



September, 2008

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INTERNATIONAL

Germany is ending all economic assistance to Chinese development projects, reasoning that China is now wealthy enough to fund its own programmes. Germany will remain an advisor on projects but the economic assistance ministry will end financial commitments this year, during which it remitted €67.8m (\$97.8m) to China. Development aid talks between China and Germany were suspended following Chinese reaction to Tibetan riots and protests in March. (Originally reported by DPA, 22 Sept)

The **International Religious Freedom Report 2008** was released by the US State Department, citing China, North Korea and Myanmar as having particularly bad records. The Chinese foreign affairs spokesperson rejected the claims, adding that the US was merely trying to interfere in the affairs of another nation. For the full text of the report see <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/> (Originally reported by ENI, 22Sept.)

Joe Biden, vice-presidential candidate for the US Democratic Party has long been chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during which time he has argued that China and the USA need each other. "It is very much in [US] interest[s] to foster an environment in which China, like the rest of East Asia, can continue recent progress towards developing a more open society, respectful of the rule of law and mindful of international norms in the areas of human rights, security and trade." However he has been particularly vehement in bids to stop Chinese imports of toys, pet food and other goods after recent scandals., and wants China to be accountable to the UN for its human rights record. (Originally reported by CBNN, 9 Sept)

The **Sudanese government has welcomed China's anticipated veto** on an indictment by a prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Chinese assistant foreign minister Zhai Jun delivered a letter to Sudanese President Al Bashir from President Hu Jintao. Sudanese media said that the letter expressed clear support for the stances of the Sudanese government and criticised the ICC indictments as failing to help the situation in Darfur. However the Chinese envoy to Darfur said that there had been no mention of a veto "at this stage" and that there remained "criminal issues [in Darfur] that require resolution". (Originally reported by Sudan Tribune, 2 September)



NATIONAL NEWS

Over 13000 Chinese infants have been admitted to hospital with serious kidney illnesses after drinking **formula milk contaminated with the industrial chemical melamine**. Four children have died, and 104 were in critical condition. Hospitals have been choked with parents anxious over the health of their children, with perhaps 50,000 infants made ill in some way. 1600 inspection teams were sent out across the country, and several people in milk collection companies have been detained.

Rights activists and lawyers have formed support groups for the families, though some have since been pressured to withdraw according to Li Fangping, a Beijing-based lawyer who has organised one such group of 120 lawyers. Some have claimed that Chinese authorities kept the news of the milk contamination secret during the Olympic period so as to avoid embarrassment. (Originally reported by BBC, 24 Sept; Reuters, AP, 29 Sep)

China's National Day, October 1, 2008, was highlighted by the successful hosting of the Olympics and the first Chinese spacewalk. Premier Wen Jiabao in a speech to dignitaries in Beijing ahead of national day also noted some of the difficulties faced by China this year mentioning the winter storms in south China and the Wenchuan earthquake in May. (Originally reported by AP, 29 Sep)

Three Chinese astronauts completed an **unprecedented space mission** for China, including the first spacewalk by a Chinese. The Shenzhou VII spacecraft spent three days in orbit, during which air force colonel Zhai Zhigang made a 19-minute spacewalk. Premier Wen Jiabao, who watched the successful return of the astronauts from ground control in Beijing, reiterated China's aim for a peaceful expansion of its space programme. The next stages include outer space docking, and a possible orbiting station by 2020, before aiming to land astronauts on the moon. (Originally reported by SCMP, 29 Sep)

China is hoping to capture around 15% of the world market in building and launching satellites. It is building increased international partnerships for its satellite and manned space missions, principally Nigeria, Brazil and Venezuela. However as most of the space missions remain under the control and budget of the PLA, the American government remains wary about cooperating with the Chinese in space. Frictions have been particularly high since China used anti-satellite technology to destroy one of its own satellites in orbit in early 2007. However a launch pad in Hainan Island will be the first in China to have a visitor centre, once it is completed in 2012, and China's space missions so far have been primarily focussed on scientific experiments. (Originally reported by WP, 25 Sept)

