

China, Kenya agree to further political, economic ties

BEIJING, 18 Aug— Chinese President Hu Jintao on Wednesday told Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki that China is ready to expand political and economic cooperation with Kenya to deepen bilateral ties.

During his hour-long talks with Kibaki, Hu said that China-Kenya ties have developed steadily over the past 42 years since the two forged diplomatic ties and the bilateral relations continued to grow since President Kibaki took office in 2002.

He expressed his appreciation for Kenya's firm adherence to the one-China policy and its precious support to China on the Taiwan question and human rights issues.

Kibaki said Kenya-China friendship dated back to 600 hundreds years ago, when legendary Chinese navigator and explorer Zheng He led a fleet from China to the east coast of Africa and made a stop in Kenya.

Kibaki said China is a close friend and sincere partner of Kenya and Kenya appreciates China's long-term help and support to its economic and social development.

The Kenyan Government firmly abides by the one-China policy and supports China's efforts for national reunification, Kibaki said.

Hu said Kenya is an important country in east Africa and China's key partner in that region.

To further the long-term stable and mutual beneficial cooperation, Hu suggested that the two countries maintain high-level visits and give full play to the cooperative mechanisms already established, to enhance mutual understanding and trust and lay down a more solid political foundation for the development of bilateral ties.

He also suggested the two countries expand pragmatic cooperation to achieve win-win results and seek common development.

"China is ready to expand economic and trade cooperation with Kenya and actively implement the cooperative projects agreed by the two sides in the areas of transportation, telecommunication, electric power, and infrastructure construction," Hu said.

He also suggested the two enhance exchanges in the fields of education, health, news service and human resources and improve consultation and cooperation on major international and regional issues to jointly safeguard the rights and interests of the developing countries.

MNA/Xinhua

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Oslo explosion kills one, injures another

OSLO, 18 Aug— An explosion in an apartment in Oslo killed one person and seriously injured another late on Wednesday night, police said.

They said the cause of the blast shortly before midnight was unknown but the Internet site of the daily Aftenposten, giving no sources, said it was probably caused by a homemade bomb.

Police evacuated about a dozen people from other apartments in the three-storey residential building after the explosion, which blew out several windows. They also cordoned off the area.

"One person was killed and another has been taken to hospital with serious injuries," a police spokesman said. "We do not know the cause of the blast."

The head of Norway's security police, which would investigate if there were any suspicion of terrorism, said he had been informed of the blast.

"This is for the time being a case for the Oslo police. Beyond that I won't comment," Joern Holme told Aftenposten. — MNA/Reuters



Rickshaw-pullers in Kolkata. India's West Bengal state says its plan to ban hand-pulled rickshaws in Kolkata is a long overdue step to end a backbreaking, 'inhuman' form of work. — INTERNET

Nationwide vigils call for end to Iraq war

WASHINGTON, 18 Aug— Hundreds of candlelight vigils calling for an end to the war in Iraq lit up the night Wednesday, part of a national effort spurred by one mother's anti-war demonstration near President Bush's ranch.

The vigils were urged by Cindy Sheehan, who has become the icon of the anti-war movement since she started a protest on 6 Aug in memory of her son Casey, who died in Iraq last year.

Sheehan says she will remain outside the President's ranch until he meets with her and other grieving families, or until his monthlong vacation there ends.

Bush has said he sympathizes with Sheehan but has made no indication he will meet with her. Two top Bush administration officials talked to Sheehan the day she started her camp, and she and other families had met with Bush shortly after her son's death.

More than 1,600 vigils were planned Wednesday from coast to coast by liberal advocacy groups MoveOn.org Political Action, TrueMajority and Democracy for America. A large vigil was also planned in Paris.—Internet

Over 100 Ecuadorean emigrants die as boat sinks

BOGOTA/QUITO (Colombia), 18 Aug— More than 100 Ecuadoreans trying to illegally emigrate to the United States drowned last week when the overcrowded fishing boat they were travelling aboard sank in the Pacific Ocean, authorities said on Wednesday.

The boat, which was designed to hold 15 people, was carrying 113 when it sank off the coast of Colombia, an Ecuadorean Navy spokesman said. The boat left the port of Manta, Ecuador, on Thursday without authorization, he said.

Nine people survived days in the water by clinging to plastic containers and other wreckage before being rescued by fishermen on Tuesday, the Colombian Navy said.

There were conflicting reports about when the boat sank. The spokesman for the Ecuadorean Navy said it went down on Friday. But Colombian Admiral Jairo Pena told Reuters the boat sank on Saturday, probably after the wooden hull sprang a leak.

