

**Refugee Review Tribunal
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RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

1. [Please provide information on the Yilishen Tianxi Group.](#)
2. [Please provide information on Mr Feng You WANG.](#)
3. [Please provide information on Mr Xi Lai BO.](#)
4. [Please provide information on the aphrodisiac producing ants including their care and the boxes.](#)
5. [Please provide any reports on the 20 November 2007 protest outside the headquarters of the Yilishen Group.](#)
6. [Please provide any reports on the 21-22 November 2007 protests outside the Shenyang City Intermediate People's Court.](#)
7. [Please provide any reports on the arrest of Feng You WANG on 23 November 2007.](#)
8. Deleted.

RESPONSE

The Researcher recommends that the Member views the following two news programs which report on the Yilishen ant investment scheme and subsequent protests in Shenyang City:

- Cheng, Tony 2008, 'Chinese conned over insect investment', *Al Jazeera*, 19 February, You Tube website http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vu_9druDVOo – Accessed 13 March 2009 – MRT-RRT Library; and
- Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, 'Chinese ant farmers left with crumbs', *Channel 4 News*, 22 February <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fozHJwtinmM> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – MRT-RRT Library.

1. **Please provide information on the Yilishen Tianxi Group.**

The Telegraph India reports that Fengyou Wang set up a company called Yilishen in Shenyang in 1999. Wang "said he had invented a process to extract a powder called

polyrachis vicina Roger from ants which could be used to make virility boosters, beauty products, sleeping pills and so on.” An article dated 21 February 2008 in *New Statesman* reports that eight years ago, Fengyou Wang of the Yilishen Tianxi Group “said he was manufacturing health products and aphrodisiacs from the black mountain ant, an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine” (Desai, Ashok V. 2008, ‘Antique porcelain, tiger photos, karaoke and ant powder’, *The Telegraph India*, 15 January http://www.telegraphindia.com/1080115/jsp/opinion/story_8698557.jsp – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 1; and Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, ‘Anger of the ant farmers’, *New Statesman*, 21 February <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2008/02/ant-farmers-china-government> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 2).

The Epoch Times reports that the “Ant Power Group [Yilishen Tianxi Group] was founded in 1998, and is an agriculture enterprise primarily involved in raising ants, ant product development, sales, and has registered capital of 10 million yuan (about US\$1.3 million), and its legal representative is Wang Fengyou. Later the company became the supporting agriculture enterprise in Liaoning Province and Shenyang District with more than 8,000 employees, 13,000 sales people, and is a major tax contributor in Liaoning.” *Asia Sentinel* reports that the Yilishen Tianxi Group was established by Fengyou Wang in 1999. The Group built “a 10,000 square meter factory with two production lines for wine and four for capsules with an annual sales capacity of 50 billion yuan.” The Group claimed that “50,000 to 80,000 pharmacies” sold their products as well as exports to the “United States, South Korea, Japan and East Europe.” Yilishen “advertised that it had developed into a “modern, hi-tech health products enterprise of commendable integrity, combining the traditional Chinese culture of preserving health with modern biological science and technology, research and production with sales, and science and technology, agriculture, industry, commerce, trade and real estate with media communications in terms of culture” (O’Neill, Mark 2007, ‘A Chinese Pyramid Scheme Built on an Anthill’, *Asia Sentinel*, 3 December http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?Itemid=32&id=910&option=com_content&task=view – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 3; and Xiao, Fang 2007, ‘US\$2 Billion Chinese Bankruptcy Scandal’, *Epoch Times*, 11 December <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/7-12-11/62810.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 4).

Asia Times reports that the Yilishen Tianxi Group chaired by “well-known entrepreneur” Fengyou Wang offered investors an opportunity to breed ants for a 32.5% annual rate of return:

A well-known entrepreneur in northeastern Liaoning province (apparently the center for such Ponzi schemes) convinced more than a million people – mostly farmers, retirees and the unemployed – to invest their savings in an ant-breeding venture that has left many of them penniless. The scheme – run by the Yilishen Tianxi Group, chaired by Wang Fengyou – worked like this: a 10,000 yuan (US\$1,375) deposit bought investors a box of ants, which they were then required to provide with food and water until death – that’s 90 days after birth for the average ant. A representative of Yilishen would then collect the ant corpses and take them to one of the firm’s factories, where they were used to produce health products that could allegedly cure anything from arthritis to impotence.

