

I. FCCC 2007 SURVEY: PRESS RELEASE

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS: CHINA YET TO FULFILL OLYMPIC PLEDGE OF FREE MEDIA COVERAGE, HARASSMENT STILL COMMON

BEIJING, AUG. 1, 2007-- A year before the start of the 2008 Summer Games, a new survey of foreign correspondents in China shows that many feel the government has not yet met its Olympic pledge to give them complete freedom to report. Harassment of foreign reporters is common, despite improvements in some areas.

Forty percent of 163 respondents in a survey by the Foreign Correspondents Club of China (FCCC) say that since Jan.1, 2007, they've experienced some form of interference. They reported more than 157 incidents, including intimidation of sources, detentions, surveillance, official reprimands, and even violence against foreign correspondents, their staff and sources.

However, many correspondents, 43 percent, say that the reporting environment improved following China's decision to temporarily lift travel restrictions during the Olympics period from January 2007 to October 2008. The old regulations required foreign correspondents to seek local government permission every time they traveled away from their home base to report.

"We welcome the progress that has been made," said FCCC President Melinda Liu. "However we urge the Chinese government to accelerate efforts to eliminate all media restrictions, and to ensure appropriate implementation of policies. We're especially concerned by many reports of intimidation of sources. A nation where citizens who speak to foreign correspondents face threats, reprisals and even bodily harm does not live up to the world's expectations of an Olympic host."

Ninety-five percent of respondents said reporting conditions in China do not meet what they consider to be international standards. Among the problems they cited was insufficient access to government officials, particularly the nation's top leadership.

When Beijing was bidding for the Olympics in 2001, Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG), promised to give international media "complete freedom to report when they come to China." Up to now, the survey showed, more than 67 percent of foreign correspondents felt Beijing has yet to live up to that pledge. During the Olympics, China expects to host at least 20,000 accredited and 10,000 non-accredited foreign reporters -- more than twice the number of athletes.

Since January, eleven foreign correspondents said they had been reprimanded officially by authorities about their or their organization's reporting. Tibet is a particular concern; it remains more difficult for foreign correspondents to travel there than to other parts of China, and those who do go appear more likely to encounter official obstruction.

In the run-up to the Olympics, the FCCC recommends greater efforts – especially among local authorities – to live up to the spirit of the new regulations, and an end to the intimidation of foreign correspondents' sources and staff. We urge the government to continue opening up even after the current rules expire.

The FCCC would welcome more dialogue with authorities to ensure that a more open media environment will be one of the lasting legacies of the Beijing Games.

ABOUT THE SURVEY: Of more than 315 China-based foreign correspondents invited to participate in this July 2007 online survey, 163 respondents from two dozen countries took part. Percentages reflect all respondents to that specific question; of 163 respondents, 18 did not answer every required question. Where percentages do not total 100 percent, some respondents answered "not applicable." "Reporting interference" includes violence, destruction of journalistic materials, detention, harassment of sources and staff, interception of communications, denial of access to public areas, being questioned in an intimidating manner by authorities, being reprimanded officially, being followed, and being subjected to other obstacles not in keeping with international practices. The graph showing types of interference does not include all reported incidents of interference. Data may be used if credit is given to the Foreign Correspondents Club of China (FCCC).

II. FCCC 2007 SURVEY: CASE STUDIES

BRITISH TV CREW DETAINED TWICE IN AREA BORDERING NORTH KOREA

Holly Williams and her crew from Britain's Sky News were detained twice in two days in January near the North Korean border, where they were doing a story about signs of North Korean poverty which were evident in China. On the first occasion armed police detained the crew then handed them over to local police, who said they themselves "still hadn't grasped" the new regulations. After a couple of hours the journalists were released, following a call to the foreign ministry. The following day, a military officer grabbed their camera while they were filming and gave it back only after the crew agreed to go with him to a nearby military base. They were held there for several hours and eventually released after a second call to the foreign ministry that day. Sky News employees also have been compelled to stop reporting in Tiananmen Square and reprimanded officially regarding a story on the state of China's zoos. For more details, contact holly.williams@skynewsbeijing.com