China has released a **30 page white paper defending efforts to modernise Tibet** and "give the international community a better understanding of the reality of the protection and development of Tibetan culture." It emphasises the strength of Tibetan printing shops connected with monasteries which are printing 63,000 new editions of Tibetan sutras each year. Since 1990 a new set of woodblocks for the Tibetan Tengyur have been created, meaning that the entire Tibetan scriptures can be printed in Lhasa for the first time. The paper explores the "deceptive nature of the 'cultural autonomy of Tibet' which they clamour for", arguing it is really a political conspiracy to restore theocratic controls. (Originally reported by Chinaview, 25 Sept; UPI, 26 Sept; AP 26 Sept)



The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) has reported that **more than 1000 Tibetan monks have disappeared** since the riots and protests in March. 80 monks from the leading Drepung monastery alone have not been seen since. The centre has called on the international community and the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance (UNWGEID) to require the Chinese government to provide information on the detained monks. (Originally reported by AsiaNews, 26 Sept.)

The success of the **Beijing Paralympic Games**, which were viewed by an estimated 1bn people in China, has led to a greater visibility of calls asking for better treatment of Chinese people with disabilities. The Games have featured outstanding performances by a number of athletes, but a lack of facilities and resources for people with disabilities outside Beijing still needs to be addressed. Beijing alone has an estimated 1 million disabled people, about 6.5% of the total population. The capital has built more than 150 rehabilitation centres for disabled persons in recent years. Particularly important in the gradual acceptance of people with physical handicaps in China have been Deng Xiaoping's son Deng Pufang, who was disabled after torture by Red Guards during the cultural revolution, and Meng Weina, founder of Huiling centres in several cities across China, and closely connected with the local Catholic churches. The Sichuan earthquake has also led to a rapid rise in the number of Chinese suffering from long term physical disabilities. (Originally reported by SCMP, 19 Sept; UCAN, 19 Sept; EDA, 19 Sept)

During the Paralympics several international agencies have been told that they can no longer carry out rehabilitation work with disabled orphaned children. Eulalia Anderson, head of the Beijing International Committee for Chinese Orphans said that her volunteers, including physical therapists, had been asked not to visit orphanages for the duration of the Games, but would be allowed to return in October. (Originally reported by AsiaNews, 9 Sept)

Zhao Chunlan, director of the Beijing Disabled Person's Federation, says that the 83 million disabled people in China still "suffer discrimination" in many ways. She emphasises that this is only from a minority of Chinese, while most do not have any prejudices. However less than 2% of rural disabled people receive medical care, compared to around 50% in urban areas. Hu Jintao promised in March to increase spending on disabled care. (Originally reported by AsiaNews, 4 Sept)

Wang Dan, a leader of the student protests at Tiananmen, has again been refused entry into Hong Kong to speak at a seminar organised by the Justice and Peace Commission. Wang has repeatedly been refused his applications to renew his Chinese passport though he remains a Chinese citizen. He has recently completed a doctorate at Harvard University. (Originally reported by HK Sunday Examiner, 7 Sept)

The Hong Kong democrats won 23 out of 30 elected seats to the HK legislative assembly. It had been expected that the democrats would lose seats to pro-Beijing parties in a post Olympic bump, but they lost only three and so retain a veto over ministerial appointments and some legislative proposals. The pro-business Liberal Party lost several seats. (Originally reported by BBC, 8 Sept)



The **government commission of inquiry into the damage to schools** caused by the Sichuan earthquake has admitted that shoddy construction could be partly to blame. The chair of the commission, geologist Ma Zongjin admitted that “in recent years we have built schools at a fast pace, and there could be construction problems ... Structures of these schools may not be sound and the materials used may not be strong enough.” 2000 investigators are currently gathering data on the impact of the quake though many local governments have already bulldozed school debris. So far nobody has been charged though 10,000 students are thought to have died in collapsed classrooms while surrounding buildings remained standing.