MNA/Reuters

New computer worms attack over 100 US companies

LOS ANGELES, 18 Aug— New worms caused the computers in over 100 companies across the United States to restart repeatedly. Security experts warned on Wednesday that attackers could potentially take control of those flawed computer systems.

Among those being hit are large media organizations, including the cable news station CNN, television network ABC and *The New York Times*. Antivirus companies blamed the havoc on various worms, including the Zotob worm that hit the Internet over the weekend and new variants of the Rbot worm.

All of the worms exploit a security hole in the plug-and-play feature in Microsoft Windows 2000 operating system. The software maker offered a critical fix for the bug last week, but experts said many users have not yet installed the patch.

Symptoms of infection include the repeated shutdown and rebooting of a computer, said experts with F-Secure, a Finnish anti-virus company.

The worms replicate by scanning machines, and when a victim is found,

they use the exploit code to download the main virus file from infected machine, meanwhile scanning for more targets, the company said in a statement.

Some security researchers claimed the outbreak is tied to a "war" between rival virus writers. "We seem to have a botwar on our hands," Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer at F-Secure said.

"There appear to be three different virus-writing gangs turning out new worms at an alarming rate, as if they were competing to build the biggest network of infected machines," he said.

Individual organizations, rather than computer users at large, are most badly hit by the worms, experts said.

The pain is being felt "on the inside", according to US anti-virus software maker Symantec.

MNA/Xinhua



Iraqi soldiers inspect a car damaged from a road-side bomb attack, on 18 August, 2005, in eastern Baghdad. Three people were wounded in the attack.

INTERNET



Planes of Korean Air park on the tarmac at Kimpo Airport in Seoul, South Korea, on 18 August, 2005. — INTERNET

ASEAN sets up panel on haze coordination

KUALA LUMPUR, 18 Aug— ASEAN has set up a panel of experts on fire and haze assessment and coordination to better tackle the haze pollution, local media reported on Wednesday.

The panel would assess the situation during critical period of fires and haze and provide recommendations on how to facilitate immediate response and effectively mobilize resources in this region. ASEAN senior environment officials said after ending a meeting in the Malaysian state of Penang.

According to the meeting statement, the officials viewed with concern the fires in Indonesia which had caused haze problems in Sumatra, parts of Peninsular Malaysia and southern Thailand.

They recognized the importance of long-term preventive measures as provided for in the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution and noted Malaysia's efforts to assist Indonesia in putting out fires. The officials reiterated the need for strict actions against those parties who set up fires indiscriminately.

In light of the drier weather conditions, the statement also urged ASEAN countries to remain vigilant and take effective measures to control the fire situation. — MNA/Xinhua

Vietnam intensifies fowl vaccination against bird flu

HANOI, 18 Aug— Vietnam has targeted to complete bird flu vaccination among poultry nationwide by mid-November, local newspaper *New Hanoi* on Thursday quoted the National Steering Committee on Anti-Bird Flu as saying.

Fowls, mainly chickens and ducks, in 47 out of 64 cities and provinces must be vaccinated against bird flu viruses, including the deadly strain H5N1, for the first time between 1 September and 15 November.

They will receive further vaccination until next year.

The total fund for vaccinating over 200 million fowls in the 2005-2006 is estimated at 44.3 million US dollars. Vietnam will have had 415 million doses of vaccines, products of China and the Netherlands, in stock by late next month.

According to local veterinary agencies, up to 70 per cent of waterfowls in the southern Mekong delta have been recently tested positive to H5N1. Vietnam has culled over 1,300 fowls in the eight localities of Dong Thap, Ben Tre, Can Tho, Tra Vinh, Yen Bai, Ha Giang, Bac Ninh and Hanoi since early April.

MNA/Xinhua

Britain's inflation at highest since 1997

LONDON, 18 Aug— Britain's inflation rate rose above its target in July to the highest level since comparable records began in 1997 as the price of petrol surged, official figures showed on Tuesday.

The Office for National Statistics said the consumer price index rose 0.1 per cent on the month, taking the annual rate up to 2.3 per cent from 2.0 per cent in June.

This marked the first time it has risen above the Bank of England's 2.0 per cent target since the CPI was adopted as Britain's main inflation measure in December 2003.

The central bank last week predicted that inflation was likely to rise above its target on the back of sky-high oil prices but the latest number is still above expectations and likely to douse expectations of further interest rate cuts ahead.

The BoE cut interest rates this month by a quarter-point to 4.5 per cent in response to news that the economic growth is slowing down.

The ONS said petrol prices added 0.13 percentage points to the annual CPI rate as crude oil costs have risen. There were also upward contributions from air and sea travel.

Another large upward effect came from furniture where prices were little changed this year as price recoveries in some major retail chains offset summer sales in others. The main downward effect came from food prices.

