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## CHINA TODAY UPDATES: 10 UPDATES

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**South China Morning Post**

**NGOs fight uphill battle as Beijing tightens the screws**

**Verna Yu**

**May 28, 2010**

Staff at the Yirenping Centre in Beijing have not been paid for two months and more than two-thirds of their projects have been suspended due to lack of funding.

"Much of our project funding has stopped coming in," said Lu Jun , founder of the non-profit group that fights discrimination against hepatitis B and HIV carriers. "It is possible that we might have to close down."

Yirenping has been under pressure before. Last year, government workers raided its office and confiscated all of its publications, accusing it of illegal publishing.

But until recently, it had never been short of funding. That changed this year with the introduction of a regulation that restricts foreign donations to independent non-governmental organisations, making access to its overseas funding - 80 per cent of its financing - almost impossible.

Lu said the regulation had sounded the death knell for many grass-roots non-profit groups like Yirenping that operated independently of the government.

From disaster relief to legal aid work and advocating the rights of those on the margins of society, mainland NGOs are playing an increasingly prominent role in society. But activists say their operating environment has become more difficult as the government steps up administrative measures against those it feels threatened by.

A crackdown on house churches, human-rights lawyers and other rights activists has also intensified, prompting fears of a new round of persecution of the mainland's nascent civil society.

Aids advocacy group Aizhixing, arguably the most vocal NGO on the mainland, has also seen its funding hit hard and has suspended several projects. After harassment from government agencies, including the tax and fire departments, its director, Wan Yanhai , left the country this month.

According to academics' estimates, some 90 per cent of mainland NGOs lack legal status because Beijing does not allow them to register without a government-backed agency as their caretaker.

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As few government bodies want to be responsible for independent NGOs, most are forced to register as companies and are subject to government scrutiny over taxes and other administrative issues.

They are also excluded from government funding, prohibited from raising funds from the public and as most enterprises consider it safer to donate to government-backed organisations, they rely on overseas funding.

Xu Youyu, a retired Chinese Academy of Social Sciences professor, said that when a nervous government sensed a dangerous level of conflict building up in society, its default reaction was to curb the rise of civil society.

"[The authorities] can't see the positive contribution from the NGOs, they see them as a destabilising force that has to be suppressed," Xu said.

Nicholas Bequelin, senior researcher at New York-based Human Rights Watch, said the past three years had seen an intensified persecution of groups or individuals who were previously tolerated.

"There is little doubt at the moment that the pressure on NGOs is coming from the very top," he said. "There is a deliberate campaign to clip the wings of non-governmental groups."

Even though many such groups or individuals have no political agenda, the government is deeply suspicious of them and sees them as a potential threat because they are outside its control and many have overseas links.

The Communist Party knows only too well the potential of forward-thinking civic groups. As an underground party before it came to power in 1949, it gained support from the masses by providing community services and teaching the underprivileged how to defend their rights against the corrupt, one-party Kuomintang government.

"The Communist Party sees civil society as a potential political threat and wants to nip in the bud any attempt to organise independently," Bequelin said.

In July, the Beijing-based legal aid centre Open Constitution Initiative, or Gongmeng, was closed by the government for alleged tax evasion. Apart from being fined 1.4 million yuan (HK\$1.6 million), founder Xu Zhiyong was held for weeks.

In March, the Women's Legal Research and Services Centre, a respected legal aid provider, had its affiliation with its sponsor Peking University abruptly terminated, making it unlawful to continue operating.

Bequelin said the central government is nervous about an increased awareness of legal rights among ordinary Chinese. The authorities pay lip service to the rule of law but they do not want to have their power restrained by it.

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That means independent civic groups such as Gongmeng, Yirenping and Aizhixing, which try to help victims seek legal redress against the government or companies, tend to be the targets of official ire.

"The winds have turned and the Communist Party wants to discourage mobilisation of the legal system to curtail the power of the government," Bequelin said.

In the latest incident in a clampdown on rights advocates, two lawyers who defended a follower of the banned Falun Gong sect had their licences permanently revoked this month. Last year, more than 20 human-rights lawyers were disbarred.

Authorities have also intensified persecution of Christian house churches in recent months. In November, hundreds of worshipers from the Beijing-based Shouwang Church and the Shanghai-based Wanbang Church were forced to worship in parks after being evicted from their rented premises. This month, Guangzhou police detained the pastor of the Liangren Church.

