

June, 2008

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INTERNATIONAL

A senior Taiwanese delegation led by Chiang Pin-kung, chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation, has begun negotiations with a PRC delegation led by Chen Yunlin, head of the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait. The negotiations aim to establish **confidence-building measures between Taipei and Beijing**, like direct flights between Taiwanese airports in Taipei, Taichung, Taoyuan and Kaohsiung and the mainland, and increase the number of tourists crossing the Strait.

[Originally reported by AsiaNews, 12 June]

China's envoy to the Darfur region of Sudan has **accused international NGOs of raising anti-Chinese sentiment** among opposition groups in the region. Liu Guijin said that these groups did not understand what China was trying to do in Sudan. 'Because of the western media, and especially the stirring of some non-governmental organisations, China's role has been distorted in their eyes. Some important opposition groups [e.g. the Justice and Equality Movement] have been influenced by this.' Liu was addressing journalists alongside a forum on Darfur in Beijing.

[Originally reported by Reuters, 26 Jun]

NATIONAL NEWS

Much criticism and debate has followed senior judge Wang Shengjun's comments that the **administration of the death penalty should reflect popular will**. Many critics felt this was harking back to the days of the Cultural Revolution and public executions. But judges are also aware that there is growing popular anger surrounding many trials for corruption and other serious crimes involving local officials, where punishments are seen as unduly lenient.

[Originally reported by Asia Times, 18 June]

A **massive riot erupted** in Wengan County, Guizhou Province, after a verdict of suicide following an inquest into the death of 15 year old Li Shufen. Li's body had been found in a river several days previously, and her family and many locals believe she was raped and killed, before her body was dumped. Three suspects, including one related to a senior government official, had offered to pay RMB3000 (£220) each in the form of 'compensation'. On 28 June, around 10,000 outraged locals burnt down a police station and attacked government buildings. Around 100 continue to stand guard over Li's body which is being held in a refrigerated casket, to prevent it being seized and cremated.

[Originally reported by BBC, 30 June; SCMP, 1 Jul]



On Sunday 1 June, hundreds of **mourning parents** gathered for a ceremony to commemorate children killed at the Dujiangyan Xinjian primary school in Sichuan province. Many parents have returned daily to other school sites in the hope of gaining answers as to why the schools collapsed so quickly in the May earthquake, and to burn incense, leave flowers and talk to each other. As increasing numbers of petitions are being made against local officials so the police presence has also increased. A memorial service at Beichuan Middle School was cancelled after twenty volunteer organisers were rounded up by police and detained. Journalists from *Southern Weekend* and *Southern Metropolis Daily*, two of China's most investigative newspapers are being recalled, and many others are being prevented from speaking to the families to 'avoid disturbing residents'. Guidelines for reporting on the quake are being more strongly implemented, which suggest journalists do not report parents' 'angered and excitable' demands, but focus instead on heroes. Reporters now also have to register with the local township authorities before conducting interviews, etc.
[Originally reported by AsiaNews, 6, 13 June; Reuters, 7 June]

A teacher who ran from his classroom during the earthquake without first ensuring that his pupils were safe has been fired, and his teaching permit removed. Fan Meizhong from a high school in Dujiangyan later wrote about his experiences on an internet forum, saying that 'At such a critical moment its escape that counts.' His comments drew a storm of popular criticism, leading to his dismissal. Xinhua later quoted the school principal saying, 'We don't have to be noble, but we will not tolerate shamelessness.'
[Originally reported by AP, 27 June]

Twelve government officials have been fired after **misusing funds allocated to earthquake relief efforts**. The anti-corruption minister Ma Wen announced that a total of 1,178 complaints had been received, and a further 31 officials had been reprimanded. Ms Ma also announced that there would be investigations into alleged corruption connected with school construction in Sichuan province.
[Originally reported by BBC, 23 June]

Premier Wen Jiabao visited the provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu, promising to restore life to normal there within two months following damage as a result of the May 12 earthquake. Premier Wen also maintained that the 'people first' policy had to be continued, guarding against possible epidemics and getting people into secure shelters. The government hopes that reconstruction in west Sichuan will be complete within three years.
[Originally reported by SCMP, 23 June]

Tens of thousands of Hong Kong residents gathered at Victoria Park to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square student protests. They asked for the immediate release of all those jailed following the protests, suggesting that this would help cement China's recent moves toward openness following the Sichuan earthquake. It is estimated by John Kamm, an American campaigner, that between 60 and 100 people remain in prison following sentences handed out in 1989. Other campaigners called for an open inquiry into the events of 3-4 June, 1989. The organisers of the commemorations, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China, also collected money to donate to survivors of the Sichuan earthquake.
[Originally reported by AP, 4 June; BBC, 4 June]



The Hong Kong based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy has cited an unnamed source to say that more than 600 people died in Tiananmen Square on the night of 3-4 June, and 20,000 people were detained in subsequent police investigations. The source was close to former president Yang Shangkun, who died in 1998. The source estimated that 15,000 people were charged with counter-revolutionary activities and 15 were executed immediately.

