



April, 2009

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INTERNATIONAL & TAIWAN

Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi unveiled a **\$10bn investment fund for Southeast Asia** together with a \$15bn credit agreement with ASEAN. China has also agreed special emergency funds with a number of East Asian countries, as well as 300,000 tons of rice for the East Asian reserve. The Chinese market has become increasingly important for surrounding countries' export-led economies, which are facing a substantial shortfall in exports to Western countries. (See BBC, 13 April)

At the fourth meeting of the China-Russia Energy Dialogue, Russia has agreed to reprice the cost of developing the Tianwan nuclear power plant in Jiangsu Province. Ministers also agreed the level of subsidy China will provide for the cost of a new East Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline that will carry crude from the Skovorodino refinery in Siberia to Heilongjiang Province. China will loan \$25 billion to the Russian energy companies Transneft and Rosneft to build the pipeline and supply crude for 20 years. A Chinese mineral company, Mylin Resources Group, has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Kyrgyzstan government in relation to prospecting at the Dzhetyay iron reserves. The area of 260km² may be the largest reserve of iron ore in Asia. (See Interfax, 15, 21 April)

The **Taiwanese legislature has ratified** the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its sister Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The two UN conventions were signed by Taiwanese leaders in 1967 but the process of ratification has taken 42 years. A law guiding the implementation of these covenants was also passed, seeking to amend or reform laws which do not adhere to the Conventions' standards. A national human-rights reporting system is also to be established, allowing civil community groups to write their own, counter reports. The PRC has yet to ratify either of the conventions. (See Amnesty International, Taiwanese Times, 9 April)

Taiwanese officials have raised the quota of mainland citizens allowed to visit the island on tourist visas. The maximum number per day has been raised from 3,000 to 7,200 during the popular travelling holiday around 1 May. Mainland tourists have only been allowed since last year, partly to help boost Taiwan's lagging economy. After a limited uptake, Beijing has been aggressively advertising Taiwan as a holiday resort. (See Reuters, 21 April)

The government-run paper *Global Times* has launched an English-language edition to 'cover the world from a Chinese perspective.' Editor-in-chief, Hu Xijin, said the paper will help China 'make friends with foreigners and facilitate communication between China and the world.' The *Global Times* is part of the *People's Daily* stable of publications, overseen by the State news agency, Xinhua. (See AP, 19 April)

Presidents **Hu Jintao and Nicolas Sarkozy** signed a deal in London to re-establish high-level contacts between France and China, suspended after the French president met with the Dalai Lama last year. France pledges in the agreement to reject Tibetan independence 'in any form', though President Sarkozy denied this meant that he could not meet the Dalai in future. Chinese foreign ministry officials say that China remains resolutely opposed to any foreign leaders meeting the Dalai. (See AP, 2 April)

China is already pressuring President Obama not to meet with the Dalai Lama when he next visits the United States in October. Ministry for Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Jiang Yu said the Chinese government 'firmly oppose[s] the Dalai's engagement in separatist activities in any country under whatever capacity and under whatever name. We have made representations to the United States urging the US to honor its commitments and not allow the Dalai to engage in separatist activities in the United States.' This will be another test of Hillary Clinton's promise that human rights concerns will over-ride the Obama administration's cooperation with Beijing. (See AP, 23 April)

NATIONAL NEWS

A survey of 12 provinces has found that **more than 90% of migrant workers have returned to China's cities** in search of work following the Chinese New Year break. The official urban unemployment rate has risen to 4.3% which meant that an average of 890,000 new jobs were created each month during the first quarter of 2009. A total of 1.2 million laid off workers had found jobs. However CASS estimates put the actual rate of urban unemployment may lie as high as 10% and the National Bureau of Statistics estimates that the number of unemployed migrant workers has risen since the Chinese New Year to a record high of 23 million, with 11 million still searching for work in the cities. Migrant workers are thought to provide around 80% of family income in most rural areas. (See SCMP, 24 Apr)

Beijing's **new Human Rights Action Plan was released** on state media on 13 April, launching a two-year programme to improve its human rights record. 'While respecting the universal principles of human rights, the Chinese government, in the light of the basic realities of China, gives priority to the protection of the people's rights to subsistence and development.' By 'protecting and promoting human rights' the Plan includes rights to a fair trial, freedom for 'normal' religious activity and the 'right to be heard'. There were few details of how such rights would be protected, though there were specifics on preventing the physical abuse of prisoners in detention. The Plan focuses on human economic rights to subsistence and 'equal participation and development on the basis of facilitating sound and rapid economic and social development.' (See AP, Telegraph, 13 April; SCMP, 14 April; WSJ Asia, 15 April)

