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FEATURED ARTICLE

Not as easy as it looks (April 23, 2009, The Economist)

For better or worse, Mao Zedong usually came out on top, whether facing Japanese invaders, nationalist warlords or Communist Party rivals. But for all his success in overturning traditional values and institutions, the founder of modern China came up short in his desire to convert written Chinese from its character-based system to an alphabet.

http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13528023

GOVERNMENT / POLITICS / FOREIGN AFFAIRS

China, Taiwan pledge deeper economic ties, more flights (April 26, 2009, AFP)

Envoys from China and Taiwan agreed Sunday to expand air links and promote mainland China investment on the island in the latest step forward in rapidly improving ties. Taiwan envoy Chiang Pin-kung and his Chinese counterpart Chen Yunlin agreed on the measures in the eastern China city of Nanjing, in the latest in a series of talks that have reversed six decades of hostility. The two sides, which held landmark talks last year that led to the first direct charter flights across the Taiwan Strait, agreed to increase the number of flights sharply and upgrade them to scheduled flights. The number of cross-strait flights will jump to 270 a week from the current 108, according to a statement from Chiang's quasi-official Straits Exchange Foundation. No timeframe was given.

Tibetan students protest in China (April 26, 2009, AFP)

Hundreds of students at a Tibetan school in China's northwest held a daring protest, demonstrating over education conditions, locals and an overseas Tibetan group said Saturday. The protest took place Friday morning among Tibetan students at the Xiahe middle school in Gansu province, the proprietor of a local hotel told AFP by telephone. "The students protested on Friday. There were no protests today," he said without giving his name. "There were a few police, but no violence. Everything is quiet." Xiahe, is home to the Labrang Monastery, a famous Tibetan Buddhist temple, where monks protested in March 2008 when anti-Chinese unrest spread throughout ethnic Tibetan regions of China.

Senior Tibetan Cleric Tibetan Faces Prison in China (April 24, 2009, The New York Times)

Defense lawyers for a revered abbot, the most senior religious figure to be put on trial after the waves of detentions in Tibetan regions last year, said Friday that they expected a verdict and sentence next Tuesday. The case has caused considerable concern among Tibetans and Chinese human rights lawyers. The abbot, Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche, 51, was detained by security forces on May 18, four days after a protest by more than 80 nuns from the two convents he leads in the restive area of Ganzi in Sichuan Province. If convicted on both charges, as is expected, he could be sentenced to 15 years in prison, Mr. Jiang said.

Japan PM arrives in China amid global crises (April 29, 2009, AFP)

Japan's premier arrived in China for a two-day visit aimed at laying stronger foundations for cooperation between the historic Asian rivals, amid global economic and health crises. Prime Minister Taro Aso, on

his first state visit to China, was scheduled to meet his counterpart Wen Jiabao on Wednesday and President Hu Jintao on Thursday, despite further flare-ups over long-standing issues of tension.

China launches security campaign for anniversary (April 29, 2009, AP)

China announced plans Tuesday to ramp up public security ahead of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Communist nation, after a similar campaign last year for the Olympic Games. The security campaign, which starts in May, is aimed at ensuring "a steady and harmonious social environment" for celebrations slated for Oct. 1, said Vice Minister of Public Security Zhang Xinfeng according to the official Xinhua News Agency. The anniversary marks a major milestone for China's government, which is planning large celebrations including a grand military parade in the center of Beijing.

HEALTH

Learning from SARS, China vows swift flu reporting (April 27, 2009, Reuters)

China has vowed to disclose any human cases of swine fever promptly, while state-run newspapers on Tuesday urged officials to be open and avoid the kind of cover-ups that brought panic during the SARS epidemic. But back then Chinese officials hid the growing toll from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome from the public for weeks before spreading deaths and rumors forced the government to reveal the epidemic, apologize and vow full candor in future disease outbreaks. Now Beijing is promising to stick to full-disclosure if there are any cases of the swine flu found in the country. None has been reported so far. Chinese Health Ministry spokesman Mao Qun'an said China had "demanded all medical bodies at all levels strengthen monitoring of suspected cases, and swiftly report the identification of any suspected cases," according to a Xinhua news agency report late on Monday. On Tuesday, official newspapers pressed further, telling readers that the public should also be quickly told of any cases.