[Originally reported by Reuters, 3 Jun]

Chinese lawyers who have taken on human rights cases or defended Tibetans following the recent riots and crackdown are **struggling to have their licenses renewed**. The China Human Rights Lawyers' Concern Group, based in Hong Kong, Human Rights Watch have both criticised the process of annual license renewal as maintaining political influence over the legal profession.

[Originally reported by AP, 30 May]

OLYMPICS

Beijing has announced a **crackdown on illegal drugs** ahead of the Olympics. A publicity campaign highlighting the danger of taking drugs will enhance public awareness. The number of known addicts in China has grown rapidly in recent years, with authorities saying the number rose 35% between 2000 and 2005 to 1.2m. The majority were heroin users under the age of 35. Plans have been drawn up to move the capitals entire addict population into rehabilitation centres ahead of the Games. Almost 13 tons of heroin and 9.3 tons of methamphetamine were seized in Yunnan province alone last year.

[Originally reported by AP, 25 June]

A forty-five year old priest, Fr Paul Neng Ningyou, took part in the torch relay in Taiyuan, carrying the torch on 26 June. Fr Paul, who is also a member of the Taiyuan People's Congress, said he was representing all five official religions in China.

[Originally reported by UCAN, 27 June]

The Catholic archbishop of Beijing, Mgr. Joseph Li Shan, held a meeting on June 12 to coordinate archdiocesan preparations for the Olympics. The archbishop hoped that 'every parish should offer its most competent lay members in receiving the visitors and meeting their needs, whether they be Catholic or non-Catholic, who wish to visit the church or participate in a religious service.'

[Originally reported by AF, 17 June]

There has been some international debate as to **whether foreign Christians should proselytise at the forthcoming Olympics**. Evangelist Franklin Graham has advocated only working within existing government frameworks, saying 'I would not support any illegal activity at all', later adding that this did not apply to unregistered Chinese churches. Graham's charity, Samaritan's Purse, has already spent \$1.1m on aid for victims of the May earthquake, and he has spoken at several registered churches in China. His stance was initially criticised by Bob Fu, of the China Aid Association.

[Originally reported by CBNnews, 11 June]



The **Olympic torch relay has begun its way through Tibet**, amid appeals for calm from the Dalai Lama. The Dalai is in Australia on part of a worldwide tour to continue to place the issue of Tibetan freedoms on the news agenda. He hopes that formal negotiations between his envoys and Beijing officials will resume by the end of the month.

[Originally reported by AFP, 12 June]

Catholic coadjutor bishop of Hong Kong, **John Tong Hon, has accepted an invitation from Beijing to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games.** As well as being 'honoured', Bishop Tong has also reminded Catholics in Hong Kong that 'the Holy Father expressed his blessings toward China for a successful Olympics. I will follow his good wishes and attend this joyous national event as a witness.' However speculation of an imminent diplomatic breakthrough between the Vatican and Beijing were denied, and a Vatican spokesman added that there were no plans to downgrade the Vatican's presence in Taiwan.

[Originally reported by Reuters, 10 Jun; AsiaNews, 9 Jun]

CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS NEWS

The Catholic diocese of Chengdu has established a **rehabilitation office**. Apart from coordinating relief and reconstruction work, the office hopes to ensure that every parish will be able to celebrate its own mass on Aug 15, either by repairing churches or using temporary buildings. The office will begin drawing up long term plans to deal with losses to property amounting to RMB80 million (US\$12m). So far the diocese has received RMB300,000 in donations. Father Li Zhigang, the diocesan administrator, said that the meeting on 12 June which established the office was the first time all diocesan clergy had gathered since the earthquake. The meeting was attended by 17 priests, forty nuns, seminarians and lay leaders. 37 lay Catholics are known to have died in the quake, and many others are struggling with crises of faith and trauma related disorders, says Father Li.

