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Membership protocol inked

Triumph in 15-year WTO quest earns praise

DOHA: The World Trade Organization (WTO) finally opened its door on Saturday to China, integrating the most populous nation on the planet into the open world market and sending a positive signal to a slumping global economy on the brink of a full-blown recession.

The Chinese delegation, as authorized by the National People's Congress, signed a membership protocol with WTO yesterday. Under WTO rules, China will become a full member 30 days after it notifies the global trade body of the approval by President Jiang Zemin.

It took only minutes for WTO trade ministers to deliberate and then, on a basis of consensus, rubberstamp a draft report of the China Working Party with an applause on Saturday evening.

The moment climaxed with WTO conference chairman Youssef Hussain Kamal of Qatar rapping the gavel following resounding extended applause.

Many ministers cracked broad smiles, a rare light moment of the otherwise tense agenda of free-trade talks.

With that, an arduous 15-year quest for China's entry was completed. The vote was a formality, with China attaining the requisite contracts and treaties with each of the trading partners necessary for admittance.

Upon entry, the Chinese delegation became the centre of international media attention. Flashbulbs popped from news photographers as Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation Shi Guangsheng enjoyed a standing ovation.

Shi then addressed the ministers, expressing gratitude for the moment and noting that full participation in the multilateral trading system is "a strategic decision made by the Chinese leaders under accelerated economic globalization."

"The WTO accession is not only in the interests of China, but also in the interests of all

WTO members and conducive to the development of the multilateral trading system," he said.

"It will inevitably exert widespread and far-reaching impact on China's economy and on the world economy in the new century."

President Jiang Zemin said in Guangzhou yesterday that China, as a member of WTO, will strike a careful balance between honouring its commitments and enjoying its rights.

Jiang spoke during a visit to Nanhai, a city in South China's Guangdong Province.

The president said that during the process of economic globalization, the economic and technical co-operation of a country with other parts of the world can be expanded advantageously only after the country establishes an economic and trade administrative system adaptable to internationally accepted norms and in line with the country's actual conditions.

He said China's WTO membership brings hard-won opportunity while constituting considerable challenge for the country.

In Doha, Minister Shi promised China will abide by the WTO rules and honour its commitments. The minister also asserted China's support for the launch of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations that mind the interests of developing countries.

That round could help the WTO face up to defects in the existing multilateral trading system that benefit developed nations at the expense of developing ones, Shi said.

Shi indicated his belief that WTO members will help maintain stability and develop the world economy.

Chinese Taipei was adopted as a member of WTO in the name of "separate customs territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen and Matsu" yesterday at the fourth ministerial meeting of the WTO in Doha.

See REACTION, Page 2



A day to remember: Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation Shi Guangsheng signs the membership protocol with WTO this morning (Beijing time) in Doha.

Globe gushes over newest member

World leaders warmly welcomed China, the most populous nation and one of the most robust economies, into the World Trade Organization (WTO) after 15 years of trying.

"Today's decision is historic; it is the greatest leap in the history of the WTO," said European Union Executive Commissioner Pascal Lamy. "In welcoming China, we expand our WTO membership by 1.3 billion people."

Formal approval came at the global trading body's fourth min-

isterial meeting in Doha, Qatar. It took 15 years of negotiations to reach this point.

"In retrospect, the history of the last 15 years of negotiations has also been the history of China's own reform process, its gradual opening-up and its integration into the world economy."

Viet Nam congratulated the Chinese Government and the Chinese people on its new WTO membership, Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Phan Thuy Thanh said yesterday.

In response to a question about Viet Nam's reaction to China's accession, she said the event is a great achievement for the Chinese people, marking their full integration into the world economy, affirming their outstanding achievements in national construction and demonstrating their increasing international prestige.

The Chilean-Chinese Institute of Culture on Saturday also praised China's entry, say-

ing that years of lengthy negotiations finally paid off.

"There is no doubt the admission of the People's Republic of China into the WTO will bring beneficial results to the national and international level," the institute said in a message signed by the organization's chairman, Abelardo Mella Quzada, and First Vice-Chairman, Dario de la Fuente Duarte.

Xinhua

Accession ushers in new chapter

China's accession to the WTO ushered in a new chapter in the history of the country's reform and opening-up process, a China Daily commentary said. With China entering the WTO, the country will in its true sense represent the global trade system and offers a huge market potential for international investors and business circles. **Page 4**

Sports gala kicks off in Guangzhou

By FENG LU
China Daily Staff

GUANGZHOU: The Ninth National Games, the country's most prestigious sports gala, debuted yesterday at the Guangzhou Olympic Stadium.

President Jiang Zemin announced the opening of the Games as the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Jacques Rogge, and Vice-Premier Li Lanqing looked on.

They were accompanied at the opening ceremony by other government officials, IOC members and international sports celebrities.

This is the country's latest major multi-sport meet following Beijing's hosting of the 21st Universiade in August.

After the traditional lion dance, 8,608 athletes from 45 participating delegations somersaulted into the stadium. All boasted good wishes for a successful event.

They will compete in 30 sports and 345 events from which 358 gold medals are

available.

The ceremony reached its peak when Olympic champion Chen Xiaomin lit the torch by laser light. The flame will burn until the Games ends on November 25.

Wang Nan, world table tennis champion, represented all athletes when she took the oath.

Then the gala show "Flourishing China" began. It was divided into three parts — light of the new century, glory of gold and galloping colours — that vividly displayed the city and country in the new millennium.

The Games is expected to highlight the latest sports achievements while promoting the National Fitness Programme and the programme of "striving for Olympic glory."

It is also the first time in the Games' history that the broadcasting rights were sold to central and provincial television stations.

The 10th National Games is scheduled to be held in East China's Jiangsu Province in 2005. (See more on Page 7)



Grand opening: A float carrying the national flag and former world champions, including gymnast Li Ning and volleyball player Sun Jinfang, passes by participating delegates at the opening ceremony of the Ninth National Games yesterday in Guangzhou.

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Stop domestic violence

Chinese experts in the legal, judicial and medical sectors issue a proclamation urging the nation to stop domestic violence. **Page 2**

Rail construction

A new railway will connect Jiangxi and Fujian provinces and help speed up development in the remote mountainous area. **Page 3**

Saving energy

The country will draft energy-saving measures to ensure the future's power supply and sustainable economic development. **Page 5**

Tender care

Xu Lianzhi, a doctor at You'an Hospital in Beijing, lovingly takes care of her AIDS patients. **Page 9**

Notice

Today's China Daily contains an eight-page WTO Special.

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