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MUST READS

1. [110 Chinese soldiers to attend 10+8 humanitarian drill](#)

-Xinhua, 05/30

BLUF: China will send 110 soldiers and officers to take part in a joint humanitarian drill held by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus in Brunei next month.

- The Chinese participants will include staff officers as well as engineers and medics, Ministry of National Defense spokesman Geng Yansheng said at a regular ministry briefing on Thursday.
- A Chinese naval hospital ship will also visit Brunei for the exercise, Geng said.
- The drill is scheduled to run from June 17 to 21. It will include humanitarian research and rescue, disaster relief and medical treatment operations based on the scenario of a typhoon and subsequent flooding and mudslides.

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2. [Indonesian Terrorists Getting More Web-Savvy](#)

-Jakarta Globe, Farouk Arnaz, 05/31

BLUF: Terrorist networks in Indonesia have abandoned conventional operation methods and have started to utilize the Internet to recruit new members and purchase weapons, an Indonesian anti-terror official said Friday.

- “They [terrorists] have purchased weapons using video calls,” Petrus Reinhard Golose, the director of operations at the National Anti-Terrorism Agency (BNPT), said on Friday.
- “Terrorism also exists on YouTube. We have arrested members of a group that upload their propaganda videos onto the site,” he said.
- Additionally, terrorists have been known to provide bomb-making information online.
- “In the Marriott bombing of 2009, the suicide bomber was monitored by his group via video call out of fear that he would change his mind. Furthermore, terrorists are using social media sites like Facebook to enlist new members,” he said.

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3. [China rejects Philippines' illegal seizure of Ren'ai Reef: FM spokesman](#)

-Xinhua, 05/30

BLUF: China will never accept the Philippines' illegal seizure of the Ren'ai Reef, an area over which China has indisputable sovereignty, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday.

- "China's determination and will to safeguard its sovereignty is unswerving, and it will never accept the Philippines' illegal seizure of the Ren'ai Reef in any form," spokesman Hong Lei told a daily press briefing.
- Hong's comments came in response to a question regarding Chinese vessels' recent activities near the Ren'ai Reef.
- Hong said China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and its surrounding waters.
- He recalled how a Philippine warship illegally landed on the beach of the Ren'ai Reef of China's Nansha Islands in 1999, claiming it had been stranded.

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4. [Myanmar gov't and Kachin ethnic rebels end peace talks with minor agreement toward cease-fire](#)

-Washington Post, AP, 05/30

BLUF: Myanmar's government and ethnic Kachin rebels have ended three days of peace talks with a tentative deal to de-escalate fighting and continue a political dialogue.

- The two sides signed a seven-point agreement Thursday in the Kachin state capital, Myitkyina, in an effort to end nearly two years of fighting.
- There have been 14 previous rounds of talks, and Thursday's agreement appeared to be just an incremental step toward a cease-fire rather than a breakthrough. The Kachin insist on a political settlement, not just a cease-fire.
- Myanmar for decades has faced rebellions from several minority groups seeking autonomy. The Kachin are the only major group not to reach a cease-fire agreement with the government of President Thein Sein, who came to power in 2011 after almost five decades of military rule.

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MYANMAR/BURMA

5. Minister Defends Government Reforms Against Suu Kyi Criticism

-Irrawaddy, Simon Roughneen, 05/31

BLUF: Minister Kan Zaw defended the government's reform record on Friday, after opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi questioned the pace of the reform process earlier this week. He stressed that the reforms had the full backing of foreign governments and international organizations.

- "We are doing our reforms, starting with the political, then the economic, and these have been approved domestically and by our key international partners," said Dr Kan Zaw, Minister of National Planning and Economic Development, when asked by The Irrawaddy about Suu Kyi's strictures.
- Speaking on Monday at a gathering of the National league for Democracy, Burma's main opposition group, party leader Suu Kyi said that "The last three years saw no tangible changes, especially in [the area of] the rule of law and the peace process." She added, "The reform started in 2010, now we have to ask the question: 'Have we got any tangible results so far?'"
- Kan Zaw was speaking alongside ministerial colleagues Htay Aung, Soe Thane and Set Aung at a Rangoon preview event for next week's World Economic Forum (WEF) — a 1000-strong gathering of political and business leaders in Asia in Burma's capital Naypyidaw.

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6. 35 arrested over religious riots in Lashio

-Mizzima, Saw Zin Nyi, 05/31

BLUF: Thirty-five people have been arrested and detained by police in Lashio for their involvement in communal rioting on Tuesday and Wednesday, Shan State's Northern District's police station has confirmed to Mizzima.

