

NOTE

All that Glitters...

A Correspondent writes :

For China Beijing Olympics was more than gold rush. In reality it symbolises China's admittance into the circle of economic and political world powers.

"The dynamics of China's rise are complex. There is, however, a shaping contradiction: dependency and growing economic strength. China is dependent on foreign capital and foreign markets. But China has also emerged as a world economic power, a centre of world manufacturing. It has accumulated vast foreign exchange reserves, and gained considerable financial leverage—increasingly over the dollar. And China is more aggressively seeking markets in the Third World and exporting capital beyond its borders."

But the rise of China is taking place in a world where, the US still occupies the primary position in the world economy.

True, America's economic position in the world has been declining for quite some time. Dollar is declining. But it possesses unparalleled military strength relative to rivals and would-be rivals. And since 2001, it has been pressing this advantage—mounting a global military offensive, focused in Iraq and Afghanistan, to secure unchallengeable dominance for decades to come.

The relationship between the US and China is expressed, and being contended, in the background sounds behind the Beijing Olympics. It explains why the US (through diplomatic moves and media propaganda) alternately turns the volume up and down on accusations about China's role in supporting the Sudanese government and massacres in Darfur, or its relationship to the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe.

And the nature of the relationship, and contention, between the US and China informs the type and tenor of exposes in the US media about actual horrors in China, including exposes of the draconian wages and working conditions in China's factories, the extreme poverty in the countryside, and suppression of debate and dissent.

These exposures are a message that China is undeserving and untrustworthy to be co-equal to the "great powers" and has to change, i.e., accept the terms being set by the US.

But behind the glittering and dazzling events Olympics also exposed the true nature of China's market economy : 1.5 million people lost their homes—they were destroyed to make way for the construction of Olympic venues and related structures. Millions of migrant workers from the countryside were forced out of Beijing before the Olympics open so as to present China's best face to the world. And quite expectedly the Olympics were accompanied by a crackdown on protest. The Chinese had to pay this 'small price' to draw world attention for a rising superpower in the east.

Maybe, the Chinese assertion that after the collapse of Soviet Union the world tends to become multi-polar, not uni-polar as claimed by Americans, in global power-sharing arrangement. And China's dominance in the Olympics indicates among other things that a superpower is very much in the making. □