International NGOs are no exception. Early this year, the Yunnan government mandated that they would have to register with the provincial civil affairs bureau and form a partnership with a government-approved agency. While some view this as a positive step towards formalising their legal status, others have expressed worries that the de-facto approval system will weed out some groups distrusted by the authorities.

Russell Leigh Moses, a Beijing-based analyst, said: "We are witnessing a greater sophistication by the security apparatus here in assessing the role of NGOs, in separating those that they believe are non-threatening from those that they have concluded look too much like alternative political organisations."

Sara Davis, executive director of the New York-based Asia Catalyst, said: "I think restricting NGOs is short-sighted and could accelerate a downward spiral into social unrest."

Asia Catalyst works with mainland grass-roots groups on Aids-related projects.

Lu of Yirenping cited the example of a man who stabbed 16 schoolchildren in Guangdong last month being a hepatitis B patient who was forced to leave his job. "If there had been an NGO to help him, he wouldn't have gone down that path," Lu said.

But it is not all bleak, according to Deng Guosheng of Tsinghua University, who specialises in NGO research. He said despite previous clampdowns on civic organisations, they have grown rapidly. Officially registered NGOs had grown nearly a hundred fold from just 4,500 in 1988 to some 425,000 by the end of last year. Scholars estimate the number of unregistered NGOs range from one million to three million.

Although the authorities were now taking a harsher line towards the more outspoken civic groups, Deng said some local governments were trying to make it easier for NGOs - albeit the less controversial ones, such as charities - to register.

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"The government's attitude towards NGOs has been wavering all the time ... tight sometimes, lax other times," Deng said. "But looking back at the past 15 years' trend ... I still feel optimistic."

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**AsiaNews - [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it)**

**05/26/2010 09:58**

**CHINA**

### **China-US dialogue: restrictions on dissidents until June 4**

Lawyers, intellectuals, writers deprived of their liberty for fear that they meet with people or contact media. The presence of international political figures (currently from U.S., soon from the EU) increases pressures, controls, forced removals from Beijing.

Beijing (AsiaNews / CHRD) - Chinese police have increased controls, isolation and ill-treatment of activists and dissidents while the meetings between U.S. and China on strategic and economic dialogue, which ended yesterday, took place in the capital.

Tight controls on people who may present petitions or launch messages in front of world media during visits of international personalities is almost traditional in China. Activists are worried because they expect these restrictions will last for quite a long time: soon there will be a visit by Members of the European Parliament and then we will be June 4, the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

CHRD (Chinese Human Rights Defenders) has received the following reports:

- On May 24, Beijing human rights lawyer Li Xiongbing was told by police that he was "not allowed to leave his home in the coming days." Li, who lives in Beijing's Tongzhou District, was invited to "tea" by National Security officers that day, and is currently under soft detention and guarded by policemen at his home.

- A Chaoyang District National Security officer contacted debarred Beijing human rights lawyer Tang Jitian on May 24 and demanded that he set an appointment for a "chat" on May 25. When Tang did not respond, the officer threatened that he would summon (chuanhuan) Tang if he did not comply.

- Beijing-based writer and activist Wang Debang was visited at home by Beijing National Security officers on May 25, who informed him that they would return on May 26 to take him away for "travel" outside of Beijing.

- Telephone and internet service were cut off at the home of Beijing-based intellectual and activist Zhang Zuhua on May 25.

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## Clinton avoids China disputes, hands out teddy bears

**Arshad Mohammed**

**Sat May 22, 2010 5:37am EDT**

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - Secretary of State Hillary Clinton passed out teddy bears to Chinese children as she toured the Shanghai World Expo on Saturday and carefully skirted the United States' many policy disputes with China.

At the start of a four-day visit whose centerpiece will be talks in Beijing about strategic and economic matters, Clinton spent a misty morning at the Expo, an emblem of China's rise on the world stage.

Dressed in a powder blue jacket to match the Expo's plump, cartoonish mascot, Clinton walked through the U.S. and Chinese national "pavilions" shaking hands, posing for pictures and talking up the importance of people-to-people ties.

She avoided any public discussion of the issues that will occupy her in Beijing, including North Korea's suspected sinking of a South Korean warship, Iran's nuclear program, and U.S. calls for China to allow its currency to appreciate.