- “On the day the riot started, we arrested 20 suspects. On the next day, 15 were arrested,” the police officer said.
- Order and calm had been restored to the streets by Thursday, he said, although there were rumors that some gangs had gathered in quarters on the outskirts of Lashio.
- On Thursday, Ye Htut, the Deputy Minister of Information, wrote on his Facebook page that 25 suspects who allegedly led and organized the communal riot had been arrested and interrogated.

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7. [U.S. trade deal with Burma could open door for constitutional change](#)

-Washington Post, Lee H. Hamilton and David C. Williams [EDITORIAL], 05/30

BLUF: The recently signed trade and investment framework agreement between the United States and Burma gives the Obama administration tools to push President Thein Sein’s government toward greater reform. The United States should use those levers to promote not only equitable business ventures but also fundamental political reform. The keynote of U.S. policy must still be to support democratization and human rights, not merely closer economic ties.

- Some have cautioned that the Obama administration is warming too quickly to a country where reform is still in its infancy. But the framework commits the United States to nothing; it merely provides a platform for discussing cooperative business initiatives. Because the Burmese government deeply desires such projects, the agreement gives the United States an opportunity: In exchange for new economic ventures, the U.S. government should demand that Burma expand and hasten its reform efforts.
- The Obama administration’s statements suggest that it will use this leverage primarily to ensure that economic projects benefit the poorest Burmese people and respect the rights of workers, as well as to promote reforms that will lead to a better investment climate, such as transparency and the rule of law. The administration should go further and use its influence to bring about fundamental constitutional change.

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INDONESIA

8. [Freeport Indonesia union says new mine collapse, urges members to stop work](#)

-Reuters, Yayat Supriatna, 05/31

BLUF: A worker was fighting for his life after a new tunnel collapse on Friday at Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold Inc’s Indonesian mine, a union official said, calling on members to stop work at the huge copper mine after the second major accident in just over two weeks.

- Company and government officials could not be immediately reached for comment, but the latest accident at the world’s second-biggest copper mine raises questions over how much longer Freeport will be able to supply its customers.

- "The victim is still in a critical condition. Hopefully, we can save his life," Papua-based union official Virgo Solossa told Reuters by telephone. He had earlier said the worker had been killed.
- "We hope this is the last incident ... that's why we ask the company to stop all activities at the mining area to review safety systems for the sake of the workers."

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9. [Plague of Corruption Rises Anew in Indonesia](#)

-New York Times, Joe Cochrane, 05/30

BLUF: Fifteen years ago, Indonesia took its first step toward democracy with the ouster of Suharto, the late authoritarian president. By the 2009 national elections, the country had one of the most open electoral systems in Asia, with direct ballots for president all the way down to district chiefs and mayors.

- Political parties and elections cost money, however, especially in a sprawling archipelago nation of 240 million. As Indonesia's democratic governance expanded, so did the need for airplane flights to rallies, local party offices, advertising, pollsters and consultants — not to mention the box lunches and T-shirts that are expected by the masses who turn up at campaign events.
- But the country's campaign-finance laws have not kept up with these changes, analysts say. As a result, Indonesian political parties are increasingly financing their operations through the same official corruption that symbolized the Suharto era.
- "That's not a secret anymore," said T. Mulya Lubis, chairman of the executive board of Transparency International Indonesia. "It's public knowledge. This is the biggest kind of corruption now."

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MALAYSIA

10. [Malaysian lawyer supports licensing of news websites](#)

-Borneo Post, 05/31

BLUF: Malaysia should emulate Singapore in implementing regulations pertaining to the imposition of licences on news websites nationwide to monitor those who use the internet to instigate and threaten peace.

- Advocate and solicitor Datuk Salehuddin Saidin said Article 10 of the Federal Constitution gave freedom of expression to the people.
- "But keep in mind, these rights are also generated conditionally, namely independence should not lead to defamation, incitement, questioning the sultans' privileges and so forth.
- "To me, it is better if it (unbridled freedom) is controlled and checked before communal harmony is continually disturbed.

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SINGAPORE

11. MDA clears air over licensing framework for news websites

-Channel News Asia, 05/31

BLUF: Singapore's Media Development Authority (MDA) has come out to clear the air over the recent changes to the licensing framework for news websites.

- This comes a day after a joint statement released by writers who provide sociopolitical news and analysis online, voicing concerns over an individual licensing framework recently introduced by the MDA.
- The writers said they are concerned about whether the new requirement will impact Singaporeans' ability to receive a diverse spread of news-related information.
- In a Facebook post on Friday, MDA said the licensing framework only applies to sites that focus on reporting Singapore news and are notified by MDA that they meet the licensing criteria.

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PHILIPPINES

12. MILF-MNLF clash looms in Cotabato, villagers flee

-Manila Standard, 05/31

BLUF: About 600 villagers fled their homes in Tulunan, North Cotabato for fear of a possible clash between troops of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Moro National Liberation Front.

