



December, 2008

1. **International News**
2. **National News**
3. **Church and Religious News**

INTERNATIONAL & TAIWAN

At a summit meeting in Beijing, **Chinese and US officials agreed to pump \$20bn into the world trade system**, through subsidizing imports and credit at the countries' import-export banks. Senior financial and government officials met at the annual China-US Strategic Economic Dialogue. The governor of China's Central Bank, Zhou Xiaochuan, criticized the US for creating the crisis through "excessive consumption and high leverage" and suggested that it maintain higher levels of saving in future. US officials pressured the Chinese to allow the yuan (the Chinese currency) to rise further against the dollar. (See BBC, 5 December)

China has signed a **30-year agreement with the Burmese military government** and two international firms to pipe natural gas from Burmese offshore gas fields to China. The deal was signed on 24 December, with the companies Daewoo and Korea Gas Corporation and India's ONGC Videsh and GAIL, which are not bound by US and EU sanctions on Burma. Human and environmental rights campaigners in the West have complained that the companies are breaching OECD guidelines on ethical and human responsibility. Construction of the pipeline from Rakhine State to Yunnan Province will begin next year. (see BBC, AFP, AP, 29 December)

A **military telephone hotline between Beijing and Moscow** was used for the first time recently, according to Xinhua News Agency. Military officials can now directly discuss military crises and their countries' response. A similar proposal to link Beijing and Washington with a military hotline has stalled, after initially being mooted two years ago. (See BBC, 29 Dec)

President Hu Jintao's New Year address looked forward to an historic year in China. 2009 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and Hu reflected on the accomplishments of 2008: the Beijing Olympics, the Shenzhou space flight, and improved cross-Straits relations. He added that China would strive to promote world peace, stability and prosperity in the coming year. (See China Daily, 31 Dec)

Jimmy Carter has **advised President-elect Obama to work together with China for peace and prosperity**. Carter urged shared responsibility for international crises, such as Zimbabwe and Darfur. He recognized that this would require a shift in China's policy of non-interference. Carter also commended Chinese progress on its human-rights record, stating that religious freedoms were an important indicator of change. The Carter Center has also worked with the Chinese government in increasing political debate and transparency, observing at local village elections and running websites to encourage political debate. (See China Daily, 12 Dec.)



China Desk e-Bulletin



Two giant pandas, Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan, have arrived in Taiwan in the latest phase of '**panda diplomacy**.' Ma Ying-jeou, the Taiwanese President, has said that the Dalai Lama will not visit Taiwan in 2009 as the 'timing is not appropriate'. (See DPA 3 Dec, SCMP, 22, 29 Dec.)

The **Dalai Lama** met with Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme on 3 Dec and addressed the European Parliament in Brussels on 4 Dec. He then met French President Nicolas Sarkozy. The Nobel Prize laureate's European tour has damaged EU-China relations and led to the cancellation of an annual EU-China summit. Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao also told reporters that China attached great importance to bilateral strategic relations with France, and only in a good relationship could business relationships flourish, but France now had responsibility to repair frayed trust. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, has urged Beijing to resume its stalled dialogue with the Dalai. (See AFP, 4, 12 Dec; SCMP, 8 Dec.; ATO; 10 Dec.; AsiaNews, 4 Dec)

NATIONAL NEWS

The **number of university graduates in China this year has reached 6m**, an increase of 500% on 2001. This has meant much greater competition for jobs, particularly during the current economic crisis. Some economists predict that economic growth needs to be maintained at 8% in order to create the required number of jobs for those entering the economy each year. However GDP growth for 2009 may fall below that level for the first time in nearly twenty years. (See *The Guardian*, 5 Dec.)

