

China ignores Tiananmen day

AGENCE France-Presse
Beijing, June 4

BEIJING LARGELY ignored the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre on Sunday with state media maintaining its usual blackout on the violent crackdown and dissidents planning low-key commemorations.

The capital was calm, 17 years after the People's Liberation Army moved in to quell six weeks of democracy protests on the square, gunning down hundreds, if not thousands, of unarmed protesters and citizens.

Groups of Chinese and foreign tourists queued as usual on the square to get into the mausoleum of Mao Zedong and the Forbidden City, with a few police vehicles seen in the area. Relatives of those killed in the crackdown reported increased surveillance in the run-up to the anniversary.

There was nothing to suggest that the government intended to use the anniversary to change its position on the "incident", which, it maintained, was necessary to prevent a counter-revolutionary uprising.

"The political incident happened last century. We have already reached a conclusion on that. I have nothing new to add", foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said at a briefing last week. Those who lost relatives were to hold ceremonies under the watchful eye of police.

Zhang Xueling, a Beijing woman whose son was one of those shot dead planned to go to the Wan'an Cemetery in the west of the



Tourists at the Tiananmen Square on the anniversary of 1989 massacre on Sunday.

capital. "Every year on June 4, relatives of the victims gather together at the cemetery", she said. "We all feel very sad and try to comfort each other. Of course, the police are always there".

She said police behaviour at the cemetery had become more brazen in recent years, as plain-clothes officers had been replaced with

officers in full uniform, often openly filming the memorial ceremonies.

"At the entrance of the cemetery, there is a sign saying that Chinese and foreign journalist interviews are banned", she said. "But we hope the government'll give up evil and return to good and allow us to hold the ceremony".

AFP

China's 'socialist dream' faces massive desertstorms

Poverty, Spreading Desert Force One Million People To Move Out Of Ningxia

Saibal Dasgupta | TNN

Yinchuan (China): Ningxia, a desert region in China's southwest, has become the theatre of one of the biggest migrations in human history. Some 600,000 people have already moved from their homes nestled in the hills of north Ningxia to the irrigated plains in the southern part. Official agencies now plan to take the figure to one million by asking 400,000 more people to leave their homes.

Migration is China's answer to the problems of desertification and poverty in the wastelands and dusty mountains in its western region. It may also be a sign that the government is losing the battle over the constant increase in the desert area duststorms. Dust thrown up by the desertstorms sometimes flies till Japan.

The Chinese government recently announced a new economic strategy that called for the construction of a "socialist countryside" with focus on the poorer western regions of the country. In political terms, the new strategy enshrined in the latest 11th five-year plan (2006-2011) is a dramatic step that focuses on development of the backward and rural areas instead of depending on industrial and export-led economic growth.

But there seems to be no change on the ground in Ningxia and the people there still consider migration as the best solution to the problems. At the same time, they are worried that the available land in the plains is shrinking and resettlement is getting more difficult by the day.

"What we do is voluntary resettlement of people so that their lives could be improved. Migration is one of the strategies employed by us to reduce poverty," Zhang Xiu, head of poverty reduction programme in the local Ningxia government, told a team



RED MARCH: Migrants on their way to a new settlement in Ningxia Hui region

of visiting journalists.

The relocated people are settled on the plains in Hongsipu county of southern Ningxia, which has been specially earmarked as a resettlement

area. The government has created the necessary infrastructure for growth of agriculture in Hongsipu and leased farmland to the resettled population on long terms, going beyond 30 years,

Zhang said. Some of the relocated people have also taken jobs as construction workers. The government also provides 5,000 yuan (Rs 25,000) to encourage desert people to accept the official relocation plan.

There have been five meetings among senior officials to discuss poverty reduction strategies based on the central government's new programme on "socialist countryside", he said.

"We have discussed ways of increasing relocation of desert people.



We are also looking at other strategies like encouraging them to take up jobs in the factories in south China," Zhang said. He mentioned two strategies to control the growth of desert—extensive use of lift irrigation and encouraging plantation of potatoes and medicinal herbs. Young men belonging to families below the poverty line in the desert would be imparted special training so that they were capable of finding jobs in the prosperous and industrial south China, he said.

The desert, stretched over 385 square km in the north Ningxia, is home to 2.58 million. About 750,000 of the existing population in the hilly desert live below the poverty line earning less than 623 yuan (Rs 3,115) a year. At least 400,000 of those below the poverty line will need to be relocated due to a lack of food and jobs.

Chinese Communist Party for 'democratic' reforms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, JUNE 25

CHINA's ruling communist party is keen to discard its Soviet-style functioning and has introduced more 'democratic' reforms as part of the political restructuring to meet the challenges in governing the world's most populous nation.

"The CPC would push forward China's political restructuring through reform and improvement of democracy within

the party," said Li Junru, vice-president of the party school of the Communist Party of China.

Strengthening the CPC's ruling capacity means promoting democracy in the whole nation through promoting democracy within the party and pushing forward the reform of the nation's political institution through institutional innovation inside the party, Li said.

In recent years, attempts have been made to expand democracy within the CPC throughout the country. There have been

endeavours to build a permanent in-house democracy mechanism, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

The CPC, which has monopolised political power since the people's republic was founded in 1949, has repeatedly ruled out aping western-style democracy in the country.

The key change is the introduction of a new cadre-appraisal system characterised with more democratic features involving public opinion poll, political achievements analysis, face-to-

face talk and comprehensive assessment, before the officials are elected or appointed.

While large-scale re-election of local leadership of the CPC is being organised at provincial, municipal, county and township levels nationwide, some new methods have been employed to improve party democracy, the report said. It quoted sources within the CPC organisation department as saying that the 2006-2007 re-elections, a major political event before the convening of the 17th National Congress

of the CPC, underscore guarantee of ordinary party members' right to know, participate, select and supervise.

Grassroots people outside the party have also been granted a say in the campaign through public opinion polls.

As a test, the CPC provincial committee of the booming Jiangsu in East China has ordered all the local party committees at township level to adopt an open candidate selection system in the ongoing re-elections for new party leaders.

Various means, including questionnaire-based survey, door-step investigation, online research and symposium, are being employed in East China's Zhejiang and Southwest China's Sichuan provinces to invite ordinary people to assess cadres performance, the report said.

Founded in 1921, the CPC now has 70.8 million members and 3.52 million grassroots organisations. Its whole regime came into being in the past revolution era and for decades it followed the Soviet model.

EXPRESS

Beijing gradually softening stance on Taiwan

96 10
EDWARD CODY
BEIJING, JUNE 15

GRADUALLY and without fanfare, China has substantially softened its stand on Taiwan, according to senior officials and diplomats. President Hu Jintao, they said, has begun to play down China's long-standing vow to recover the self-ruled island by force if necessary and shifted the focus to preventing any move toward formal independence.

