

CHINA TODAY UPDATES – JULY 2010

12 update

Radio Free Asia

2010-08-04

Call For Quake Probe

Parents of quake victims say they have been threatened by local authorities.

HONG KONG—Parents who lost children when school buildings collapsed in a devastating 2008 earthquake in the southwestern province of Sichuan have called for an inquiry into alleged shoddy construction, amid continuing official surveillance and warnings not to talk to foreign media.

Ten parents of children who died under collapsed buildings at the Beichuan Middle School said they had made it as far as the provincial capital Chengdu this week to submit a petition, although a planned trip to complain to the central government in Beijing was blocked by authorities.

"We are at the complaints office right now," one parent surnamed Liu said from Chengdu. "There are 10 parents from the Beichuan High School who have come here today," she said.

"We have submitted our letter. They are in the office discussing it."

She said the Beichuan High School parents had been to Beijing and to the provincial government several times, but with no result so far.

"They just say it's the fault of the earthquake," Liu said. "We will wait to see if we get a response over here, and then we will go back to Beijing."

The Beichuan High School parents are planning to team up with parents who lost children in the collapse of the Fuxin No. 2 Primary School in the quake-hit area, according to Fuxin parent and petitioner Sang Jun.

"The police said that I wouldn't be allowed to leave my hometown if I tried to travel to Beijing," Sang said.

"The police from the local station have been following me since Friday. [On Monday] they came to my house and told me not to talk to [foreign media]."

"They said that I would have to bear the consequences if I spoke to the overseas media. They said they would settle the account in their own good time. They were from the Fuxin township police station."

An officer who answered the phone at the Fuxin police station declined to comment.

"How about this: You come here to Fuxin and then the relevant departments will answer your questions," he said.

Petitioning Beijing

Sang said his group of parents from Fuxin plan to link up with similar petitioners from the Beichuan High School for the trip to Beijing.

"We had planned to go on Friday or Saturday to Beijing. There were plans for 16 of us to go."

According to official figures, 5,335 children died in the Sichuan earthquake of May 12, 2008, but rights activists say the number is probably closer to 7,000.

"The earthquake was such a massive disaster," Sang said. "Why have they been unable all along to get to the bottom of the 'beancurd buildings'?"

"[The officials] are lying to the people. Our aim is ... to get an investigation into the matter."

"Didn't Premier Wen Jiabao from the central government say himself that he would investigate the issue of unsafe buildings? Our school was an unsafe building. Why won't they investigate it?"

Internet blocked

Meanwhile, parents who lost children in school collapses in Chongyi township said the authorities have prevented them from getting online.

"They have shut off our Internet access," said a parent whose child died in the earthquake.

"If you do anything that isn't in the government's interest, they cut you off. We can't see anything online. It's all been blocked," he said.

Parents from worst-hit Dujiangyan also said they are being followed, threatened, and prevented from lodging official complaints in Beijing and with higher authorities.

Prominent artist Ai Weiwei has spearheaded a campaign to identify the children who died in the earthquake, which killed nearly 70,000 people.

On May 12, the second anniversary of the quake, Ai posted the names of thousands of dead children on his Twitter account, which is followed by more than 30,000 people.

He also posted online an audio file more than three hours long in which volunteer netizens from all over China read out the names of the children who died, in a somber protest against the government's refusal to allow any kind of public inquiry into their deaths.

Sichuan authorities have already jailed one activist, writer Tan Zuoren, after he carried out an independent investigation into the children's deaths and published it online.

* Original reporting by Qiao Long for RFA's Mandarin service. Translated and written in English by Luisetta Mudie.

South China Morning Post

State voices support for media rights after attacks

Priscilla Jiao

Aug 02, 2010

The mainland's media watchdog has said reporters' rights to "exercise checks and balances" in public matters must be protected - a stance that analysts say might produce an environment for a freer press, at least for exposing business scandals.

The statement was made in an article published yesterday in the China Press and Publishing Journal, the mouthpiece for the General Administration of Press and Publication (Gapp), and carried on its website.

"The government has suggested that journalists' rights could be better protected, compared to the past where they were constantly suppressed," said Hu Xingdou, a professor at the Beijing Institute of Technology. "We might see a better future and freedom for the 'fourth power'."

A spokesman from Gapp's newspaper division said that media outlets "are protected by law to exercise their rights in informing, interviewing, publishing, criticising and overseeing, and media workers' reporting activities are protected, as well."