JAPANESE NEWSPAPER REPORTER ATTACKED AT CONSTRUCTION SITE OF 2010 WORLD EXPO IN SHANGHAI

Mayumi Otani, correspondent for Japan's Mainichi Newspaper, was assaulted in Shanghai on March 27 while covering a demonstration in a neighborhood that was being demolished for the 2010 World Expo. Three men hit her while she was photographing a protestor who was being forced into a government car. Otani stumbled and fell into the bushes. When she protested to a government official who was at the site, he replied that the local workers were ill-mannered. A demonstrator told her the three men had been hired by the government or the construction company to ensure that the project went smoothly. For more details, contact survey@fccchina.org

GERMAN JOURNALIST HARASSED IN TIBET, REPRIMANDED FOR TRIP

Harald Maass, correspondent for the German daily Frankfurter Rundschau, was harassed after arriving in Lhasa in April to do a story on Mount Everest climbers -- along with an accompanying colleague, a photographer and the local people whom they had contacted. Maass was prevented by police from going to the city of Shigatse to do his story, while interview subjects in Lhasa, as well as a travel agency he had hired a car from, were heavily fined and warned not to talk to him. Maass was summoned by the Foreign Ministry on May 15 and strongly criticized for his trip. A ministry official told Maass to "correct his mistakes." For more details, contact harald.maass@fr-online.de

CANADIAN REPORTER REPRIMANDED FOR COVERAGE OF JAILED CANADIAN CITIZEN

Geoffrey York, correspondent for Canada's Globe and Mail, was called into the Foreign Ministry on April 30 for a reprimand over his coverage of the case of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen and ethnic Uyghur who was recently found guilty of "splittism" and membership in terrorist organizations by a Xinjiang court. The ministry official expressed dissatisfaction that York and his coverage had raised questions about the case and about the fairness of the Chinese legal system. The official also expressed displeasure with a 63-word article about the plight of Tibetans, Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities. For more details, contact gyork@globeandmail.com (or see his report on pg. 7 of this newsletter)

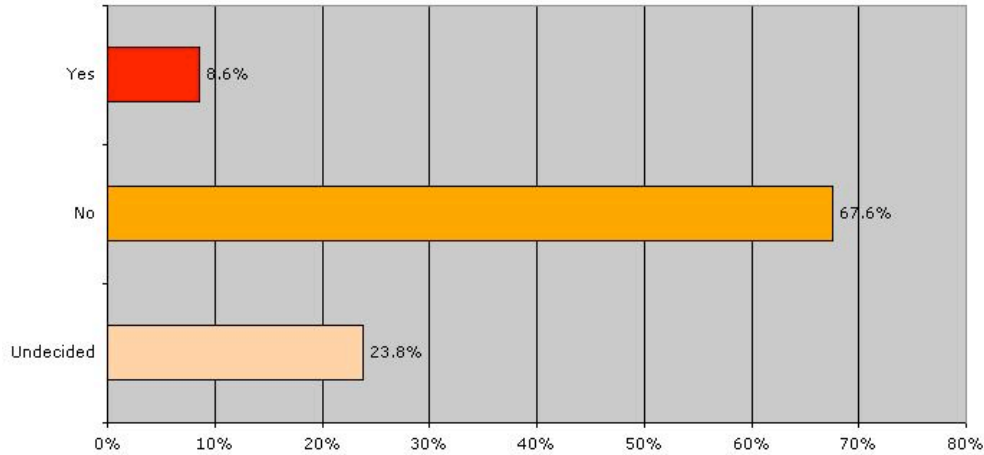
AMERICAN PHOTOJOURNALIST JOSTLED AND REPEATEDLY STOPPED FROM PHOTOGRAPHING, INTERVIEWING

Elizabeth Dalziel, photographer for the Associated Press, has on several occasions been stopped by plain clothes police, security guards and regular police when trying to interview or take photographs of activists and other sources. In one case, she was detained by police officers shortly after arriving at the "petitioners' village" in Beijing. She was later told she could shoot photos as long as she was not on the grounds of the petitions office. However, she was later blocked, pushed and shoved by plain clothes police who arrived there shortly afterwards. For more details, contact edalziel@ap.org

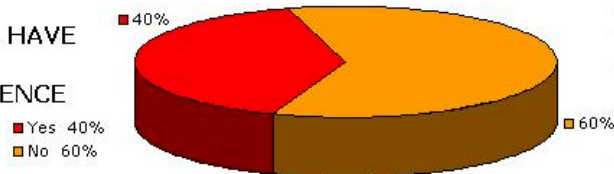
III. FCCC 2007 SURVEY: DATA AND CHARTS

The FCCC 2007 survey of reporting conditions collected foreign correspondents' views on the impact of new reporting regulations which were unveiled on Jan. 1, 2007, and on other issues affecting the international media reporting environment.

