



China News Summary

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General Board of Global Ministries
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Refusal of visa for the Dalai Lama leads to cancellation of South African peace conference.

In the run up to South Africa hosting the 2010 soccer World Cup, a Nobel Laureate peace conference was cancelled when South Africa refused to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism and 1989 winner of the Nobel Peace prize, said the BBC. Notable attendees Archbishop Desmond Tutu who won the Nobel Peace prize in 1984 and former South African president F.W. deKlerk both withdrew in protest from the conference which was to discuss the role of soccer in fighting racism and xenophobia, one of several events that would lead up to South Africa's hosting of the World Cup. Archbishop Tutu accused the South African government of "shamelessly succumbing to Chinese pressure," said the *New York Times*, and that he felt "distressed and ashamed." Supporters of the Dalai Lama actively campaign for independence of the Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region, a move Beijing outright condemns. South Africa denies that it succumbed to pressure from Beijing and that it would not be inviting the Dalai Lama because it did not want anything to distract from its hosting of the 2010 World Cup, said the *Guardian*. Nobel Laureate Nelson Mandela was also invited to the conference along with Finland's former president Martti Ahtisaari, Queen Rania of Jordan, actors Morgan Freeman, who is to play Mandela in a new film, and Charlize Theron a South African, among many high-profile guests. ("*Dalai Lama's South African conference ban causes uproar,*" *Guardian*, March 23, 2009; "*Dalai Lama ban halts conference,*" *BBC*, March 24, 2009; "*South Africa bars Dalai Lama from a peace conference,*" *New York Times*, March 24, 2009)

Chinese and US ships in standoff.

Five Chinese ships came within 25 feet of the USNS Impeccable as it carried out monitoring activities in what the US believes to be international waters south of China's Hainan Island. China claims the USNS Impeccable broke international law by operating in one of China's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), said the BBC. Washington and Beijing differ on the boundaries of the EEZ and practices allowed within it. The Pentagon insists the ship had done no wrong. The Impeccable used its fire hoses to repel one of the Chinese ships and when it radioed to request a safe path, two of the Chinese vessels stopped directly in front of the Impeccable which forced it to an emergency stop, reported CNN. Shadowing is a common naval practice but the Pentagon called this act an "aggressive maneuver" and a coordinated effort to harass the US ocean surveillance ship. Some analysts have wondered if this was a way that China was "testing the mettle of a new US administration," queried the BBC. After several days of standoff, when the five Chinese ships would not clear a path for the Impeccable, US President Barack Obama ordered an armed escort to the area, revealed the *Times*. The Impeccable is an unarmed oceanographic ship used by the US Navy to gather underwater acoustic data using sonar. There is a large underwater submarine base on Hainan. ("*Chinese ships 'harass' US vessel,*" *BBC*, March 9, 2009; "*Stand-off shows Chinese navy's secret tactics,*" *Guardian*, March 10; "*Pentagon says Chinese vessels harassed US ship,*" *CNN*; "*US warships head for South China Sea after standoff,*" *Times*, March 14, 2009; "*US and China 'vow to avoid rows,'*" *BBC*, March 11, 2009)

Harsh words on 50th anniversary event.

On March 10, 1959 Tibetans rose up in arms against the Chinese government's presence in that region. The rebellion failed and the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, fled across the border to India. Tibetans outside of China feel the uprising was justified to free the region from Chinese control. Beijing maintains the uprising was a plot by Tibet's upper class who wanted to maintain a feudal system that enslaved the majority of Tibetans who were serfs. Fifty years later, while the 50th anniversary of that event passed in relative peace, the Dalai Lama, now 73, used the occasion to deliver one of his harshest criticisms to date of Beijing's engagement with the region, according to the *New York Times*. The Dalai Lama said that Tibetan culture, language and identity were near extinction and that his people had been put through "hell on earth." The speech was thought to court a much angrier tone in order to placate younger Tibetan activists who openly criticize the

Dalai Lama's 'middle way approach' with Beijing, said the BBC. The Dalai Lama calls for legitimate and meaningful autonomy for Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region, not outright independence. Around the anniversary date, Beijing tightened border controls in preparation for "expected sabotage activities by the Dalai Lama clique", said the BBC, and has since relaxed control. A day before the March 10th anniversary, China's president Hu Jintao called for a "Great Wall against separatism" to preserve stability, order and tranquility in the region, said Reuters. The Chinese government also released a White Paper, *Fifty Years of Democratic Reform in Tibet*, to mark the anniversary of Xizang's liberation from feudalism. Prior to 1959, 95 percent of the Tibetan people were serfs, the White Paper points out. Serfs were the private property of landlords and powerful lamas who traded them, presented them as gifts, and used them as mortgage payments or as gambling stakes. The full text of the paper can be found at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/02/content_10928003.htm. ("Deep divisions over Tibet anniversary," BBC, March 9, 2009; "White paper published to mark 50th anniversary of Tibet reform," China Daily, March 2, 2009; "Dalai Lama says China has turned Tibet into a 'hell on earth,'" New York Times, March 11, 2009; "China's Hu demands wall of stability in Tibet," Reuters, March 9, 2009; "White paper: Tibetan people suffered from feudal serfdom, darker than medieval Europe," Xinhua, March 2, 2009)