The support came after police in Zhejiang scrapped a detention warrant for Qiu Ziming, a Shanghai-based journalist for the Economic Observer who had exposed apparent insider

trading and wrongdoing at Kan Specialty Materials, a Zhejiang company that manufactures paper and batteries.

Police and local government officials made an official apology to the newspaper in Beijing on Friday, while Qiu was on holiday after having been in hiding.

Wang Shengzhong, the newspaper's deputy editor-in-chief, applauded Gapp's move, calling it a "very good beginning" for a greater press freedom. Even so, the press needed more than official support, he said. Public recognition is key to reporting in remote areas.

Wen Yunchao, a Guangzhou-based media analyst, said it was "rare to see official support in protecting journalists' rights especially when Qiu is still on probation and hasn't been granted a reporter identity card yet".

A number of threats and assaults have recently been made against journalists who have disclosed business scandals.

Song Shinan, a media analyst based in Sichuan, said the violence had prompted Gapp's move. It might be a step towards greater press freedom, but only in the short term. The system still has problems. "Domestic media coverage is ... restricted by administrative oversight, and it can be bribed away in a crisis, anyway," Song said.

Authorities were happy to let the media have a voice in the community, especially to monitor business practices, Hu said. But when the reporting touches on political and social matters, concerns arise.

Hu said what journalists needed most to defend their rights was a media law.

Gapp has issued and revised a number of guidelines to step up protection of journalists over the past three years. They pledged to check whether guidelines were properly implemented and ordered media watchdogs below the state level to do a better job of protecting the media's rights.

Protest in China for legal brothels, organizer held

Tue Aug 3, 2:52 am ET

BEIJING (Reuters) – An activist Chinese sex worker said she had been detained after fronting an unusual protest to demand legalized prostitution, rampant in China despite an official ban since the Communists took power six decades ago.

Ye Haiyan, who also goes by the name of "Hooligan Sparrow," rallied a small group of sex workers and their supporters in the central Chinese city of Wuhan last Thursday.

The group, holding red umbrellas, carried banners and collected signatures urging an end to discrimination against sex workers.

"I cannot talk or use the Internet right now, I am with them," Ye told Reuters by text message, having been detained on Sunday. "I am at a 'resort' and receiving 're-education'."

Wuhan police could not be reached for comment. Prostitution is banned and usually a taboo topic in state media.

The China Development Brief, a well-regarded non-profit publication which writes on China's civil society, said the protest was the first of its kind in China.

Ye, a single mother who describes herself as a sex worker on her Twitter micro-blogging page, started a website for sex workers five years ago.

She soon opened her own NGO, the Chinese Women's Rights Workshop, to promote sex workers' health and human rights, visiting massage parlors and barber shops in Wuhan to distribute condoms and AIDS-prevention pamphlets.

"I promote AIDS awareness. They can investigate all of that, but I do not deserve this kind of treatment," Ye said in a message that appeared on her Twitter feed shortly after she was detained.

Prostitution has returned with a vengeance since China embarked upon market-oriented economic reforms in the late 1970s. A World Health Organization study has estimated the country has four million sex workers.

Ye said she had also been angered by the "shame parades" of sex workers common in recent government crackdowns.

Last month, a suspected prostitute was pictured barefoot, handcuffed and led about by a rope in a street in Dongguan in southern Guangdong province, which provoked a backlash online.

(Reporting by Beijing newsroom; Editing by Ben Blanchard and Jonathan Thatcher)

Moral standards for officials' personal life necessary: newspaper

English.news.cn 2010-07-30 17:46:02

BEIJING, July 30 (Xinhua) -- New standards adopted by a county in China for performance assessment based on officials' moral conduct outside of work was a step forward, according to a commentary in the official newspaper of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

In the article signed by Zhong Zuwen in Friday's People's Daily, the author said the new standards emphasize "both morality and professional competence with morality taking priority" in official selection and promotion.

A county in east China's Jiangsu Province has recently adopted new rules to include records of local officials' marital fidelity, filial piety, parenting and good neighborliness in their biannual performance assessments.

"The standards included in the new rules reflect the traditional virtues in Chinese society and are also the basic moral requirements for the officials," the article said.

The article cited the late Tao Xingzhi, a famous ideologist and educationist, as saying that "a person who is not morally upright in his personal life is very likely to do harm to the public."