Instruction for travelers (April 27, 2009, Shanghai Daily)

China is requiring people coming from swine-flu affected areas to report any flu-like symptoms at ports of entry. The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine issued an emergency notice on Saturday night stating that people who developed flu-like symptoms within two weeks on their return from affected regions should also report to the local entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities. Those people must be scrutinized and those who have been infected or are suspected to have been infected by the virus should be isolated and treated, it said. The state health, agricultural and quarantine departments are monitoring the epidemic and are organizing experts to analyze the virus sequences and study preventive and controlling measures.

Hong Kong Announces Strict Measures Against Swine Flu (April 27, 2009, China Briefing)

Once the epicenter of a SARS outbreak, Hong Kong, has announced that it would implement strict measures in response to the reported swine flu outbreak in Mexico and the United States. According to the U.S.'s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 20 cases have been already confirmed in New York, Ohio, California, Kansas and Texas. The new policies may restrict air travel in the region as Hong Kong officials warned residents not to go to Mexico and called for the immediate detention of persons arriving in Hong Kong with a fever and symptoms of a respiratory illness and coming from a city with a confirmed outbreak in the past seven days. Hong Kong serves as the region's busiest airport hub for international travel and flights from the United States and Canada come in around the clock.

Three held after milk found to be tainted (April 27, 2009, Shanghai Daily)

A cancer-causing protein has been found in milk produced in an eastern China city. Three people from the dairy producer, including its legal representative, have been detained. Authorities tested 14 batches of milk products from Morning Garden Dairy Co Ltd in Jinhua City, Zhejiang Province, and found 11 of

them were contaminated with protein hydrolyzed from leather waste, a substance which could have been used to increase the apparent protein content in milk products, Shanghai Evening Post reported yesterday.

Taiwan president: China okays island WHO role (April 29, 2009, AP)

Taiwan's president announced Wednesday that China will allow the island's participation in a key World Health Organization body, a major victory in Taipei's campaign for international recognition. President Ma Ying-jeou's announcement that Taiwan would join this year's decision-making World Health Assembly in Geneva as an observer comes amid warming ties between the two sides, which split amid civil war in 1949. The mainland still claims the island as part of its territory. Beijing normally objects to Taipei's participation in any international organizations because that symbolizes national sovereignty, and has successfully blocked Taipei's participation in WHO since the early 1970s.

SOCIETY / LIFE

'Israeli oranges' faked in China (April 26, 2009, BBC News)

A twist has emerged in the story of Israeli citrus fruit reportedly sold in Iran in defiance of a ban on commercial dealings between the two enemy states. It has now been revealed the fruit, a type of orange-grapefruit hybrid marketed as Jaffa Sweetie, were not Israeli in the first place. The Sweeties were brought to Iran from China, where faking the origin of goods is a common practice. The discovery of apparent Israeli origin caused a stir in Iran.

Urban jobless rate rises to 4.3% (March 24, 2009, Xinhua)

China's urban unemployment rate rose to 4.3 percent in the first quarter, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security spokesman Yin Chengji said yesterday. That was higher than the 4.2 percent recorded at the end of last year. Altogether 2.68 million new jobs were created in cities across the country in the first quarter - about a third of this year's target of 9 million, Yin said. The figure is about 11.6 percent lower from the same period last year, but 51.4 percent higher than in the fourth quarter of 2008, Yin said. A total of 1.2 million laid-off workers found jobs in the first quarter - about 24 percent of this year's target of 5 million, Yin said.

China school admits football scam (April 24, 2009, BBC News)

A Chinese principal has admitted that the school football team which won an international contest was stuffed with national squad players. Only three of the players actually attended Daping high school for girls in the south-western city of Chongqing, Chinese media said. Principal Zhang Jianling has now made a public apology for the scandal. The team won the trophy 12 days ago, beating a German team in the final. Officials say they will hand it back. Mr Zhang, who faces disciplinary action, initially denied cheating, the China Daily newspaper said, but had now taken full responsibility.