Speaking after her four-hour tour, Clinton suggested the event may mark a watershed in the history of China's financial hub and richest and most cosmopolitan city.

"It's like a coming out party for countries and cities," Clinton told reporters. "There is a real historical significance to them doing this."

That the chief U.S. diplomat is spending two nights in Shanghai before the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Beijing on Monday and Tuesday illustrates the importance of China's rising economic and political influence to Washington.

Clinton began her day at the U.S. pavilion, which was a bare patch of ground less than a year ago with the United States short of money to build it and at risk of missing an event at the top of China's business and political agenda.

Thanks partly to her intervention, major U.S. companies stepped up to the plate to fund the pavilion, whose attractions include three films highlighting the American way of life.

In one, Americans including basketball stars Kobe Bryant and Magic Johnson offered greetings in Chinese.

A second verged on corporate advertising, with an executive discussing the potential of wind to meet China's burgeoning energy needs with pictures of U.S.-made windmills in the background.

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A third was an allegory of what a single person -- in this case a young girl who plants a flower in an abandoned city lot -- can do to improve the environment.

After the film, Clinton handed out teddy bears to children in the audience.

The films made no explicit reference to democracy, human rights, freedom of religion or other political issues where the United States has long criticized China's record.

The U.S. exhibit ends with a gift shop where a great many products -- from teddy bears and stuffed bison to silver lapel pins and pink cowboy hats -- were all marked "Made in China."

(Editing by Nick Macfie)

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## **Beijing breaks ice with Hong Kong opposition**

**24 May 2010 - 7:39am EDT**

**By James Pomfret**

HONG KONG (Reuters) - China's leadership reached out to Hong Kong's opposition democrats on Monday in a breakthrough move to resolve a bitter dispute over how to realize full democracy in the city.

Li Gang, a deputy director of Beijing's liaison office, met senior members of Hong Kong's opposition Democratic Party that has been highly critical of the Chinese Communist leadership that in 1989 ordered troops to fire on pro-democracy demonstrators in and around Tiananmen Square.

"We hope that Li Gang ... can take our clear position to the highest levels of the central government and hope they make a response," said Emily Lau, one of the democrats who met Li.

Democratic Party Chairman Albert Ho said such a meeting, formally sanctioned by Beijing, was a first for his party.

With the return of Hong Kong, a former British colony, to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, both sides have sparred over the pace of constitutional development, with the vocal and highly mobilized opposition democrats condemning Beijing's repeated delays over promised democratic reforms.

The talks come as Hong Kong gears up for a key vote on an electoral reform package that will make elections in 2012 marginally more democratic, but far short of the one-man, one-vote polls the democrats have been pushing for that year.

"We very much hope that we can take a fresh step in realizing electoral reforms for 2012 ... that will take us a step closer toward universal suffrage," Li told reporters in rare, wide-ranging comments underscoring Beijing's desire to resolve the thorny and divisive issue that has dominated local politics.

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While Beijing has promised universal suffrage in 2017 to elect the city's leader, it hasn't clarified key details including threshold nomination rules that may end up shutting out pro-democracy candidates.

Nor has Beijing said whether it will abolish controversial special-franchise seats held by mostly commercial special interest groups called functional constituencies.

These have traditionally been dominated by pro-establishment and pro-Beijing forces. The democrats say these seats, which make up half the legislature, must be phased out fully under universal suffrage.

"I see no grounds for people to attack us that we have been appeased (by Beijing)," Ho said in response to attacks from radical democratic factions that his party was selling out on its longstanding principles.

While Ho said he hoped to use the talks as a platform to push for "concrete improvements" over future reforms, some experts said the odds of a breakthrough were slim.

"It needs quite some time to build up some understanding," said James Sung, a political scientist. "I think there will be at least three or four rounds of meetings before they finally can make a decision on whether they accept a compromise."

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**Source: Agencies**  
**20 May 2010**

## **China punishes officials over graft**

### **China has jailed thousands of government officials in a crackdown on corruption, according to authorities.**

A deputy minister of the ministry of supervision said on Thursday that a total of 3,058 officials, including several mayors, received punishments of up to life in prison for stealing stimulus money or taking bribes for construction projects among other crimes.