The article said most of the officials convicted of corruption in recent years were found to have had extramarital relations.

Morality standards for officials were necessary given the links between immoral actions in one's personal life and workplace corruption, the article said.

The author also urged that cadres and officials at all levels should set moral examples for the public and promote harmony in their families and society.

* Editor: Zhang Xiang

China bans "shame parades" of criminal suspects

Reuters

Tue Jul 27, 2:13 am ET

BEIJING (Reuters) – China will end the public shaming of criminal suspects by parading them through the streets, the People's Daily reported on Tuesday, after online commentators championed the case of a prostitute.

A spokesperson at the Public Security Bureau in central Henan province confirmed the ban on the practice long used by local law enforcement officials.

Although the ban is meant to apply to all suspects, the "shame parades" have most often been used in periodic government crackdowns on prostitution.

Online activists launched a campaign to halt the marches this month after a suspected prostitute was pictured barefoot, handcuffed and led about by a rope in a street in Dongguan in southern Guangdong province.

Netizens expressed outrage at a "humiliating" act and urged sympathy toward sex workers, according to Mop.com, a popular online forum.

"They would not become prostitutes if they did not have to support their younger siblings to finish school back in their home village," said a commentator identified only as "388943."

"I know sex workers who donated hundreds of yuan to the (2008) Sichuan earthquake. They are also human beings. Where is the respect? What about human rights?" another post said.

There are no official statistics for sex workers, but a World Health Organization study estimated the number at four million.

Prostitution is banned and a taboo topic that generates scant coverage in the state media, except for annual crackdowns.

Four years ago, some 100 prostitutes were forced to march in front of a jeering crowd in Shenzhen, a boomtown in Guangdong province. The march was broadcast on television to publicize the government's efforts to combat the rising sex trade.

(Reporting by Beijing newsroom; Editing by Ken Wills and Ron Popeski)

AsiaNews - www.asianews.it

07/26/2010 12:17

CHINA

China now wants to "cut" crimes that carry the death penalty

Beijing wants to remove capital punishment for many of the 68 offenses that carry the death penalty. China has the primacy for executions. The same supreme judges say that its application should be limited to serious cases.

Beijing (AsiaNews / Agencies) - China wants to remove the death penalty for many crimes which still today carry it and abolish it outright for people over 70 years of age. The state newspaper China Daily said that a bill will be discussed by the Politburo Standing Committee by the end of August.

To date 68 crimes carry the death penalty, 44 of which are committed with violence, from murder to corruption to drug dealing and offenses against the state. Although there are no official figures, groups such as Amnesty International estimate that Beijing has the

unenviable record of death sentences imposed and each year there are thousand death sentences carried out, amounting to well over half of those of all world executions: in 2008, 1718 of the global total 2390. This removal will be the first reduction of the sentence since 1979.

The death penalty has not proved an effective deterrent to such crimes as corruption, because it is rare for such crimes to result in execution. Just today Chen Shaoji, former head of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference for Guangdong, was sentenced to death for accepting bribes for about 30 million Yuan, but the sentence was suspended for two years, a formula that will see the sentence later commuted to life imprisonment after a period of good conduct. According to official figures, at least 10% of death sentences were commuted to life in prison.

Among the crimes for which capital punishment is to abolished, there is talk of corruption that involves contained amounts (no more than 100 thousand Yuan, 10 thousand Euros), although it is certain that the death penalty will remain for cases of serious corruption, a widespread phenomenon that has provoked social alarm.

It seems that the decision has also been taken to standardize the convictions of several courts, since, according to an expert study from the Jiatong University Shanghai, some courts hand down death sentences for corruption cases, while others impose life sentences. In January 2007 the Supreme People's Court, the central court of the country gave itself ultimate power to pronounce the death penalty. Following this, the Court also asked local judges to limit their use of the and administer a "justice tempered with mercy."

The notorious case of a death sentences imposed for the murder of a person who years later resurfaced alive and well, has led to widespread discussion. For this reason experts comment that the first problem is not so much the severity of the punishment, rather the rights of defence and the need to ensure an adequate and proper defence from the initial police investigations with less weight given to confessions, often obtained in unclear circumstances.