IS CHINA LIVING UP TO THE PLEDGE MADE BY BOCOG WANG WEI IN 2001, "We will give the [international] media complete freedom to report"?

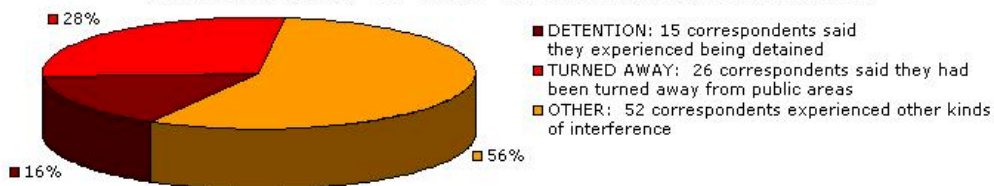


SINCE 1 JANUARY 2007, HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY TYPE OF INTERFERENCE ON YOUR REPORTING?

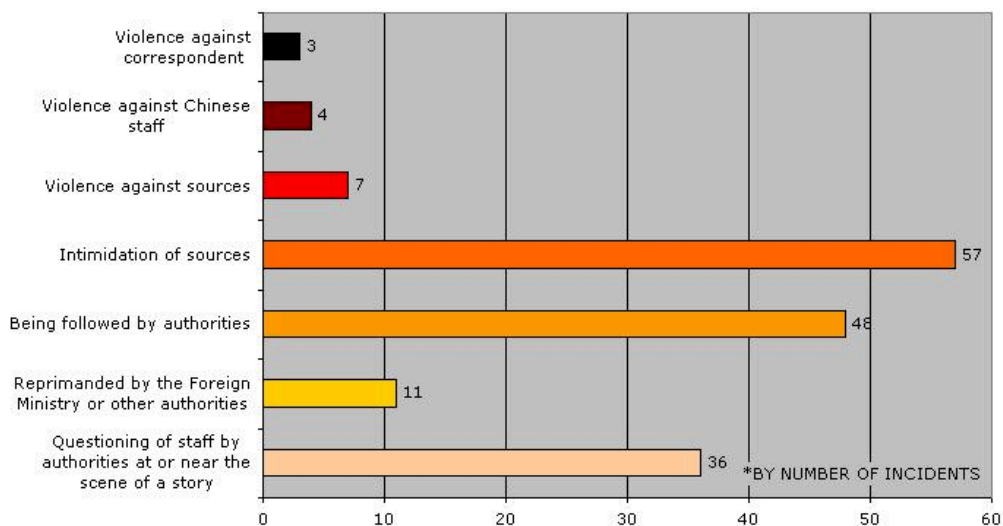


Incidents of interference ranged from media being barred from public areas, to being detained inside a toy factory, to being ordered by police to leave Tiananmen Square during a National People's Congress session as Chinese petitioners were tackled, pushed, and shoved in front of the reporter. Four correspondents reported five or more incidents of interference.

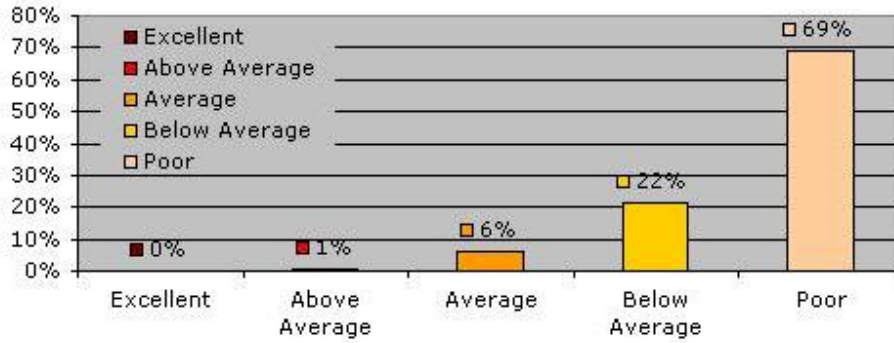
MOST COMMON TYPES OF REPORTING INTERFERENCE