President Hu Jintao marked **30 years of China's policy of 'reform and opening'** at a meeting at the Great Hall of the People attended by 6000 invited guests. The anniversary is of the 3rd plenary session of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP, convened by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Since then, the Chinese economy has averaged growth of 9.8%, and it has become the fourth largest economy by GDP in the world. Hu summarised: 'We have understood that progress is the basic logic and stability the main aim. Without stability we will be unable to realise anything and we will lose all that we have gained so far.' He identified continuing problems as a weak agricultural system, poverty-stricken rural zones, and a lack of innovation and creativity. (See AsiaNews, 18 Dec)

Wang Chen, minister of the State Council Information Office (SCIO), announced that **China's first national action plan on human rights** will be issued early in 2009. The plan will include measures 'in poverty reduction, protection of women's and children's rights, and economic and social equality.' The plan will encompass the work of nearly 50 government departments, but is being drafted by the Foreign Ministry and the SCIO. (See People's Daily, 30 Dec.)

303 Chinese, including leading **rural activists, academics, artists, and lawyers, signed 'Charter 08'** – an internet-based manifesto consisting of 18 political, legal and economic demands. Since the Charter was released on the internet, thousands more Chinese have signed the petition. Police arrested prominent dissident and former philosophy professor Liu Xiaobo on 8 Dec in connection with the Charter, and his whereabouts have not been disclosed. Friends say that the government is preparing charges against him. Other Charter organisers include Zhang Zhuhua, a former Communist Youth League official, who was also questioned on 8 Dec, but not detained. Other activists who have signed the Charter have been warned not to leave their cities or meet other dissidents. The manifesto is modelled on Charter 77, produced by leading Czech academics in 1977. (See AP, 9 Dec., Time Magazine, 10 Dec., NYT, 11 Dec., WP, 17 Dec; Reuters, 18 Dec; for an English translation of Charter 08 see the New York Review of Books, www.nybooks.com)

3rd floor Bastille Court 2 Paris Garden London SE1 8ND

telephone +44 (0) 20 7654 7254 fax +44 (0) 20 7654 7222 email info@ctbi.org.uk www.ctbi.org.uk



Four more people are **on trial at Shijiazhuang for the milk contamination scandal**. The former chairman of the board of Sanlu, Tian Wenhua, goes on trial on Wednesday, 31 Dec. Sanlu and other Chinese dairy firms involved in the scandal have said they will make compensation payments to 300,000 families affected. The victims have not had any input into the compensation scheme and the provincial court is so far refusing to hear lawsuits brought by the families against the dairy companies. At least six babies died as a result of kidney damage, and the scandal has seriously damaged China's food standards reputation throughout the region and beyond. China exported only 1000 tonnes of dairy products in October, down 92% on a year ago. (See AsiaNews, 12 Dec; BBC, 27 Dec., Reuters, 29 Dec)

Another sign of **slowing growth in the Chinese economy** can be found in an increase in Chinese coal exports. The first quotas for coal exports in 2009 have been allocated at 26m tonnes, an indication that growth in internal consumption of coal has weakened substantially. China exported nearly 41m tonnes of coal in 2008 to November, and had been cutting exports recently in order to keep pace with the increasing demand of coal-powered generating plants. However coal usage in 2008 (estimated at 2. is expected to rise only 4.5% on the previous year, a slowing down from 9.5% increase in 2007. Chinese wind-power generation is said to have leapt to 10GW, up 2/3 on 2007. Government targets are for 100GW by 2020. (See Reuters, *The Guardian*, 29 Dec.)

Growing economic disparities are in evident in China despite government attempts to establish a 'moderately prosperous society'. In 1985 urban Chinese earned 1.9 as much as those in rural areas, while in 2007 the figure had risen to 3.3 times. If access to basic public services is factored in, urban residents' salaries are worth 5 or 6 times that of their rural counterparts. The Asian Development Bank also calculates that the Gini Coefficient (which measures income disparity) rose from 0.30 in the late 1970s to 0.45 in 2005. Zhou Tianyong, a researcher at the influential Central Party School, has warned of social turmoil next year and urged that the government focus investment on job creation. He warned the rate of real urban joblessness could rise as high as 14% in 2009. (See Reuters, 4, 23 Dec.; AsiaNews, 6 Dec)