Google Access in China Normal After Blockage Reported

By Brian Womack - Jul 30, 2010 2:39 AM GMT+0200 Bloomberg

Google Reports Search, Ad, Mobile Blocked in China

David Drummond, Google's chief legal officer, told journalists in San Diego today that the company was looking into the cause and that it could be a technical glitch. Photographer: Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

Bloomberg's Levy on Blocking of Google Services in China

Play Video

July 29 (Bloomberg) -- Google Inc. said access to its website in China is working normally after earlier reporting that some services, including search, mobile and advertising, were fully blocked.

“Because of the way we measure accessibility in China, it’s possible that our machines could overestimate the level of blockage,” the company said today in an e-mailed statement. “That seems to be what happened last night when there was a relatively small blockage. It appears now that users in China are accessing our properties normally.”

Google’s initial report on its website raised concern that authorities in China might still be unsatisfied with how the company complies with local law. Google had also said at least two other services, including news and images, were partially blocked, while the Gmail e-mail service was fully or mostly accessible.

Google had its Internet license renewed earlier this month after it stopped automatically sending Chinese users to its separate Hong Kong site. A conflict with China erupted in January after the company said it would no longer self-censor search results in the world’s largest Internet market.

Zhang Feng, head of China’s Ministry of Industry and Information Technology’s communication development department, said last week the Google China website meets the nation’s regulations against online content deemed to be illicit.

Google fell as much as 2.3 percent to \$473.75 in after- hours trading. The stock, down 22 percent this year, had gained 64 cents to \$484.99 during regular trading on the Nasdaq Stock Market.

* To contact the reporter on this story: Brian Womack in San Francisco at bwomack1@bloomberg.net

BBC News

22 July 2010 Last updated at 06:40 GMT

Buying votes in China village polls 'costing more'

By Chris Hogg BBC News, Shanghai

In China the cost of bribing a voter in a grassroots election can be more than 100 times greater than it used to be, according to a report in an official newspaper that covers legal affairs.

The Procuratorial Daily cited a probe by provincial prosecutors in Hainan province in the south of the country.

It said the investigation had revealed that elections were marred by allegations of bribery and favouritism.

Some even involved the the use of fortune tellers, the paper said.

Fierce competition

The prosecutors in Hainan found that candidates were most likely to try to bribe voters in villages where there were projects likely to attract investment from property developers or other businesses.

Often, officials profit from corruption when they get the chance to become involved in big deals.

It makes sense, then, that competition for those posts where they might benefit the most is fierce.

The report says villagers told the prosecutors they used to be paid the equivalent of \$1.50 (£0.98) for their support at the ballot box.

Today, in some villages, the figure has swelled to \$177.

Prosecutors also heard claims that witches or fortune tellers were used in elections - warning people if they did not vote for a particular candidate their families would suffer misfortune.

Village elections began in the late 1980s. They are held every three years. Candidates are selected in a process that some say is not always open and transparent.

Chinese people do not get the chance to elect any officials more senior than village leaders.

Reports of bribery and other problems in so-called grassroots elections surface fairly regularly in the official media.

They help convey the impression that democracy is a flawed concept.

Many Chinese will tell you they do not think voting should be introduced more widely because they do not think it works in poorer rural areas.

Getting Jesuitical in Shanghai

The city government turns a 19th century orphanage into a museum.

By LISA MOVIUS

OPINION ASIA - JULY 16, 2010

Printed in The Wall Street Journal, page W12

The recently opened Tushanwan Museum features a contrast that is pure Shanghai: a 1930s advertising poster of a sultry, qipao-clad siren next to an austere painting of Jesus. Both are legacies of the city's Jesuit Tushanwan Orphanage and its attached arts and crafts academy, which helped to introduce Western art into China.

The museum is unusual for its efforts to promote Shanghai's heritage. Across the country, a tide of redevelopment is sweeping away relics of the past, and local governments rarely realize in time the need to preserve cultural history, especially if it involves the colonial era. The Catholics may have helped develop the city, from serving the poor to training artists, but the Communist Party has usually condemned missionaries as complicit in the foreign exploitation of China before 1949.

Enter Song Haojie, deputy director of Xuhui District. He spearheaded a program to preserve the downtown Xujiahui area's history since 2003 with the repair of Xu Guangqi's tomb and opening of an adjacent memorial hall. Xujiahui literally means "Xu family gathering," and Paul Xu Guangqi (1562-1633) was a friend of Matteo Ricci, an early Catholic convert and a Ming official who first introduced Western science to China.