China Mobile will invest 70bn RMB (\$10bn) to extend mobile coverage to 10,000 more villages in China over the next three years. (See Chinanews, 9 April)

In a bid to stem the rapid rise in the number of aggrieved citizens coming to Beijing to petition the national government, the Communist Party's Central Committee and the State Council have **issued directives for local officials to set aside time to hear grievances and deal with complaints**. Government figures put the number of petitions received last year were between 3-4m (in letter and in person), though some rights groups put the figure at over 10m. Petitioners are often forcibly detained by local government officials prior to reaching Beijing, for fear that their grievances will cost officials their jobs or prospects for promotion. (See AP, 15 April)

The prominent writer and dissident Liu Xiaobo has highlighted the **role of the internet to Chinese people in raising political issues and forming public opinion**. 'The ease, openness and freedom of the internet has caused public opinion [in China] to become very lively in recent years.' This has brought pressure on senior officials and punishment for those involved in SARS, mining accidents and the contamination of the Songhua River. He concludes that 'the internet is God's present to China.' (See The Times, 28 April)

Tighter enforcement of regulations for Chinese journalists has led to the State Press and Publications Administration **penalising six local newspapers and the publication of a list of journalists who have 'fabricated misinformation'**. Specific instances of 'misinformation' include an economic story in the *Beijing Times* which helped cause the crash on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on 11 September, 2008, one on bogus pharmaceutical drugs, stories relating to China's naval escort missions in Somalia and one suggesting that Sun Yat-sen was a Korean. (See Chinaview, 14 April; AsiaNews 17 April)

The **tenth anniversary of the crackdown against the Falungong qigong movement** has passed without incident in China. Prior to the crackdown, Falungong had assembled a membership of between 40-70 million, mostly retirees but also including officials and military personnel. Between 10,000 and 15,000 members gathered outside the Zhongnanhai political complex in Beijing on 25 April, 1999, in a

silent demonstration demanding government recognition. This led the CCP to declare Falungong a 'destructive cult' and to launch a massive campaign for its eradication. Activists in Hong Kong and Taiwan, where Falungong remains popular, marked the anniversary with gatherings, mass-chants and demonstrations. There was no repeat of the 2001 incident in which five alleged members set fire to themselves on Tiananmen Square. (See Reuters, 22 April)

China's bid to **attract foreign-trained talent back to its research universities** has begun to show results. The most recent campaign was launched in December, 2008, and provides high-level relocation packages (around \$146,000) and research funding for professorial-level scientists. So far 96 scientists and 26 science entrepreneurs have returned to China under the scheme. (See China Daily, 16 April)

The New York-based group Asia Catalyst has highlighted the **barriers facing rural families getting treatment for children with HIV/AIDS**. Despite a programme of free treatment for people with HIV in China, many families do not know how to access available treatment, or cannot afford the other medications required to treat AIDS-related illnesses. Others have developed resistance to the four, mainstream anti-retroviral drugs. There are perhaps 10,000 children with HIV in China, mostly located in central Henan province and southwestern Yunnan province. (See Reuters, 20 April)

According to a report in the British Medical Journal, China now has **32m more young males (under 20) than females**, meaning that the gender imbalance will worsen over the next twenty years. Extrapolating data from the 2000 census, the researcher finds there are now 119 male births for every 100 female births, and the biggest imbalance is in the 1-4 year old age group. The imbalance has grown following the increasingly widespread use of sonograms in private clinics which means that parents can choose to abort female foetuses. The imbalance in ethnic nationality areas like Tibet and Xinjiang remain in the 'normal' range. (See British Medical Journal, 10 April)

A minister in the Ministry for Public Security has outlined the steps being taken to ensure a 'harmonious' celebration of the 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. Zhang Xinfeng highlighted the police's role in cracking down on criminal gangs, thefts and robberies, particularly telephone scams. Local officials would be instructed in 'patriotic educational activities' to be carried out in their local area. Activities should 'guide people to love the Party' and make them 'aware of the advantages of socialism with Chinese characteristics.' A campaign of measures will begin in May. (See AP, 27 April).

