



NAPSNet Daily Report Wednesday, May 16, 2007

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Wednesday, May 16, 2007", NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, 2007, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-wednesday-may-16-2007/>

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I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Frozen Funds

Associated Press ("HILL: NKOREA NUKE DISPUTE WILL BE SOLVED", 2007-05-16) reported that Christopher Hill, chief US negotiator for Six Party Talks said Tuesday the financial dispute over

Pyongyang's \$25 million in a Macau bank will be resolved. "I can assure you ... we are not going to allow \$25 million or even \$26 million to get between us and a deal that will finally do something about nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula," Hill said. "We are going after this problem until we solve this problem."

2. US-DPRK Relations

Korea Herald ("HILL TO VISIT U.K., 4 ASIAN NATIONS", 2007-05-16) reported that Christopher Hill will attend the Asian regional security forum in London followed by visits to four Southeast Asian countries to discuss bilateral and regional issues. Deputy US State Department spokesman Tom Casey said Hill will be visiting Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia as part of a schedule that takes him to a regional forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Hill's trip garnered attention as it could bring Hill together with DPRK counterparts. But U.S. officials said there were no plans to meet with DPR Koreans.

3. US on Inter-Korean Rapprochement

Joongang Ilbo ("HILL: TOO EARLY TO TALK ABOUT SUMMIT", 2007-05-17) reported that the ROK's desire for closer ties with the DPRK, symbolized by today's testing of an inter-Korean railroad line, is being subtly challenged by Washington. Christopher Hill told Korean officials that any discussion of an inter-Korean summit meeting would be inappropriate as long as Pyongyang keeps dragging its feet, Shin Ki-nam, the head of the National Assembly's intelligence committee, told reporters on Tuesday in Washington. The lawmaker also said Dennis Wilder, the U.S. National Security Council's director for Asian affairs, said Washington and Seoul need to discuss the timing of a summit meeting while monitoring progress in nuclear negotiations.

4. ROK Aid to DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL OKS W240 BILLION FOR N. KOREA", 2007-05-16) reported that although Pyongyang has yet to implement its commitments under the six-nation denuclearization agreement, Seoul has endorsed spending of W240 billion (US\$1=W924) needed to send rice and light industry raw materials to the DPRK. A Unification Ministry official said despite the DPRK's refusal to shut down its nuclear facilities under the February accord, the government endorsed the spending because the money is needed to buy rice in advance so the food aid can be sent late this month. The official said the government will buy only 5,000 tons of rice first, since the shipment will not leave if the North fails to implement the agreement by late May.

5. Japan on DPRK Military Capability

Associated Press ("JAPAN SAYS NORTH KOREA DEVELOPING NEW LONG-RANGE MISSILE", 2007-05-16) reported that a Japanese official, on condition of anonymity protocol, said the DPRK is developing a new long-range ballistic missile that may be capable of hitting the U.S. territory of Guam. The new missile, believed to have been displayed at a recent military parade, may be able to cruise up to 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles) at medium altitudes.

6. Green on 6-P Peace Mechanism

Yonhap ("U.S. SHOULD PACE KOREAN PEACE REGIME WITH DENUCLEARIZATION: EX-WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL", 2007-05-16) reported that Michael Green, former director of Asian issues at the National Security Council said the United States should closely pace Korean peace treaty negotiations with the progress in the DPRK's denuclearization and bilateral diplomatic normalizations. Green encouraged active work by researchers, think tanks and policy planners to

map out a peace regime that will officially end the 1950-1953 Korean War. The DPRK will mostly resist confidence-building measures required for a peace treaty, he predicted. The trick for the U.S. and other members of the six-nation forum is not to let the treaty talks outrun other issues, he said.

7. US-ROK Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. ENVOY URGES KOREA TO REFLECT NEW U.S. TRADE POLICY", 2007-05-16) reported that US Ambassador Alexander Vershbow urged the ROK to reflect new US trade policy in changes to their bilateral free trade agreement. Vershbow said the new U.S. trade policy guidelines would "benefit both sides equally and would not alter the balanced result of our FTA negotiations."

