forged an alliance to fight the Maoist insurgency. Some Nepali leaders have asked for a political solution to end the insurgency.
"Nepal" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #13)
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