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## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

## **China increases spending on rural poor**

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**6 March, 2006**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **China increases spending on rural poor**

China's government has decided it is time to redress the huge disparity in wealth between the affluent city dwellers and their largely impoverished rural counterparts. Premier Wen Jiabao opened the annual session of parliament yesterday with promises of massive new social spending to appease the disgruntled farming communities in China's largely left-behind countryside. He announced the scrapping of agricultural taxes and the boosting of spending on rural infrastructure and education. He said newly introduced initiatives would narrow the ever-increasing income divide that threatens social stability. He expressed his belief that this would help accelerate economic growth and keep China on track to become the world's largest economy.

Wen Jiabao placed elevating China's poor high on his agenda, saying: "We need to resolutely work to reorient investments by shifting the government's priority in infrastructure investment to the countryside." Managed correctly, this may mean growth figures in double digits. Once the rural poor get spending, there's no telling how quickly the economy will take off. Sixty percent of China's population lives in the countryside, although their disposable income is just one third of those in cities. The Premier wasn't backward in coming forward about his ambitions, stating: "This is a change of epoch-making significance." Mr. Wen will be helped in his lofty ambitions by a runaway economic growth rate of nine percent plus per annum.

## WARM-UPS

**1. SPENDING:** Your government is about to spend a massive amount on improving your country. Write down three areas you think this money should be spent on – be specific. Tell these to your partner(s). Discuss which areas are most worthy.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*China / wealth / city dwellers / country folk / social spending / social stability / economic growth / agendas / disposable income / coming forward / ambitions*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**3. DIVIDES:** To what degree to the following exist in your country? Talk about this with your partner(s).

- Income divide
- Digital divide
- North-South (geographic) divide
- Racial divide
- Caste system
- Sexual inequality
- Educational divide
- Religious divide
- English language divide
- Other

**4. INVESTMENT:** In pairs / groups, put the following in order of which you would like to see increased government spending on:

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ Kindergarten education | _____ Safer roads          |
| _____ AIDS research          | _____ Increased pensions   |
| _____ Sports promotion       | _____ Military spending    |
| _____ Wildlife preservation  | _____ Rural infrastructure |

**5. TWO-MINUTE DEBATES:** Have these following fun debates with your partners. Students A agree with the first argument; students B, the second. Change partners often:

- a. Living in the countryside is best. Vs. Living in the city is best.
- b. The countryside is best for kids growing up. Vs. The city is best for kids.
- c. The countryside is not important. Vs. The countryside is very important.
- d. Country folk are boring. Vs. Country folk are very interesting.
- e. Cities are our future. Vs. Cities will destroy the future of many people.
- f. Government money should be spent on rural areas. Vs. Cities need money.
- g. You can't beat the smell of the countryside. Vs. The countryside smells bad.
- h. The slow pace of the country is best. Vs. The fast pace of the city is best.

**6. RURAL:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "rural". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. China's leader will change the addresses of millions of China's poor. T / F
- b. The leader announced new spending to appease disgruntled farmers. T / F
- c. He said he would increase agricultural taxes and boost urban incomes. T / F
- d. A digital divide threatens social stability in China. T / F
- e. Wen Jiabao placed elevating China's poor high on his agenda. T / F
- f. The Premier refused to tell how quickly the economy will take off. T / F
- g. The Premier wasn't backward in coming forward about his ambitions. T / F
- h. Mr. Wen will be helped in his lofty ambitions by runaway growth. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. redress      | historical  |
| b. disparity    | measures    |
| c. disgruntled  | steadfastly |
| d. initiatives  | shy         |
| e. track        | divergence  |
| f. resolutely   | change      |
| g. reorient     | target      |
| h. backward     | rectify     |
| i. epoch-making | grand       |
| j. lofty        | aggrieved   |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. it is time to redress              | of agricultural taxes           |
| b. social spending to appease the     | runaway economic growth rate    |
| c. He announced the scrapping         | the world's largest economy     |
| d. narrow the ever-increasing         | China's poor high on his agenda |
| e. keep China on track to become      | the disparity in wealth         |
| f. Wen Jiabao placed elevating        | one third of those in cities    |
| g. there's no                         | in coming forward               |
| h. their disposable income is just    | disgruntled farming communities |
| i. The Premier wasn't backward        | income divide                   |
| j. helped in his lofty ambitions by a | telling how quickly             |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### China increases spending on rural poor

