Connectivity 8.7.97

Recommended Citation

"Connectivity 8.7.97", Aprenet, August 07, 1997, https://nautilus.org/aprenet/connectivity-8-7-97/

Connectivity
Asia-Pacific Trade, Environment and Development Monitor

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AUG. 7th, VOL. 1 NO. 8

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Regional News

Canada Looks Abroad for Nukes after Shutdown
August 15, 1997 - Source: The Christian Science Monitor, New York Times

According to the Christian Science Monitor, CANDU (Canadian Deuterium Uranium) is seeking greater export possibilities in response to the announcement that the Canadian government plans to shut-down seven nuclear reactors (one-third of Canada's nuclear power production) because of costs and operating safety issues. According to CANDU officials, Korea, China, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia are all seeking nuclear technology from Canada. This may change, according to Kristen Ostling of the Campaign for Nuclear Phaseout, as the recent shutdowns are "going to give

[these countries] something to think about."

Nations Agree to Share Costs in Controlling Haze

August 12-14, 1997 - Source: The Star, Straits Times, Reuters

Last week Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei agreed to step up their efforts to control the ground and forest fires currently causing transportation and health problems throughout the region, according to a Star report. The eight hour meeting, held under the auspices of the ASEAN Task Force on trans-boundary haze pollution, resulted in Indonesia agreeing to use water bombers to suppress the fires and to strengthen enforcement against illegal forest fires. Later in the week, according to the Star, Malaysian and Singaporean senior officials agreed to share the cost of providing the water bombers to Indonesia.

Indonesian Environment Minister, Surna Djajadiningrat , said strong action would be taken against those setting the illegal forest fires. Under current Indonesian law offender could face up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to 100 million rupiah, according to the report. Indonesian officials claim the fires - which have been exacerbated by unusually dry conditions attributed to the El Nino effect - are started by entrepreneurs clearing forest land for plantation use.

US, Japan Key to Climate Talks

August 12, 1997 - Source: New York Times, Associated Press

At the conclusion of climate talks earlier this month in Bonn, the United States and Japan emerged as the two decisive players in reaching an agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions, according to the New York Times. Japanese and American proposals are "the key to the success of the process," said Raul Estrada-Oyuela, the Argentine chairman of the U.N.-sponsored talks. Both countries are seen as pivotal players in the talks in light of their economic power and massive levels of greenhouse gas emissions. However, according to the report, both countries are increasingly seen as the 800 pound gorillas of the talks as they continue to drag their feet in adopting emission limits.

"Without the U.S., nothing will happen -- it is absolutely crucial," said Bert Metz, a climate negotiator from the Netherlands

According to the report, American negotiators in Bonn privately told a number of major countries that the Clinton administration was strongly committed to binding action and that his government was working to complete the specifics of its proposal. The Japanese took a similar approach, as Toshiaki Tanabe, the chief Japanese delegate in Bonn, acknowledged the concern about his country and the United States. Like the Americans, he said in an interview, Japan is "still in the process of working out our figures."

China

Environmentally protected cities recognized in China

August 15, 1997 - Source: China Daily

The Chinese National Environmental Protection Agency (Nepa), has initiated a program to reward model environmentally protected cities. The new program grants the honor to cities demonstrating improved environmental quality, rapid socio-economic growth, and progress in implementing sustainable development strategies. Zhangjiagang in the Jiangsu Province was the first city to earn the honor last year.

China looks to market reforms

August 7, 1997 - Source: The Associated Press

Earlier this month, President Jiang Zemin announced plans to rely on market forces to develop China's economy. Jiang outlined a series of reforms which will, according to the report, bring China to a more competitive level and away from purely state-owned enterprise. Jiang's suggestions include selling of assets to clear debt, privatizing shares of companies, listing shares on overseas stock markets and use of the South Korean and Japanese models of merging small weak enterprises with large, strong firms.

Chinese Foundation Promotes Environmentally Responsible Business
August 5, 1997 - Source: China Daily

To solve the problem of increasingly scarce funds for environmental projects, the Chinese Environmental Protection Foundation has proposed special funds to support businesses that produce environmentally friendly products. Foundation president, Qu Geping, has praised the 1 million yuan ($120,400) donation from Jiangsu Banshen Co Ltd and urges other companies to follow suit.