- The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council confirmed Thursday morning that about 168 families, or 587 people, evacuated their homes after hundreds of MILF guerillas showed up in two villages of Tulunan town on May 25.
- Maybula residents were brought to the Barangay Maybula multi-purpose building while those from New Bunawan were brought to the Sitio Tuburan Purok Center, the disaster agency said.
- It was the second time Cotabato residents complained of armed intrusions by the MILF.
- On May 16, fighting broke out in neighboring Matalam town, the provincial capital, after the MILF supposedly intruded into another MNLF-dominated area purportedly because they were conducting a "peace caravan."

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VIETNAM

13. The government to protect fishermen by all measures: Minister

-Vietnam Net Bridge, 05/31

BLUF: Speaking to the media on the sideline of the NA session, Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh said the Government would take all measures to protect fishermen.

- After Chinese vessels seriously rammed a Vietnamese fishing boat in the East Sea, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested the act but China denied the allegations and made false accusations against Vietnam. So what will we do next to resolve this matter?
- We must continue the diplomatic fight. The spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of Vietnam clearly stated that the area where the incident occurred is entirely within the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf of Vietnam. The Chinese vessels hampering Vietnamese fishermen from fishing is the violation of international principle.
- After the Law on the Sea of Vietnam was passed last year, collision with China in the sea happened more and more, more serious and the attitude of China is increasingly unruly, however, our response is still limited?
- Our principle is to protect fishermen. These behaviors with fishermen are so serious. When these things happened, we opposed. In the fishing grounds, if there are violations in our waters, relevant forces will have responsibility to protect.

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14. PM spotlights VN foreign policy at Shangri La meet

-Vietnam News, 05/31

BLUF: Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung will highlight Viet Nam's foreign policy of peace, independence, self-control, diversification and multilateralisation of international relations at the 12th Shangri La Dialogue which starts today in Singapore.

- In his opening keynote address, Viet Nam will be described as a reliable friend and partner of all countries, which is proactively integrating into the world.
- The speech will also manifest Viet Nam's national defence and security policy for regional peace, stability and development co-operation. In addition, it will voice Viet Nam's stance on important regional issues, including maritime security in the East Sea.
- The organisers' invitation for Dung to attend and deliver an opening remark reflects the growing appreciation of Viet Nam's role and position. This is also a good chance for the country to enhance the recent Party Resolution implementation to pursue a policy of active and proactive international integration.

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THAILAND

15. Civic society to offer South peace plan

-Bangkok Post, 05/31

BLUF: Civic movements are upbeat about the next round of the peace dialogue between the government and separatist groups on June 13, and plan to present their own "roadmap" to peace.

- The idea emerged from meetings last week when members of the Civil Society Council of Southernmost Thailand debated how they could become actively engaged in the fledgling process of talks in Malaysia between Thai government representatives and the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) movement and other separatist groups.
- The meeting agreed to formalise the process with greater participation from other civic movement networks to prepare a joint proposal, CSO Council member Soraya Jamjuree said on Friday.
- "Some 150 people representing some 50 organisations will discuss what steps are to be taken under the guidance of Dr Norbert Ropers (from Berghof Peace Support)," said Ms Soraya.

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16. [US: Insurgents resist outside help](#)

-Bangkok Post, 05/31

BLUF: The terrorism threat in Southeast Asia from Iran and Hezbollah has reached "a tempo unseen since the 1990s" but the Thai insurgency in the South continues to resist all operations with international terrorists, the US State Department said on Friday.

- The US government's annual report on terrorism around the world recounted the arrests of a Hezbollah operative and Iranians linked to bombs but as in previous years concluded:
- "There was no direct evidence of operational linkages between the southern Thai insurgent groups and international terrorist networks."
- The report reprises the arrests last January and February of foreigners linked to potential bomb plots in Bangkok. It stated the possible terrorist plots by a Hezbollah agent and Iranians involved in bomb explosions were not linked to the South.

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LAOS

17. [Anger over North Korean refugees repatriated from Laos](#)

-Channel News Asia, Lim Yun Suk, 05/30

BLUF: Human rights monitors and North Korean defector groups voiced anger and concern on Thursday over the forced repatriation to Pyongyang of nine young refugees captured in Laos.

- The case has aroused strong public feeling in South Korea. Some have accused the foreign ministry, which has declined to comment on the issue in any detail, of failing in its duty to protect the refugees once they got to Laos.

- Most North Korean refugees begin their escape by crossing into China and then try to make it to third countries -- often in Southeast Asia -- where they seek permission to resettle in South Korea.
- For North Korea defectors making that journey to a place like Laos or any other country in Southeast Asia is a very difficult and very, very dangerous journey.

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