Investors were guaranteed a profit of US\$447 after only 14 months and an annual rate of return as high as 32.5%. The scam may seem impossible outside China, where ant products are largely unheard of, but within the country ants are believed to carry healing properties that can increase physical stamina, prolong youth, heighten immunity and increase sexual potency (Ewing, Kent 2008, ‘Ants and pyramids: China scams abound’, *Asia Times*, 12 January

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/JA12Ad01.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 5).

Sources report that political connections, advertisements using famous people, favourable media coverage, donations to public causes and awards received, convinced investors of the company's legitimacy:

- *New Statesman* reports that “Wang’s publicity machine was phenomenal. He had himself filmed and photographed with local and national leaders, including Bo Xilai, the former commerce minister. He appeared in the front row at the annual New Year TV special, a sign of official favour.” *Channel 4 News* reports that “Wang Fengyou’s official photographer was always on hand to snap him glad-handing important government officials. Thus he trumpeted that he had guanxi – connections – which gave investors confidence that he was protected.” *SOH News* reports that in October 2007 the Chinese Department of Commerce awarded Yilishen with “the license for direct marketing.” Sources of *SOH News* say that “in order for an enterprise to receive this license, they need to guarantee 5 years of no loss” (Reynolds, Wilma 2007, ‘Ant breeders call for help in Liaoning Province as CPP experts take control over Ant Power’, *SOH News*, 17 December <http://sohnews.com/2007/12/17/breaking-news-ant-breeders-call-for-help-in-liaoning-province-as-cpp-experts-take-control-over-power-ant/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 9; Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, ‘Anger of the ant farmers’, *New Statesman*, 21 February <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2008/02/ant-farmers-china-government> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 2; and Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, ‘The magic power of ants’, *Channel 4 News*, 22 February http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/world/asia_pacific/the+magic+power+of+ants/1622547 – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 6);
- Zhao Benshan, China’s number one comedian, actor “in such famous shows as *Today*, *Tomorrow*, *Red Sorghum Model Team*, and *Selling Crutches*” and Liaoning native starred in a commercial for the Yilishen Tianxi Group and “suggested the product could remedy male impotence. Zhao also created a character in the nationally televised television series Liu Laogen who cured stubborn diseases with ant wine – one of Yilishen’s core products.” China’s tallest man also “endorsed Yilishen ant products” (Pinghui, Zhuang 2008, ‘Jobless widow 240,000 yuan out of pocket in ant-breeding scam’, *South China Morning Post*, 7 January – Attachment 7; Desai, Ashok V. 2008, ‘Antique porcelain, tiger photos, karaoke and ant powder’, *The Telegraph India*, 15 January http://www.telegraphindia.com/1080115/jsp/opinion/story_8698557.jsp – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 1; and Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, ‘Chinese ant farmers left with crumbs’, *Channel 4 News*, 22 February http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/world/asia_pacific/chinese+ant+farmers+left+wit+h+crumbs/1631247 – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 8);
- *New Statesman* reports that Fengyou Wang “had his own talk show. Documentaries were broadcast about his acts of charity, the “scientific” underpinnings of ant products, and his rags-to-riches personal story, rising from humble tofu salesman to multimillionaire.” *South China Morning Post* reports that the Yilishen Tianxi Group “gave each ant farmer an album of news clippings from state media praising the company and its chairman, Wang Fengyou. They were also given a DVD of a nationally televised Lunar New Year gala, which included frequent close-ups of Wang clapping from the VIP front row of the audience.” *South China Morning Post* also report that investors “said they were influenced by the company’s commercial on CCTV [China Central Television, the major state television broadcaster in mainland China], which was broadcast so often, they were convinced Yilishen had a popular product and was financially strong” (Pinghui, Zhuang

2008, 'Jobless widow 240,000 yuan out of pocket in ant-breeding scam', *South China Morning Post*, 7 January – Attachment 7; and Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, 'Anger of the ant farmers', *New Statesman*, 21 February <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2008/02/ant-farmers-china-government> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 2);