(Originally reported by AsiaNews, 5 Sept; IHT, 5 Sept)

Residents in Xichang diocese, Sichuan, were rocked by another earthquake on 30 August. The quake measured 6.1 on the Richter Scale and most seriously affected the rural area of the Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture, an area known for large numbers of Catholic and Protestant Yi converts in the early twentieth century. The area is a seismic zone and people and buildings were better prepared than the May earthquake. Several Catholic churches in the region have been damaged however.

(Originally reported by BBC, AsiaNews, 1 Sept)

CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS NEWS

The **Hong Kong Catholic weekly newspaper *Kong Kao Po*** has celebrated its 80th anniversary. The weekly was founded by an Italian priest, A. Granelli, as a Chinese-language newspaper for Hong Kong, mainland and overseas Catholics. At the commemorative seminar Sr Beatrice Leung called on the paper to carry increasing numbers of politically sensitive stories to refresh the image of the Church in Hong Kong. (Originally reported by UCAN, 26 Sept)

The Catholic Bishop of Shanghai, **Aloysius Jin Luxian, has released his pastoral letter for 2008**, the year of St. Paul. As the year also coincides with the 400th anniversary of the evangelisation of the Diocese of Shanghai, the bishop focuses on evangelisation by presenting St. Paul from eight different perspectives: who is St. Paul?, the physical aspects of St. Paul, Paul’s character; chosen by the Lord; the patrimony of St. Paul; the theological insights of St. Paul; the heart of Pauline thought; Paul and Christ. He concludes with St. Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor 9: ‘woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’, advocating that all priests and faithful imitate Paul’s example. (Originally reported by AF, 23 Sept)

Underground bishop of Zhengding, **Julius Jia Zhiguo, was released from detention** on 18 Sept. He was escorted back to his residence by PSB officers, and remains under constant surveillance. He has been isolated from his priests and religious, and is not allowed to receive visitors.

(Originally reported by UCAN, 19 Sept)

The **Dalai Lama cancelled his visit to Europe** in October stating that he needed more rest. The Dalai, 73, was admitted to hospital in Mumbai in August with exhaustion. He pulled out of planned visits to Mexico and the Dominican Republic. He has now cancelled his visit to Italy, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Germany. (Originally reported by AP, 14 Sep)



China Desk Bulletin



The **Chinese Catholic liturgical calendar for 2009 will be dedicated to Marian devotions** around the world. This is particularly in response to the widespread devotion expressed to Our Lady of Sheshan this year, and the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of Mary at Lourdes to be celebrated next year. (Originally reported by AF 9 Sept)

President Gao Feng of the China Christian Council attended a **Sino-American Multi-religious Conference** sponsored by Mercer University, Atlanta. He said that the Christian ideal of “loving others like loving yourself” encourages dialogue with other faiths leading to understanding and trust. Ding Chengyun of the China Daoist Association said that the “common well-being of mankind” should be the focus of religious exchanges. They are both part of a delegation of religious leaders on a 12-day visit to the United States, arranged by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Carter Foundation. (Originally reported by Chinaview, 10 Sept)

The delegation also held talks with American scholars and religious leaders to discuss dialogues between the two countries on religious freedom and tolerance. The delegates then moved on to meet American leaders in Washington. (Originally reported by Christian Post, 8 Sept)

A leading consultant to the Vatican on Chinese affairs, Fr Bernard Cervellera, a member of PIME and editor of the AsiaNews service, has **cautioned against optimism for a rapid thaw in Sino-Vatican relations**. He told a conference for journalists sponsored by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, that the burgeoning religious revival in China and the intersection of religious freedoms and human-rights demands meant that Beijing was increasingly wary of religions. Cervellera said that Protestant Christianity was growing fastest because of a low institutional apparatus and minimal spiritual formation required before new members can be accepted, both of which slowed Catholic growth. (Originally reported by National Catholic Reporter, 10 Sept)

Members of eight youth groups across China met up online to chat and share their experiences around the theme of Growing Up in the Community. Through web cams the youths were able to introduce themselves to each other, bringing together 130 young Catholics for the first time. The **Eternal Cross chat room** hosts daily live programs as well as the annual young people’s gathering. (Originally reported by UCAN, 5 Sept)



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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
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	
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]	
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	
	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	
WP	Washington Post	
	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