China's government has decided it is time to \_\_\_\_\_ the huge disparity in wealth between the affluent city dwellers and their \_\_\_\_\_ impoverished rural counterparts. Premier Wen Jiabao opened the annual session of parliament yesterday with promises of \_\_\_\_\_ new social spending to appease the disgruntled farming communities in China's largely left-behind countryside. He announced the \_\_\_\_\_ of agricultural taxes and the boosting of spending on \_\_\_\_\_ infrastructure and education. He said newly introduced initiatives would narrow the \_\_\_\_\_ -increasing income divide that threatens social stability. He expressed his belief that this would help \_\_\_\_\_ economic growth and keep China on \_\_\_\_\_ to become the world's largest economy.

*ever*  
*massive*  
*track*  
*redress*  
*accelerate*  
*scrapping*  
*largely*  
*rural*

Wen Jiabao placed \_\_\_\_\_ China's poor high on his agenda, saying: "We need to \_\_\_\_\_ work to reorient investments by shifting the government's priority in infrastructure investment to the countryside." Managed \_\_\_\_\_, this may mean growth figures in double \_\_\_\_\_. Once the rural poor get spending, there's no \_\_\_\_\_ how quickly the economy will take off. Sixty percent of China's population lives in the countryside, although their disposable income is just one third of those in cities. The Premier wasn't \_\_\_\_\_ in coming forward about his ambitions, stating: "This is a change of epoch-\_\_\_\_\_ significance." Mr. Wen will be helped in his lofty ambitions by a runaway economic growth rate of nine percent plus per \_\_\_\_\_.

*digits*  
*backward*  
*resolutely*  
*annum*  
*telling*  
*elevating*  
*making*  
*correctly*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **China increases spending on rural poor**

China's government has decided it is time to \_\_\_\_\_ the huge disparity in wealth between the affluent city dwellers and their largely impoverished rural \_\_\_\_\_. Premier Wen Jiabao opened the annual session of parliament yesterday with promises of massive new social spending to \_\_\_\_\_ the disgruntled farming communities in China's largely left-behind countryside. He announced the \_\_\_\_\_ of agricultural taxes and the boosting of spending on rural infrastructure and education. He said newly introduced \_\_\_\_\_ would narrow the ever-increasing income \_\_\_\_\_ that threatens social stability. He expressed his belief that this would help \_\_\_\_\_ economic growth and keep China on track to become the world's largest economy.

Wen Jiabao placed elevating China's poor high on his \_\_\_\_\_, saying: "We need to resolutely work to \_\_\_\_\_ investments by shifting the government's priority in infrastructure investment to the countryside." Managed correctly, this may mean growth figures in double \_\_\_\_\_. Once the rural poor get spending, there's no telling how quickly the economy will take off. Sixty percent of China's population lives in the countryside, although their \_\_\_\_\_ income is just one third of those in cities. The Premier wasn't backward in coming forward about his ambitions, stating: "This is a change of \_\_\_\_\_-making significance." Mr. Wen will be helped in his \_\_\_\_\_ ambitions by a runaway economic growth rate of nine percent \_\_\_\_\_ per annum.