The adjustment, which has become clearer in recent months, has brought China's policy on the volatile Taiwan issue closer to that of the United States. Washington has long maintained that the island's half-century-old status quo—*independent in fact but not in law*—should not be changed until Beijing and Taipei can work out a mutually acceptable peaceful solution.

"Before, we never said 'status quo'," said a Chinese academic who advises Hu's government about Taiwan. "Now we say it all the time." Officials and diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. One of them, a high-level official, said that he had visited Beijing and spoken to Hu privately about Taiwan for several hours. Hu, according to the visitor, said he had no plans to act militarily against Taiwan unless the status quo were changed in a way that risked causing him to "lose face."

That concern reflected the ardour for reunification among many Chinese on the mainland. Despite continuing propaganda about "liberat-

ing" Taiwan, Hu said China's bottom line is that it will not allow the island to take decisive steps toward legal independence, the visitor recalled. Backing up that resolution, China has deployed nearly 800 medium- and short-range ballistic missiles in southern China, with targets around the Taiwan Strait, and is steadily building its military forces with Taiwan as a principal focus.

The government also passed an anti-secession law in March last year that legally enshrined the long-standing pledge to use military force as a last resort to prevent independence. But barring changes in the status quo, Hu told the visitor, Beijing's policy is to encourage more economic and other exchanges between Taiwan and the mainland in hopes that, at some undefined point, China will have liberalised enough that peaceful reunification will be possible.

To encourage those ties, the two governments announced on Wednesday, China and Taiwan will launch direct charter passenger flights between them during major holidays. The decision appeared to represent a step toward restoring regular direct flights cut in 1949 during civil war.

The Bush administration and allied governments have recognised Hu's shift in Taiwan policy and base their calculations on it, according to veteran diplomats in Asia. As a result, they added, a partnership of sorts has evolved in which Beijing relies on the US to ensure that Chen does nothing to push China up against a wall.

—The Washington Post

10.2 p.c. GDP growth in 1st quarter: Hu Jintao

President seeks efficiency and quality

BEIJING: China scored a 10.2 per cent growth in its gross domestic product in the first quarter of this year, said Hu Jintao, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, here on Sunday.

The country also achieved a 25 per cent growth in import and exports in the three months, said Mr. Hu at a meeting with Lien Chan, honorary chairman of the Taiwan-based Kuomintang Party.

The rapid economic growth and the big market have created favourable conditions for further economic and trade cooperation across the Straits, along with opportunities for Taiwan compatriots to give full play to their talent in China, he said.

want to pursue excessively rapid economic growth. What we are seeking is efficiency and quality of development, the change in the economic growth mode, resources conservation, environmental protection and improvement of people's livelihood," Mr. Hu said.

This is the second meeting between Mr. Hu and Mr. Lien. They met in Beijing a year ago when Mr. Lien, then chairman of the Kuomintang (KMT) Party, had an "ice-breaking" journey to China. It was also the first meeting between the top leaders of the CPC and KMT in 60 years.

To curb the excessive economic growth, the State Council, or China's Cabinet, held an executive meeting on Friday, deciding to strengthen regulation of

economic performance by adjusting and upgrading redundant production capacity, curbing new production capacity, improving efficiency of energy and raw material consumption and coordinating demand for and supply of energy and raw materials.

Lien's call

China and Taiwan should reinforce efforts to promoting peace and opening-up across the Taiwan Strait, Mr. Lien said. Both sides should endeavour towards unity, peace and opening-up, as "the cross-strait relations are now in a seesaw struggle between peace and opening-up on one side and conflicts and closure on the other," he said. — Xinhua

China
HD-19
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China turns to nuclear power to fuel growth

Pallavi Aiyar

EVEN AS the debate in the U.S. Congress sets in motion the process of implementing the Washington-New Delhi civilian nuclear agreement, India's neighbour, China, is embarking on one of the most ambitious expansions of nuclear energy capabilities in recent decades.

Over the next 15 years, China will bring online 30 new nuclear power plants, leading to a four-fold increase in its nuclear energy capacity, up from the current 8,700 MW to some 40,000 MW. So far Beijing has committed to \$50 billion towards the new constructions. The country's 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10) lays special emphasis on nuclear power plant development. Sixteen provinces and municipalities have already announced plans to build reactors.

At present, China has nine operational reactors and two more are under construction with nuclear energy accounting for about two per cent of its total electricity output. According to government targets, this will double to four per cent by 2020. Even then the percentage of electricity generated from nuclear plants will be far behind today's world average of 16 per cent. Japan for example gets about 30 per cent of its electricity from nuclear sources.

Nonetheless, China's plans call for one of the boldest nuclear construction binges since the U.S.' expansion in the 1970s. "China's nuclear energy is set for 'lift-off'" said Chen Hua, a Director of the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC), the government body responsible for both civilian and military nuclear development.

The reasons behind China's determination to push forward its nuclear capabilities are similar to those in India. Chronic electricity shortages of 35 million KW in 2004 and 25 million KW in 2005 forced Beijing to recognise its deteriorating energy situation. The demands of China's burgeoning economy have led to a gargantuan appetite for energy. China recently overtook Japan to become the world's second-largest consumer of energy, after the U.S. To sustain its annual economic growth rate of about 10 per

Over the next 15 years, China is planning to increase its nuclear power capacity four-fold. For, its burgeoning economy has led to a gargantuan appetite for energy.

cent, China estimates it will have to double its electricity-generating capacity every decade.

"China's energy crisis is severe. In 2004 no less than 26 provinces reported energy shortages," explained Professor Xia Yishan, Director of the China Energy Strategy Centre, a government-affiliated think-tank. Indeed for the last few winters even Beijing residents, usually protected from the shortages common in the outlying provinces, had to don extra woollens in an effort to stave off the cold — energy shortfalls led to the turning down of heating in most buildings.

Simply expanding the use of coal, on which China is already dependent for 70 per cent of its energy needs, is not an option. Already 40 per cent of China's railroad capacity is taken up by the hauling of more than one billion tonnes of coal a year. Moreover, coal mining in China is plagued by safety issues.

Although China produces 35 per cent of global coal, it also accounts for 80 per cent of the world's coal mining accidents. More than 6,000 miners were killed in accidents in 2005 alone. Faced with a chronic pollution problem, China also has to take into account the negative impact of greenhouse gases.

A further cause for the new emphasis on nuclear energy is China's growing reliance on foreign oil, which has many within the government establishment concerned. China was a net exporter of oil not so long ago. Today it imports one-third of its oil requirements.

At a recent conference on energy issues in the Asia Pacific region, held in Beijing, Steven Kidd, Director of Strategy for the London-based World Nuclear Association, put forth his case arguing the benefits of nuclear technology to a room full of eager Chinese Government officials.

As he listed the environmental advantages and benefits to security of energy supply that nuclear energy would purportedly bring, he was obviously preaching to the converted. "Nuclear industry has been declared a strategic industry," said Chen Hua at the same conference. "We need this power. It is an economic imperative."