MNA/Reuters

WTO panel issues ruling in US steel case

WASHINGTON, 18 Aug — World Trade Organization experts ruled against the United States on Wednesday on some aspects of a long-running dispute with the European Union over special US duties on carbon steel products from Britain and Spain.

The three-man panel also recommended that the 148-nation WTO's Dispute Settlement Body call on Washington to come into line over the issue.

The panel found that US amendments to the way Washington applied the duties to British and Spanish products after losing an earlier case brought by the EU did not comply fully with WTO rules.

But they found the US methods of assessing new duties on carbon steel flat products from France were in order.

The Office of the US

Trade Representative contended later Wednesday that the ruling was at worst a mixed result for the

United States.

"The findings of the panel are mixed, though largely favourable to the

United States," said USTR spokeswoman Neena Moorjani.

MNA/Reuters

Expired food causing health problems

BAGHDAD, 18 Aug— A serious rise in food poisoning cases caused by expired and contaminated food in Iraq has been reported by the Ministry of Health.

"Government hospital directors have alerted our ministry that there is an increase in cases on a daily basis, especially in children, caused by poor food quality in the markets," to Mustafa al-Aani, a senior official at the ministry said. Muhammad Shambar, a Baghdad doctor, said initial symptoms for the food poisoning are characterised by intense diarrhoea and constant vomiting. He added that urgent action should be taken by the patient before dehydration sets in.

"We have at least three cases of food poisoning every day in our hospital and when you analyse the patient's history you find that they ate food that had passed the sell by date or that it was prepared in unhygienic conditions," Shambar added.

Expired food had been sold in northern Iraq, which was considered to have

the best food monitoring system in Iraq, officials said. One of the main reasons for this recent increase in tainted food in the market is due to the removal of border customs check points, officials said.

Dr Salah Hassan, a food quality control expert at the Ministry of Health, further explained that shopkeepers were being duped into buying such goods as the sellers were changing the date of expiry by sticking new labels on products.

"I am sick now because I ate cheese which was supposed to be good quality. My son found that the label had been changed giving a longer expiry date. But you can see on the old label that it expired more than a year ago," Saluwa Ali, a patient at Yarmouk hospital, said.

The food sold is full of bacteria and harmful, doctors say. —Internet

Philippines, US start annual joint naval exercise

MANILA, 18 Aug — Five vessels carrying around 1,200 US Navy soldiers docked at the Alava Pier, Subic Bay, on Tuesday for a new round of joint Philippine-US Marine exercises, local reports said.

The US troops are joining the naval exercise called Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT), an annual joint training activity between the naval forces of the United States and six Southeast Asia nations including the Philippines.

A total of 800 Philippine Navy soldiers will be joining the event.

The week-long training, which will be held in various training sites in Manila, Zambales, and Palawan, will end on 23 August.

MNA/Xinhua



A park employee carries two leopards at the Wildlife Protection Manda Park in Jammu, India, on 18 August, 2005. The cubs were found by the Indian Army during a patrol in Rajouri and was handed over to the park. —INTERNET



Indonesian employees of the state electricity company check a power grid located on the outskirts of Jakarta on 18 August, 2005.

INTERNET

Surveys find unpaid wages still haunt migrant workers in China

BEIJING, 18 Aug — Two recent surveys have found that unpaid wages are still haunting China's migrant workers, reported on Wednesday's *China Daily*.

A quarter of 3,288 migrant workers questioned said they had not been fully paid, according to a survey released on Tuesday by the National Economic Research Institute under the China Reform Foundation.

In 2004 alone, unpaid wages totalled an estimated nearly 20 billion yuan (2.5 billion US dollars), Wang Xiaolu, deputy director of the institute, was quoted as saying. Around 100 billion yuan (12.5 billion US dollars) of wages have gone unpaid in China in the last few years.

Statistics from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security indicate there are 120 million rural migrant workers nationwide, more than 80 per cent of them working in cities. Most are male labourers under 40 from central and western parts of the country, who mostly work in construction and manufacturing sectors.

A similar report by a think tank of the Ministry

of Labour and Social Security said, citing Beijing as an example, that up to three billion yuan (375 million US dollars) was owed to 700,000 rural migrant labourers working on construction sites last year.

The think tank's report also says many employers deliberately withhold wages from their employees.

An investigation by the National Bureau of Statistics last year discovered some companies charge their staff 20 to 30 per cent of their wages as a "deposit". But money was rarely paid back.

The survey by Wang's institute also says the average per capita annual income for migrant workers reached 9,236 yuan (1,140 US dollars) last year, half of which was sent back to their hometowns, benefiting the local economy.