China's version of 'American Idol' gets green light (April 29, 2009, Xinhua)

A spokesman for China's Hunan Satellite Television said Tuesday that "Happy Girls", its proposed version of "American Idol", had won conditional approval from the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television. Li Chao told Xinhua the singing contest would last no more than two months and must be aired after 10:30 p.m.. The TV anchors should act and speak decently and the judges should be authoritative and observe common courtesy. The conditional approval came after a similar reality show planned by Hunan TV was cancelled last year amid criticism that it promoted vulgarity and encouraged youngsters to seek instant celebrity.

ENVIRONMENT / SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY

China insists it does not hack into US computers (April 24, 2009, AFP)

China insisted on Thursday it was opposed to Internet crimes, following a US media report that said Chinese hackers may have been behind a cyber attack on computers linked to a new US fighter jet. "Some people keep making up stories, I don't know what their intentions are," foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said. "We resolutely oppose and crackdown on cyber crimes, including hacking." Jiang was commenting on a Wall Street Journal report that computer spies hacked into the Pentagon's 300-billion-dollar Joint Strike Fighter project. The newspaper cited unnamed former US officials as saying the attack appeared to have originated in China, which the Pentagon says has put a priority on bolstering its cyber-warfare capability. Hackers may have attacked computer networks at contractors helping to build the new fighter jet, also known as the F-35, the paper said.

Beijing to get 1.4b-ton diverted water per year by 2014 (April 29, 2009, China Daily)

Beijing plans to build and expand 13 facilities by 2014 to process water from the Yangtze River, with combined capacity of about 1 billion cubic meters annually, an official with the city government said Wednesday. The municipal government will spend 26 billion yuan (about \$3.8 billion) on the plants, according to He Fengci, vice director of the municipal south-to-north water diversion office. "By 2020, Beijing will receive about 1.4 billion cubic meters of water diverted from the Yangtze River annually," said the official. Beijing has had water shortages partly because of its geography, and it has experienced a drought since 1999. It received only 75 percent of its expected precipitation since that year, said He. Shortages are set to reach a crisis next year, when the population is expected to top 17 million, or 3 million more than its water resources can support.

BUSINESS / ECONOMICS / TRADE

New China stimulus tranche less than expected (April 26, 2009, Reuters)

China's central government will spend 70 billion yuan (\$10.3 billion) in the third tranche of its stimulus package, falling short of market expectations, a Chinese newspaper has reported. Investment in sectors that have stronger prospects will be scaled back, an unnamed official at the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top planning agency, was quoted as saying by the Chinese-language Economic Observer. It did not specify any sectors but said that the government would continue to lend ample support to those in which private investment remained insufficient. The China Securities Journal had reported last week that the central government would allocate more than 130 billion yuan in the third tranche. The smaller investment reflected adjustments to the stimulus program and did not mean that the central government's finances were under pressure, the Economic Observer cited the planning official as saying.

Taiwan, China in landmark financial services deal (April 26, 2009, Reuters)

Taiwan and China signed a series of landmark agreements on Sunday laying the groundwork for a flood of financial services investment to flow across the Taiwan Strait for the first time in six decades. The centerpiece of the latest cross-strait talks, the third since Ma took office, is an agreement setting up a regulatory framework for financial services firms on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to invest and do business in each others' markets. The two sides also agreed to gradually set up a clearing system between the Taiwan dollar and China's currency, the yuan.

China's gold reserves top 1,000 tonnes: state media (April 25, 2009, AFP)

China's gold reserves rose 75 percent from 2003 to 2008, state media said, reporting that Beijing now had the world's fifth largest holdings of the precious metal. China had 1,054 tonnes of gold by the end of 2008, up 454 tonnes from the 600 tonnes that it said it had in 2003, the last time it reported its reserve figures, Xinhua news agency said in a report Friday. The new figures, released by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, has been reported to the International Monetary Fund, Xinhua said.

Profits rise for China's oil firms: state media (April 25, 2009, AFP) China's top five oil companies saw profits rise by 13.2 percent in March from a year earlier, despite falling production and sales revenue, state media reported Saturday. Profits in March rose to 28.25 billion yuan (4.15 billion dollars), up 160 percent over the previous month, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Association. The profit increase was mostly due to a government decision to raise prices of oil products domestically as world crude prices fell in the face of the global economic crisis, it said.