Details of a government manual indicating how one can beat suspects without leaving a mark have been leaked to a Chinese website. The manual for *chengguan* (city administrators), whose main responsibility is removing unlicensed street vendors and checking permits, has reinforced concerns that this particular aspect of law enforcement is particularly brutal. Last year, a passer-by named Wei Wenhua was beaten to death after he began filming *chengguan* scuffling with local residents over a local rubbish dump. (See The Times, 23 April)

Famed biologist, Yuan Longping, has said in an interview with the Guangzhou Daily, that as many as 40m people died as a result of government policies during and after the Great Leap Forward. The 'three years of natural disaster' between 1960-62 were as a result of massive ecological dislocation and the exacerbation of a drought which had begun in 1959. Worse, peasants were forced to hand over their entire harvests as taxes to ensure that local officials met unrealistic targets, leaving them with no food for the rest of the year. Yuan is the 'father' of a hybrid rice strain which has enabled China to become self-sufficient in cereal production and is a member of the CPPCC national committee. (See ET, 12 April)

LOCAL NEWS

Two Tibetans have been sentenced to death for setting fires during demonstrations in March 2008. The fires killed several Chinese. Lobsang Gyaltsen and Loyak set fire to several Chinese shops, according to prosecutors. A Tibetan monk, Lama Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche from Ganzi prefecture, Sichuan, is now also being tried for illegal possession of weapons and ammunition. He has been in custody since his arrest in May, 2008. His attorney, Li Fangping, says that the monk's confession was extorted after four days of interrogation and threats to his wife and child. (See Asianews, 9, 22 April)

Tourists are beginning to be allowed back into Tibet after a security lockdown since February. Foreign journalists and human rights groups are still prevented from travelling there. Tibet's head of tourism said the region was now 'harmonious and safe'. It is expected 500 foreign tourists will travel through the region this month. (See BBC, 6 April)

There is still no news from Gao Zhisheng, a prominent human rights defence lawyer, arrested in Shaanxi province on 4 February. His wife, Geng He, who fled to the United States earlier this year, has made an appeal to Congress to put pressure on the Chinese government to disclose his whereabouts and condition. (HRIC, 23 April)

CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS NEWS

Jia Qinglin, chairman of the CPPCC and the third most senior member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, called together a workshop for senior provincial, UFDW and SARA officials to **reiterate Communist policy on religion**. He called for the active promotion of friendly religious exchanges with overseas bodies but warned strongly against foreign infiltration in the guise of religion. He said that the government and the Party 'have always attached great importance to religious work' and the Party Central Committee has made 'a series of major decisions and arrangements as well as new achievements in religious work.' He said the officials must make every effort to safeguard harmony and stability and to unite religious and non-religious people. (Chinaview, 17 April)

The Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) has said that the selection of bishops by local dioceses needs to be given greater scrutiny before they can be ordained. Vice-chairman of the CPA Liu Bainian has said that **five dioceses cannot expect to have their selection of bishops ordained this year**. Instead further investigations will be made, as the approval of a bishop is 'a matter of concern for the diocese's future in the coming decades.' As the Chinese church already has a number of young bishops, he argued, the issue of a new generation of leadership is less critical than in previous years. Papal approval will not be a factor in any ordination, Liu added. Anthony Lam of the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong, said the decision to delay ordination was 'quite harmful' as China normally consecrates three or four bishops a year. The five dioceses in question were Haimen (Jiangsu), Hohhot (Inner Mongolia), Sanyuan (Shaanxi), Taizhou (Zhejiang) and Wuhan (Hubei). There have been no episcopal ordinations in China since November, 2007. (See AFP, 12 April; UCAN, 29 April)

At the conclusion of its second meeting (Mar 30-Apr 1), the **Vatican commission on the Church in China** suggested that Chinese arrests of 'underground' bishops and priests were 'obstacles to [a] climate of dialogue with the competent authorities'. The concurrent arrest of Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo, the 'underground' bishop of Zhengding (Shijiazhuang), may have followed his attempts to improve unity with the approved bishop Jiang Taoren, in line with papal instructions. The commission made no public mention of the fiftieth anniversary of Chinese 'self-ordinations'. (See The Tablet, 12 April; HKSE, 10 April; VIS, 2 April; AsiaNews, UCAN 31 March)

According to Hebei Faith Press, **22,308 people have been baptised** as Catholics in China this year to April. Surveying 90 dioceses, the report suggests that the figure is nearly 9,000 more than the figure last year and may be attributed to greater emphasis on evangelisation in this Pauline Year. Chengdu diocese, affected by the earthquake last year, has seen the number of Catholics double in 2009, while nearby Chongqing diocese saw 1,400 baptisms at Easter alone. (See UCAN, 28 April; AF, 22 April)

