



NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, May 7, 2007

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, May 7, 2007", NAPSNet Daily Report, May 07, 2007,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-monday-may-7-2007/>

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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK on Nuke Reactor Shutdown

APTN ("N.KOREA READY TO SHUT DOWN REACTOR", 2007-05-07) reported that the DPRK Foreign Ministry assured it is ready to quickly shut down its nuclear reactor as soon as it receives funds that had been frozen in a banking dispute. In an APTN interview in Pyongyang, Ri Kyong Son, vice spokesman at the ministry said that the US has announced the funds are freed, but "Making the announcement itself does not settle the unfreezing of the funds." The nuclear reactor shutdown would not take long, he said.

2. DPRK Funds Transfer

Reuters ("N. KOREA SEEKS U.S. BANK ACCOUNT FOR FUNDS: REPORT", 2007-05-07) reported that the DPRK has asked the United States allow it to open an account at a bank in New York and its funds at a Macau bank be transferred there. Quoting an unspecified source in Washington linked to relations between the United States and the DPRK, the Mainichi newspaper said the United States had rejected Pyongyang's request.

3. DPRK Funds Transfer

Chosun Ilbo ("S. KOREA'S EXIM BANK COULD HANDLE KIM JONG-IL'S MONEY", 2007-05-07) reported that the ROK is considering letting the state-run Export-Import Bank of Korea handle the DPRK's recently unfrozen US\$25 million from a Macau bank before they go to a third country. That would put Seoul in an awkward position since handling the funds could be seen as helping launder money from illicit activities -- the reason global banks have been squeamish about touching the money despite the lift of the freeze.

4. Inter-Korean Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("DEAL MAKES TRAIN RUN MORE LIKELY", 2007-05-07) reported that the ROK agreed late Friday to send raw materials that the DPRK can use in its light industries, but scheduled it to happen June 27 ? after next week's scheduled test-run of an inter-Korean railroad. The ROK could therefore halt the shipment if the DPRK cancels the test, as it has done several times in the past. The two Koreas will hold general-level military talks from Tuesday to Thursday to guarantee the safety of passengers and trains that will travel across the demilitarized zone.

5. DPRK to Import Solar Power

Agence France-Presse ("N. KOREA TO IMPORT SOLAR POWER FOR TV", 2007-05-07) reported that the DPRK has decided to buy solar power generation systems in large quantities from Western countries. Kim's regime has favored soldiers over other workers in deciding who benefits from solar power.

6. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("SKOREA AND EU START FREE TRADE TALKS", 2007-05-07) reported that the ROK and the European Union started free trade talks aimed at linking Asia's third largest economy to the world's biggest trading bloc. Monday's agenda focused on how to ease tariffs, with the EU asking the ROK to step up a clampdown on fake goods, a ROK official told Yonhap. The ROK demanded the EU phase out tariffs on automobiles and other goods and soften its environmental regulations, he said.

7. Japan Constitutional Revision

Kyodo News ("ABE'S PANEL ON DEFENSE DOMINATED BY HAWKS", 2007-05-07) reported that a government panel set up to examine Japan's right to collective defense is dominated by members critical of the current official interpretation of the Constitution that says Japan is banned from coming to the aid of an ally under attack, it was learned Saturday. Twelve of the 13 members, including panel chief Shunji Yanai, a former ambassador to the US, have publicly expressed criticism of the interpretation or called for a reinterpretation in their statements in the Diet and in publications. The composition of the membership suggests that the panel's findings may be a foregone conclusion in line with Abe's stance.

8. Japan on Export Controls

Kyodo ("SHIOZAKI DENIES REVIEW OF JAPAN'S ARMS EXPORT BAN, SDF'S AFGHAN AID", 2007-05-07) reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki denied the possibility the Japanese government would review its arms export controls with a view to relaxing them, in response to a call to the effect by Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma last week. Shiozaki also said Japan does not intend to dispatch the Self-Defense Forces for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, against the backdrop of Kyuma's separate remarks that the government will study a new law to send the SDF to help the war-torn country rebuild itself.

9. Japan Climate Change Initiative

The Associated Press ("JAPAN VOWS \$100M TO STEM CLIMATE CHANGE ", 2007-05-07) reported that Japan pledged \$100 million in grants to the Asian Development Bank to combat global warming and promote greener investment in the region and called for a stronger international agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The money is part of a new initiative by the government in Tokyo to support sustainable development in response to increasing concern that Asia's breakneck economic growth is destroying the environment.

10. Taiwan Elections and Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("HSIEH EYES TAIWAN'S PRESIDENCY FOR 2008 ", 2007-05-07) reported that Presidential candidates of Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party united around a moderate on relations with the PRC to lead the independence-leaning party's ticket in the island's March 2008 elections. The announcement by Frank Hsieh's three rivals for the presidential nomination came a day after the former premier prevailed in an internal party primary.

11. PRC Population

Reuters ("CHINA WARNS OF POPULATION REBOUND", 2007-05-07) reported that the PRC's top family planning body has warned that the world's most populous country could face a "population rebound" because the newly rich are ignoring population control laws and because of early marriages in rural areas, state media said. A rise in incomes means some newly rich can afford to break the rules and pay any resulting fines, while the traditional desire for sons means the rules are also broken in the countryside.

12. PRC Political Reform

Reuters ("IN CHINA A CALL FOR DEMOCRACY STIRS SECRETIVE STORM", 2007-05-07) reported that a veteran PRC Communist's call for democracy has stirred a secretive campaign of condemnation from the party, wary of fanning disputes over political reform before a congress to cement President Hu Jintao's grip on power. Xie Tao, 85, made his plea for "democratic socialism" in the magazine China Across the Ages (Yanhuang Chunqiu), a monthly backed by reformist party elders. While welcomed by liberal thinkers in dozens of Internet essays, Xie's essay has recently become the focus of a mostly unpublicized campaign of official denunciation, according to several officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

13. PRC Confucian Revival

The Los Angeles Times ("CHINA TURNS TO CONFUCIUS, WITH A MODERN TWIST", 2007-05-07) reported that since the publication of her enormously popular book on the teachings of Confucius late last year, Yu Dan has been racing from college lectures to book signings, TV appearances and speaking engagements. The public can't seem to get enough of this overnight sensation who has

turned dusty old Confucian teachings into a Chinese version of "Chicken Soup for the Soul." Confucius is indeed enjoying a huge revival - and is even endorsed by the Communist Party that once tried to erase his influence.

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NAPSNet is produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development affiliated with the University of San Francisco, Center for the Pacific Rim and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. If you have any questions about this report please e-mail: scott@nautilus.org

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