"We decided in 2008 to do Tushanwan," explains Mr. Song, a plan that followed a 2007 academic forum, "and gathered a group of people who are familiar with the history of Xujiahui, religion, painting and crafts." The small museum opened in June on the first floor of a pre-1894 building of the old orphanage, which still houses a school on its upper two floors. Founded in 1864 by French Jesuits, the orphanage closed in the late 1950s.

The project cost 20 million yuan (\$3 million), including building restoration and the collection of 1,500 items, of which 500 are on display. The centerpiece is an ornate traditional gate, or pailou, made at Tushanwan in the early 1910s and exhibited in several World's Fairs. The half-original pailou dominates a new glass atrium at the entrance, flanked by works which also were sent to Expos in the early 20th century—a much-stressed connection given Shanghai's current hosting of the World Expo and the dominant script of China's international openness.

"It is all part and parcel of the soft cultural diplomacy initiative of the Chinese government, to seem benign to the rest of the world," observes William Hanbury-Tenison, an art dealer who has studied Chinese Catholic art. "It's an odd little museum," part of an "initiative to build a cultural Xuhui District—it's not just about malls and bars."

Inside the museum, exhibitions outline the general and Jesuit history of Xujiahui and the rest of Xuhui District before focusing on Tushanwan. Photos and dioramas replicate life and instruction at the orphanage. Works produced there are showcased throughout, as are famous alumni such as Zhang Chongren, sculptor and friend of Tintin creator Georges Remi. Exhibits, such as Jesus and the poster girl, describe Tushanwan as the "cradle of Western painting in China," influencing China's artistic modernization by training Chinese in Western techniques.

Not everyone concurs with the narrative. "The claim commonly held that Tushanwan introduced Western art to China is rubbish. It is a typical Shanghai particularity," argues Mr. Hanbury-Tenison. "The impact was not so much Tushanwan as the whole of Jesuit education in Shanghai, from elementary [school] through university. Institutions taught in French, and so sent talented students to Paris."

In addition to the Tushanwan Museum, this spring saw the opening of the Xu-Ricci Center at Shanghai's Fudan University, codirected by Li Tiangang. "I believe we are doing something new in Shanghai and China" with Tushanwan, asserts Mr. Li, a chief advisor to the museum. "I hate the Leninist-style Communist doctrines of anti-imperialism or -colonialism. You maybe don't know how unreasonable it was from 1950 to 1980" toward Catholicism, and even now, "we replace 'religion' with 'civilization.'"

"I think it's very much the case that China is happy to acknowledge Catholic history and accomplishment so long as the Catholicism is drained from it," suggests Adam Minter, a Shanghai-based journalist covering Catholic issues. He cites how Xu Guangqi is celebrated for science, with the religious context absent, or how Fudan's Catholic origins are expunged. Mr. Minter suggests that attitudes are changing, and the Tushanwan Museum is a testament to that. "But I don't think that the Party is ready to acknowledge actual Catholic contributions to Chinese civilization yet. In that sense, we're not much beyond 1949 in the official attitude."

According to Xuhui District's Mr. Song, however, religion is "no longer a problem, things are all very open now." He says the municipal government was supportive of the museum. "We're not advertising or proselytizing Catholicism—just presenting the culture and historical culture, not religion . . . and showing the benefits of the interchange between Eastern and Western culture."

Mr. Song enthuses about Xujiahui's rich history and historic architecture, and stresses the importance of preserving them. "Xujiahui used to be a place with [a] strong Catholic background, but only nine are left of several hundred old Catholic buildings." He identifies the property market as the greatest threat to Xuhui's Catholic and other heritage, in particular last year's illegal demolition of the municipally protected Carmelite nunnery. Built in 1874, making it one of the oldest structures in Shanghai, it was part of the compound of the Shanghai Film Group.

"They just want to build high-rises, unconcerned that the culture has been ruined," Mr. Song laments, detailing his and Mr. Li's futile protests to the municipality. "At that time, it was the best building in Shanghai. They should not have demolished it!" To developers' plans to build a copy, he responds: "Building a smaller one only creates a fake relic, which is not the same as a real one. But we told them that and they don't care."

