

# Beijing Olympics the Most Polluted Games?

## Chinese regime disputes claim

By **SI WANG**  
Epoch Times Staff

A scientific study of air pollution during the Beijing Summer Olympics has raised a storm of rebuttal in China's state-run press, with a Chinese author of the study being pressed into service by the Chinese regime to criticize his own work.

Beijing's air pollution during the Olympic games nearly doubled that of the 2004 Athens summer Olympic games, tripled that of the 1996 Atlanta summer Olympics, and was 3.5 times that of 2000 Sydney summer Olympics, according to a study on air quality during the Beijing Olympics.

A Daily Telegraph report on June 22 quoted the study, conducted jointly by researchers from Beijing University and Oregon University, and called the Beijing Olympics "the most polluted games ever." The study's conclusions are consistent with China's record of having 16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities, according to a World Bank report.

The Beijing Olympics are widely viewed as having been used by the Chinese regime to increase its prestige, both in China and around the world.

**EXPERT OPINION**

The Communist Party's newspaper, People's Daily, quoted Beijing Uni-

versity expert Zhu Tong as saying the air quality during the Olympics was "good to excellent" and criticizing the Daily Telegraph report as "irresponsible."

The China-U.S. joint study measured fine dust particles (called particulate matter, or PM) over eight weeks before, during, and after the games, at a station inside Beijing University close to the sites of the 2008 Olympic table tennis, marathon, and bicycle races. The study found that PM concentrations exceeded the WHO standard more than 81 percent of the time during the games.

Beijing invested US\$20 billion into a "Green Olympics," and during the games ordered the reduction of vehicles in the city and the shut-down of factories in the surrounding provinces. These pollution control measures, however, were less effective than the weather in clearing the polluted air, the study shows.

Zhu was quoted as saying that Oregon University did set up an observation station in Beijing University and "As far as I know, the observation should have no technical problems," but he criticized as "unscientific" using the observation data from that station to draw conclusions about Beijing's overall air quality.

The People's Daily article concluded that the expert Zhu from Beijing University questioned the Olympic air pollution claims by scientists

from Oregon University.

The article gives no hint that Zhu himself is actually one of the five co-authors of the original research that was published earlier this year in Environmental Science and Technology and cited by the Daily Telegraph. Nor does the People's Daily make clear that the first author of the report is from Beijing University, as are two of the other four authors of the report.

Staci Simonich, a researcher from University of Oregon and the contacting author of the published research, confirmed that Zhu is a co-researcher of the study. Zhu could not be reached for comment.

"Zhu is an excellent scientist," said Staci Simonich. In response to the criticism by People's Daily on extending the observation data to the Beijing Olympics, Simonich said, "We did monitor one site at Beijing University where there were some Olympic events."

The state-run Xinhua News quoted Kevin Gosper, chairperson of the IOC Press Commission, as saying "These data have no meaning," as the Beijing Olympics are almost a year past and were the most successful games on record. Back in 2008, Gosper dismissed pollution worries for the Beijing Olympics.

"The science and scientific data published in the journal have meaning," responded Simonich, "I agree that findings have no meaning for

the Olympic Committee now the Olympics are a year past."

**PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT**

The Chinese media response to the Olympic pollution reporting is likely to have come from the orders by the Chinese Communist Party's Propaganda Department, according to Cheng Xiaonong, a China expert and editor of the journal Modern China Studies.

When it comes to international issues, Cheng explains, the Chinese media are not allowed to express their views independently. "The Propaganda Department gives the media very detailed instructions on a daily basis on what to report, and they usually utilize Chinese experts to speak for the government."

Spinning off from the People's Daily and Xinhua interviews with Zhu and Gosper, the Chinese media carried strong headlines: "Chinese Expert Refutes Foreign Media's Reports on Beijing Olympics Being the Most Polluted" (Sohu News); "Beijing University Professor Criticizes the Statement about Beijing Olympics Being the Most Polluted Games" (Chinese economic net ce.cn); "Foreign Media Defames Beijing Olympics and IOC Official Clears Rumors" (titan 24 sports net).