From **20-24 April, the secretary-generals of each of the provincial Protestant Christian Councils gathered in Shanghai for training**. All of the 29 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions were represented with a total of 42 participants. Rev Gao Feng, president of the CCC, presented the keynote sessions personally. He stressed the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the CCC/TSPM, to improve the quality of pastors through training and that each provincial council must establish an educational department. Training must improve pastor's spiritual quality, political calibre, cultural quality, and ensure good moral character. (See CCC, 27 April)

Protestant Christian Youth Associations across China held special events for May Day. In Guangdong Province a special gathering for Christian single people was held in the city of Dongwan. The meeting was addressed by pastor Liu Qian of a Shenzhen church. Over 100 young people gathered for the events which combines sports and social activities with biblical teaching. In Fujian over 50 young people

gathered with the chair of the Fujian Christian Council, Lu Qiuling, at Shishi city. They presented over 100 presents to the local orphanage together with a gift of 3000RMB. (See CCC, 1 May)

Pope Benedict has appointed **bishop John Tong Hon to succeed Cardinal Zen Ze-kium** as the seventh bishop of Hong Kong. Tong has mentioned that he hopes to act as a bridge for Chinese Catholics. Bishop John Tong, 69, has been assistant-bishop of Hong Kong since last year. He said one priority was to help raise the quality of formation of clergy, seminarians and nuns on the mainland. He said he would encourage all Catholics to 'speak up on justice issues and participate in politics ...' (See Reuters, UCAN, 15 April; EDA, 27 April)

In his last liturgy as archbishop, Cardinal Zen encouraged the chief executive of Hong Kong, Donald Tsang, to create a society which would not 'toady to the powerful while despising the weak'. He told the 'underground' church in China 'not to give up' and the state-sanctioned church to 'be brave'. Cardinal Zen's record was somewhat criticised by an editorial in the South China Morning Post (now largely owned by Beijing-friendly companies) for championing many worthy causes but in such a confrontational manner as to become a 'polarising figure'. The editorial also accuses Zen's 'vocal criticism' of the Communist Party as turning Pope Benedict's tentative overtures to Beijing into 'a wasted opportunity'. The Cardinal responded to critics by quoting Mother Theresa: God 'calls us not for success but to be faithful and honest'. The Cardinal has also maintained that his future work will continue to be focussed on the Chinese Church.

(See The Tablet, 18 April; SCMP, 16 April; UCAN, 15 April)

Bishop John Tong Hon has appointed two new vicars general for relations between the universal church and the church in China. Frs Michael Yeung Ming-cheung, Dominic Chan Chi-ming and Pierre Lam Minh have been given responsibility for diocesan administration and communications, parish matters and religious congregations respectively. Fr Yeung is chief-executive of Caritas-Hong Kong and a member of Cor Unum. Fr Chan has been a vicar-general since 1992. Fr Lam is a member of Paris Foreign Missions Society and encouraged lay people to be the bridge between the universal church and the church in China, not just the clergy. (See UCAN, 28 April)

An 'underground' Catholic priest, Fr Francis Xavier Tan Tiande died on 23 April at the age of 94. Fr Tan was born in Guangdong, started his studies in Hong Kong and ordained in 1941. Arrested in 1953 he spent nearly thirty years in prison and reform-through-labour camps, but after his release was allowed to serve at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in Guangzhou. He wrote a widely-circulated reflection on his time in prison, and was widely influential in the teaching of catechumens.

(See UCAN, 30 April; AsiaNews, 27 April)

Chinese Franciscans gathered in the province of Shanxi on 16 April to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the founding of the order. At the Celebration Mass there were those who took perpetual vows, and the event was presided over by Bishop Luca Li Jingfeng of Fengxiang diocese. In addition to the 38 priests, the mass was also attended by several religious from the Franciscan Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Laohekou, Hubei province; the Congregation of Saint Elizabeth of the Diocese of Changzhi of the Province of Shanxi; the Franciscan Congregation of Our Lady; the Franciscans of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the Franciscan Sisters of St. Teresa of Child Jesus of the local diocese of Fengxiang. (See AF, 21 April)

Two Catholic priests will be part of the 300-strong election committee chosen to select a new chief executive for Macao. Fr Luis Lei Xavier and Fr Joao Evangelista Lau Him-sang are joined by two Buddhist representatives, a Protestant and a Daoist priest. The new chief executive will take over from Edmund Ho Hau-wah, whose term expires on 20 Dec, after serving since 1999. (See UCAN, 27 April)

