

# CHINA TODAY UPDATES

## APRIL 2013

### 2 Updates

- 1. China, France vow to promote 'multipolar' world**
- 2. Yaan parish priest: Earthquake survivors lack everything**

1.

#### **China, France vow to promote 'multipolar' world**

25<sup>th</sup> April 2013

BEIJING (AP) — China's President Xi Jinping and France's President Francois Hollande pledged to push for a world free of domination by any superpower Thursday as the French leader visited the Chinese capital on a mission to boost trade amid his country's worsening economic woes.

Both leaders stressed their desire for a "multipolar" world that would dilute Washington's influence — though they did not mention the U.S. in their comments.

"China and France are both great countries with a strong sense of independence," Xi said at a news conference, adding that the two countries would "actively promote a multipolar world and the democratization of international relations."

Xi and Hollande, who is traveling with a delegation representing scores of French businesses, spoke to reporters after meeting at Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

"China and France both want a multipolar world. We want there to be a balance. We refuse a world of powers, and of superpowers," Hollande said. "When China and France agree on a position, we can drive the world."

Officials from the two countries signed an agreement for China to buy 60 planes from France-based Airbus. In addition, French nuclear giant Areva signed an agreement with China National Nuclear Corp. to build a used fuel treatment and recycling facility in the country.

French businesses hit by domestic declines are hoping for additional deals in China in areas including car making, nuclear energy and food exports. France registered a \$34 billion trade deficit with China last year and accounts for less than 2 percent of the Asian giant's foreign trade.

"There is an imbalance in our foreign trade, and we hope to correct that," Hollande said. "Not by reducing our investment and exports, but by increasing them further, and we will be discussing this throughout our meetings and this trip."

At a second news conference later in the day, Hollande said his talks with Xi had touched on human rights and the recent string of self-immolations among Tibetans protesting Chinese rule.

"Let me say again, we discussed all the issues. Moreover, it was in a very frank and mutually respectful manner. This entirely serves the friendly relations between the people of our countries," he said.

China is extremely sensitive to criticisms of its human rights record and uses diplomatic and economic means to retaliate against countries it sees as lacking in respect. China lashed out at France after Hollande's predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy, met with exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in 2008.

Chinese officials have also shunned high-level exchanges with British counterparts since Prime Minister David Cameron met the Dalai Lama last May, and ties with Norway remain frozen following the awarding of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize to imprisoned Chinese dissident writer Liu Xiaobo.

The French delegation visits Shanghai on Friday.

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### **Yaan parish priest: Earthquake survivors lack everything**

29<sup>th</sup> April 2013

by Bodi Jiao

Fr. Chen Yong describes the conditions of his community affected by the Sichuan earthquake: "We have no water, food or shelter. The churches have collapsed and the children draw only black's skies. Even a little help touches us deeply. "

Chengdu (AsiaNews) - The situation in Yaan "is not at all good. We have no tents and reserves of clean water and food are severely limited. We have assembled temporary shelters made of plastic and bamboo to spend the night, but it not enough and offer no protection". This is how Fr. Chen Yong, priest from St Mary's parish near Yaan (diocese of Leshan), describes conditions for survivors of the April 20 earthquake that rocked the Chinese province of Sichuan in a telephone interview.

In the area of ??Yaan, continues Fr. Chen, "there are about 10 thousand Catholics. Of these, 6 thousand have suffered damage due to the earthquake: their homes have collapsed or are unsafe, so they have no place to stay. At the moment there are no victims among the faithful, yesterday we managed to recover from the rubble a seriously injured Catholic: he is hospitalized at the People's Hospital of Lushan ".

The official number of victims of the earthquake remains for now at 196, with nearly 14 thousand injured. But rescuers have not been able to reach some areas, and they fear that there are more victims still unidentified under the rubble that buried everything.

The worst damage continues Fr. Chen, "is to the hearts of the children. Some have reported minor injuries, but they are all very shaken. In their drawings they only paint dark clouds in the sky and a strong rain, with a small person holding a small umbrella in the storm. Even if they are dark, these drawings show that children are still full of hope. "

Only 3 priests are working in the area of ??Ya'an, but each county has its own chapel, every priest is responsible for several counties. Fr. Chen follows BaoXing and Hanyuan, and the latter alone has 2 chapels and 3 places for religious activities. In BaoXing there is a chapel, as well as in Lushan.

"All these buildings - the priest said were damaged by the earthquake, they can no longer be used to celebrate religious rites. Walls are crumbling and need to be repaired, while the structure of the BaoXing church was destroyed completely. Even in Lushan there is severe damage: the church has collapsed, another is almost completely unusable. Some priests' houses and offices have collapsed. "

Fr. Chen emphasizes, however, the great help provided by Chinese Catholics across the web: "The bishops and priests who could have gone to Taiping, Liaoning, home to many Catholics. Once there, they saw that the faithful had organized fundraising groups and materials for them: there was great emotion, even when you lose everything because the slightest help deeply touches you. "

In addition to the normal problems of reconstruction, including the difficulty in reaching some areas affected by the earthquake and disposing of the debris, there is also the problem of distrust of the Chinese population towards "official" rescuers.

The state media also reports that donations sent to the Red Cross Society of China, the government organization that oversees the activities of first aid, have almost halved. Hit by numerous scandals - born from the lack of transparency in the management of accounts - the Red Cross has lost 50% of donations from citizens, who prefer the other 115 small NGOs that are privately managed.