The money sent home in 2003 accounted for 3.9 per cent of the country's gross domestic product, said Wang. — *MNA/Xinhua*

India plans to hold Pakistani film festival

NEW DELHI, 18 Aug— In another step towards normalizing its once-severely strained ties with Pakistan, India said on Wednesday it plans to hold a Pakistani film festival in the country.

"There is a proposal to hold a Pakistani film festival in India which is to be finalized by mutual consultation," Indian Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahmed said in the Parliament on Wednesday.

The Minister said that India also proposed to open more pilgrim centres in the country for Pakistani nationals.

According to government officials, at the talks at the culture secretary-level held on 26-27 July, the two sides agreed to expand the protocol on visits to religious shrines to increase the number of shrines in both countries as also the number of pilgrims.

At present, Pakistani pilgrims are permitted to visit five pilgrim centres in India.

In order to increase people-to-people contact between the two countries, India has been allowing additional pilgrim places outside the protocol, the Indian minister said.

MNA/Xinhua

China to explore Japanese POWs ship wreckage torpedoed during WWII

ZHOUSHAN (Zhejiang), 18 Aug — A Hong Kong underwater search team has decided to explore the wreckage of a Japanese prisoners of war (POWs) vessel torpedoed and sunk in the East China Sea during World War II.

The non-governmental team, with several popular Hong Kong TV series and movie stars as members, was sponsored by the Hong Kong Underwater Association Limited (HKUA) and will try the water for the ship wreckage on Thursday. The team arrived at Zhoushan on Wednesday.

"We aim to accurately locate the ship, get details of the vessel and screen the wreckage," said Carly FT Wong, a diving instructor of the team.

Named "Lisbon Maru" and armed fore and aft, the ship was a large cargo vessel with more than 1,800 British POWs on board. It was torpedoed by an American submarine and sank in the seawaters near the Dongji Islands of Zhoushan, a city in east China's Zhejiang Province, on 2 October, 1942.

Nearly 200 Chinese fishermen living on the Dongji Islands rescued 384 British prisoners during the shipwreck.

This is not the first time for the team to come to Zhoushan, as it has planned to try the water for Lisbon Maru twice in the last three months. The first trial was made in June but failed due to bad weather and inadequate equipment. The second was delayed by the savage Typhoon Matsa. — *MNA/Xinhua*

Tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka tops 300,000

COLOMBO, 18 Aug— Tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka have surpassed 300,000 within the first seven months of the year after the tsunami hit the country, an increase of 13.38 per cent compared with corresponding period from January to July in 2004, the *Daily News* reported on Thursday.

According to latest statistics from the Research and International Affairs Division of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB), 304,613 tourist arrivals have been indicated from January to July this year.

The SLTB is targeting one million tourist arrivals by 2010. The tourism sector is one of the major foreign exchange earners. — *MNA/Xinhua*

Indian researchers warn Monsoon can alter drastically

NEW YORK, 18 Aug— Human impact on environment could drastically alter the state of Monsoon, the lifeblood of India, with disastrous results for the subcontinent, climate researchers have warned.

The Monsoon could run dry, spelling disaster for its rain-fed agriculture, or become more intense due to global warming caused by rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide which would be equally bad as illustrated by the recent deluge in Maharashtra where over 1,000 people were killed.

The worst case scenario, they say, would be a "roller-coaster effect": drying of the monsoon, followed by the return of an even more intense wet monsoon as aerosol emissions are cleaned up but carbon dioxide goes on increasing.

Such a series of changes "would seriously challenge the adaptive capabilities of India's rural

society", Kirsten Zickfeld and her colleagues at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research were quoted as saying by *Nature* magazine.

Even a minor change in monsoon timing or intensity can have a big impact. "If the rains are delayed by just a few days, that affects the agricultural yields," says Zickfeld.

The monsoon's disappearance would wreak havoc, probably requiring Indian farmers to completely change their crops and methods.

Zickfeld and colleagues, *Nature* says, have shown that changes in land use and air pollution on the Indian continent are pushing conditions towards the off state. They don't know

if or when it might happen, but they say there is cause for concern. The monsoon is driven by an air-pressure difference between the land and the Indian Ocean. Usually, the hot season creates low-pressure zones over the warm continent. Air rushes in from the higher-pressure zone over the water, bringing rain to the land.

Anything that reduces this pressure difference — such as cooler land temperatures — can weaken the monsoon. And once the weakening exceeds a certain threshold, the climate switches into a new state in which moist air over the ocean is no longer carried inland, they report in *Geophysical Research Letters*. — *MNA/PTI*



Chinese residents watch a water buffalo fight during a festival in Majiang county, southwest China's Guizhou Province on 18 Aug, 2005.

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Drive safely