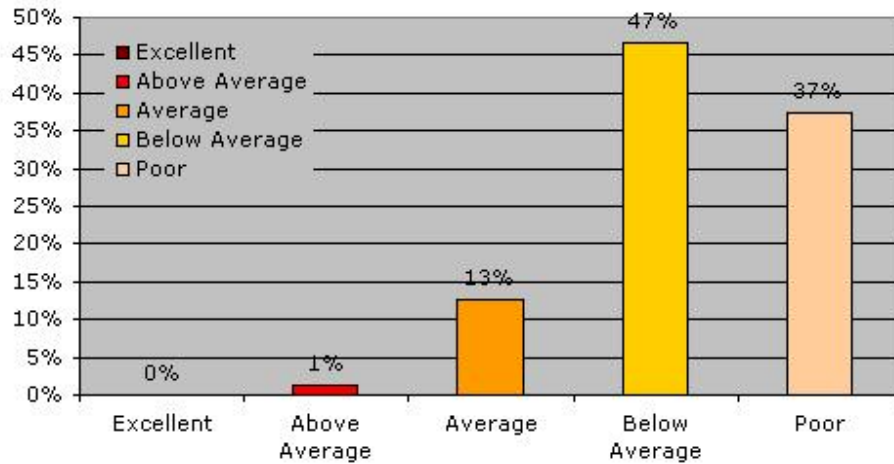
BREAKDOWN OF OTHER TYPES OF REPORTING INTERFERENCE*



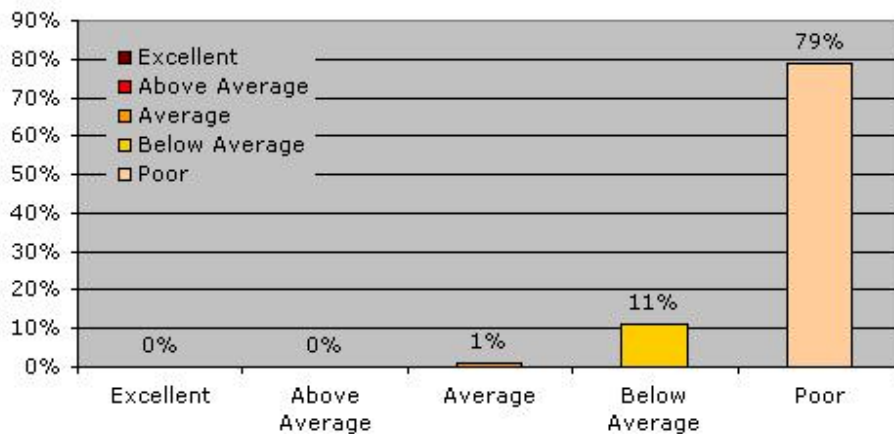
RATINGS OF ACCESS TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS



RATINGS OF ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT DATA



RATINGS OF PRESS AVAILABILITY OF PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER



IV. FCCC 2007 SURVEY: SELECTED COMMENTS

The following were excerpted from more than 300 comments submitted by 163 survey respondents.

ON CHINA LIVING UP TO THE OLYMPIC PLEDGE MADE BY BOCOG SECRETARY GENERAL WANG WEI IN 2001: “We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China.”

- “To me ‘complete freedom’ means that sources should not have to fear harassment or intimidation for speaking to foreign correspondents. But that is still not the case.”
- “We are not allowed to film any demonstrations... We are experiencing difficulties to interview people freely on the streets... Therefore I don't think we have complete freedom to report.”
- “Not until Tibet and Xinjiang are open for foreign correspondents, and [there is] safety for the people they interview, can Mr. Wang say that he has fulfilled [his] pledge.”

ON IMPROVEMENTS IN THE REPORTING ENVIRONMENT:

- “There’s a big shift in attitude by authorities. At a national level, there is a clear commitment to correct the old practices. On a local scale, there is confusion...they don’t dare push you too much, and whatever they try it’s always with extreme caution and [in] a polite way...A huge difference from the situation before Jan. 1.”
- “Overall, the new rules make me feel a little more confident. I'll go into an area knowing that at the most I'll have to show them my copy of the regulations. Before, I might have hesitated to show my face, anticipating being detained and enduring another unpleasant interaction with the authorities without getting any closer to my story. It's nice not to be looking over my shoulder all the time.” -- U.S. PRINT CORRESPONDENT
- “[Regarding] state owned companies, its almost impossible to get them to respond to questions...But the FCCC should congratulate the State Council information people on the regular press conferences they organize: the topics, the length of time given to questions, the consecutive translation into English (a remarkable facility, probably unique globally). It's just a pity that they don't organize such conferences in response to breaking news.”