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'income' and 'divide'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "COUNTRYSIDE" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about the countryside and city.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| • redress     | • reorient |
| • session     | • digits   |
| • appease     | • telling  |
| • scrapping   | • third    |
| • initiatives | • backward |
| • track       | • lofty    |

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of the Chinese Premier's initiatives?
- c. Is there a disparity in wealth where you're from?
- d. How important is the countryside to your country's economy?
- e. Does your government spend enough money on rural areas?
- f. What image do farmers and country folk have in your country?
- g. Is there a move of people back to the countryside in your country?
- h. What factors in your country are likeliest to lead to social instability?
- i. What are relations like between rural folk and city dwellers in your country?
- j. What lofty ambitions do you have?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. How will the world change if China becomes the strongest economy?
- d. What potential does China have if its rural population becomes economically empowered?
- e. What kind of economic relationship does your country have with China?
- f. What do you think of Chinese made goods or Chinese grown produce?
- g. What kinds of disparity exist in your country and what does your government do about them?
- h. What are the financial prospects for your country in the coming years?
- i. What contribution do rural folk make to the overall society in your country?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?



## SPEAKING

**LOFTY AMBITIONS:** Write down your ambitions regarding the things in the left hand column. Write in the next column the things you must do from now to achieve these ambitions. In the right hand column, write down the obstacles to your achieving the ambitions.

	Lofty ambition	Things to do	Obstacles
English studies			
Fitness			
Job			
Hobby			
Computer / Technology			
Money			
Other _____			

Talk about what you wrote to your partner(s). Discuss how you might all overcome the obstacles and what your chances of realizing your ambitions are.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information about China's Premier Wen Jiabao. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

**3. COUNTRY ADVANTAGE:** Make a poster about the advantages of living in the countryside. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster most made you want to live in the countryside and why?

**4. CHINA AS #1:** Write an essay describing your feelings about China becoming the number one economy in the world. How do you think this will change the world? Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone have similar thoughts?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. F      d. F      e. T      f. F      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. redress      | rectify     |
| b. disparity    | divergence  |
| c. disgruntled  | aggrieved   |
| d. initiatives  | measures    |
| e. track        | target      |
| f. resolutely   | steadfastly |
| g. reorient     | change      |
| h. backward     | shy         |
| i. epoch-making | historical  |
| j. lofty        | grand       |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. it is time to redress              | the disparity in wealth         |
| b. social spending to appease the     | disgruntled farming communities |
| c. He announced the scrapping         | of agricultural taxes           |
| d. narrow the ever-increasing         | income divide                   |
| e. keep China on track to become      | the world's largest economy     |
| f. Wen Jiabao placed elevating        | China's poor high on his agenda |
| g. there's no                         | telling how quickly             |
| h. their disposable income is just    | one third of those in cities    |
| i. The Premier wasn't backward        | in coming forward               |
| j. helped in his lofty ambitions by a | runaway economic growth rate    |

### GAP FILL:

#### China increases spending on rural poor

China's government has decided it is time to **redress** the huge disparity in wealth between the affluent city dwellers and their **largely** impoverished rural counterparts. Premier Wen Jiabao opened the annual session of parliament yesterday with promises of **massive** new social spending to appease the disgruntled farming communities in China's largely left-behind countryside. He announced the **scrapping** of agricultural taxes and the boosting of spending on **rural** infrastructure and education. He said newly introduced initiatives would narrow the **ever-increasing** income divide that threatens social stability. He expressed his belief that this would help **accelerate** economic growth and keep China on **track** to become the world's largest economy.

Wen Jiabao placed **elevating** China's poor high on his agenda, saying: "We need to **resolutely** work to reorient investments by shifting the government's priority in infrastructure investment to the countryside." Managed **correctly**, this may mean growth figures in double **digits**. Once the rural poor get spending, there's no **telling** how quickly the economy will take off. Sixty percent of China's population lives in the countryside, although their disposable income is just one third of those in cities. The Premier wasn't **backward** in coming forward about his ambitions, stating: "This is a change of epoch-**making** significance." Mr. Wen will be helped in his lofty ambitions by a runaway economic growth rate of nine percent plus per **annum**.