Reconstruction of western Sichuan province following the May earthquake will be an important component of government spending to counter the global economic slowdown. 4.5m homes, 51,000km of roads and 5,500km of railways are expected to employ some of the 20m Chinese people left jobless in the slowdown. The price of building materials in the region is already highly inflated, however, and official corruption means that spending earmarked for reconstruction has been misspent in at least six local townships, according to a national audit. (See Reuters, *The Guardian*, 29 Dec)

A government audit of school buildings in Yunnan province has found that **20% of primary schools and 11% of middle schools in the province 'were not totally safe'**. Liu Yongxiang, a vice-president of the NPC Standing Committee revealed the findings in a report in *China Daily*. (See AP, 26 Dec.)

Several Chinese language websites, including those of *Asiaweek*, *Ming Pao* (a HK newspaper) and the BBC were being blocked again in China in December after having been available for several months since the Olympics. (See NYT, 17 Dec)

A man was killed on 24 Dec while reportedly attempting to set a bomb in a Kunming coffee bar. No one else was hurt in the explosion. Officials have said that DNA evidence links this man to the two



China Desk e-Bulletin



bombings of public buses in the city during the lead up to the Beijing Olympic Games earlier in the year. (See AP, 29 Dec.)

Wo Weihai, a medical researcher and businessman, was executed on 29 Nov after being convicted of spying for Taiwan. The European Parliament had issued a call for the sentence to be stayed, alleging that Wo's conviction was unsafe, but a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry said that this was just 'rude interference in China's judiciary'. (See AP, 1 Dec)

According to the most recent Chinese Health Ministry statistics there were an estimated **700,000 new cases of HIV in the year to September**. Of these perhaps 440,000 do not know they are HIV-positive. 77,000 people have developed AIDS, and 33,864 people died from AIDS related illnesses. The number contracting HIV is a 45% increase on 2007. A Belgian television crew which was investigating the AIDS situation in central Henan province were beaten and their cameras and notes stolen by thugs on 27 Nov. (See AF 1 Dec; AP 2 Dec)

CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS NEWS

The Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) has **celebrated fifty years since the first 'self-ordinations' of Dong Guangqing and Yuan Wenhua as bishops in 1958**. The event was held at the Great Hall of the People, Tiananmen Square, and brought together forty-five bishops with 200 priests, religious and lay Catholics in Beijing. Du Qinglin, minister for the UFDW and vice-chairman of the CPPCC, conveyed his congratulations to the gathering, with a reiteration of Beijing's requirements prior to establishing relations with the Holy See: 'The Vatican must not interfere in China's internal politics, including using religion to interfere in our country's domestic affairs.' The Vatican must also break off its "so-called diplomatic relationship" with Taiwan and recognize the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government representing China. The gathering was then addressed by the bishop of Kunming, Ma Yinglin, ordained in 2006, and who many see as being groomed as the next president of the CPA. New presidents for the CPA and the Chinese Bishops' Conference need to be elected soon, and the anniversary celebrations may be the prelude to a National Congress of Catholic Representatives at which the elections will be held. (See UCAN, 19 Dec.; People's Daily, AsiaNews, 20 Dec; EDA, 22 Dec)

The Vatican has circulated a **letter from Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone to all Vatican-recognised Chinese bishops**. The letter was initially sent out in May, but has reached some bishops only recently. It stresses the 'fundamental principles of Catholic teaching' and asks bishops to 'discharge courageously your office as shepherd'. The letter also addresses sections 7,8 and 9 of Pope Benedict's 2007 pastoral letter and requests that the bishops engage in direct and respectful dialogue with the authorities, to act together and to ask for a right to meet freely together. The letter is particularly emphatic that bishops be 'particularly careful to ensure that episcopal ordinations take place only with the apostolic mandate.' (See UCAN, 19 Dec)