Protest essays submitted to local media were ignored, Mr. Li confirms, suggesting the sort of press ban common to controversial demolitions in Shanghai. "It was just criminal. Our history will remember this, and I am a historian." However, Mr. Li and others see hope for the long-term future of Xuhui's past, more so than in other Shanghai districts. That is largely due to the singular dedication of Mr. Song.

"It is lucky Mr. Song is our comrade. I don't view him as an official. He really loves having an advanced museum. He appreciates our contributions, and we appreciate his bravery and responsibility," says Mr. Li. "He loves his job, and wants to take responsibility for the historical legacy. He is a native Shanghainese like us, and understands naturally if we say we should preserve something we love."

* Ms. Movius is a writer based in Shanghai.

ABC - Australian Broadcasting Corporation

China's new rules against corruption

Updated July 13, 2010 11:48:45

China has issued new rules against corruption, to end what's seen as an ongoing threat to the nation's economic and social well-being. President Hu Jintao has repeatedly said fighting corruption is a matter of life and death for the ruling Communist Party. Chinese state media reports that government officials will now have to report their incomes, investments, personal assets and movement of family members. The new rules which stop short of requiring that the incomes and assets of Chinese officials be made public are already in effect.

Presenter: Sen Lam

Speakers: Paul Monk, China specialist and co-founder of AUSTHINK Consultancy

MONK: I think there are three core reasons; the first is that you've got such rapid economic growth against a previous background of poverty, so that there's an enormous amount of money going around, so there are temptations and opportunities of all kinds for many people. Combined with that you have a large bureaucratic government where civil officials are paid poor salaries, so there are temptations put in their way by people who are making money, and it becomes all but irresistible to large numbers of them to take bribes. Indeed they find it very difficult to do their jobs many of them unless they take bribes, that simply is a fact of life for them. The third thing, and perhaps the crucial thing is that the party runs everything in China,

so if there's corruption in a party channel, which there is, it's extremely difficult to get redress, because the party officials control the police, they control the courts, they control the press, they control who can invest and it's very difficult therefore to get a handle on them. If senior officials decide to crackdown on more junior officials, sometimes they crack open cases and people are arrested and executed. But very frequently, the corruption goes all the way to the top and it can be protected for political reasons.

LAM: As you say, the party is involved in everything, and indeed President Hu Jintao has spoken about corruption being a threat to the Chinese Communist Party. So politically, it's also a very sensitive issue isn't it?

MONK: Absolutely it is, but the party's been saying this for a long time. It's important to remember that you can go back 20 years and you have very senior officials, you have Jiang Zemin in the 1990s saying corruption is an enormous problem, it's a threat to the state, the party must crack down. But if anything, it's grown worse in that time, and it's grown worse I think largely for the three reasons I've mentioned. Can the party do something about it? Well so long as it insists on controlling every aspect of life, it actually fuels the problem, and that's the imponderable difficulty that the party refuses to confront. It has been a maxim of Leninist government since the start, that discipline is something enforced by the party on the party. But if the incentives within the party are to its corruption and abuse of power, it's intrinsically very difficult to control that. Yet the Central Discipline Inspection Commission, which is charged with overseeing all this, has at its head office about 800 staff. It would be difficult to run the taxation system in Australia with only 800 staff. You're trying to run a country of one-point-four-billion people and to get a handle on corruption involves vast sums of money with 800 staff? You're kidding yourself.

LAM: Why do you think the new rules stop short of making public, the senior officials' assets?

MONK: Well for the very simple reason that quite apart from even corruption in and of itself, the party works secretly. Draw a little parallel here between rhetoric about cracking down on corruption and rhetoric about human rights. I mean, the Chinese constitution even under Mao guaranteed civil and political rights. People were free to express their opinions, to choose their religion, to demonstrate in public, to assemble. Of course in reality they were free to do none of these things.

LAM: So the party is still uneasy with total transparency then?

MONK: It's not only uneasy with total transparency, it is singularly untransparent. I mean, it is systemically opaque, and it resists any effort by any civic or never mind political organisation, to alter that. So it's constantly trying to monitor the internet, to crack down on anybody who conducts unwelcome polls, unwelcome inquiries. It is a very large organisation that's run effectively like a mafia. So there's a contradiction in terms of the most fundamental kind between the party saying we want sound government and accountability, and the way it has always done its business.

South China Morning Post

Praise for purged leader Zhao Ziyang

Verna Yu

Jul 09, 2010

An outspoken mainland magazine has published a memoir paying tribute to late Communist Party chief Zhao Ziyang in an apparent push to rehabilitate the name of the purged reformist leader.

