

# NAPSNet Daily Report 17 June, 2008

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## Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 17 June, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, June 17, 2008,  
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-17-june-2008/>

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## **I. NAPSNet**

### **1. DPRK and ASEAN**

Bangkok Post ("NORTH KOREA WILL ATTEND ASEAN MEET", Singapore, 2008/06/16) reported that the DPRK will attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) meeting in Singapore next month. Asean foreign ministers agreed to invite the DPRK to sign Asean's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) during an informal conference in Singapore in February. Pyongyang joined the Asean Regional Forum in 2000 and has diplomatic relations with Asean nations. If the DPRK signs the TAC, it would be considered a great advancement for peace-building in the Asia-Pacific region. TAC is a regional code of conduct which encourages the peaceful resolution of conflict through dialogue. TAC has been adopted by 24 countries, including the 10 Asean nations, including Japan, PRC, ROK, Russia, France, Australia, India, Pakistan, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Mongolia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. This covers 3.7 billion people. The EU is also applying to join the treaty.

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### **2. DPRK Food Supply**

Yonhap News ("N. KOREAN LEADER MAKES TOUR TO ENCOURAGE FARMERS ", Seoul, 2008/06/14) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il inspected a state-run cooperative farm in the country's northern province, the country's official news agency said, amid reports that the hungry nation may face yet another famine due to soaring grain prices and poor harvests. The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Kim "provided field guidance to the tidal flat reclamation site on Taegye Islet and the Sinam Co-op Farm in Ryongchon County of North Phyongan Province." On the farm, "he praised the agricultural working people there for devoting their patriotic zeal, aware of being responsible for the nation's agricultural production," the KCNA added.

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### **3. Japan Quake**

ABC News ("SURPRISE QUAKE SHOWS JAPAN'S VULNERABILITY: EXPERTS", 2008/06/15) reported that Saturday's powerful earthquake in Japan struck at a previously unknown fault line, raising new alarm that the dreaded "Big One" could hit anywhere in the country. The 7.2-magnitude quake was the most powerful to strike inland Japan in eight years, killing at least nine people and triggering massive landslides. Japan's meteorological agency admitted it did not consider the inland area at major risk. Japan has started a world-first early warning system for earthquakes by monitoring seismic waves. The system kicked in on Saturday, offering alerts several seconds in advance. A government study in 2006 warned that a 7.3 magnitude earthquake in Tokyo would kill 4,700 people and damage 440,000 buildings.

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### **4. Japan on Food Crisis**

Press Association ("JAPAN IN PLEA TO EASE FOOD CRISIS", 2008/06/16) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has urged world governments to step up agriculture production to ease the global crisis over rising food prices. Fukuda said he would focus on the need to boost agricultural production as well as access to clean water and climate change at the July 7-9 summit of the Group of Eight leading nations in Hokkaido, which he will chair. Food prices have risen worldwide in recent months due to a combination of high oil prices, growing demand, extreme weather, higher biofuel production and speculation. This has triggered protests in parts of Africa and Asia and raised fears of widespread malnutrition and economic instability. On Saturday, G8 finance ministers representing US, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Russia, Italy and Canada, urged oil producers to boost output to help stabilise record-high oil and food prices, calling the situation a serious threat to global economic growth. The world economy now faces "headwinds" because of the recent rise in prices, the G-8 ministers said in a joint statement at the conclusion of two days of talks in Osaka.

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### **5. Japan on Immigration**

The Age ("DRASTIC RISE IN JAPAN'S MIGRANT INTAKE URGED", Tokyo, 2008/06/17) reported that a group of 80 politicians from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has called for a drastic increase in the ratio of immigrants in Japan to 10% of the population — about 10 million people — within 50 years. Presently the country's 2.08 million registered foreigners make up 1.6% of the population. On current demographic trends, Japan will lose 70% of its workforce within 40 years. By then more than 40% of the population will be over 65. Analysts agree that unless dramatic action is taken, the damage to the world's second-biggest economy will be disastrous. If Japan is to rely on immigrants as a solution, it will need to put aside generations of wariness and, in some cases, outright mistrust of foreigners.

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## 6. Hydrogen-Cell Car

Associated Press ("HONDA ROLLS OUT NEW ZERO-EMISSION CAR", Takanezawa, Japan, 2008/06/16) reported that Honda rolled out its new zero-emission, hydrogen fuel cell car. The FCX Clarity, which runs on hydrogen and electricity, emits only water and none of the noxious fumes believed to induce global warming. It is also two times more energy efficient than a gas-electric hybrid and three times that of a standard gasoline-powered car, the company says. The biggest obstacles standing in the way of wider adoption of fuel cell vehicles are cost and the dearth of hydrogen fuel stations. The company has not revealed how much each car costs to make, and it is unclear when, or if, the car will be available for mass-market sales. Takeo has set a target for 2018, but meeting that goal will depend on whether Honda can significantly lower development and assembly costs as well as market reaction to fuel cells.