Joseph Cardinal Zen, archbishop of Hong Kong, has asked the Catholic bishops of China to be more courageous in resisting compromise with the Chinese authorities. Writing in *Kung Kao Po* (the HK diocesan weekly) on 4 January, the cardinal took as his theme the martyrdom of St Stephen. He reviewed the events of the last two years in China, particularly highlighting the episcopal ordinations of 2006 which had taken place without papal consent, but which several Vatican-recognised bishops had attended. He also attacked the recent fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the first Chinese episcopal 'self-ordinations', organised by the CPA. Cardinal Zen, aged 77, also announced that Pope Benedict has

3rd floor Bastille Court 2 Paris Garden London SE1 8ND

telephone +44 (0) 20 7654 7254 fax +44 (0) 20 7654 7222 email info@ctbi.org.uk www.ctbi.org.uk



China Desk Bulletin



allowed him to take retirement sometime during the first half of 2009. (See AsiaNews, 3 Jan; UCAN 2 Jan; AFP, 25 Jan)

Christmas celebrations remain an important time for Chinese churches to evangelize. In Beijing's Church of the Immaculate Conception, 1500 people gathered for midnight mass, with thousands more clustered outside to watch the ceremony on large screens. In Taiyuan, the Catholic diocese printed 300,000 copies of 10 different pamphlets, which were distributed at Christmas services by clergy, religious and lay volunteers, who also gave explanations of their contents. They also gave away 10,000 copies of Christian books. Internet chatrooms also organised carol-singing concerts in Nanchong diocese (Sichuan) while bishop Li Jingfeng, of Fengxiang diocese, led a procession dedicated to the Infant Jesus through the streets of the city. Catholics in Sichuan were given guidelines as to which churches were safe to use for Christmas services. In mid-December the Catholic diocese drew up plans to rebuild/relocate 25 churches which had collapsed and repair 22 which were seriously damaged. (See Xinhua, 26 Dec; UCAN, 26 Dec., 2 Jan)

There were **Christmas Day raids and arrests across a number of provinces in China.** In Anhui, a house church in Bozhou City was raided and two leaders detained. In northwestern Xinjiang province, seven house church leaders were arrested after their gatherings were broken up by police. On Christmas Eve, nine Henanese church leaders were arrested, though five were released the following day. The nine were arrested after holding a street enactment of the nativity. Those released were forced to pay fines of 1500-3000 yuan (£150-300). (See China Aid, 27 Dec.)

Four devastated Christian households were raided by police in Sichuan province. The families in Beichuan county were reconstructing their homes with the aid of Christian volunteers from Anhui province. On Dec 24 police raided the homes, seized Bibles, hymnals, televisions, motorcycles and other household items. Police officers refused to present authorisation or justification for their actions, merely verbally insulting the families and saying they were fighting illegal Christian gatherings. (See China Aid, 26 Dec)

Some Taiwanese Catholics are hopeful that the new policy of 'direct links' between Taipei and Beijing will **enable closer work between Catholics in Taiwan and the mainland.** Bishop Thomas Chung An-zu of Taiwan's Chaiyi diocese, has suggested links could be made in 'theology, education, and spirituality'. He hoped that pilgrimage tours would also become possible. (See UCAN, 31 Dec)

The Regional Bishops Conference of Taiwan made their *ad limina apostolorum* visits to the Vatican from 9-13 Dec. This is the first time the Taiwanese bishops have met with Pope Benedict XVI. They were led by archbishop John Hung SVD, who invited the Pontiff to visit Taiwan in 2009 to mark the 150 celebration of the island's evangelisation. He also informed the pope that Fu Jen Catholic University has initiated an academy to train seminarians and other Catholics from mainland China through distance-learning programmes. Pope Benedict reminded the bishops to 'give special care for migrants' and to 'continue to be spiritually united with your brethren on the mainland'. His officials added that his heavy schedule means he is unlikely to visit Taiwan in 2009. There are about 300,000 Catholics on Taiwan. (AF 4 Dec; DPA 6; VIS 12 Dec.; Dec, 15 Dec; UCAN 11, 15 Dec)