Indonesia

Suharto to Win "Strongman Powers"
August 19, 1997 - Source: South China Morning Post

Later this week the Indonesian Parliament is set to reactivate a decree which would give President Suharto extra powers to act against "subversion and security threats," according the South China Morning Post. The decree, originally issued in 1966, would give the President the authority to act against threats to the 1945 constitution, or to the state ideology, pancasila. According to the report, Suharto did not ask the assembly to reactivate the decree, but merely to consider it.

Japan

Japan offers tax breaks as emissions reduction incentive
August 19, 1997 - Source: The Daily Yomiuri

In an effort to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the Japanese Transport Ministry has announced tax incentives for the purchase of new high-efficiency autos available this fall. The new cars combine use of batteries and gasoline engines and reduce average emissions by one half, according to the report. Already, tax breaks are offered for alternative-fuel vehicles such as electric and methanol-powered cars. The tax breaks currently in place for manufacturers are to be tightened in 2001 and will now aim at diesel-engine vehicles as well. The Transport Ministry also plans a tax break based on vehicle fuel efficiency that will be based on manufacturers' state of technology in their 1998 proposals.

Malaysia

Malaysia to enforce ban on illegal incineration
August 16, 1997 - Source: The Star

In light of the recent haze problem in Malaysia, the Department of Energy (DOE) has banned all forms of open burning with plans to enforce the new law stringently. Along with the ban on illegal incineration, the DOE air quality plan involves promoting use of catalytic converters cleaner fuel.

Malaysian industries urged to seek cleaner production
August 14, 1997 - Source: The Star

To avoid the cost of treating hazardous waste and to reduce the amount of waste entering landfills, the Malaysian Department of Energy (DOE) has issued a statement urging industries to reduce waste in initial stages of production. Along with this effort, the DOE is prepared to fine industries

who do not take steps to reduce waste and clean up production, according to the report. Raja Rokiah Raja Saigon, DOE director, said that Malaysian industry will be uncompetitive in the world market due to growing waste disposal costs unless steps are taken toward waste reduction.

Malaysia Attempts to Boost Fish Stocks
July 31, 1997 - Source: The Star

According to a recent Star report, the Malaysian government is spending RM2.5 million on unjam, or fish attracting devices, to boost yields for coastal fisherfolk. The Malaysian Fisheries Development Board reports 378 such devices are currently in use. According to Deputy Agriculture Minister Mahmud Mansor, the programs targets implementation of the devices by fisherfolk working within five nautical miles of shore. In addition to attracting increased fish populations, the project has reportedly increased the income of over 25,000 traditional fishermen.

States Told to Review Mega-Projects
July 23, 1997 - Source: The Star (Malaysia)

Malaysian Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has directed state governments to review their "mega" projects to ensure that they comply with all local and national laws. "We want to ensure that the development procedures were complied with, including the construction of low-cost houses, provision of basic amenities and carrying out of environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies," the former acting PM told reporters. "The move showed the state's concern over various aspects including the environment," Anwar added. The call comes in response to the ongoing controversy over the Bakun Dam project.

Malaysian Highway Plan Meets Criticism from Environmentalists
July 25, 1997 - Source: Asia Times

A highway proposed to run through western Malaysia is a potential threat to the biodiversity, forests, water supply and indigenous peoples of the ecologically sensitive Malaysian highlands, according to an Asia Times report. Over 13 NGOs, known as the Malaysian Hills Network (MHN), have come together to bring attention to the issue which they call an environmental disaster. The project plans will continue unless the government ordered environmental impact assessment shows the project as environmentally harmful. Malaysia's Berjaya Group, the contractors of this project, are known for their large development projects world wide.

Malaysia May Get its First Green Political Party
July 18, 1997 - The Star

According to the Star, Malaysia may get its first green party -- Parti Hijau Malaysia -- if its application

is accepted by the Selangor Registrar of Societies. The group was formed in response to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's challenge to non-governmental organizations to stand for election if they were serious in their cause. "Unlike other international green movements, we are not opposing the government's development projects, but seek to ensure there is balanced development in the country," according to Ravindran Nekoo, a lawyer and one of the three founders of the party. Mr. Ravindran added that the party would also protect the interests of the nation in countering accusations on environmental matters by foreigners. A government spokesperson said the application will take between four and six months before it was accepted or rejected.