Mr. Chen went on to explain China's "multi-pronged strategy" for achieving its nuclear ambitions. Rather than reinventing the wheel, China has imported commercial power plants from Russia, France, and Canada, allowing for an absorption of a variety of technologies and the training of a generation of local engineers.

The ultimate goal is to improve China's own design and construction capabilities so that it will not have to rely on foreigners to build and operate the country's reactors. China's contracts with foreign firms are thus structured to maximise technology sharing. A strategy that many analysts believe will enable it to leapfrog the world in nuclear power technology, even though China entered the race late.

The desire for a piece of China's nuclear pie has the cream of the international nuclear-power industry queuing up. Currently the U.S.-based, Japanese-owned Westinghouse, France's Arvea, and Russia's AtomStroyExport are battling it out for an \$8 billion contract for the construction of four nuclear reactors in Guangdong and Zhejiang provinces, given the go-ahead by the Chinese authorities last year. These are expected to come online in 2012.

Beijing has repeatedly postponed a decision on the bid, in order to squeeze maximum concessions from the bidders on technology sharing, according to industry watchers. CNNC director Yu Jianfeng said at the World Energy Confer-

ence in Sydney that 70 per cent of the equipment for the new reactors will, in fact, be Chinese-made.

By taking what it can from the rest of the world in terms of technology and design, China hopes eventually to develop indigenous conventional nuclear plant designs, in order to give it an independent production capability for domestic use as well as for export. "Already we can develop 300MW and 600 MW PWRs (pressurised water reactors) by ourselves and currently we are experimenting with designing an indigenously developed 1000MW PWR which we should have before the next five years," said Mr. Chen.

Indeed a 300-MW reactor in Qinshan, Zhejiang province, was designed in China and built with 70 per cent of its components produced domestically in 1991. In the second phase of its domestic R&D programme, two 600-MW indigenously developed reactors were installed in Qinshan, which became operational in 2002 and 2004.

Regarding exports, China assisted Pakistan in building its Chashma-1 300-MW nuclear reactor in 1999. In 2004, China's First Heavy Industries Company won a bid to supply the Chashma-2 reactor's pressure vessels. As recently as last month, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf was in Beijing, asking for Chinese assistance in further developing his country's nuclear energy programme, having been rebuffed by the U.S.

R&D effort

Another key component of China's energy programme is the research and development of next-generation nuclear technologies. Later this year a \$370 million, 190 MW nuclear plant using 'pebble-bed technology' is expected to begin construction. Built by the China Huaneng Group, the country's largest electricity generator, the power plant will use new high-temperature, gas-cooled reactor technology instead of the pressurised-water type.

China began its research into this technology in the 1990s at Tsinghua University in Beijing, and using German-licensed technology began to construct an experimental \$30 million, 10 MW pebble bed reactor in 1995. This reactor was eventually incorporated into the power grid in 2003.

It is theoretically impossible for pebble bed reactors to melt down since even if all safety devices were switched off, the reactor cannot achieve high enough temperatures to melt its own materials and therefore would simply cool down slowly, remaining physically undamaged.

The only other country actively working on commercial pebble bed reactors is South Africa, but pressure from environmentalists means that development there has faced many delays. China is thus expected by many experts to finish first. Other countries are potentially interested in the technology not only because it addresses safety issues but also because one of its by-products is hydrogen, potentially an alternative source of energy to oil.

China is also embarking on a fast breeder programme, with Russian assistance. The first phase involved the construction of a 25 MW breeder reactor as a technology demonstrator, and it is hoped to have a prototype 600 MW fast breeder reactor built by 2015.

In Asia, China is not alone in its nuclear ambitions. India too hopes to add at least 20,000MW of nuclear capacity over the next 20 years and is actively pursuing a fast breeder programme. Unlike China, however, India has had to develop its nuclear programme in isolation from the global nuclear marketplace. Whether it can achieve its goals depends on a variety of factors, not least of which is the approval of the U.S. Congress on the Indo-U.S. deal.

Nonetheless, given the ravenous appetite of both Asian giants for energy, together accounting for some 35 per cent of the growth in global energy demand, the World Nuclear Association's Steven Kidd predicts that when it comes to nuclear technology, this will indeed be an Asian century.

CARTOONSCAPE



Hu's 8-Fold Path For Citizens

Beijing: Chinese President Hu Jintao has a message for Chinese who are greedy, lazy or unpatriotic: be ashamed, be very ashamed. His list of eight dos and don'ts was unveiled during the meeting of parliament that ended this week. It aims to douse the excesses of China's 27-year-old economic boom with a bucket of cold virtue.

On Wednesday, the aphorisms were issued on an 8-yuan (US\$1) poster with plain, black Chinese characters above a photo of the Great Wall. The Chinese President's virtues are blandly apolitical, with none of the radical vigour of founding communist leader Mao Zedong, who had declared: "Political power comes out of the barrel of a gun." AP

Patriotism, Science & Other Virtues	
I Love, do not harm, the motherland.	
I Serve, don't disserve, the people.	
I Uphold science; don't be ignorant and unenlightened.	
I Work hard; don't be lazy and hate work.	
I Be united and help each other; don't gain benefits at the expense of others.	
I Be honest and trustworthy, not profit-mongering at the expense of your values.	
I Be disciplined and law-abiding instead of chaotic and lawless.	
I Know plain living, hard struggle; don't wallow in luxuries, pleasures.	

China: 1 country, 3 systems

JEHANGIR S. POCHA

Beijing, March 15: China will abjure economic reforms in its agricultural sector and instead focus on creating "a new socialist countryside", the country's Premier Wen Jiabao said as China's parliament ended its current legislative session here.

The move marks the creation of a new Chinese governance model that can be described as "one country, three systems".

Originally, China had constructed the "one country, two systems" model in 1997 when it took over laissez-faire-loving Hong Kong and promised the island territory it could retain its political and economic freedoms.

Now by continuing to move China's coastal industrial regions along a unique path of state-controlled capitalism but promising to administer China's interior agricultural areas through a new socialist framework, Beijing will have to juggle three contrasting and often contradictory sets of realities at the same time.

Speaking at a stage-managed "news conference" tradi-

tionally held at the close of the National People's Congress, as China's parliament is called, Wen put on a confident and upbeat face.

"The new socialist countryside will be a key and significant step in building a society of moderate prosperity and putting the Chinese economy on more solid ground,"

Wen said from the ornate Great Hall of the People at Tiananmen Square. "The issues of the san nong for three 'nongs' — Nong Min (peasants), Nong Ye (agriculture) and Nong Cun (rural communities)] are fundamental to China's modernisation drive."

At the heart of Beijing's new socialist agriculture policies is the decision not to privatise agricultural land.

After the Communist Revolution of 1949, all land in China was taken over by the state and redistributed to farmers, who were granted approximately 35-year leases on individual plots.