The offenses committed were related to Beijing's \$586bn stimulus launched in late 2008 or to ordinary construction spending, Hao Mingjin has said.

The cases were concluded over a six-month period from October last year to April, according to Mingjin.

"Today, with many corruption cases likely to happen, if we don't take tough measures, it will be hard to suppress this," Mingjin added.

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Fu Kui, the head of the ministry's enforcement department, said: "We will tackle corruption with a heavy fist."

Bribe-taking and other money-related abuses by government officials are not uncommon in China.

In 2008, the country was ranked 72 of 179 countries suffering from widespread corruption by politicians and officials in a report released by Transparency International, a non-government organisation.

Means of corruption include graft, bribery, embezzlement, and backdoor deals.

'Threat to future'

A recent study by Minxin Pei, the director for the China programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said corruption threatened China's economic future.

"Failure to contain endemic corruption among Chinese officials poses one of the most serious threats to the nation's future economic and political stability," the report said.

"(In China) Roughly 10 per cent of government spending, contracts, and transactions is estimated to be used as kickbacks and bribes, or simply stolen.

Pei examined the root causes for the corruption, which includes "partial economic reforms, lax enforcement efforts, and reluctance by the Communist Party to adopt political reforms".

"Though the Chinese government has more than 1,200 laws, rules, and directives against corruption, implementation is spotty and ineffective.

"The odds of a corrupt official going to jail are less than three per cent, making corruption a high-return, low-risk activity," he said.

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## **School attacks cut deep at China's soul**

**By Francesco Sisci**

BEIJING - They are no longer rare, random acts of one or two nutcases far from the rest of the country. A series of knife attacks in kindergartens has become the symptom of a virus lurking deep in the soul of the new China.

Premier Wen Jiabao said as much on May 13, a day after the fifth attack and as the death toll among children as young as three reached 16, with dozens also wounded since the first attack two months ago. "We need to resolve the deep-seated causes that have resulted in these problems," Wen said in an interview with Hong Kong-based Phoenix Television. "This includes handling social contradictions, resolving disputes and strengthening mediation at the grassroots level."

According to The Global Times, a popular newspaper published by the official People's Daily, police have foiled seven attacks at schools since the first killings. That was at the hands of Zheng Minsheng, an apparently deranged 42-year-old man who hacked eight children to death with a cleaver in the coastal province of Fujian on March 23 [1]. Zheng was convicted and executed on April 28, the day of the second successful attack, when 16 children were stabbed in a primary school in the southern province of Guangdong. The next day, 29 children and three teachers were wounded at a kindergarten in Taixing, Jiangsu province, by another cleaver-wielding madman.

On April 30, the wave of madness reached Shandong province. Again, a middle aged man - this time brandishing a hammer - left five children and a teacher on the ground, then poured gasoline on himself and set himself on fire while holding two children. On May 12, one Wu Huangming, 48, from Hanzhong city, Shaanxi province, stormed a private kindergarten, killing two teachers and seven children with a kitchen cleaver - and wounding about a dozen more.

After this last episode, the government imposed a news blackout amid concerns that the reports could encourage copycat attacks.

In a culture with a very mild sense of metaphysics, with humanlike ghosts but few gods, children are viewed as the true link to the future and the cosmos, and brought up to think that through them the spirit of their parents, grandparents and ancestors continues to be embodied. In antiquity, the worst punishment was the extermination of an entire family line and the end of all those who had the same surname. It signified not only the physical demise of the guilty, but also his condemnation to eternal death and to the lowest circle of hell.

Today, popular deep feelings are the same, and moreover in most families, due to the one-child policy, an only child becomes the concentration of affections and hopes for an entire household.

The authorities do not provide psychological profiles of the assassins. Some Chinese commentators spoke of a lack of social safety valves - people who feel wronged have sometimes resorted to suicide and murder. Some suspect a conspiracy. There were 12 attacks - successful or foiled - in 50 days, an average of one every four days, conducted by middle-aged men with crude weapons against small children.

In other countries, similar attacks were by students taking revenge with firearms against fellow students. The Chinese episodes are much more serious: it takes special gall to kill at close range with a knife, and something even more extraordinarily demonic to use the knife to bathe oneself in the blood of defenseless toddlers.