The escalated rhetoric of the above headlines reflects a common phenomenon in the Chinese media, Cheng said. "The Propaganda Department designates which media shall carry the original reports, called 'universal reports (tong gao),' and requires other media to carry them with altered titles." The original reports are usually carried by People's Daily or Xinhua News.

To show their level of obedience to the Communist Party, other media tend to use stronger and even extreme headlines. "The Chinese media have become barking dogs for the [Communist] Party," said Cheng.

Staci Simonich declined to comment on the Chinese media reaction to her team's research.

### GLOBAL Q & A

*'How important is money in people's lives?'*

Perhaps it's a sign of the times. Around the world, from Rio to Russia, money seems to be most important in people's lives. This was the consensus answer found by Epoch Times' global reporters who this week asked, "How much emphasis do you think people in your country place on money compared to other parts of their lives?"



Paola Landi, 43, Hospital Social Worker Florence, Italy

I think in Italy, people are very interested in money—maybe 70 percent [put money first]. After money, we are very interested too in eating, the house, and the other is sex. The emphasis on money I don't think is different from elsewhere in the world. Money I am sure is the top interest. Only if, for example, people don't have water in Africa or don't have something, they wouldn't put a lot of emphasis on money.



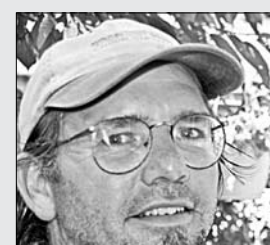
Zowie Heywood, 26, Fashion Designer Wellington, New Zealand

I think our country in particular has a huge emphasis on money, and I think it's a real shame. I don't think that the world should revolve so dependently, as far as our happiness goes, on finances. I think that it's so much more important that our well being is taken care of, and that we are happy within what we are doing with ourselves, as opposed to how much money we are making. If you're in a dead-end job that you don't like—behind a reception desk answering phone calls for twenty years and you've always hated it—as opposed to someone like me who is earning barely enough to pay the rent, but I'm following my dreams, struggling to do it, but I've never been happier in my life. I think that it's a shame that so many people in this country are so focused on having those material possessions. When you start to earn more money, you don't save more, you buy more crap. When it gets to a certain stage you're compensating for your happiness because you're using that money to buy yourself happiness, and I think that's a real shame.



Dulcimar Ferreira Roriz, 55, Tourist Industry Athens, Greece

I think they put the maximum emphasis in my country on money. People live for work and make money in order to feed the family and pay for necessities.



Bruce Rautmann, 43, Wine Wholesaler Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, USA

Personally I look to buy more local and from independent places. ... Right now the trend in the USA is to save money and be more frugal.



Olga Pushkareva, 34, Landscape Architect St. Petersburg, Russia

Money in Russia is not very important, but everybody wants it ... and yet would never say it.

Look for the Global Q&A column every week, when Epoch Times correspondents interview people around the world to learn about their lives and perspectives on local and global realities. Next week's global question: "What gives you hope?"

# Sarkozy Pushes for 'Grand Paris'

By **AURELIEN GIRARD**  
Epoch Times Staff

PARIS—Two months after the April 29 announcement of a "Grand Paris" roadmap to 2025, French President Nicolas Sarkozy further detailed on Tuesday, June 30, his vision of Paris's urban development during a round table in La Defense, Paris's financial district.

One million square meters of offices and housing facilities are to be expected in La Defense so as to make it become a rival of London's "City" district. But this is only the tip of the iceberg of what could become the most important revolution in Paris urbanism since the work of Baron Haussmann in the late nineteenth century.



GRAND PARIS: France's President Nicolas Sarkozy (C) shakes hands with French builder Bouygues' employees during a visit to a tower that is part of the 'Grand Paris' project on June 30 in La Defense business district near Paris. ERIC FEFERBERG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

tific hub. And to the north, Saint-Denis city would become house to creative works.