Though the privatisation "mood" of recent years led the government to consider privatising land as well, "we have realised we just cannot do this", said Ding Ningning, di-



Wen: Countryside socialism

farmers would be exempt from paying taxes. "In one stroke, our farmers have been freed of feudal or government taxes for the first time in 2500 years".

said He Bing Jun, vice-chief of Dong Chun village in China's central Hunan province.

Beijing has also said it will transfer about \$20 billion to local governments in poor, rural areas, both to make up for the shortfall in revenues to local governments because of the tax cuts, and to boost investment and research in farm-related activities.

Ding said such "new socialist countryside" initiatives were a much-needed response to growing criticisms from many quarters that the benefits of China's frenetic economic growth were not trickling down to farmers.

While China's relentless free-market reforms have turned it into the world's

fastest-growing economy, the benefits of this have been mostly cornered by connected "clans" and urban elite.

In contrast, Chinese farmers have seen their incomes fall and had their social services cut, said Professor Wang Hui, a professor of literature at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

In rural China, politicians are buying votes

Tainted Candidates See Village Posts As Easy Route To Quick Money

Beijing: Corrupt politicians in rural China are paying tens of thousands of dollars in bribes to win local elections, lured by the vast profits they can make afterwards wielding their clout, state media said on Monday.

The claim was one of a series of allegations about widespread corruption in the nation's vast countryside that was raised at the ongoing annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC), or parliament, Xinhua news agency said.

"In some villages, candidates spend... several hundred thousand yuan (tens of thousands of dollars) campaigning for the post of village chief, the monthly pay for which is at most several hundred yuan," said Liu Xiguang, a delegate.

"It's apparent that what the candidates are actually seeking is the power to control the village's land and mineral resources, which they can trade for cash and other personal benefits."

Control of scarce resources has become increasingly important over the past few years amid Chi-

na's breakneck economic growth, which has set off one of history's great construction booms.

Liu, who is in charge of overseeing village elections at a local district in north China's Hebei province, said politicians who had risen to power through bribing the voters were mostly "dictatorial and corrupt," according to Xinhua.

Meanwhile, concern was raised at the 10-day parliament session, which ends on Tuesday, that a whole new field of corruption had opened up following central government pledges to spend more money on the backward rural areas of the country.

According to the central government's budget plan announced to the parliament, China will spend \$42 billion on rural development in 2006 alone.

"Some National People's Congress deputies are worried that the huge funds might be misused or intercepted by officials at various levels before reaching the farmers," Xinhua said. AFP



Corrupt politicians in China are seeking the power to control the village land and mineral resources, which they can trade for cash and other personal benefits

Fugitive officials expected back

Beijing: China expects a number of high-profile corrupt officials and businessmen who fled abroad to be repatriated as soon as this year, state media said on Monday.

The official optimism follows a decision by China to strengthen its efforts to get them back from the countries where they found refuge, the China Daily reported, citing Zhu En-tao, a former minister. Among the targets of China's drive is the nation's most wanted fugitive, Lai Changxing, allegedly the ringmaster of a \$6 billion smuggling ring in Fujian province in the nation's southeast.

Lai has been in Canada since 1999, but the Canadian government is evaluating his extradition, according to Zhu. "Once the evaluation is finished, he will be sent back," Zhu told the paper. Others China expects to welcome back include Xu Chaofan and Xu Guojun, allegedly involved in embezzling nearly \$500 million from a Bank of China branch. AFP

China bows to farmers' demands

Protests Pay Off, Govt To Overhaul Land Acquisition System

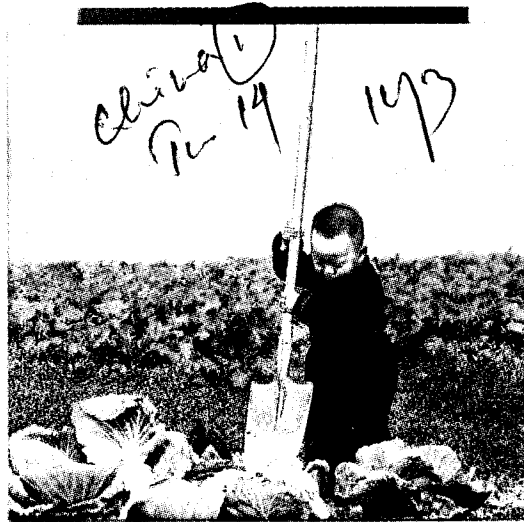
By Saibal Dasgupta/TNN

Beijing: China has finally buckled to a series of protest demonstrations by farmers seeking justice against land grabbers and suitable compensation for acquisition of land for industrial use. The government on Wednesday promised to entirely overhaul the system, and impose severe restrictions on the transfer of land from agriculture to industrial use.

China has witnessed thousands of protest demonstrations on issues concerning land acquisition. The government recently admitted there were 87,000 "mass incidents" in China in 2005, a drastic increase over the 9,000-odd similar incidents recorded in 1993. Another government report said 65% of protest demonstrations were connected to land acquisition.

"We need to adopt a down-to-earth attitude to the situation in order to build a new socialist countryside," a minister said on Wednesday. The government was working on a new system that would replace the existing regime on land acquisition and pricing, Du Ying, vice-minister in-charge of the National Reforms Development Commission said at a press conference.

This follows another announcement by the government on Tuesday that police officials involved in the firing on agitating farmers in Guangdong province last December would be detained. The government has said



been killed.

The increasing unrest on the issue has also been echoed in the ongoing session of the National People's Congress, the Chinese parliament. "Failure to protect the basic rights of these farmers may cause social instability," Zhou Hongyu, a member of the NPC warned the government.

"We will adopt the most strict land use approval system to minimise the transfer of agriculture land for other purposes," Yin Cheng Jie, vice-minister for agriculture, said at the same press conference. The government was striving to provide better compensation for acquired land, and extend employment opportunities to farmers rendered landless in the process, he

said. Landless farmers who are unable to get jobs would be offered guaranteed pension support, he said.

Chen Xiwen, deputy office chief of the central government's Central Leading Group of Financial Work, has estimated that 200,000 hectares of farmland go into urbanisation and industrialisation each year.

The government has been forced to take action on this score because of widespread demonstrations and a belated realisation that the farming community was suffering the brunt of the rapid industrialisation that has taken place over the past two decades. A recent survey by the State Council Development Research Centre, which functions under the central cabinet, showed farmers are usually under-compensated and have little say in the acquisition process.

New crop of rules

- Strict land use approval system to minimise transfer of agricultural land for industrial and other purposes
- Better compensation to farmers for acquired land
- Employment opportunities for farmers rendered landless
- Landless farmers unable to get jobs to get guaranteed pension support

three persons were killed in firing although media reports from the affected areas suggested 20 persons had

Tibetan protest debut

JEHANGIR S. POCHA

Beijing, March 8: A Tibetan activist challenged Chinese authorities yesterday by unfurling a provocative banner opposite the Great Hall of the People at Tiananmen Square, where China's parliament is currently in session.

The activist, Wangpo Tethong, 43, held open his banner for just a few seconds before melting into the crowd.