Newspapers in recent weeks have reported an increase in mental disorders among China's population, with 17% of people suffering varying degrees of clinical depression, and an increasing number turning to the care of psychiatrists. These numbers are probably too low if one considers the radical changes and dramatic events in China in the past 20 years.

It is as if 200 years of Western history and development were crammed in a few years in China and forced over a billion people to change their lifestyles rapidly and radically. Future changes could be greater and more dramatic as the transformation gains momentum.

Many people are searching for answers in religion. And many move from official churches, with many practitioners and few pastors, to semi-underground house churches where one pastor can keep a closer watch on his smaller flock, and people feel cared about rather than abandoned.

Most Chinese intellectuals, traditionally the most sensitive part of society, feel unhappy. Their material life has dramatically improved in the past 20 years: they live in better housing, eat better food, can afford to travel and have greater freedom of expression. Still, many feel tormented. Some blame the lack of democracy, others fault the nation for showing weakness internationally, and others can't stand the new social differences.

These issues may all exist, but in all these fields there were dramatic improvements over the past 20 years, a reason to rejoice and trust in the future - not be unhappy. Could it be that there is also something deeper and more personal in this unhappiness? Does it have anything to do with coping with the dramatic earth-shattering changes of these years?

Many people simply cannot take it, and they burst. Until a month ago, these explosions were virtually all private, but by the end of March some decided to hit where it hurt most - at the future of China, at children who grow up in this whirlwind changing world. It is difficult for the news blackout to eliminate the risk of "contagion" of this madness.

Schools today are increasing security systems, the police have prepared special units to cope with attackers, and perhaps in a short time this wave of killings will subside. Yet the malaise in the soul of the Chinese will remain and possibly deepen. They are making enormous strides toward a future the world says is theirs. But apparently some of them are afraid of this future and want to destroy it by killing children.

Note

1. Xuyang Jingjing Cops foil seven schools attacks Global Times May 13, 2010.

\* Francesco Sisci is the Asia Editor of La Stampa.

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**UCA News - [www.ucanews.com](http://www.ucanews.com)**

**Tiananmen rallies 'form' HK youths' conscience**

**Published Date: May 21, 2010**

By ucanews.com reporter

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Annual rallies in Hong Kong commemorating the Tiananmen Square crackdown on June 4, 1989, are not wasted even though the mainland Chinese are still suffering 21 years on, a Protestant pastor says.

These rallies have “helped form the conscience of the next generation,” said Reverend Timothy Lam Kwok Cheung of the Sen Lok Christian Church, at a seminar to remember the tragic event.

More than half of the 200 participants in the May 19 seminar were young people.

Though they were very young in 1989 and did not know what was happening in Beijing then, nevertheless they learnt about the event from their elders, said Reverend Lam.

One youth who was born in the 1980s said in an interview that “he began to learn about his country from the tears on his parents’ face,” the pastor recalled.

The seminar was co-hosted by several Catholic and Protestant groups.

It was the first in a series of Christian activities to mark the 21st anniversary of the massacre. Other activities to be held in the run-up to June 4 include a rally, a prayer gathering and Masses in several Catholic parishes.

Or Yan-yan, project officer of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, one of the seminar organizers, agreed with the pastor.

Over the past two years, more young people are taking the initiative in organizing commemorative activities, she told UCA News.

“It’s possible they understand that local democratic development is now closely linked to the Chinese regime,” she said.

Reading about the clampdowns on dissidents and the many cases of injustice in mainland China, they have realized they need to stand and be counted on social issues and to show concern for their society, she said.

Tens of thousands of Hong Kong residents attend the annual June 4 candlelight vigils, and these “have sown seeds in their minds,” she said.

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## **South China Morning Post**

### **China, US differ on how to upgrade ties**

### **Beijing wants strategic partnership; Washington looks to specify global role for China**

## **Cary Huang in Beijing**

**May 20, 2010**

Beijing and Washington are keen to thrash out a fresh framework, to upgrade their often fragile ties, at next week's top-level dialogue.

Diplomats familiar with the talks, to be held in Beijing on Monday and Tuesday, say the Chinese side favours characterising the bilateral relationship as a "strategic partnership", while the Americans want to specify China's global responsibilities.