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Catholic bishop of Shanghai, Jin Luxian celebrated this year's Chrism Mass by looking ahead to the forthcoming Year of the Priest which begins on 19 June. Auxiliary Bishop John Xing added that the year was about the permanent formation of priests, inspired by the example of Jesus. The Taipei archdiocese and six other Taiwanese dioceses will hold special celebrations in a bid to promote vocations. The feast of Christ the King on 22 November will also mark the 150th anniversary of the evangelisation of Taiwan. (See UCAN, 23 April; AF, 16 April)

The Taiwanese Catholic diocese of Kaohsiung has begun donating money and rice to those laid off in recent waves of job cuts. Unemployment in Taiwan reached 5.8% in March. Volunteers from the diocese have visited over 30 schools to find out which parents are facing the worst financial difficulties. The gifts are sponsored by commitments raised during this year's Lent. (See UCAN, 8 April)

The Chinese House Church Alliance, together with seven human rights organisations, have sent an **open letter to the Chinese government challenging the illegal operations of the police** to detain, search and question Chinese citizens and confiscate their possessions. The rights groups are the China Rights Defence Alliance, Chinese Human Rights Defenders, Chinese League of Victims, Chinese Human Rights Forum, Association of Chinese Citizens for Monitoring the Government, China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group and the Provisional Committee of Chinese Farmers' Rights Defence Association. They warn the government not to return to 'the old path' and 'turn the wheel of history backwards'. The letter says that the Chinese people have 'awakened' and want to create a 'beautiful future'. (See Christian Post, 5 April)

A congregation of the China Gospel Fellowship, a Protestant house-church, was raided on 30 April in Xinye, Henan province. Eighteen people were detained and each forced to pay a 1000 RMB (£100) fine before being released. (See China Aid, 4 May)

A Chinese pastor, Lou Yuanqi, has been bailed awaiting trial in Xinjiang province. He was initially arrested on 17 May, 2008, before standing trial for 'utilizing superstition to undermine the law'. However the court found that the facts of the case were unclear and ordered a retrial. Pastor Lou has now been released, though it is unclear whether he will face a further trial. Lou's house church has been prevented from meeting while he was in prison. (See China Aid, 27 April)

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SOURCES

AF	Agenzia Fides	www.fides.org
AFP	Agence France Presse	www.afp.com
AFPC	American Foreign Policy Centre	www.afpc.org
AP	Associated Press	www.ap.org
ATO	Asia Times Online	www.atimes.com
BBC	British Broadcasting Association	www.bbc.co.uk
CAA	China Aid Association	www.chinaaid.org
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	
CBNN	Christian Broadcast Network News	www.cbn.com/CBN/news
CCC	China Christian Council [Protestant]	www.chinesechristianchurch.org.cn
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	
(C)CPA (Chinese)	Catholic Patriotic Association	
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress	
CD	China Daily	www.chinadaily.net/news/
CHCA	Chinese House Church Association [Protestant]	
CRI	China Radio International	www.cri.com.cn
CWN	Catholic World News	www.cwnnews.com
	Chinaview	www.chinaview.cn
	China News [Zhongguo Xinwen She]	www.chinanews.com.cn
	China.org.cn	www.China.org.cn
DPA	Deutsche Presse-Agentur	www.dpa.com
EDA	Églises D'Asie	http://eglasiemepasie.org
FT	Financial Times	www.ft.com
	Guardian	www.guardian.co.uk
HK	Hong Kong	
	Independent	www.independent.co.uk
IHT	International Herald Tribune	www.iht.com
IPS	Inter Press Service	www.ipsnews.net
PBS	Public Broadcast Radio	www.pbs.org
RAB	Religious Affairs Bureau	
	Religious Intelligence	www.religiousintelligence.co.uk
	Reuters	www.reuters.co.uk
	Sky News	http://news.sky.com/skynews
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs	
SCMP	South China Morning Post	www.scmp.com
SOE	State Owned Enterprise	
	The Daily Telegraph	www.telegraph.co.uk
	The Times	www.timesonline.co.uk/
TSPM	Three-Self Patriotic Movement	
UCAN	Union of Catholic Asia News	www.ucanews.com
UFWD	United Front Work Department	
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization	
WP	Washington Post	www.washingtonpost.com
	Xinhua	http://www.xinhua.org/

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