[Originally reported by UCAN, 19 June]

On June 13, a further 100 tons of rice and 10 tons of cooking oil were delivered by Jinde Charities to areas near the epicentre of the Sichuan earthquake. This followed 20 tons of rice and 307 barrels of oil which had been delivered on 8 June. The aid will be distributed by local officials.

[Originally reported by AF, 16 June]

The Catholic church and seminary at Bailu, near Pengzhou, is to be rebuilt after being destroyed by the Sichuan earthquake. The original church was built by French MEP missionaries in 1908, and was built in a mixture of Roman and Gothic styles. Local officials have ensured that the remains of the church have been carefully conserved and it will be rebuilt. Over 80 other churches, temples and mosques and the world heritage site of Dujiangyan were all damaged in the earthquake.

[Originally reported by AF, 26 June; Chinaview, 21 June; Xinhua, 24 June]



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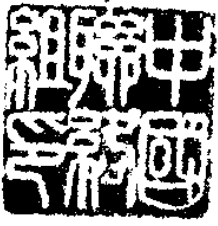
Former student activist, house church leader, and now **China Christian rights campaigner, Bob Fu visited Westminster Palace** to meet with China human rights campaigners. Mr. Fu was attending the People's University in Beijing in 1989 and helped lead student protests, before becoming a Christian and starting an unregistered Bible School together with his wife Heidi. The school was discovered and closed down, and after a brief period of imprisonment, the couple fled for Hong Kong and then emigrated to the United States in 1997. In 2002 Bob Fu established the China Aid Association, which campaigns for Christian religious freedom in China. Speaking with David Alton, Mr. Fu said "My hope is that the Chinese government will recognize that Christianity and other true peaceful religious groups do not need to be controlled and are not a threat to the government but, rather, are one of the needed building blocks for stability and can provide much-needed help for promoting non-violence during this time of transition in China's history,"
[Originally reported by ICN, 18 June]

A joint report by Christian Solidarity Worldwide and the China Aid Association entitled 'China: Persecution of Protestant Christians in the Approach to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games' was released on 8 June. The report reiterates China Aid's claims that funds have been set aside by the Chinese central government for use by the Public Security Bureau to close down unregistered churches. In particular, 'third wave' churches of urban intellectuals have suffered growing restrictions and detentions.
[Originally reported by Christian Post, 9 June]

Bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kuin spoke at a vigil to commemorate nineteen years since the Tiananmen Square crackdown. He said 'this obvious injustice has still to be redressed and an apology is overdue.' However he also commended the government's response to the Sichuan earthquake: 'We saw helplessness on the face of our Prime Minister [Wen Jiabao] but in that way we also saw the love of a father and mother.' He hoped this respect for life would be the new foundation of unity in the nation.
[Originally reported by Hong Kong Sunday Examiner, 17 June]

The new chargé d'affaires at the apostolic nunciature in China has arrived in Taipei. Mgr Paul Fitzpatrick Russell, until recently in Nigeria, is replacing Mgr Ambrose Madtha, who is being made archbishop of Lucknow and apostolic nuncio to Côte D'Ivoire. Madtha has been based in Taipei since 2003.
[Originally reported by UCAN, 11 June]

The three Catholic bishops of Hong Kong and Macao made their first *ad limina* visits to meet with Pope Benedict XVI. Cardinal Joseph Zen, coadjutor bishop John Tong and bishop Jose Lai all saw the Pope on 27 June, and bring with them diocesan reports, marking a year since the Pope issued his pastoral letter. The Pope praised their well-ordered dioceses, commended their work with the mainland church, and particularly mentioned the Caritas charities of both dioceses. He also hoped that one day the bishops of mainland China would be able to visit Rome.
[Originally reported by UCAN, 10 June; AsiaNews, VIS 28 June]



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ORIGINAL SOURCES

AF	Agenzia Fides	www.fides.org
AFP	Agence France Presse	www.afp.com
AP	Associated Press	www.ap.org
BBC	British Broadcasting Association	www.bbc.co.uk
BOCOG	Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games	
CAA	China Aid Association	www.chinaaid.org
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	
CCC	China Christian Council [Protestant]	
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	
(C)CPA	(Chinese) Catholic Patriotic Association	
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
PBOC	People's Bank of China [China's Central Bank]	
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	
	Telegraph	www.telegraph.co.uk
	The Times	www.timesonline.co.uk/
UCAN	Union of Catholic Asia News	www.ucanews.com
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization	
	Xinhua	http://www.xinhua.org

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