Marshall Islands

Marshall Islands nuclear waste storage plan meets Hawaiian opposition
August 14, 1997 - Source: Marshall Islands Journal

A recent Honolulu City Council resolution against nuclear waste storage in the Marshall Islands was yet another reminder of the region's opposition to the proposed nuclear waste storage site on the Marshall Islands. According to the report, opposition to the plan from neighboring Pacific Island nations, Hawaii, and within the Marshall Islands should be enough to freeze feasibility studies of the nuclear waste storage site. However, according to Jaluit Senator Alvin Jacklick, the involvement of the major American corporation B&W Nuclear Environmental Services means that the proposal is still on the table

Korea

ROK-Japan Territorial Waters Dispute
August 5, 1997 - Source: Korea Herald

(NAPSNet)

Legislators plan to discuss laws aimed at preserving the ecosystem on and around the disputed Tokto islets during September's regular National Assembly session. A dozen ruling and opposition lawmakers, including those who once served as environment ministers, have recently submitted bills to the National Assembly. The legislation would also help the nation assert its sovereignty over Tokto, said Representative Kim Zoong-wie, chief policymaker of the ruling New Korea Party. Under the bills, the environment minister would be obligated to work out a new plan to help preserve the islands' ecosystem, and there would be a ban on the construction of housing, reclamation, and logging on remote islands groups, including Tokto. Tokto, lying in the East Sea between the ROK and Japan, has long been the subject of rival sovereignty claims by the two countries. In a bid to lodge claims to Tokto, both countries have declared their own 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zones (EEZ) according to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, causing an overlap of their territorial waters. As part of their efforts to solve the territorial dispute, Seoul and Tokyo have held a series of negotiations on revision of the ROK-Japan fishery treaty. The fishing treaty, the basic law governing fishing operations in the waters between them, requires both countries to reach an agreement before drawing up a new boundary between their territorial waters. The talks, however, have recently hit trouble as Japan unilaterally used a straight baseline to expand its territorial sea boundary which the ROK refuses to accept. Japan has since seized ROK fishing boats crossing into its new territorial seas. In protest against the seizures, the ROK National Assembly adopted a resolution late last month, demanding Japan's apology and a promise to ensure the incidents do not recur. Lawmakers on the National Assembly's Agriculture, Maritime and Fisheries Committee also plan to make a protest visit to Japan later this month.

Government Urged to Upgrade Environmental Standard
July 18, 1997 - Source: Korea Herald

According to a Korea Herald report, the Korean government is being urged to upgrade local environmental standards to international levels to meet the challenges of the growing trend among industrialized nations of linking trade with the environment. The move to upgrade Korean laws, according to the report, comes in response to growing domestic and international consumer demand for environmentally benign products; to meet obligations of multilateral environmental agreements; and to be able to meet ISO 14,000 standards.

According to the report, the voluntary environmental standard, has become a de facto obligation, as it is often used as non tariff barriers by developed countries. The Korea Herald story did not indicate

who was pressuring the government.

North Korea

DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

July 23, 1997 - Source: Chosun Ilbo

(NAPSNet Report)

According to recent information, the DPRK has already begun construction in preparation to receive nuclear waste from Taiwan. Green Korea disclosed a blueprint of nuclear waste facilities which the DPRK has sent to the Taiwanese government. The blueprints, received by the Taiwan Power Corporation at the end of May, were attached to plans outlining the transportation and treatment of nuclear waste. The Taiwan Atomic Energy Committee has finished preliminary reviews of the plan, and disclosed to the local press on July 12 that two tunnels are currently under construction in the Pyongsan region of the DPRK. According to the blueprints, the treatment facilities are located in the southwest region of the DPRK, 120 km south of Pyongyang and 95 km north of the DMZ. The DPRK is planning to build three storage areas with capacities of 15,000 tons, 10,000 tons and 30,000 tons respectively, expanding to 60,000 tons in two years. According to DPRK sources, no residents are located within 5 km of the area. A Green Korea official stated that Taiwan is to send a survey team to the DPRK in July and wishes to make its first shipment in September.

Philippines

Steps to Curb Poaching in Philippine Territorial Waters

August 6, 1997 - Source: CNA

On August 6th, the Philippine Senate approved the latest version of the 1997 Fisheries Code which will impose large penalties on foreign poachers in Philippine waters. The proposal is aimed to help "protect our remaining marine resources against poaching by foreign fishermen and ensure that only our local fishermen benefit from the bounty of our seas," says Senator Leticia Ramos Shahani. Illegal fishing by mainland Chinese in Philippine waters has occurred regularly and has contributed to a decrease in regional fish stocks, according to the report.