The banner was addressed to China President Hu Jintao directly, saying: "Hu, you can't stop us! 2008-Freetibet.org".

"This is the first time there will be a Tibetan protest at Tiananmen Square", Tethong said in an interview the day before he carried out his act. "It's meant to show the Chinese government that they can't just keep ignoring the issue of Tibet or that sooner or later it will arrive in the heart of China."

Also meaningful, Tethong said, was the date on his banner, as well as the exact spot he chose to unfurl it - just besides



Wangpo Tethong after unfurling the banner at Tiananmen Square, Beijing. (AFP)

the electronic "Olympic" clock that is counting down the days to the 2008 Summer Olympics that Beijing will host.

China has been gearing up to put on a spectacular Olympics and use the occasion to announce its arrival on the global stage as a developed

country. But Tethong said he and other Tibetan activists are planning to use the fact that "the world's eyes will be focused on China" to draw attention to their own cause.

Though there were plenty of Chinese policemen at the square when Tethong opened

his banner, they seemed perplexed by his act and hesitated before taking any action. This allowed Tethong, a Swiss citizen, to leave the square unharmed and bike to the Swiss embassy.

There diplomats gave him an informal escort to the airport from where he flew to Hong Kong, he said in a telephone interview from the island territory.

Tethong was lucky, for Chinese authorities do not take kindly to protests, even the momentary display of banners, at Tiananmen Square where hundreds of pro-democracy demonstrators were killed by army troops in 1989.

On June 4, 1992, when Wang Wanxing, a political activist, tried to commemorate the third anniversary of the 1989 massacre by displaying a banner at Tiananmen Square, he was arrested and sent to a psychiatric hospital for 13 years where he was forced to undergo shock therapy and put on psychotropic drugs.

Public opinion to shape CPC reshuffle

REUTERS
Beijing, March 8

CHINA IS planning a massive reshuffle of local politicians, linking promotion to how well they adhere to the central leadership's bid to address social imbalances, an official newspaper said on Wednesday.

The moves may affect over 100,000 officials in township, county, city and provincial posts ahead of a party congress in 2007 that is likely to seal changes in the country's ruling circle under President Hu Jintao.

"The criteria for promotion will not only look to GDP growth and other political achievements, it'll also look to the level of popular satisfaction with their administration," the overseas edition of the *People's Daily*, the Communist Party's mouthpiece, said, citing comments by the party's organisation chief, He Guoqiang.

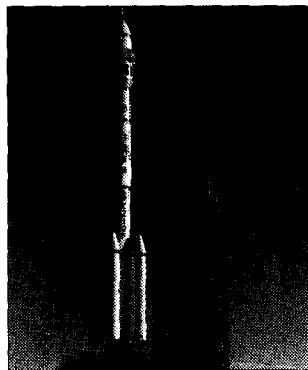
It said the decisions about promotions and demotions would apply the "scientific outlook on development" — the party's catchphrase for balanced economic and social growth that places fresh emphasis on social equality, especially for China's poor farmers.

"The goal is to properly select appropriate officials to provide an organisational guarantee for China's future development, and it has major significance for the Chinese Communist Party's 17th Congress in 2007," the paper said.

Hu and Premier Wen Jiabao have overseen a new five-year national development program currently before China's Parliament.

That program promises improved incomes, health, education and housing for the country's 750 million farmers, but it has ignited internal debate about how to combine economic growth and equity, say observers.

He, the organisation chief,



A Shenzhou rocket

Scientist jailed

CHINA HAS sentenced a top rocket designer to life in prison after convicting him of corruption and embezzling 160 million yuan (\$19.9 million) from public funds, the state media said on Wednesday. A court in Beijing on Tuesday sentenced Li Jianzhong, who worked on Long March carrier rockets for China's Shenzhou manned space programme, the *Beijing News* reported.

Li is the former head of the Chinese Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, which developed the rockets for the Shenzhou space and satellite programmes. The court also sentenced Zhang Lingying, the former chief finance officer at the academy, to 20 years in prison for helping Li to embezzle funds. *DPA, Beijing*

said 14 provincial-level governments would be reshuffled later this year, and 17 in the first half of next year. Party congresses are held every five years, usually late in the year.

He did not specify what provinces would be changed first, but the leaders of several have been widely discussed as potential successors to Hu and Wen.

The paper said the selection process would include public opinion polls, on-the-ground investigations, and interviews with officials.

চিনে কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির ক্যাডারের মূল্যায়ন এ বার হবে জনসমীক্ষায়

বেজিং, ৮ মার্চ: এত দিন ক্যাডাররা যা বলত, মুখ বুজে সাধারণ মানুষকে তা মেনে নিতে হত। এ বার দিন বদলাচ্ছে চিনের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টিতে (সিপিসি)।

এখন ক্যাডারদের শুনতে হবে, সাধারণ লোক তাদের সম্পর্কে কী ভাবে। স্থানীয় থেকে প্রাদেশিক স্তর পর্যন্ত এই প্রথম ক্যাডার বাছাই ও তাদের পুনর্মূল্যায়নের মাপকাঠি হবে জনমত। অর্থাৎ পার্টির মুষ্টিমেয় নেতাদের মত নয়, সাধারণ মানুষ কী ভাবে ক্যাডারদের দেখছে, তার উপরেই নির্ভর করবে দলে ক্যাডারদের ভবিষ্যৎ। সংবাদসংস্থা শিনহুয়া এই খবর জানিয়েছে।

আগামী বছর দলের জাতীয় কংগ্রেস। তার আগে এই নীতি বদল সম্পর্কে জানিয়ে সিপিসি-র কেন্দ্রীয় কমিটির সদস্য হে গুয়োকিয়াং বলেন, “দল কেমন ভাবে চালানো হবে, তা নিয়ে বেশ কিছু বদল আসছে।” ক্যাডাররাই দলের ভিত, ফলে সেখানেই সংস্কার এনে বড় ধরনের পরিবর্তনের ইঙ্গিত দিতে চায় দলীয়

নেতৃত্ব। দেশের আর্থিক বিকাশে কে কেমন সাহায্য করছে, তা দিয়েই গত কয়েক বছর ক্যাডারদের কাজকর্মের পুনর্মূল্যায়ন হত। কিন্তু এ বার জনমত হবে প্রধান মাপকাঠি।

কেন? সে সম্পর্কে হে মুখ ফুটে কিছু না বললেও বিশেষজ্ঞদের মতে, শাসক দল ও সরকারের কাজকর্মের অগ্রাধিকারে একটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বদল হচ্ছে বলেই মনে হয়। আর্থিক বিকাশ ঘটলেও চিনে জনগণের মত প্রকাশের অধিকারকে দাবিয়ে রাখা হয় বলে বার বারই অভিযোগ ওঠে।