8. Australia-ROK Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("KOREA, AUSTRALIA PONDER FTA", 2007-05-16) reported that the ROK and Australia will begin a joint study this year to explore a free trade agreement, a senior trade official said yesterday. "When the study is completed, government officials from the two sides will meet to set parameters for preliminary discussions," Deputy Trade Minister Kim Han-soo said. "A cautious approach is needed in starting free trade talks with Australia because of sensitivity about agriculture," Kim said.

9. Sino-Indian Trade Relations

The Economic Times ("INDIA-CHINA BILATERAL TRADE SET TO TOUCH \$40 BN", 2007-05-16) reported that senior trade representatives of India and the PRC today forecast that the bilateral trade volume will surge from the current \$25 billion to \$40 billion by 2009, a full year ahead of the target set by the two governments. Member of Parliament and Managing Director of Videocon Industries Ltd., Rajkumar Dhoot, heading an ASSOCHAM delegation to the PRC, noted that the growth in PRC exports to India was among the fastest for the world's third largest trading power. However, he noted that PRC investment in India was very low, only accounting for .30 per cent of all foreign direct investment approved by the country.

10. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN TESTS DEFENCES AGAINST CHINA ", 2007-05-16) reported that Taiwan on Wednesday tested its defences in live-fire drills simulating an invasion by rival PRC as part of the island's biggest ever wargames, the defence ministry said. The scenario being played out during the manoeuvres -- part of five-day wargames codenamed "Han Kuang 23" -- was that a fleet of PRC warships were found crossing the middle of the Taiwan Strait approaching northern Taiwan. Some analysts allege that the military exercises are for publicity purposes rather than a review of the island's defences.

11. Taiwan Leadership

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN'S PREMIER, CABINET RESIGN ", 2007-05-16) reported that Taiwan Premier Su Tseng-chang and his cabinet resigned en masse, clearing the way for President Chen Shui-bian to reshuffle the administration. The resignation had been expected after Su announced at the weekend that he would quit following his defeat in the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's primary for next year's presidential election.

12. PRC African Diplomacy

Reuters ("CHINA SEEKS TO OVERCOME CREDIBILITY GAP IN AFRICA", 2007-05-16) reported that when the PRC played host to nearly 50 African leaders in Beijing last year it sought to cement its

friendship with the continent with promises on everything from tariff exemptions to tourism to training. Six months later African nations want to see the results. Analysts say that while the PRC is showing a commitment to following through on its pledges, it is also being forced to wage a public relations war to counter criticism that it is ignoring labour and environmental standards and undermining local industries by flooding the continent with cheap goods.

13. PRC Environment

Asia Pulse ("FOOD SECURITY FEARS AS CHINA'S FARMLAND SHRINKS", 2007-05-16) reported that experts have warned that the PRC's arable land might drop below the "red line" of 120 million hectares in six years' time because of rampant illegal use. The area of arable land has shrunk by 307,000 hectares in the past year. "If arable land shrinks at such a pace, the red line will be breached in six years," an official was quoted by Shanghai-based China Business News as saying.

Xinhua ("CHINA PLANS SATELLITES FOR ENVIRONMENT", 2007-05-16) reported that the PRC plans to launch three small satellites for environment and disaster monitoring and forecasting next year, said Zhang Qingwei, general manager of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp. "In two or three years the constellation will comprise seven satellites in order to better monitor, predict and assess ecological damage, pollution and disaster in all weather and over a large area", said Zhang, who is also chairman of the Chinese Society of Astronautics.

14. PRC Gender Equality

The Los Angeles Times ("CHINA CITES GAINS MADE BY WOMEN", 2007-05-16) reported that PRC officials painted a bright picture of gender equality in the country, saying more women are entering the workforce, getting a basic education and moving into positions of power in government. However, women have yet to break into the highest echelon of the Communist Party, and other recent reports have offered a grimmer view of their daily lives. Since the 2001 implementation of two national programs aimed at improving the lives of women and children, more than 4 million rural women have been lifted out of poverty, Huang said.

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