The article in the July issue of Yanhuang Chunqiu magazine - known for its outspoken articles by senior party officials and liberals - is seen as part of a drive by Zhao's supporters and party liberals for a reassessment of his pivotal role in the nation's development.

Zhao was purged after sympathising with the students in the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy movement and was kept under house arrest for nearly 16 years until his death in 2005. The party has since tried to obliterate any mention of him from the public domain.

Yang Rudai, a former subordinate of Zhao's in Sichuan, praised Zhao in his article for his pioneering role in reviving agricultural and industrial production in the province as well as his role in the rehabilitation of people persecuted under the Gang of Four's rule there during the Cultural Revolution. Zhao was Sichuan's political leader between 1975 and 1980. Yang later followed in Zhao's footsteps to become Sichuan party secretary.

Du Daozheng, the magazine's publisher and a former Zhao ally, said he believed the Chinese leadership was becoming more open and tolerant. It was against such a backdrop that his magazine decided to publish the memoir.

"[The leadership] is on the whole tolerant of us and supports our work," Du said. "We have to be patient, but I believe China will follow the mainstream trend and become more democratic and tolerant in time."

He said the publication was timed to avoid sensitive dates such as the 21st anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown. The memoir focused on Zhao's leadership in Sichuan before he became party general secretary.

The article did not mention his role in the 1989 movement, as the subject remains taboo on the mainland, and mentioning the event would almost certainly lead to the magazine being punished.

Unlike two years ago when the magazine came under pressure for articles that praised Zhao, Du said authorities had not complained about Yang's article this time. "There are conservative and backward forces, but there are voices on the two sides, and there are democratic and pragmatic views, too, and they want to listen to the people," he said.

He said the fact that authorities had not put pressure on him after he published his memoir of Zhao in January was evidence that there were open-minded leaders.

Du is the former chief of the General Administration of Press and Publications, one of the mainland's censors. He was one of four retired reform-minded officials who helped Zhao secretly record his memoirs before his death in 2005. Independent political analyst Chen Ziming said having Yang, a former Politburo member, praising Zhao in Yanhuang Chunqiu could only boost the magazine's political backing.

"Now there is one more person [from the political sphere] in support of Zhao," Chen said. "The [officials] from the Zhao era want to have an opportunity to express their feelings."

The magazine in 2008 published articles by former vice-premier Tian Jiyun and former Xinhua chief Sun Zhen in memory of Zhao. The articles angered the Propaganda Department but Du resisted pressure and stayed at his post.

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Migrant workers face unmarried futures

Published Date: July 5, 2010

By ucanews.com reporter, Shenzhen

China's new generation of urban migrant workers are finding it difficult to meet and marry potential partners, even though 80% of them are single and in their 20s, the prime age for marriage and child rearing.

Respondents to a recent survey said they had little time for dating due to their long working hours, even though many admitted to feelings of loneliness.

Gender imbalance in the workplace, low income, the ever increasing rich-poor gap and the high divorce rate are other factors that make many afraid of getting married, says the report from the All China Federation of Trade Unions.

A group of Catholic workers in Shenzhen said the problem is magnified for Catholic women, as they require their future spouses to share their faith as well as being economically sound.

The group also observed that many workers become more materialistic through living in cities. "Their values of life and in choosing their spouse are definitely affected by that," they said.

Maria Dai, a Shenzhen Catholic in her 20s, agreed that many women of her acquaintance have developed higher expectations and tend to look down on men from a rural background. "The marriages of my peers are very fragile," she said. "Some are opting to remain single or to co-habit."

Even though the Church teaches that priority should be given to the faith and moral qualities of a potential partner, one female from the Shenzhen group asserted that "a stable family life is what a woman wants most and migrant workers can hardly satisfy that."

Migrant workers born since 1980, who leave their rural home towns to find non-agricultural jobs in cities, now account for nearly half China's workforce of 230 million.

_China's population to approach 1.4 billion by 2015

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By : dpa

Beijing - China's population is expected to reach 1.39 billion by the end of 2015, with the urban population set to exceed the rural population for the first time, state media reported Sunday.

China's cities are expected to be home to more than 700 million by 2015, Li Bin, head of the country's population and family planning commission, was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua news agency.