ON EXPANDING ACCESS TO MEET INTERNATIONAL NORMS:

- “Government offices should...reply to queries quickly and abandon the practice of requesting numerous faxes; they should reply to specific questions...The Prime Minister should hold more than one press conference per year. The practice of vetting questions beforehand should be abandoned. This should be a real press conference rather than a staged event.”
- “Some [local officials] are very good – often, the more local, the better – and less ‘PR-managed’ than their Western equivalents. But important local officials – e.g. provincial level – seem too often to have no idea how or even whether to present the facts, or even their own side of the story...This is self-defeating.” -- BRITISH NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENT

ON REPORTING IN TIBET AND XINJIANG:

- “If you go [to Tibet], you are likely to be harassed. Staff at hotels know to look for J-1 [journalist] visas and to notify authorities of the presence of journalists.” -- U.S. PRINT JOURNALIST
- “The travel permit [to Tibet] was arranged by a [business] company as I was going to report on [it]. The Foreign Affairs Office didn't escort us... but they had given strict instructions to the company not to let us be alone... We ended up being policed by a company and they were even worse than what the Waiban-appointed ‘assistant’ had been on my previous trip.”-- EUROPEAN BROADCAST JOURNALIST
- “As soon as I started interviewing locals, [Xinjiang] police came to my hotel and asked about me.” -- FRENCH PRINT JOURNALIST

ON THE POST-OLYMPICS PERIOD:

- “I expect authorities to crack down on reporters harder but in different ways...not by stupid harassment or stonewalling but by adopting a more Western-style approach copied in many [aspects from] the kind of censorship and pressure you can get in the U.S. They have already become more ‘technological’ in their approach to restricting [or] influencing reporters’ work.”
- “The government should recognize that the foreign media is not an adversary, and it could be a great tool in improving China’s image as a responsible world power.” -- INDIAN PRINT JOURNALIST

ON TYPES OF INTERFERENCE:

- “Private security guards from a securities firm in Beijing, Guodu, tried to stop me from working outside the firm, ON THE PUBLIC SIDEWALK, interviewing Chinese investors.” – BRAZILIAN PRINT JOURNALIST
- “In the last week in April...I was in Zhengzhou, Henan province, writing about a local tainted food incident at a day-care facility...police detained my assistant and me [and] held us for 20 minutes or so. We explained this was improper. We finally walked out... As we conducted further interviews on the street, city propaganda department officials arrived...and suggested that we accompany them. We balked at first but then went along. In the end they were very helpful in providing information. It was only the police who tried to interfere.”
- ”[In Hubei a] local party secretary and propaganda department official showed up at the house of a villager i was interviewing. they tried to ask me to stop [and] suggested i needed permission etc. they followed me all afternoon. after a long drive [and] a long lunch, they gave up. They were polite. my interviewees later said they were chided for talking to a foreign journalist – for ‘disgracing their own country’.” -- ASIAN PRINT JOURNALIST
- “We have experienced intimidation and detention / abuse of sources - sometimes right in front of our cameras. Other times, police or plainclothes [men] will simply stand with us...in order to discourage would-be sources from talking to us.”
- “Our national staff has been harassed regularly. The authorities have also contacted my assistant's parents and asked for information about him.”
- ”Sometimes it seems harder to get an interview than before. I’ve got the feeling that especially government-linked organizations have [been ordered to say]: "Sorry, we never give interviews". And if we apply for an official interview now it is not refused immediately, but I would be old and grey-headed, if I wait for the OK.”
- “We visited a village to cover a land seizure by local officials and a property developer. Villagers complained they had not been compensated...Local police and security asked us to stop filming, and we showed them the new regulations. They interpreted the regulations as strictly covering news concerning the Olympics, and they said what we wanted to film had nothing to do with the Olympics... We had to leave.” – ARAB MEDIA
- ”July 23, 2007 – Hunan farmers held a press briefing over a land seizure dispute [and] invited a number of foreign media... police interrupted briefing... farmers disappeared and journos [were] prevented from leaving for 20 mins., then questioned by police boss for 15 mins...[he] called his superior who said the farmers had broken the law by being interviewed by more than one media organization at a time. We were let off with a ‘warning’.”
- ”I was summoned by the Foreign Ministry...after I interviewed Taiwan’s President Chen Shui-bian...An official read me an informal warning accusing me twice of irresponsible behavior giving Taiwan’s President a platform to propagate his independence activities. (If Taiwan is part of China, I should have been able to interview Chen Shui-bian under the new rules if he agrees to be interviewed.)”