3rd floor Bastille Court 2 Paris Garden London SE1 8ND
telephone +44 (0) 20 7654 7254 fax +44 (0) 20 7654 7222 email info@ctbi.org.uk www.ctbi.org.uk

General Secretary Revd Bob Fyffe Registered charity no 113299 Company limited by guarantee Registered in England and Wales Registered no 5661787



China Desk Bulletin



About **four hundred Christian students were detained and questioned** in eight weeks between September-October. House church leaders who evangelised to students were arrested. The raids and arrests were focussed on Beijing and Hangzhou cities. (Christian Post, 5 Dec.)

The **Catholic bishop of Wanzhou diocese, Joseph Xu Zhixuan, has died** of multiple-organ failure after a long illness. Bishop Xu was born in Sichuan province in 1916, ordained a priest in 1949. In 1980 he was ordained coadjutor bishop, as well as teaching and managing Sichuan seminary. He is succeeded by auxiliary bishop Paul He Zeqing, 40, who administers a diocese of approximately 60,000 Catholics and 11 priests. (UCAN, 8 Dec)

A prominent Chinese priest, **Father Joseph Jia Fuqian died on 26 Dec.** More than 20,000 Catholics came to pay their respects, as his body lay in Christ the King cathedral where he had resided since 2006. His funeral on 30 Dec was attended by around 10,000 Catholics from Hebei and surrounding provinces. He is uncle to the prominent unregistered 'bishop' Julius Jia Zhiguo who presided at the ceremony. (See UCAN, 31 Dec.)

Auxiliary Bishop of Shanghai, Xing Wenzhi dedicated a new church in the diocese to the Apostle Matthias. The church is located in the Jinshan district of Shanghai, which now has fifteen Catholic churches, with three priests and six religious. New churches were also dedicated in the dioceses of Xiamen, Hengshui and Wanzhou (See AF, 16 Dec)

Bishop Jose Lai Hung-seng of Macao has asked for clarification of Article 23 of the Basic Law which will be enacted next year, ten years after Macao reverted to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. **Article 23 outlaws acts undermining China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity or national security**, and underwent a 40-day public consultation during October-November. Amendments to the bill now include provision that all state security trials will be held in public, unless the judge decides otherwise. Both Protestant and Catholic churches in the territory have come out in basic support of the legislation. Bishop Lai has asked that the Macanese government clarify what is meant by terms like 'state secrets' and 'preparatory acts'. (Zenit, 11 Dec.; UCAN, 18 Dec)

The Shaolin Temple in Henan Province, famed for its teaching of kung fu, is taking on the administration of four Buddhist temples near Kunming, Yunnan Province. Master Yanlu says the aim is to build a bridge between the cultures of Henan and Yunnan. The advanced administrative system employed by Shaolin Temple can be used throughout Chinese Buddhist institutions, Abbot Shi Yongxin suggests. However, critics suggest that this is more a commercial venture for Shaolin, which is the most visited temple in China. (AsiaNews, 28 Nov)



China Desk Bulletin



The China Desk Bulletin is an edited digest of published news sources. The China Desk is not responsible for the content of these items nor does it endorse all the views expressed. Please follow the links identified below to read the original report of each story.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SOURCES

AF	Agenzia Fides	www.fides.org
AFP	Agence France Presse	www.afp.com
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	
CCC	China Christian Council [Protestant]	
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	
CWN	Catholic World News	
	Chinaview	www.chinaview.cn
	China.org.cn	www.China.org.cn
DPA	Deutsche Presse-Agentur	
EDA	Églises D'Asie	http://eglisie.mepasie.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
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/
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/

3rd floor Bastille Court 2 Paris Garden London SE1 8ND

telephone +44 (0) 20 7654 7254 fax +44 (0) 20 7654 7222 email info@ctbi.org.uk www.ctbi.org.uk