Shortly after he took office, US President Barack Obama and Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao agreed to seek to create a partnership for the 21st century, but it remains a limited partnership, rather than a strategic relationship. Obama's first visit to China for a summit meeting with Hu in November only ended with a joint statement reiterating the two sides' commitment to building a "positive, co-operative and comprehensive relationship in the 21st century" and taking concrete actions to build a partnership to jointly cope with common challenges.

The second meeting of the strategic and economic dialogue will be a two-track meeting. The economic track will be chaired by Vice-Premier Wang Qishan and US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, with the strategic track to be chaired by State Councillor Dai Bingguo and US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. A dozen cabinet ministers from both nations will take part in the talks, with a list of broad topics on the agenda, including trade friction, exchange rate concerns, the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programmes, carbon emissions, energy efficiency and global financial recovery.

Chinese diplomats say Beijing has put forward a suggestion that bilateral ties be upgraded, with a statement heralding a "strategic partnership to address the common challenges" to be put in an official document, while US negotiators initiated discussion on "specifying China's global responsibilities", accompanying its rising global influence.

The strategic partnership concept was first mooted by then-president Jiang Zemin during his visit to the US in October 1997. But a few years later, the then US secretary of state, Warren Christopher, talked just about a partnership.

The succeeding Bush administration called China "a strategic competitor" amid growing awareness of possible threats posed by China to United States interests. It later shifted its policy towards China, seeking a more co-operative relationship and redefining the rising power as "a responsible stakeholder".

Chinese negotiators see the strategic partnership label as even more imperative nowadays. Washington has established such relations with many emerging economies, including India, China's main neighbour and competitor, when Washington and New Delhi sealed a deal on nuclear co-operation in 2008.

Professor Jin Canrong, associate dean of Renmin University's school of international relations, said it was likely the sides were working towards such an agreement. "In the past, talks often focused a lot on bilateral issues such as trade and the yuan, Taiwan, Tibet or human rights in politics and Iran and North Korea in global security," he said. "Now both sides recognise that no global issue will be solved without their co-operation."

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## **Ancient wisdom of Confucius reverberates in modern China**

**By Andrew Higgins**

**Saturday, May 15, 2010; A01**

QUFU, CHINA -- Zhong Yong, a wealthy metals trader from the far west of China, recently took a long weekend off work, boarded a four-hour flight across the country and then drove for two hours. His mission: to dress up in a long black robe with crimson trim and tap his head on the ground in front of a wooden statue of Confucius.

"Any businessman with some success wants to do more than just get rich," said Zhong, the chairman of EverSunny trading, who traveled here to the birthplace of Confucius as part of a crash course in Chinese philosophy and religion. It cost him nearly \$12,000.

Dressed in mock ancient garb, Zhong, 45, knelt on a gold cushion and sipped Chinese wine from a bronze goblet. Then, amid giggles from bystanders and smoke from burning incense, he kowtowed to honor the ancient sage.

The ceremony, a mix of theme-park gimmickry and earnest ritual that dates back more than two millennia, took place at Qufu's Confucius Temple, the focal point of what, in imperial times, was China's guiding creed.

Today it's the center of a burgeoning personality cult built around a philosopher who died in 479 B.C. It's a movement endorsed by the government but one that is also providing cover to some who question China's direction.

A revival of interest in Confucius and other aspects of what Mao Zedong vilified as China's noxious feudal past has been underway for years, spawning best-selling novels, television dramas and films set in the Imperial Era. The Communist Party, tapping into a deep vein of cultural nationalism, has encouraged the trend, in part as an antidote to Western ways.

Overseas, Confucius has become China's standard-bearer, with dozens of state-sponsored Confucius Institutes, including one at the University of Maryland, promoting the study of Chinese language and culture.

But a Confucian revival sanctioned and initially steered by the party has grown into something more vibrant and also more unpredictable. It has become a quest for alternative ideas that challenge not

only foreign imports such as democracy but also some of the homegrown results of China's dash to modernity.

Confucianism, an elaborate system of moral philosophy and political theory, has always been a two-edged sword, both deeply conservative and potentially subversive.

Successive Chinese dynasties, deploying Confucianism to cement their rule, distilled its complexity to a simple message: obedience. Confucius prized hierarchy and order, but he also believed that virtue, not wealth or power, should decide who governs: "If a ruler departs from benevolence, how can he be worthy of that name?"