সম্প্রতি বাঁধ নিয়ে জনতার অসন্তোষ সামলাতে পুলিশ গুলিও চালিয়েছিল। সেই ঘটনায় বেশ কয়েক জনের মৃত্যু হয়। বাইরের বিশ্বে ভাবমূর্তি বদলের একটা চেষ্টার পাশাপাশি দলীয় নেতৃত্বও হয়তো মনে করছে, উন্নয়ন ধরে রাখতে সাধারণ লোকের কথা শোনা দরকার। দরকার দলীয় কর্মীদের ঔদ্ধত্য কমানো।

দলের কেন্দ্রীয় কমিটির পার্টিস্কুলের শিক্ষক সং ফুফাংয়ের

দাবি, “জনগণের জানার অধিকার, রাজনীতিতে অংশগ্রহণ এবং কর্মকর্তাদের নির্বাচনের অধিকারের প্রতি শ্রদ্ধা রেখেই এই নীতি নেওয়া হল।” জনমত সমীক্ষা ছাড়াও রাজনৈতিক দিক থেকে ক্যাডাররা কী করতে পেরেছে, তা মুখোমুখি কথা বলে মূল্যায়ন করা হবে।

পার্টিস্কুলের আর এক শিক্ষক গাও জিনমিনের কথায়, “ক্যাডারদের আচারআচরণে বড় ধরনের পরিবর্তন আনবে এই নতুন নীতি।” ইতিমধ্যেই পরীক্ষামূলক ভাবে বেশ কয়েকটি প্রদেশে জনমত সমীক্ষার ভিত্তিতে ক্যাডারদের মূল্যায়ন করা হচ্ছে। সেই প্রক্রিয়ায় ‘খুশি’ চেপে রাখতে পারেননি এক পার্টিকর্মী।

গাও জিনমিন যে ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, তা-ই আরও খোলাখুলি বলেছেন কর্মীটি। বলেছেন, “এত বছর ক্যাডার-নেতারা যা বলতেন, সাধারণ মানুষকে মুখ বুজে তা-ই শুনতে হত। এখন আর সে দিন থাকবে না। এখন লোকের কথা দাদাদের শুনতে হবে।” - পি টি আই

Glare on China divide

Beijing, March 5 (Reuters): China will channel its surging economic growth to narrow the chasm dividing its rich cities and restive countryside. Premier Wen Jiabao told parliament today in a speech tempering optimism with stark warnings.

In setting out government goals for the coming year, Wen promised "continuity and stability" in general economic policy, including the currency exchange rate and monetary policy. But he said more wealth and investment must



Wen in parliament on Sunday. (Reuters)

go to farmers and other struggling groups to ensure China's stability and growth.

Wen praised China's per-

formance in 2005 in a speech to nearly 3,000 delegates of the National People's Congress — mostly Communist Party members and officials — who packed Beijing's Great Hall of the People for their brief annual session.

He read a 35-page speech word for word, his delivery occasionally interrupted by perfunctory applause. The only extended clapping before the end came when he spoke of China's commitment to reclaim Taiwan, an island China considers its own.

Wen warned of dangers and difficult choices ahead. "Some deeply seated conflicts that have accumulated over a long time have yet to be fundamentally resolved, and new problems have arisen that cannot be ignored," he said.

The country must "pay more attention to social equity and social stability so that all the people can enjoy the fruits of reform and development".

Wen drew a picture of a rapidly growing economy threatened by excessive investment, production gluts and mismanagement. He said distorted industrial expansion was undercutting China's long-term economic health.

"Production gluts are increasingly severe, prices of related goods are falling and inventories are rising. Business profits are shrinking, losses are growing and latent financial risks are increasing."

Wen's government is working on the assumption that GDP will grow about 8 per cent this year and consumer prices will rise 3 per cent. But it typically sets cautious targets; it set 8 per cent growth for 2005 but actually it was 9.9 per cent.

China aims to raze urban-rural wall

11-14
6/2

By Saibal Dasgupta/TNN & AP

Beijing: Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on Sunday forecast slower economic growth for 2006 as Beijing pours resources into building up the long-neglected countryside.

In Sunday's address to the opening of parliament's annual session, Wen gave no sign that China would ease exchange-rate controls, which critics say contributes to its rising trade surplus. But he said technol-

plans to spend 339.7 billion yuan (\$42.3 billion) this year on agriculture and rural areas, up 14.2% from the year before, Wen said.

The 3,000-member parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC) is due to approve the budget, Wen's report and other plans when its session ends March 14.

Earlier, Chinese authorities announced a slew of measures to tackle the protests across rural regions. Deputies or members of par-

liament have been given wider powers to voice sentiments at the grass-roots level and play a greater role in supervising the work of the bureaucracy.

The NPC will discuss the plan to develop a "socialist countryside", which would bridge the gap between prosperous cities and poorer rural areas. Special inspection teams of NPC members have asked the government to settle unpaid wages of construction and migrant workers,

NPC spokesman Jiang Enzhu said.

The NPC will also discuss property rights. Farmers have demonstrated and even rioted in several places to protest against the takeover of land for industrial use.

The announcements indicate that the NPC, which is regarded by critics as a rubber-stamp parliament, has become assertive as a supervisor of the government and in dealing with the unrest spreading across the country. Sources said that the government may also be keen on utilising the sobering influence of NPC members to calm the tide of unrest.

One Step Forward, Two Backward



ogy and resource imports would rise and that Beijing would "strive to redress the trade imbalance".

China expects its economy to grow about 8% this year, Wen said, slowing sharply from 9.9% growth last year. The shift to promoting rural growth comes amid mounting anger and riots in those areas over land seizures, corruption and pollution. Increasing the spending power of China's 800 million rural citizens is seen as a crucial step in the country's development.

In the countryside, average incomes are one-third the size of those in cities. The government

Dissidents missing ahead of China meet

JEHANGIRS, POCHA

Beijing, March 4: Dozens of dissidents on a national hungerstrike to protest the Chinese government's human rights policies have gone missing across China just as the country's parliament, the National People's Congress, goes into session here tomorrow.

The trouble began last month when Yang Maodong, alias Guo Feixiong, a prominent human rights activist, was beaten up by thugs suspected of being hired by local police. A small group of activists led by Gao Zhisheng, a Beijing-based activist lawyer, then began a hungerstrike in protest.

As news of the hungerstrike spread within the growing ranks of the disaffected,

many of whom Gao has represented in cases against the government, hundreds began to join in.

"We're using our own bodies, in our own homes to do what we choose; yet people who have joined the hunger strike are disappearing," Gao said in a telephone interview on yesterday. The next day Gao, who recently had his licence suspended for a year after taking on several politically-charged cases, was detained by authorities.

Other prominent dissidents who have been arrested so far include Qi Zhiyong, 50, a Tiananmen Square-era protester who lost a leg after he was shot during the 1989 student protests, and Hu Jia, 31, a Beijing-based activist who was blacklisted by authorities

after he revealed how a botched blood donation campaign in central Henan province had created a massive AIDS epidemic there.