Thailand

Japanese Group to Research Thai Mangroves

July 24, 1997 - Source: Asian Wall Street Journal

According to a Wall Street Journal report, the Japanese non-governmental group, Research Association of Global Mangroves, is set to begin work on a major mangrove reforestation project in Thailand. The group will begin a feasibility study later this year on reforesting over 1,000 hectares of seashore in Nakhon Si Thammarat district. If the study gives the go-ahead, the group, with the cooperation of the Thai government, will begin a five-year reforestation project in the area in mid-1998. The project's estimated 200 million yen (US$1.7 million) costs are expected to be financed by the Nature Conservation Fund of the Keidanren. Japan is the world's largest importer of prawns, importing 304,813 metric tons; Thailand supplies 11% of that volume.

United States

US Officials Say China Is Not Ready for WTO

August 4, 1997 - Source: New York Times

According to a New York Times report, the Clinton administration doubts that they will reach broad agreement this year to admit China to the World Trade Organization, an accord they once hoped would be the centerpiece of Chinese President Jiang Zemin's state visit to Washington in October. The response came after talks ended between the two countries last Friday in Geneva. According to US officials, the talks proved inconclusive as China did not offer any comprehensive large-scale commitments to open its markets and allow foreign competitors to take on state-owned Chinese industries. "China's offers were tepid," said Charlene Barshefsky, the U.S. trade representative. "This was a view shared by a number of our trading partners," including Japan and Europe, which have pressed for quicker admission for China under relaxed rules, according to the report.

US Lawmakers Push for China to be Included on Climate Deal
July 25, 1997 - Source: Reuters

According to the Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Benjamin Gilman, China must be required to limit its industrial pollution under an international treaty on global warming in order to get congressional support for the deal. Currently the Clinton administration is pursuing a stance on the treaty that would gradually draw China and other developing countries into the treaty, however, it exempts them from the immediate obligations, developed countries will have to face. Gilman has signed onto a resolution generally supporting the administration's position, however, with a clause which specifies that all countries, "and especially China," face the same timetables to limit their emissions. "We think we have the concept about right. No one should be exempt. We emit the most, so we have to act first, but others have to phase in over time," said Undersecretary of State Tim Wirth.

Bill to End Tuna Embargo Passed

July 26 through August 1, 1997 - Sources: The Associated Press, The Los Angeles Times, USIA

The US congress recently adopted the Senate 'compromise' bill that will end the US embargo on yellowfin tuna from Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama and Vanuatu. With lifting the ban, the bill also commissions a three year study to determine the impact of new net-setting methods on dolphins. If the findings of the study report that dolphins are harmed, the US will not allow the 'dolphin-safe' label to be imposed on tuna imports. If dolphins are not found to be harmed by the nets, the 'dolphin-safe' label will be allowed. Regardless of the findings, an independent monitor will now be required on all tuna fishing vessels to assure that no dolphins were killed or injured in the harvesting process. This way, according to the bill's proponents, greater integrity will be attached to the 'dolphin-safe' label because only the tuna approved by the monitor that is harvested without killing or injuring dolphins (regardless of the fishing method used) will be given the label.

US Announces 'Big Push' for Fast-Track Authority
July 24, 1997 - Source: United States Information Agency

According to a USIA report, the Clinton administration plans a "big push" in the coming weeks to convince Congress to approve "fast track" authority. According to White House spokesman Mike McCurry, the administration's strategy for convincing congress is centered "principally on the fact that free trade has been a critical element of our economic strategy, which is producing very significant results for the American people. And the president needs the authority to continue those types of agreements that will keep markets open and keep American prosperity rising." McCurry said the White House has delayed proposing fast-track legislation to Congress because officials were concentrating on getting the balanced budget agreement, and hampered by a dispute between Democrats and Republicans over whether labor and environmental concerns should be included in trade negotiations. The administration has been without fast track since 1994.

Connectivity is a bi-monthly information service reporting on trade, environment and development issues in the Asia-Pacific. The *Monitor* is emailed to members of the ***Asia Pacific Regional Environment Network*** (APRENet). To register for this free service please fill out the on-line registration form at or send email to nautilus@nautilus.org

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APRENet is funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development
2342 Shattuck Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94704USA
http://www.nautilus.org
nautilus@nautilus.org

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org