China's current government is still backing Confucius and has adopted as its own one of his favorite concepts: harmony. But it sometimes has a hard time selling its preferred image of the sage as a bookish patriot, now on display in movie houses across the country thanks to "Confucius," a multimillion-dollar bio-epic. It has been widely panned as a snooze.

Zhong and fellow entrepreneurs who trekked to Qufu to worship at the Confucius Temple are by no means unruly dissidents. They cheer the party's emphasis on stability, applaud its economic success and mostly scoff at the idea that China would be better off with democracy.

But, well-off and well-educated, they relish a once rare but now increasingly widespread privilege: While proud of China's achievements, they have questions about where their country is headed.

"For the past 30 years, China has constantly stressed the economy, not culture, philosophy and reflection," said Michael Ning, who returned from studies in New York and a job outside Chicago to work for a chemical company in Beijing.

The result, said Ning, who also donned a black robe for the visit to the Confucius Temple, is that people "don't have any fixed values" and often feel at sea. "But after you reach a certain economic level, you can start to think," he said.

Ning and Zhong belong to the first batch of 50 students enrolled in the Three Wisdoms Business School, an intensive program in Chinese culture started last year by professors in Beijing. In Qufu, they were tutored by Duan Yanping, a technician at the local electricity company and one of the town's most zealous Confucians. He instructed them on how to bow properly, explained ancient rites and presided over worship at the Confucius Temple.

Far more interested in philosophy than electricity, Duan has set up his own Confucius academy, part of China's growing network of private schools and study groups dedicated to the revival of Confucianism. Unlike government-funded scholars who "just research Confucius," Duan said, "we live Confucius."

Duan's school has formal approval from the state, and he shares the leadership's distaste for democracy. But he also shares many of the concerns of government critics: rampant corruption,

corrosive greed and what he called the "ideological chaos" of a nominally communist country guided mostly by the pursuit of profit.

He wants the "Analects" and other Confucian classics put back at the center of education and thinks the country should be run by an elite imbued with Confucian values. "This does not match Western democracy, but it is not dictatorship, either," he said.

Not far from Duan's school are the vast and, on a recent afternoon, mostly deserted premises of the Confucius Research Institute, a state-financed organization.

"If Confucius were alive today, he would probably join the Communist Party," said the institute's deputy director, Kong Xianglin, a 75th-generation descendant of Confucius and a party member for 30 years.

He said Confucianism will never supplant China's official state creed of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" but can complement and reinforce it. Confucius, said Kong, citing an oft-repeated maxim, "believed in 'harmonious while different.' "

At Duan's private academy recently, students gathered for a lecture by Miao Chunbao, a teacher in a state middle school who moonlights on weekends teaching about Confucius. Miao explained how, through the ages, politics has often distorted Confucius's message, with rulers rejecting and then embracing Confucianism as the fortunes of dynasties waxed and waned.

Confucius, he said, would be "smiling in his grave" now that he is back in favor with a regime that in the 1960s unleashed Red Guards to ransack his temple and plunder his tomb.

Today, Miao said, China is again "on its way to prosperity, on its way up. Whether we will sink into this strange loop again, I don't know. Hopefully, we won't."

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### **Story from BBC NEWS:**

**<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/8681495.stm>**

**Published: 2010/05/13 18:08:18 GMT**

### **US-China rights dialogue resumes**

The United States and China are holding talks on human rights for the first time in two years.

Senior officials are meeting behind closed doors for two days in Washington.

The US has said it will raise longstanding concerns over freedom of expression and religion in China, as well as the treatment of dissidents.

Disagreements over human rights have for years been an irritant in US-China relations.

The Obama administration is under pressure from human rights groups to demand that China improve its treatment of its citizens.

But it is also anxious not to damage relations with a crucial political and economic partner.

Strained ties

The head of the US delegation, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Michael Posner, said the US would not shy away from raising difficult issues.

"The challenge is to find a way to communicate differences respectfully but directly" he said.

The talks come at a sensitive time for relations between the US and China.

Ties have been strained by US arms sales to Taiwan and president Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama, as well as trade disputes and a row over internet censorship.

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Do more for the disabled, officials urged

Watchdog slams government efforts

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Disabled people have trouble getting around Hong Kong, and the new head of the anti-discrimination watchdog blames the government for not setting a good example and taking the lead.

A study by the Equal Opportunities Commission that is expected to be released by the end of the month found that the provision of barrier-free facilities at government-owned premises such as libraries and wet markets is "far from satisfactory".