On Thursday, Liu Jianchao, a spokesperson from the Chinese foreign ministry said that the protesters were not conducting their affairs "under a legal framework".

Later Xu Hu, an official from the ministry of public security ministry official, confirmed that 15,000 police assisted by 620,000 citizen volunteers would clear Beijing of "bad elements" ahead of the parliament session.

"This is aimed at reducing certain factors that might harm public order," Xu was quoted as saying by local media.

While Chinese authorities

routinely round up dissidents before politically sensitive periods, such as June 4, the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, or when the NPC is in session, the current crackdown seems more ferocious, said Brad Adams, the London-based Asia director of Human Rights Watch.

"The government seems to have gone into fear mode over the last few years," Adams said in the telephone interview. "From the outside it just seems absurd. But maybe they know something we don't know about the fragility of the political system."

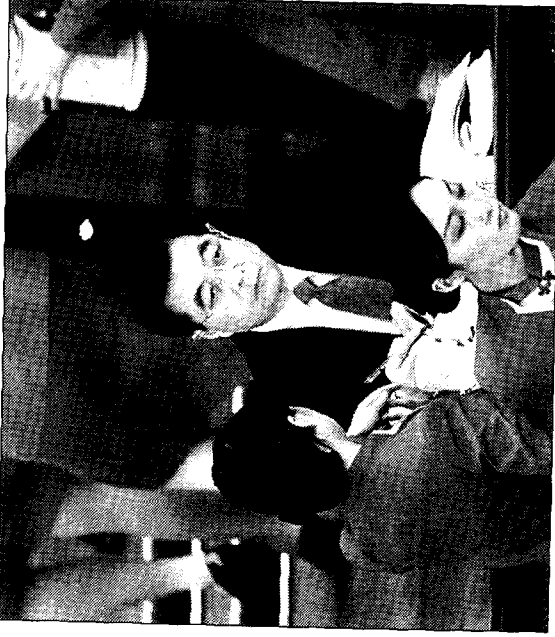
Last year, more than 74,000 public protests rocked China, about 50 per cent more than the previous year, the ministry of public security said. Until now, most of these ral-

lies were over local or personal grievances, such as unpaid wages and pensions and illegal land seizures.

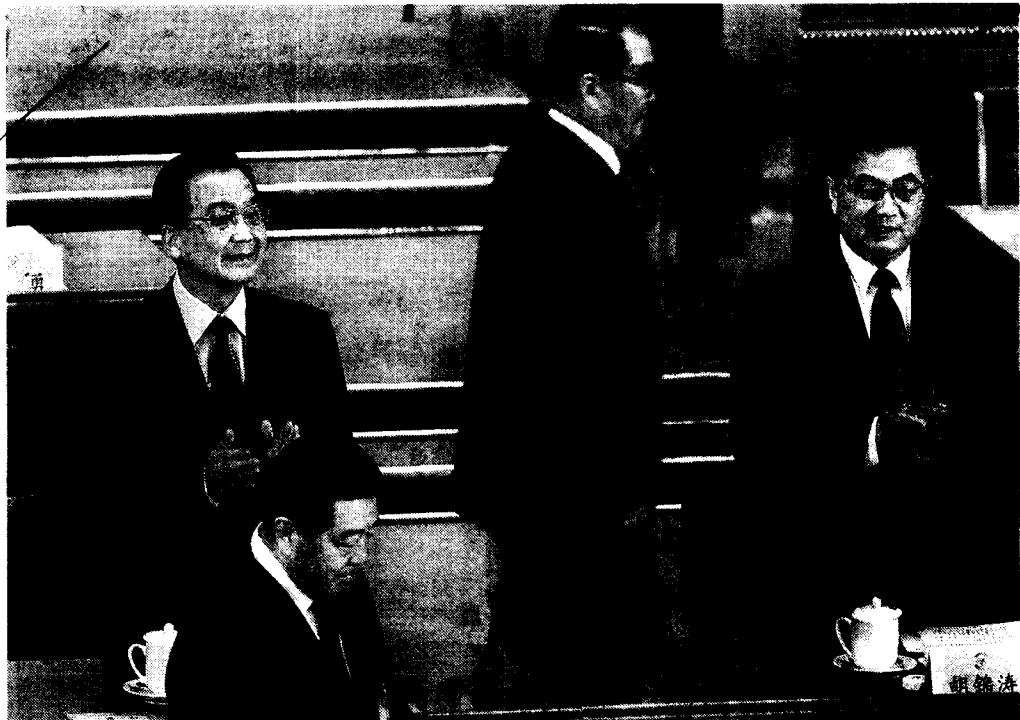
But with China now having 377 million cellphones and 111 million Internet users, the country's dissatisfied have increasingly been learning to organise and unite themselves.

That's making the authorities here particularly nervous, said Adams, but it's also created a problem.

"The government has cracked down so much that today most of the major activists are already in jail", Adams added. "That means good people who once stayed inside the system and pushed the rules and who could have been tapped to modernise China, have been forced to step outside the system."



Chinese President Hu Jintao surrounded by hostesses in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. (AFP)



RESOLUTE STAND: Chinese President Hu Jintao (right) and Premier Wen Jiabao (left) applaud as they attend the opening ceremony of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Friday. - PHOTO: AP

China launches exercises

Beijing stresses importance of reunification efforts

BEIJING: China has launched military exercises, the Government said on Friday, days after rival Taiwan's leader angered Beijing by scrapping an agency dedicated to eventually unifying the two sides.

The exercises involved land, naval and air forces and simulated "modern battle that is characterised by modern information technology," the official *China Daily* newspaper said.

On Monday, Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian announced the termination of the self-governing island's National Unification Council, along with guidelines calling for uniting Taiwan with the mainland.

The Tenth National Committee of the Chinese People's Polit-

ical Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's top advisory body, convened its fourth annual full session here on Friday, stressing its resolute stand against "Taiwan independence" and sincere pursuit for peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations.

Secessionists warned

"We will never tolerate 'Taiwan independence', and shall oppose and curb 'Taiwan independence' secessionist forces and activities," said Jia Qinglin, chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, while delivering a keynote report on what the advisory body did last year and what it should do in 2006.

"We will adhere to the funda-

mental principles of peaceful reunification and 'one country, two systems,' and maintain and promote a peaceful and stable development of the cross-Strait relations with our utmost sincerity and greatest endeavours to strive for a prospect of peaceful reunification," Mr. Jia said.

Top leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the state, including President

Hu Jintao, top lawmaker Wu Bangguo and Premier Wen Jiabao were seated on the central rostrum when the session opened in the Great Hall of the People in downtown Beijing. The session is expected to last 10 days and conclude on the morning of March 13. - Xinhua, AP

Back to the villages in China

The Chinese Government last week announced an ambitious new rural policy that focusses less on indiscriminate growth and more on redistribution of resources and rebalancing of incomes.

