



## China to Bush: QUIT MEDDLING

### President chides Beijing on human rights on opening day of Olympics

By Ben Feller The Associated Press

BEIJING — President Bush's Olympic odyssey started with a game of political one-upmanship Thursday, as his blunt critique of the host country prompted China to warn the U.S. president to stop meddling in its business.

Speaking on China's turf the very day it hosted the opening of the Olympic Games, President Bush today prodded the communist country to lessen repression and "let people say what they think."

The president's challenge, issued as he dedicated a massive new U.S. embassy in Beijing, capped a volley of sharp exchanges between the two nations this week about China's human rights record.

But Bush also offered balance, praising China's contributions to society and embracing its relationship with the United States as strong, enduring and candid.

"We strongly believe societies which allow the free expression of ideas tend to be the most prosperous and the most peaceful," Bush said at the official opening of the \$434 million U.S. embassy.

"Candor is most effective where nations have built a relationship of respect and trust," Bush said. "I've worked hard to build that respect and trust. I appreciate the Chinese leadership that have worked hard to build that respect and trust."

Bush said the vast American diplomatic complex — the second largest in the world, after the heavily fortified compound in Baghdad — is symbolic of China's importance to the United States.

"It reflects the solid foundation underpinning our relations," Bush said. "It is a commitment to strengthen that foundation for years to come."

Bush came to Beijing mainly to watch U.S. athletes compete and enjoy the spectacle of the Summer Games, but a round of political one-upmanship has heavily defined his trip to Asia. He bluntly criticized China's human rights record in a speech in Thailand, which prompted Beijing to warn him to stop meddling in its business.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang admonished Bush just before he got to China.

"We firmly oppose any words or acts that interfere in other countries' internal affairs, using human rights and religion and other issues," he said. The spokesman added that "Chinese citizens have freedom of religion. These are indisputable facts."

The rhetorical barbs were expected to recede quickly as the games began. White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said she did not think they would overshadow Bush's trip at all.

"We've had these backand-forths with China for years," she said. The White House says its cooperation with China on security and economic matters should not be overlooked.

Indeed, Bush and his wife were front-and-center with Chinese President Hu Jintao and his wife as they led more than 80 world leaders up redcarpeted stairs to a banquet hall in the Great Hall of the People where the group had lunch at huge round tables. The two leaders shook hands, exchanged warm greetings and posed for photographs.

Later today, Bush meets with members of the U.S. Olympic Team for a presidential pep talk. At night comes the elaborate opening ceremony.

The new American embassy in Beijing, situated on 10 acres in a new diplomatic zone, is wrapped in freestanding transparent and opaque glass. Bush got a look at it today as the pollution over the city cast a white haze in all directions.

The dedication followed China's unveiling of its own imposing new embassy in Washington last week. The 250,000-square-foot glass and limestone compound is the largest foreign embassy in the U.S. capital.

The president attended the dedication of the U.S. Embassy with his father, former President George H.W. Bush, who in the 1970s served as chief of the U.S. liaison office during a critical period when the United States was renewing ties with China.

Also in attendance was Henry Kissinger, who was secretary of state during the Nixon presidency when the U.S. began a relationship with China.

Bush's presence is a precedent. He will be the first U.S. president to ever attend an Olympics on foreign soil when he soaks up the splendor of the opening ceremony.

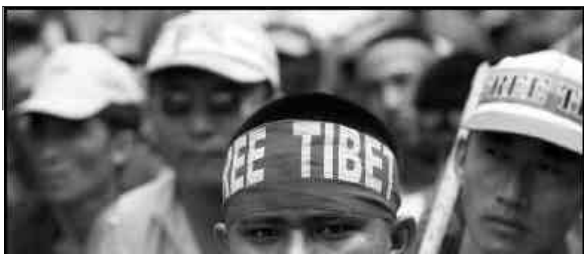
"I'm looking forward to cheering our athletes on," Bush said.

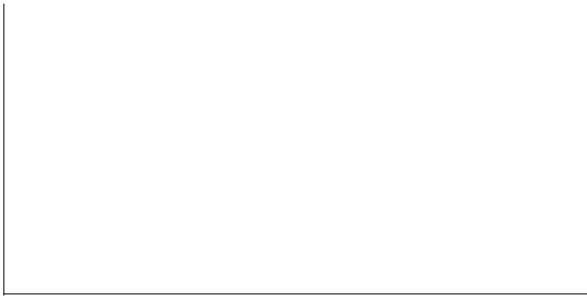


**KATHARINE KIMBALL/JOURNAL** Karma Dolkar, center, and Sonam Lhamo, right, walk around the Santa Fe Plaza on Thursday night during a candlelight vigil protesting Chinese rule of Tibet. The opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics are in Beijing today.



**GERALD HERBERT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS** Chinese President Hu Jintao greets President Bush and his wife, Laura, as they arrive for a social lunch today with other world leaders in Beijing.





**MUSTAFA QURAI SHI / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS** Tibetan monks protest the Beijing Olympic Games in New Delhi, India. Thousands of Tibetan exiles demonstrated in Nepal and India on Thursday.

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