Lam Woon-kwong, who became commission chairman in February, said the study would recommend the administration set up a high-level co-ordinating agency to ensure the improvement of facilities at those premises, and that each department should earmark a portion of its annual budget for the cause.

He questioned how the administration could persuade private developers to step up provision of facilities for disabled people if it failed to set a good example itself.

Instances of discrimination against the disabled were nearly everywhere in everyday life in the community, Lam said. These included a lack of reservation services for the hearing-impaired at Hospital Authority outpatient clinics - currently the only service offered is phone booking - and bus companies' bans on people with breathing difficulties carrying oxygen tanks onto buses.

Only about 85 per cent of 516 polling stations in next Sunday's Legislative Council's by-elections were accessible to the disabled, he said. This was an increase of 4 percentage points from the 2008 Legco poll.

"What is particularly disappointing is that 10 years after the commission expressed its concern over the accessibility problem at polling stations, some government-owned facilities are still not fully accessible to the disabled," he said.

Registration and Electoral Office figures show that 73 polling stations are not accessible to the disabled and 90 per cent of those are on private premises. There are physical constraints at the private premises making them inaccessible, the office said.

Lam, ex-director of the Chief Executive's Office and secretary for home affairs, said more than a dozen departments and bureaus were involved with the provision of barrier-free facilities, which was why the co-ordinating agency was needed.

The minister-turned-defender of equal opportunities said the government should set a timetable for improvement. "Each department or bureau should earmark a specified portion of its annual budget, such as two or three per cent, for providing barrier-free facilities in premises under its management," Lam said.

The barrier-free access guideline, introduced in 1997 and revised in 2008, requires new buildings to provide access and facilities for disabled people. But existing buildings are exempt from the guidelines that the Buildings Department drafted.

"I hope the concept of equal opportunity assessments would be adopted as a requirement for formulation of government policies in future, like the environmental impact assessment which is one of the considerations listed in the government's policy documents," Lam said.

In Britain, Canada, Australia and some states in the United States, equal opportunity assessments are involved when policies are formulated.

"Hong Kong is falling behind on awareness of equal opportunities compared with developed countries, where equal opportunity is a core value of the society and part of making policy," Lam said.

He said he would raise the issue of seeking power for the commission to initiate lawsuits without complaints having been received at the meeting of the commission's board next month and planned to urge the government to empower the commission to do so. At present, it can launch investigations into possible discrimination on grounds of gender, disability and family status. But it cannot sue under anti-discrimination laws unless a complaint is lodged.

In 1999, then commission chairwoman Anna Wu Hung-yuk discussed the issue with the government but officials did not back the idea. Wu, an executive councillor, said she appreciated Lam's efforts to

revive the issue. "It would help people who fear exposing their identity or engaging in lawsuits," she said.

Foreign-capital firms and Hong Kong branches of multinational companies were more proactive than their local counterparts in enforcing equal opportunities, Lam said. "Human resources managers at local companies have gradually appreciated the importance of equal opportunities but the awareness has not yet been shared by board members of relevant companies."

Lam said what set Hong Kong apart from the mainland or Asian countries was that it embraced diversity. "Hong Kong has long offered refuge for many since the late Qing dynasty ... some religious leaders in Hong Kong, who are from ethnic minorities, told me several years ago: 'You can't imagine how peaceful Hong Kong is. Even in some developed countries, there is harassment of followers of non-mainstream religions by people holding extremist religious faiths'."

Lam said he supported legislating against race discrimination in 2002 when he was secretary for home affairs. "After I was transferred to the post of director of the Chief Executive's Office in July 2002, I was once worried that then chief executive Tung Chee-hwa would not back legislation against race discrimination. But Mr Tung gave the green light."

The enactment of three anti-discrimination laws in the mid-1990s marked a milestone in promoting equal opportunities but there had been little progress since, Lam said. The government was morally wrong to exempt itself in 2008 from being prosecuted for racial discrimination, he said. The ordinance bound the government only in its role as an employer. The exercising of its authority - for example, the power of police to stop and search someone on the street - was exempted.

Lam has clear objectives for the enhancing watchdog: the EOC will embrace openness, be proactive in fighting for equal opportunities for Hongkongers and engage related groups and parties.