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## 7. ROK Protests

International Herald Tribune ("KOREA'S NEW GENERATION OF 'WEB 2.0' PROTESTERS", Seoul, 2008/06/16) reported that the internet has facilitated a new style of organized protests and presents an unprecedented challenge for Ro Korean authorities. The police investigating who organized the ROK's biggest anti-government protests in two decades ended up in the cyberspace. When Lee agreed in April to lift a five-year-old import ban on U.S. beef despite widespread fears that the meat might not be safe from mad cow disease, it quickly became a hot topic on the Internet. When a high school student began a campaign on the internet calling for President Lee's impeachment, it gathered 1.3 million signatures within a week. The police were caught off-guard on May 2 when thousands of teenagers networking through Agora and coordinating via text messages poured into central Seoul, holding candles and chanting "No to mad cow!"

Xinhua ("S. KOREA'S CONSTRUCTION DRIVERS STRIKE OVER FUEL PRICE HIKE", Seoul, 2008/06/16) reported that thousands of Ro Korean construction vehicle drivers walked off the job in a nationwide strike over rising fuel costs. Yonhap News Agency reported that about 8,000 striking drivers held a rally in Seoul after two large industrial unions comprising over 40 percent of dump truck drivers went on a strike calling for greater fuel subsidies and a legalized minimum wage. Container traffic dropped to less than 50 percent of normal capacity on average while exports worth 1.7 billion U.S. dollars and imports worth 1.8 billion U.S. dollars have been stalled, according to the government.

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## 8. PRC Flooding

Xinhua ("SOUTH CHINA FACES DANGER OF SERIOUS FLOODING", Guangzhou, 2008/06/16) reported South PRC's Guangdong Province was facing the threat of serious flooding as two swollen rivers converged in the Pearl River Delta, resulting in what is threatening to be the worst flood in 50 years. The runoff in Xijiang River was 46,800 cubic meters per second and in Beijiang River 15,200 cubic meters per second before they met each other in Foshan City. The Guangdong provincial flood control headquarters ordered local governments to reinforce river embankments in nine cities,

including Guangzhou and to prepare to evacuate people in danger. The Pearl River Delta is a major manufacturing base of the country, while Guangdong posted a gross domestic product (GDP) of more than 2.59 trillion yuan (375 billion U.S. dollars) in 2006, ranking the first on the PRC mainland.

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## **9. Cross-Straits Relations**

Reuters ("TAIWAN TO RELAX RULES FOR BROKERAGES TO INVEST IN CHINA", Taipei, 2008/06/16) reported that Taiwan's securities regulator plans to allow the island's brokerages to invest up to 30 percent of their net assets in the PRC, up from 10 percent previously. The Financial Supervisory Commission will also scrap a restriction requiring a Taiwanese brokerage to invest in a stake of at least 25 percent in a PRC peer, an official said, making it easier for a flow of investments. Though the move still requires approval from the cabinet, Taiwan media said the cabinet would likely give the green light as soon as next Thursday. The move is part of Taiwan's plans to improve trade ties with PRC under the administration of new President Ma Ying-jeou, who favours closer relations with the mainland.

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## **10. US-PRC Economic Relations**

Agence France-Presse ("US, CHINA SET FOR TALKS TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC CONCERNS", Washington, 2008/06/15) reported that top policy makers from the United States and PRC hold talks this week in a bid to ease currency concerns, counter protectionist pressures and boost energy security. The cabinet-level talks led by US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and PRC Vice Premier Wang Qishan take place as the world's richest and most rapidly growing economies grapple with rocketing oil and food prices, higher inflation and financial market instability. As the PRC may be reluctant to sign on to policies that could be revamped by any new US president, the Bush administration is pushing for breakthroughs in energy security in upcoming talks, experts say. Democratic White House candidate Barack Obama has promised to review US free trade policies if he wins the presidential election in November. The United States and PRC are the world's top two polluters as well as net importers of oil, but are not part of the Kyoto Protocol which limits emissions.

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## **11. PRC Death Penalty**

Reuters ("CHINA URGED TO CURB EXECUTIONS AHEAD OF OLYMPICS", Hong Kong, 2008/06/16) reported that a global coalition of rights groups urged the PRC on Monday to curb use of the death penalty ahead of the Olympics, but noted that judicial reforms had led to a "significant" drop in the number of executions since last year. The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty handed a petition to Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong carrying the signatures of 256,000 people from 23 countries, calling on Chinese President Hu Jintao to grant a moratorium on executions.

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## **12. Russian Weapons**

Reuters ("RUSSIA STEPS UP DESTRUCTION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS", Moscow, 2008/06/16) reported that Russia will open a new facility to continue destroying its formidable arsenal of chemical weapons, the world's biggest, as part of its drive to eliminate all such weapons by 2012. Russia and its Cold War-era foe the United States held more than 71,000 metric tonnes of deadly chemical agents in 1997, more than 90 percent of the world's chemical weapons stockpiles. Russia's arsenal alone stood at 40,000 tonnes. Under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention, Moscow and Washington committed themselves to completely destroy all their stockpiles of chemical weapons by 2012.