Foreign investment in China slows sharply in 2008 (April 25, 2009, Xinhua)

Foreign investment, both to the financial and non-financial sectors, was significantly down in China last year, as foreign investors tightened their belts amid the global financial crisis, according to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) on Friday. The combined foreign direct investment inflow to China was 160.9 billion U.S. dollars in 2008, up 8 percent from a year ago, but was 65 percentage points slower, SAFE said in a report on China's balance of payments in 2008. Foreign investors withdrew some 13.1 billion U.S. dollars of investment, a rise of 17 percent from 2007, but 16 percentage points less. The net investment inflow was 147.8 billion U.S. dollars, up 7 percent but was 70 percentage points lower than that for 2007. The financial sector attracted 14.7 billion U.S. dollars while the non-financial area drew 146.2 billion U.S. dollars.

China postal law revision seen eroding competition: report (April 25, 2009, AFP)

China's parliament has revised the nation's postal law in a move that will ban foreign delivery companies from handling domestic express mail, state press reported Saturday. The revised law was passed by the National's People's Congress on Friday despite opposition from express delivery giants including DHL, FedEx, TNT and UPS, the China Daily reported. The newly amended law that goes into effect on October 1 bans foreign companies from delivering express letters within China, the newspaper said. But foreign delivery companies with operations in China will be permitted to deliver express packages domestically, as well as express letters internationally, it said. Legislators insisted the new law complied with China's World Trade Organisation commitments, it said.

U.S. businesses fret China, U.S. protectionism may rise (April 27, 2009, Reuters)

A U.S. business group said on Monday it was worried that protectionist sentiment could rise in both China and the United States as the global economy shrinks. The American Chamber of Commerce in China also said in its annual white paper that China was still crucial as a base for manufacturing and increasingly as a market, but the regulatory environment was opaque and sometimes worked against foreigners. "The risk is higher in an economic downturn" that governments will turn to protectionism, AmCham China Chairman John Watkins told reporters.

LINKS TO DETAILED ARTICLES AND ANALYSIS

Falungong silent in China, thriving abroad (April 25, 2009, Asia Times Online, by Kent Ewing)

Saturday's 10th anniversary of mass demonstrations in Beijing by the Falungong, a professed spiritual movement devoted to anti-government resistance, is expected to pass silently. China's crackdown on a group it labels an "evil cult" has clearly worked at home, but overseas its appeal flourishes.

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KD25Ad01.html>

The Chinese character: no simple matter (March 2009, China Heritage Quarterly)

In early March 2009, delegates to the National People's Political Consultative Congress in Beijing argued over whether the state should move to reintroduce traditional-style Chinese characters. The Chinese written language was standardised and its orthography simplified during the 1950s and 60s as part of the socialist transformation of China under the Communist Party.

<http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/updates.php?searchterm=0903characters.inc>

Leading Chinese dissident claims freedom of speech worse than before Olympics (April 27, 2009, The Telegraph, by Peter Foster)

The Chinese government is allowing its people less freedom of speech than two years ago, dashing hopes that last year's Olympic Games would lead to greater liberalisation, a leading Chinese dissident has claimed.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/5230707/Leading-Chinese-dissident-claims-freedom-of-speech-worse-than-before-Olympics.html>

The internet is God's present to China (April 28, 2009, The Times Online, by Liu Xiaobo)

On the day he receives a human rights award, a Chinese dissident reveals his gratitude to the web

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article6181699.ece

China shows who the real boss is at USA, Inc. (April 26, 2009, Pajamas Media, by Bobby McGill)

The nice thing about owning your own business is that you get to call the shots. Want to take the day off? Take the day off. Want to reupholster the office in pink, candy-striped vinyl? Go right ahead and have at it. Along the same lines, I give you China — an ever-increasing stakeholder and now permanent board member at USA Inc.