Hangzhou Youth Fellowship tops 1,000 members. The Chongyi Church in downtown Hangzhou opened in 2005 and in just a few short years its youth fellowship now numbers over 1,000 members. Chongyi's youth pastor, the Rev. Zhang Guoyong, attributes this to prayer, good preaching, and follow-up care, reported *Tian Feng* in the *Amity News Service*. Many of China's urban churches are filled with university students and young adults who see Christianity as a culture and way of life, not necessarily a faith. At Chongyi there is an eight-lesson basic course to teach newcomers about the basics of Christianity. The Rev. Zhang also feels fellowship is important for people to feel "God is here, love is here, life is here." Young people are also involved in all kinds of discussion groups to share experiences, doubts, hopes and change. And lastly to influence and move others, the Rev. Zhang uses examples of Christians who have been called by God to a new life. The Rev. Zhang feels that youth ministry is at the core of the Chongyi Church as over half of the church's congregants are under the age of 40. Protestant Christianity in China is post-denominational and the Chongyi Church is one of the largest in China able to seat about 7,000. ("Youth ministry in Hangzhou," Amity News Service, March 2009; United Methodist China Program)

Cardinal Zen, Hongkong, retires. The Pope accepted the retirement resignation of Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kuin, 77, of the Hongkong diocese, as of Easter, April 12, 2009, revealed the *New York Times*. Zen told the diocesan weekly, *Kung Kao Po*, that he had begun to feel tired from dealing with the enormous responsibilities of the church and that in his retirement he will remain at the diocesan seminary to help nurture vocations and to focus on Chinese Catholic Church research issues. Monsignor John Tong Hon, auxiliary bishop of the Hongkong diocese now heads the affairs of the Catholic Church in Hongkong. According to Church law, cardinals must retire upon turning 75, and Cardinal Zen remitted his resignation the two previous years, but the Pope had continued to ask him to lead Hongkong's Catholic community. Cardinal Zen remains an outspoken critic of Beijing's human rights and democratisation policies. ("Cardinal critical of China resigns from Hongkong Diocese," New York Times, December 25, 2008, "Cardinal calls it a 'grace' that pope has ok'd resignation," Catholic News Service, February 12, 2009; "Cardinal Joseph Zen: conscience of China," AD2000, April 2008)

Chinese exports and housing market in sharp decline. Chinese exports were down by 25.7 percent in February compared to the same time last year, reported the BBC. It also revealed that the decline has caused China's trading surplus to drop to \$4.8 billion in February compared to \$39.1 billion the month before. Hardest hit are manufacturers of low-tech, low-margin goods such as textiles. In Shenzhen, directly across the border from the Hongkong Special Administrative Region and China's most successful former Special Economic Zone, factories are closing by the hundreds and migrant workers leaving by the thousands. In Shanghai, property prices have been falling since last year, some by 50 percent. So desperate was one developer to sell that for one month he offered a full time job to anyone who bought one of his new apartments. "We offered the jobs to any person who bought the apartment or to his family or friends," said Zhang Tao, the firm's deputy general manager, to the BBC. "That way," he said, "the offer could be guaranteed." ("Bleak times for Chinese manufacturers," BBC News, March 3, 2009; "China's exports in sharp decline," BBC News, March 11, 2009; "Housing slump hits Shanghai owners," BBC, March 4, 2009)

China expresses concern about its investments in US Treasury. China is top creditor to the United States with a known \$739.6 billion invested in treasury bills and other US government-affiliated notes as of late January 2009, revealed the US Treasury. Nearly half of that amount was invested in the last year, said AFP, who revealed that in September 2008 China overtook Japan as the largest single investor in the

US treasury bonds. The US government released figures a week after Premier Wen Jiabao publically expressed concern for China's investments in the US economy in a press conference at the end of the 11th National People's Congress, China's annual parliamentary session. "We have lent huge amounts of money to the United States," said Premier Wen. "Of course we are concerned about the safety of our assets. I implore the United States...to honor its words, stay a credible nation and ensure the safety of Chinese assets." Washington responded by saying there was no safer investment in the world than the United States, reported the BBC. China went on to suggest that the US dollar be replaced with a new currency reserve system implemented by the International Monetary Fund, which, Beijing said, would be more stable and economically viable. ("*China cements role as top creditor to US: Treasury*," *AFP*, March 17, 2009; "*Purchase of US Treasuries to continue*," *China Daily*, March 24, 2009; "*China urges new money reserve to replace dollar*," *New York Times*, March 24, 2009)