ABOUT THE FCCC: The Foreign Correspondents club of China is an independent Beijing-based organization for professional journalists. It has 350 members, including more than 250 foreign correspondents resident in China. Of the 163 survey respondents who chose to identify their city of residence, 133 were based in Beijing, 12 in Shanghai and four in other Chinese cities. For more information, please e-mail survey@fccchina.org

The FCCC conducted its “2007 Survey of Reporting Conditions” for international media during the month of July and released its findings Aug. 1, 2007. The survey was cited by numerous media reports – though not by the following article which appeared three days later in the government-run China Daily:

Foreign media enjoy greater access

By Li Xing and Su Qiang (China Daily)

The past seven months have witnessed increased coverage of China in the international media, thanks to the bulging resident foreign correspondents corps, overseas media field trips and most importantly, a fitting legal framework governing their work in the country. "We are encouraged to see an increasing number of reports by foreign journalists, which now cover every aspect of our society," Liu Jianchao, director-general of the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry, told China Daily in an exclusive interview yesterday.

"We are also encouraged to see that the new regulations have been widely welcomed and followed by foreign journalists, either staying in, or just making a brief visit to, China." He was referring to the Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists during the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period, which took effect on January 1.

According to the regulations, foreign media professionals enjoy wide and free access to report from China. "China has followed up on its pledge to facilitate the work of foreign journalists in China," he said. "They can do interviews as long as they get the permission of interviewees.

"It's not easy to enact a new legal document," Liu admitted. "We find it a sweating job to set up coordination networks and make clarifications to the grassroots across a country as big as China." Liu cited a few cases in which related central and local government bodies have made tremendous efforts to ensure "overall and accurate" implementation of the new regulations. China Customs has simplified procedures to enable foreign journalists clear broadcasting equipment faster than before. All Chinese embassies and consulates have speeded up visas applications, he added.

The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad has also done a lot to smooth the way for international media to cover Beijing's preparations for next year's Games.

Many departments in both central and local governments have set up spokesperson systems, which give quicker response and more information to journalists' enquiries. The Information Department of the Foreign Ministry even set up a round-the-clock hotline answering questions from foreign journalists. "We are trying to help them at the earliest time, even at midnight," Liu said.

A foreign journalist once called from a village where he said he was stopped by a village leader. "As soon as we received the call, we contacted the local government and enabled the journalist to accomplish his work," he said. "There have been fewer complaints from the foreign media," Liu said. Instead, he and his fellow officers have been swamped by constant positive appraisals from the foreign correspondents on the far-reaching significance of the regulations. "The regulations have helped create a better environment for foreign journalists to cover their stories in China in a more comprehensive, objective and balanced way and enable their audiences and readers to understand what is happening in China," Liu said. They are particularly significant as the Olympics is only one year ahead.

As evidence of growing interest and confidence from the international media, Liu cited a sharp increase of resident foreign correspondents in China since the year's start. The contingent now numbers 705 from 351 media organizations based in 53 countries, compared to 606, 315 and 49 seven months ago. Meanwhile, some 2,060 foreign journalists came to China on reporting tours.

While expressing his own confidence in implementation of the regulations, Liu acknowledged that it was unrealistic to expect that the regulations be implemented without glitches.

"The regulations' full implementation needs close coordination among different government bodies and it takes time for local governments and organizations to fully understand the terms of the regulations," he said. While foreign media workers have the freedom to cover China, they must still abide by the Chinese laws and live up to professional standards.

China will continue to provide an open environment for foreign journalists, but it is essential that they establish mutual trust and win the confidence of the Chinese side, he said. "That way, more and more Chinese will get used to being interviewed by foreign media."

Liu stressed that goodwill and constructive suggestions from the foreign media will always be welcome, but the communication should work both ways. "We are listening to them, therefore, at the same time, I hope they also listen to us so that China can be reported in a more balanced and objective way," he said.

"We look forward to receiving journalists from across the world here in Beijing in 2008. I am sure the foreign press in China will enjoy an even better working environment and have more access to information in the future," Liu said.

China Daily 08/03/2007