The commission released new figures which showed that China's one child family-planning policy, adopted by the government in the late 1970s, would lead to an aging population boom in the next five years.

More than 200 million people would be aged over 60 by 2015, with an average of 8 million people turning this age each year, Li said.

At the same time, the "working" population of 15-59 year olds would peak and then slowly fall, Xinhua reported.

Despite this, China would still retain the advantage of a plentiful labour supply and a relatively low population dependency ratio, Li was quoted as saying.

At the end of 2008, China's population stood at 1.32 billion, about 2.5 times the number in 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded.

The New York Times
July 1, 2010

China Puts Best Face Forward With News Channel

By DAVID BARBOZA

SHANGHAI — The Xinhua News Agency, China's dominant news service and the propaganda arm of the Communist Party, introduced a 24-hour English-language news channel and is preparing to open a prominent newsroom in Times Square, part of an expensive push to increase the reach and influence of the Chinese news media overseas.

The president of Xinhua, Li Congjun, said Thursday at a press conference in Beijing that CNC World, the agency's new 24-hour news channel, was part of a government effort to "present an international vision with a Chinese perspective."

The announcement is the strongest sign yet that China intends to spend billions of dollars over the next few years to create a global media empire that can match the country's rising economic and diplomatic power and more effectively project its views to an international audience.

Beijing officials have long complained that China is often portrayed unfavorably in the Western media and that what it considers biased news coverage has hurt the country's interests abroad.

The new channel, which media experts say appears to be modeled on Al Jazeera, the Arabic news network, aims to provide comprehensive coverage of world affairs, while explaining matters of direct concern to the Chinese leadership in a perspective its producers consider appropriate.

Analysts say China's global media expansion is striking because many Western media giants, faced with an advertising slump, have scaled back operations by closing bureaus and laying off employees.

"While our media empires are melting away like the Himalayan glaciers, China's are expanding," said Orville Schell, director of the Center on U.S.-China Relations at the Asia Society in New York and a former dean of the journalism school at the University of California, Berkeley. "They want to get every hallmark of the world of credible journalism they can, and being in New York City, in an iconic location, is part of that."

On Thursday, an official with Xinhua, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the press, said Xinhua was planning to build a newsroom at the top of a 44-story skyscraper in Times Square, giving it an address in the same neighborhood as Reuters, Conde Nast, News Corp and The New York Times.

Xinhua's move is just one of several planned by Beijing. China Central Television, the country's biggest state-run television broadcaster, has also been expanding overseas and offering broadcasts in English, Spanish, French, Arabic and other languages. And China has heavily financed a makeover of China Daily, its English-language daily newspaper, and introduced a new English edition of Global Times, which is controlled by People's Daily, the leading Communist Party-run newspaper.

Whether state-run news services financed and controlled by Beijing can attract a big international audience or earn significant revenues overseas remains uncertain. Many media experts say Chinese news agencies, though improving, lack credible and objective reporting and are widely perceived to be propaganda vehicles for the Chinese government.

"We've criticized them a lot because they're a propaganda tool," said Clothilde Le Coz, the Washington director of Reporters Without Borders. "So the fact that they want to expand in the U.S., we'd like to see what that would look like."

There have also been reports over the years that some of China's state-run news agencies are closely tied to state intelligence agencies. Xinhua got its start in 1931 as the Red China News Agency, even before the Communist Party gained power in 1949.

Xinhua still functions as China's official news bureau, releasing government reports and official statements for Politburo members, and setting the tone for China's other heavily censored news publications, which are often instructed to republish Xinhua dispatches on major news events without alteration.

On Thursday, the agency said in announcing its new 24-hour English news channel that it hoped to offer a "better view of China to its international viewers." And it will try to do that, it said, with English-language news, live Internet broadcasts, talk shows and in-depth reporting.

The agency already has more than 10,000 employees and 120 bureaus around the world, rivaling the reach, if not the quality, of Western news services like Reuters or Bloomberg. Xinhua has begun recruiting non-Chinese journalists from around the world to write for its news services.

Mr. Schell at the Asia Society says Beijing is serious about trying to present its news agencies as a credible alternative to global brands.

“Despite Herculean efforts, they don’t think they’re taken seriously; the agency is not on equal footing on credibility,” he said of Xinhua. “But we’re one step away from the next stage, when they pick up distressed properties in the global media world.”

* Christine Haughney contributed reporting from New York.

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