Pallavi Aiyar

CHINA'S DOUBLE-DIGIT economic growth has led to the creation of shiny cities, bathed in neon. But the inequalities that have also resulted from this economic metamorphosis are increasingly hard to disguise with urban glitter. Following mass protests in the countryside in the face of corruption and poverty in recent years, the Chinese Government last week announced an ambitious new rural policy, which crystallises the leadership's ongoing efforts at giving fresh direction to China's economic policies. The focus of these new policies is less on indiscriminate growth and more on redistribution of resources and rebalancing of incomes.

At the core of these efforts, termed the creation of the "New Socialist Countryside," is beefed up government spending on basic education and medical care, additional subsidies for farmers, and large injections of funding in rural infrastructure projects.

This rural initiative is likely to be the centrepiece of the new five-year plan (for 2006-2010) that will be deliberated by the National People's Congress (NPC), China's legislature, during its annual meeting on March 5. Some initial spending figures are also expected to be announced during the NPC meet.

The new plan has been three years in the making. Ever since taking office in late 2002 and early 2003, China's President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao have repeatedly stated that their administration's top priority is to tackle the rich-poor gap, symbolised most baldly by the urban-rural divide.

China's 800 million-odd peasants comprise 70 per cent of the country's total population, but with an average annual income of \$400 (a third of average urban incomes) they make up only around 40 per cent of domestic consumption. The gap is exacerbated when factoring in health care and other social benefits provided to many urban residents but lacking in the countryside.

The new initiative also reflects the Government's alarm at the escalation in the number of peasant protests in the last few years. According to the Ministry of Public Security, in 2005 there were a total of 87,000 mass protests across the country, expressing public anger against official corruption, illegal land seizures, and unpaid wages and pensions. The number of such protests has seen a more than 400 per cent increase over the last decade.

Many of the efforts outlined in the new rural plan have in fact already been experimented with in pilot projects. Notable among the various schemes aimed at improving the lot of farmers is the abolishing of the hundreds of years old agricultural tax from January of this year. In December 2005, the NPC provisionally approved an additional budget of 100 billion yuan (\$12.5 billion) a year to rural areas, the bulk of which — 78 billion yuan — will go in making up the loss of revenue to provincial governments following the abolition of the tax.

But lifting rural incomes through subsidies and tax cuts is only part of the challenge the Chinese Government faces. The sectors



UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT: A Chinese farmer at work in Gu'an Country, Hebei province. — PHOTO: REUTERS

of greatest neglect in rural areas have, in fact, been health and education services. These used to be free but have over the years become privatised and out of the financial reach of most rural residents.

Moreover, the centre has for the large part left it to cash-strapped local governments to come up with the bulk of funding for these services.

But as Anjana Mangalgi, Education officer for UNICEF's Beijing office, points out, "Local officials are promoted and rewarded on the basis of their ability to generate physically tangible examples of 'progress' like roads and factories. Education and health, the softer sides of development, are not rewarded in the same way and do not bring short-term gains for the officials, so they are neglected."

Fall in health spending

The Government's share in national health spending has plunged from close to 100 per cent in the heyday of the communist revolution to about 15 per cent today. Less than 10 per cent of China's rural population has any medical insurance. Moreover, big cities in China consume 80 per cent of the country's medical resources although only a third of the Chinese population lives there. In 2000, the World Health Organisation ranked China 144th amongst 191 countries on the basis of fairness of access to health care and fairness of individual contributions to cost. Even India ranked ahead at 112.

At a press conference in Beijing last week, Chen Xiwen, the top government adviser on rural issues, stressed that the Government was aware that "the [urban-rural] divide is even more compelling for social undertakings such as education and health," and these will be on top of the policy priority list in the coming five-year plan period.

While it has not been announced how much will specifically be spent on rural health care, efforts to improve access and affordability to medical services are likely to involve cooperative health care networks where medical costs will be covered through a combination of contributions from the central and local governments as well as the farmers themselves.

China's new policy also promises that by 2007 rural students will no longer have to pay for textbooks and heating in schools. Students from poorer families will receive boarding and transport subsidies. Proposals to hike the remuneration for teachers in rural areas are in the process of being considered, as is a plan to make it compulsory for teachers from cities to work for part of the year in the countryside.

The Central Government recently promised an additional 218 billion yuan (\$26.9 billion) over the next five years to boost basic education in the countryside.

Most significantly, local governments have been warned that they will be held to account for progress made on social services and that their promotions will no longer

depend exclusively on their attracting investment for hard infrastructure projects.

Critical lacuna

But many analysts say that the critical lacuna in the new rural initiative is that it leaves unresolved the fundamental issue of whether farmers will be allowed to buy and sell land.

Under the Chinese constitution, farmland is held collectively by the villages, so that individual farmers who have leases are easily exploited by local officials who claim the land for development projects. Farmers are usually given woefully inadequate compensation in return.

Moreover, internal migration for rural residents to China's bigger cities remains restricted, narrowing their options and ability to climb out of poverty.

In the span of some 25 years, China has gone from being one of the world's most equal, albeit poor societies to the fourth largest economy in the world with one of the worst rich-poor imbalances.

China's gini index — a commonly used statistical measure of inequality where 0 represents perfect equality and 100 perfect inequality — of 44.7 is worse even than that of India's 32.5, according to the UNDP's 2005 Human Development Report.

Given this situation, the success of China's new rural plan will be crucial to the sustainability of the country's economic dynamism in the long-run.

Hu slashes Taiwan move

Grave provocation to peace, says Chinese President

BEIJING: Chinese President Hu Jintao here on Tuesday condemned the decision of Taiwan authorities to cease the function of "National Unification Council" and the application of its guidelines, saying it is a "dangerous step" toward "Taiwan Independence."

Taiwan leader Chen Shui-bian announced on Monday that the "National Unification Council" shall "cease to function" and the "National Unification Gui-

delines," shall "cease to apply". "Despite the strong opposition with and outside the island, the Taiwan authorities went its own way," Mr. Hu said.

It is a grave provocation to the one-China policy observed by the international community and to the peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits, he noted.

"It's also a dangerous step on the road towards 'Taiwan Independence'. It's our unswerving

will and determination to oppose 'Taiwan Independence' secessionist forces and their activities and to safeguard the peace and stability across the Straits," the President said.

"We will continue to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification, but never tolerate the secession of Taiwan from the motherland," Mr. Hu said. "Anyone who moves against historical trend is doomed to failure."
— Xinhua

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THE HINDU

China launches Web site

BEIJING: The Chinese central government Web site, *http - is* *www.gov.cn*, was officially launched at zero hour on Sunday. The Web site, which went into trial operation on October 1, 2005, aims at providing a platform for the departments under the State Council, and the provincial, autonomous regional and municipal governments across the country to release information on government affairs and provide online services. The site has four sections. The section of information about government affairs is for providing information on work, including policies and documents. The service section provides online services for citizens, enterprises and foreigners. The section offers communication channels between the Government and citizens. The section of applied functions provides surfers with a search engine. — Xinhua