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/china-shows-who-the-real-boss-is-at-usa-inc/>

BLOG POSTS

The Tiananmen Protesters: Then and Now (April 26, 2009, The China Beat)

China Beat sent out a note to a few scholars and journalists who have carefully watched and written about the events of 1989, asking them to send in short commentaries detailing what they wish more people knew, associated with, or remembered about that spring.

<http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/2009/04/tiananmen-protestors-then-and-now.html>

The Forgotten Meaning of Tiananmen (April 24, 2009, The Bangkok Post, by Philip J. Cunningham)

Given the way the media works, perhaps reflecting something intrinsic to the workings of memory itself, there is undue focus on the big-bang at the end, the ultimate failure of the movement, rather than its peaceful flowering.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/15434/the-forgotten-meaning-of-tiananmen>

China Visas. I'm Getting Deja Vu Olympic Feelings (April 26, 2009, China Law Blog)

One of the great things about being a lawyer is that we hear all kinds of things from our clients and potential clients. And then when we start hearing those same things on the blogs, we know something is up. I am hearing a lot of things about the difficulty of getting anything but a three month visa.

http://www.chinalawblog.com/2009/04/visa_madness_all_over_again.html

The final triumph of Chiang Kai-shek (April 25, 2009, China Digital times)

Laura Tyson Li in the Washington Post reviews Jay Taylor's new book *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China*. The book, released by Harvard University Press, brings a new look into the life of Chiang Kai-shek, former President of the Republic of China and leader of the Kuomintang (KMT).

<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2009/04/the-final-triumph-of-chiang-kai-shek/>

Wanna Get Sued In China? Your Ex-Employees Can Help. (April 23, 2009, China Law Blog)

China Daily (h/t to my friend Brian over at China Challenges) just came out with an article headlined, "Cases soar as workers seek redress." The article gives facts behind what many of us already knew: "the

number of labor disputes heard by courts has skyrocketed this year." I knew it because my firm's handling of such matters has probably just about doubled in just the last three months.

http://www.chinalawblog.com/2009/04/wanna_get_sued_in_china_your_e.html

Jokes from Post-reform China (April 24, 2009, The China Beat)

<http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/2009/04/jokes-from-post-reform-china.html>

Wife of abducted rights defense lawyer Gao Zhisheng requests urgent help from US Congress in open letter (April 24, 2009, China Digital Times)

Geng He, the wife of human rights activist and defense lawyer Gao Zhisheng, has released an open letter address to the U.S. Congress. In it, she urgently calls for help to support her husband.

<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2009/04/wife-of-abducted-rights-defense-lawyer-gao-zhisheng-requests-urgent-help-from-us-congress-in-open-letter/>

Grading exams in late Imperial China (April 24, 2009, Frog in a Well)

As finals week is here for many of us I thought this would be a good time to dip into Benjamin Elman's *Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. Elman includes a whole chapter on student methods of dealing with the exams, most of which seem to involve cheating or some form of divine intervention rather than, say, studying.

<http://www.froginawell.net/china/2009/04/grading-exams-in-late-imperial-china/>

Isaac Mao, Hu Yong, Liu Xiaobiao: the internet, the media, and the public sphere in China (April 26, 2009, China Digital Times)

In a roundtable discussion at the University of California, Berkeley, on March 18th, participants presented their observations and shared their experiences relating to the rise of the Internet and its interplay with China's media, society and politics.

<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2009/04/isaac-mao-hu-yong-liu-xiaobiao-the-internet-the-media-and-the-public-sphere-in-china/>

Ai Weiwei's Project: The Numbers (April 27, 2009, ChinaGeeks)

Ai Weiwei's blog was recently updated (http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_473f90ad0100d5sl.html) with statistics from their investigation as of April 27th...

<http://sun-zoo.com/chinageeks/2009/04/27/ai-weiweis-project-the-numbers/>

LINKS FOR RESEARCHERS

East-West Center (EWC): The East-West Center, Honolulu, HI, US.

<http://www.eastwestcenter.org/>

RESOURCES

Big Picture Story Bible: English-Chinese Children's Bible (ZDL Books)

<http://www.zdlbooks.com/english/>

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<https://app.etapestry.com/hosted/ChinaSource/ZGBriefsDonation.html>