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Taelspin for Monday, January 21, 2008

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This past Christmas, AIDS activist and new daddy Hu Jia was arrested by Chinese authorities. He is currently in detention and his lawyers have been denied access, while his wife and newborn son remain under house arrest with extremely tight security. This month a You Tube video appeared, filmed by Hu and his wife last year, that can only be described as “Reality TV for Those Under Government Surveillance.” Rebecca MacKinnon, one of the best bloggers on the media and China today, gives a searing analysis of the situation. For more on Hu Jia, the blog Black and White Cat posts a 2001 interview with Hu first published in the periodical Freezing Point.

What would you do if an ATM started unexpectedly giving you $100 bills while charging your account just $1? Such was the dilemma faced by Xu Ting, and who knew that the Guangzhou resident was a fan of the Steve Miller Band? The bank, obviously not devotees of 70s arena rock, took a different view and Xu, 100,000 RMB richer than before he went to the ATM, was arrested, tried, and sentenced to life in prison. Now a higher court is prepared to reopen the case. Joel Martinson of Danwei looks at how the trial is playing out in the media and in the court of Chinese public opinion.

Finally, on the Shanghaiist, JFK Miller argues that the recent Taiwanese election (or as it is referred to here in Beijing “the elections for Taiwan’s so-called ‘legislature’) was not a rejection of the pro-independence leanings of Chen Shui-bian, but instead hinged on domestic problems of corruption and a sluggish economy.