Reuters ("RUSSIA SAYS TO REPLACE UKRAINE-MADE MISSILE PARTS", Moscow, 2008/06/16) reported that Russia is to replace Ukrainian-made engines in its cruise missiles with local ones. Moscow's statement was the second signal in as many days of Russia's fierce opposition to its neighbour's entry into NATO, and came as NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer was visiting Ukraine. Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov said Ukraine would lose industry ties with Russia and suffer reduced trade cooperation if it joined NATO. Yevgeny Kablov, director general of the All-Russian Aviation Materials Research Institute, said Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had ordered officials to revise some ties with Ukraine.

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## **II. PRC Report**

### **13. PRC Civil Society and the 512 Earthquake**

NGO Communication Net, <http://www.ngocn.org/> ("AGENCIES CO-LAUNCH "NEW HOME PLAN" FOR POST-DISASTER RECONSTRUCTION", 2008/06/16) reported that Chengdu Roots & Shoots Environment and Cultural Communication Centre, Yunnan Development Training Institute, Wheatfield Project, Civil and Social Development Research Center of Sun Yat-sen University and other related agencies jointly launched a "New Home Plan" for post-disaster reconstruction. It is designed to build a platform for NGOs to participate in the reconstruction. The early site plans to be in Longmemnshan Town of Pengzhou City, relying on the Chengdu Roots & Shoots Centre. At present, the plan is considered to cut in from the following aspects: 1 disaster volunteer training; 2 community redevelopment; 3 research of civil participation.

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### **14. PRC Environment**

Xinhua (Yu Wenjing, "EARTHQUAKE MAKES WILD PANDA FACE 3 THREATS", 2008/06/13) reported that because of the mountain landslide and large areas of damaged forest, 1,400 wild pandas face the triple threats of habitat destruction, food and water source depletion, and "reproductive isolation". Most parts of Min Mountain, north of Qionglai Mountain and south of Qinling Mountain, which are locate in the main area affected by the earthquake, are the main

habitats of the PRC's wild pandas. There are more than 1,400 wild pandas in those areas, accounting for about 88 percent of the whole wild population. In the quake, 49 panda nature reserves were damaged to varying degrees, and 80 million mu of panda habitat was completely destroyed.

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## **15. PRC Floods**

Xinhua Net, www.xinhua.net ("38 MILLION PEOPLE AFFECTED BY TORRENTIAL RAIN AND FLOODS", 2008/06/13) reported that torrential rain and floods across the southern PRC have claimed at least 57 lives over the past 10 days, the government said Sunday. More than 38 million people in Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Guizhou and Yunnan provinces, and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region have been hit by the floods. And about 1.3 million people have been moved to safer places, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said. The economic loss because of the rain and floods has reached 10.6 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion), with crops on 902,000 hectares being destroyed. More than 45,000 houses have collapsed and 140,000 houses have been damaged.

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## **III. ROK Report**

### **16. DPRK Internal Situation**

Goodfriends ("SINUJU ECONOMIC SLUMP DRAWN OUT", 2008/06/16) reported that the economic slump in Sinuiju is becoming more drawn out due to rigid inspections. The quantity of imports has dramatically decreased, and trade in Sinuiju is much less active than before. Decreased imports along with increased oil prices makes traders to visit there. Dealers say visiting Naseon or Cheongjin makes better profit.

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### **17. Inter-Korean Relations**

Tongilnews ("6.15 CEREMONY OPENING SPEECH REVEALS SHARED STANCE OF BOTH KOREAS", 2008/06/17) wrote that the 6.15 joint declaration 8th anniversary ceremony held on June 15-16 showed that both Koreas share a view on the current situation, including the cause of it and the solution. Both agreed that 6.15 joint declarations and 10.4 declarations are in large part ignored. Both pointed out that the ROK government is responsible for that. While the ROK side expected private activity to soothe the problem, the DPRK suggested that the '6.15 national joint committee' play a key role.

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### **18. DPRK-PRC Relations**

Yonhapnews ("XI JINPING VISITS DRPK ", 2008/06/16) reported that the PRC Vice President Xi Jinping, who is expected to succeed Hu Jintao, decided to visit the DPRK on the 17<sup>th</sup> for three days. Experts say that while relations between the DPRK and PRC were "cold" until last year, changing East Asia dynamics have made them closer. While the inter-Korean relationship was weakened by the Lee Myung-bak administration, the DPRK tries to create a friendly atmosphere and gain economic benefit by re-engaging with China. It seems that U.S. election and changing relations with the U.S. also played a role. On the other hand, the PRC is pursuing stability in the changing dynamics of East Asia and wants to check the DPRK's nuclear power.

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