To link these hotspots as well as other "spots of excellence" and cities, more than 80 miles of railways, mostly subways running automatic trains at 50 mph around Paris, will be built.

In 2010, a public debate shall serve as an idea incubator for the project. Mind you if you think time for talking will last—this is not the habit of President Sarkozy: in October this year, a new law will be submitted to the French Parliament

so as to fasten the tender process and have the concrete operations started by 2012.

"The goals are so broad that we need new procedures," said Sarkozy to the press. "This law will accelerate the process so as to avoid lengthy discussions and unending debates."

**KYOTO AS A MODEL**

A dozen of teams of architects and urbanists have already been working to draft a proposal that prepares for a "green" Grand Paris, respectful of the environment. Ac-

ording to this project, nearly 1 million trees would be seeded around the Charles de Gaulle airport to create a new "lung" to the Paris area. Large areas would also be kept from new building so as to create large public parks, using as a model Manhattan Central Park.

**THE COST ISSUE**

All of this will cost no less than 35 billion euros (nearly US\$50 billions) for the transport infrastructure only. Sarkozy fully justifies the spending: "Versailles did cost a lot at the beginning, and was largely criticized. Yet seeing all the money generated from it, I would say it was worth the investment," quoted BFM radio.

If it is clear that the national loan expected to be started by the government before the end of the year will provide some fuel to the investment needed, it is much less clear how far such fuel will go. Gilles Sarrez, Member of the Parliament in charge of evaluating funding possibilities, is confident that 25 to 27 billion euros (US\$35-38 billion) will be found from now to 2025. That should be the amount needed for "Arc Express," a new ring transportation system around Paris. As for the missing tens of billions that are supposed to fund a transportation network that links hot spots of activity, the issue remains as of today a "financial dead end."

The Ile-de-France region, which includes Paris, generates one third of France's interior revenue and is home to one fifth of the French population. For the 12 million French leaving there, the "Grand Paris" should become a reality in a little bit more than 15 years.

# Pope Benedict Wants to Visit Romania

By **GINA NEAGU**  
Epoch Times Staff

Romanian Ambassador to the Vatican Marius Gabriel Lazarca says that Pope Benedict XVI wants to visit Romania and honor the invitation made by President Traian Basescu. Lazarca said in an interview.

It's been just over ten years since a Pope came to Romania. On May 7, 1999, Pope John Paul II began a historic visit to Romania, the first time a Pope had visited a predominantly Orthodox country in a thousand years.

Pope John Paul II hoped his visit would move the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity, separated in 1054, closer together.

A decade later, Pope Benedict XVI has expressed his wish to visit Roma-

nia but this is only possible after a visit by Daniel, the current Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) to Italy. The BOR must first visit the Vatican and invite the Pope.

The invitation by President Traian Basescu in September 2006 to the sovereign pontiff to visit Romania was approved by the late Patriarch Teoctist. According to custom, the invitation extended by the Romanian Orthodox Church must be renewed by the new Patriarch Daniel.

"As for when such a visit might take place, it is difficult to say at present; the sure thing is that we can count on the Pope's kindness and on his sincere wish for such a visit to take place," Lazarca stressed.

He pointed out that the affection Pope Benedict XVI has for Romania is

"As for when such a visit might take place, it is difficult to say at present; the sure thing is that we can count on the Pope's kindness and on his sincere wish for such a visit to take place"

based on "the awareness of the suffering seen by the Catholic Church in Romania during the communist times, also fed by the gratitude for the Catholic Church's followers who stayed faithful despite the persecution." He pointed out that the BOR invitation to the Pontiff was delayed after Daniel took up the Patriarch's role, given that the new Romanian Patriarch did not see ecumenical dialogue as a main priority when he took office.

"It is obvious that Patriarch Daniel's absolute priority is to lay down a program of action for the BOR in Romania and secondly to plan in concert with the other Orthodox churches. The ecumenical dialogue, while undoubtedly important to the current patriarch, who is an expert in this field, is a priority but not as important as the one I first mentioned," Lazarca said.

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