China critical of IMF's increased role. Leaders of the world's largest economies have agreed to increase resources available to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a way to help struggling countries in this global economic crisis. Although China will also contribute more than it has in the past, Beijing has expressed concern that for the first time the IMF is considering loaning money to struggling European economies, said the *China Daily*. While China's economy is the world's third largest, it ranks 100 out of 192 UN members in terms of per capita income, said *People's Daily*. The IMF will consider loaning money to countries whose per capital income is much higher than China's. Observes Yu Yongding of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, "It will seem like the poor is rescuing the rich," reported *People's Daily*. China also objects that the United States holds far more voting and veto rights compared to other countries, especially the BRIC countries, Brazil, Russia, India, and China, who together have a little less than 10 percent veto power. International critics of the IMF say that its strings-attached loans just leave poorer nations struggling more. The Trade Justice Movement points out that IMF loans have led to crippling debt for poor nations who struggle to pay back interest at the expense of education, clean drinking water and health care. IMF loans often require the world's poorest countries to open their markets to cheap foreign imports, for example excess rice from the United States, which puts local farmers out of business. The United States is pushing to triple IMF resources to \$750 billion, said the BBC. ("*G20 leaders seal \$1tn global deal*," *BBC*, April 4, 2009; "*Lend less to IMF, China cautions*," *People's Daily*, March 17, 2009; tradejusticemovement.org.uk; "*China ready to contribute to the IMF*," *BBC News*, March 27, 2009)

Chinese language lessons save California elementary school from closing. Barnard Elementary School near San Diego, with a pupil enrolment of 148, was scheduled to close, another victim of the latest wave of budget cuts hitting California's state schools. The principal approached community residents on ways to save the school and among many suggestions, beginning Chinese language classes attracted attention. Two Chinese teachers were hired and all students from kindergarten to fifth grade began receiving daily 45-minute lessons in Chinese. Barnard Elementary became the first elementary school in San Diego to offer Chinese language to all of its students. Enrolment soon flourished and it became a model elementary school. A national survey by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages estimated that in the year 2000 there were 5,000 students learning Chinese. Today it is estimated that 50,000 students in the U.S. now study Chinese language. A total of 185 colleges and universities in the US have Chinese programs. ("*More US schools, universities offer Chinese classes*," *Xinhua*, March 7, 2009)

Milk scandal verdicts and sentences upheld. Chinese courts upheld the guilty verdicts and sentences of several convicted in the 2008 tainted milk scandal. The scandal involved lacing fresh milk with melamine, a substance that gave an artificial boost to the protein levels in milk that had been watered down. The deception caused the death of six infants and affected an estimated 300,000 persons, mostly children. Tian Wenhua, chair of the now defunct Sanlu Group, once the largest milk supplier in the country, was given a life sentence and ordered to pay a 20 million *yuan* (\$2.9 million) fine. Brother and sister Geng Jinping and Geng Jinzhu, were given the death sentence and an 8-year sentence respectively for producing and selling melamine laced milk that was then used to produce infant formula and baby food, said CNN. According to Xinhua the court also upheld the death sentence against Zhang Yujun who produced and sold tainted milk, and a life-sentence for Zhang Yanzhang who was a liaison in supplying the toxic milk products to suppliers. ("*China milk scandal terms upheld*," *BBC News*, March 26, 2009; "*Convictions upheld in China milk scandal*," *CNN*, March 26, 2009, "*Appeal against death sentence rejected in Sanlu milk scandal*," *Xinhua*, March 26, 2009)

China tops list for UN Clean Development Mechanism projects. China has passed the 500-project milestone for the number of United Nations-backed clean energy projects implemented, reported the *China Daily*. Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM) allows a country with an emission-reduction or emission-limitation commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to implement an emission-reduction project in developing countries, according to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. These projects can earn saleable certified emission reduction (CER) credits, each equivalent to one ton of CO₂, which can be counted towards meeting the Kyoto targets. Most of China's projects are in hydro and wind power, with the others designed to capture and reuse methane from coal mines, landfills and agricultural waste. China has 501 CDMs, 40 percent of the total registered with the UN, followed by 411 in India and 156 in Brazil. World wide there are 1,539 projects. ("*China passes 500 mark for UN clean energy projects,*" *China Daily*, March 21, 2009; *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*, www.unfccc.int)

Peking Man is 200,000 years older than previously thought. A new procedure developed by a Sino-US research team from Nanjing Normal University has predicted that the Peking Man remains are 200,000 years older than previously thought, bringing its date back to around 750,000 BCE. The human fossils known as Peking Man were discovered in the mid 1920s at a Zhoukoudian dig outside of Beijing (then romanized as Peking) and labeled *Homo erectus pekinensis*. The difficulty in dating Peking Man is that the fossils were lost in the 1940s and never recovered. Nothing is known of the bone fragments after they were packed in crates at Peking Union Medical College for removal from China in 1941. One theory is that they were lost while in the possession of US marines whom the Japan captured after the US declared war on Japan. The paleontologists in charge at the time made photographs of the bones, which are all that remain. The new dating data recently discovered involves measuring the isotopes of certain elements that are buried in quartz grains found at the Zhoudiankou site. The results show that the Peking Man fossils came from ground layers that were 680,000 – 780,000 years old. Some feel this new dating procedure adds weight to the theory that *Homo erectus* split into two groups when migrating out of Africa, said *National Geographic News*. ("*Peking Man older than thought,*" *BBC News*, March 11, 2009; "*Peking Man lived 200,000 years earlier than though,*" *National Geographic News*, March 12, 2009)

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