- *Asia Times* reports that Fengyou Wang “created a formidable public relations machine, cultivated a reputation as a philanthropist” by donating nearly \$1.4 million to public causes. *SOH News* reports that Fengyou Wang was asked to donate \$2 billion yuan “to build underground railways for the Olympics.” *SOH News* reports that he donated \$800 million yuan (Reynolds, Wilma 2007, 'Ant breeders call for help in Liaoning Province as CPP experts take control over Ant Power', *SOH News*, 17 December <http://sohnews.com/2007/12/17/breaking-news-ant-breeders-call-for-help-in-liaoning-province-as-cpp-experts-take-control-over-power-ant/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 9; and Ewing, Kent 2008, 'Ants and pyramids: China scams abound', *Asia Times*, 12 January <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/JA12Ad01.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 5); and
- *The Epoch Times* reports that Fengyou Wang and Yilishen Tianxi Group received a number of awards including Shenyang City's “Outstanding Charitable Contribution Award”, “Promoting Shenyang Charity Contribution Award”, “Quality in Sincere, Trustworthy Model National Brand”, “2006 Chinese Private Enterprise and Industry Leader's Award” and “The Entrepreneur Possessing the Most Social Responsibility Award”. *SOH News* reports that in June 2007 Wang Fengyou received the title “China's Top 10 Entrepreneurial Leaders” (Xiao, Fang 2007, 'US\$2 Billion Chinese Bankruptcy Scandal', *Epoch Times*, 11 December <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/7-12-11/62810.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 4; Reynolds, Wilma 2007, 'Ant breeders call for help in Liaoning Province as CPP experts take control over Ant Power', *SOH News*, 17 December <http://sohnews.com/2007/12/17/breaking-news-ant-breeders-call-for-help-in-liaoning-province-as-cpp-experts-take-control-over-power-ant/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 9).

Reuters reports that the website of the Yilishen Tianxi Group [<http://www.tianxigroup.com/pc03index.html>] was “shut” following the protests (Buckley, Chris 2007, 'Thousands protest over China ant aphrodisiac scheme', *Reuters*, 21 November <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP70669.htm> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 10). The website remains inaccessible.



The

logo of the Yilishen Tianxi Group:

(‘Ant Power’ (undated), Yilishen Tianxi Group website http://www.tianxigroup.com/images/my001_a01_01.jpg – Google Images cached copy accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 11).

For pictures of some of the products please see Attachment 12 and Attachment 13 (‘Yilishen’ (undated), Alibaba China website <http://www.alibaba.com/product-gs/51446061/Yilishen/showimage.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 12; and Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, 'Chinese ant farmers left with crumbs', *Channel 4 News*, 22 February <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fozHJwtnmM> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 13).

Asia Sentinel reports that on 11 October 2007 the Yilishen Tianxi Group “missed a repayment day for the first time. It told depositors to wait until October 27. On that day, Wang wrote an open letter, saying that he had raised new capital from a Kuwaiti investment group which would be available on November 22.” *Epoch Times* reports that on 30 November 2007 the Intermediate People’s Court of China accepted a bankruptcy application from the group. *SOH News* reports that on 9 December 2007 officials in Liaoning “released a notice that the nine enterprises of the Yilishen Tianxi Company Holdings Limited claimed liquidation.” The notice “requests breeders to declare and register within the deadlines” (O’Neill, Mark 2007, ‘A Chinese Pyramid Scheme Built on an Anthill’, *Asia Sentinel*, 3 December

http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?Itemid=32&id=910&option=com_content&task=view – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 3; Anderson, Michael 2007, ‘Declared Bankruptcy of ‘Yilishen Scheme’ Left Millions Impoverished’, *SOH News*, 11 December <http://sohnews.com/2007/12/11/breaking-news-declared-bankruptcy-of-yilishen-scheme-left-millions-impooverished/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 14; and Xiao, Fang 2007, ‘US\$2 Billion Chinese Bankruptcy Scandal’, *Epoch Times*, 11 December <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/7-12-11/62810.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 4).

South China Post reports that ant farmers demanding compensation “were told to wait until late March [2008], after the company is liquidated.” Hong Kong newspaper, *Ping Kuo Jih Pao* reports that ant farmers “will have to wait until 24 March” 2008. No further reports were found in the sources consulted on the status of Yilishen’s bankruptcy or whether the ant farmers received any money from Yilishen or the Chinese Government (‘Protests over ant-farming scheme spread in north-eastern China – HK paper’ 2007, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, source: *Ping Kuo Jih Pao*, 6 December – Attachment 21; Pinghui, Zhuang 2008, ‘Jobless widow 240,000 yuan out of pocket in ant-breeding scam’, *South China Morning Post*, 7 January – Attachment 7).

2. Please provide information on Mr Feng You WANG.

An article dated 7 January 2008 in *The South China Morning Post* provides information on Fengyou WANG, Chairman of the Yilishen Tianxi Group and “King of the Ants”:

Born into a poor farmer’s family in a small village in Fushun , Liaoning , the 45-year-old made a living after finishing middle school by opening a tofu shop.

He tried to plant trees for timber for Fushun coal mines, only to find that trees did not grow quickly enough in the frozen north to meet supply. He then tried his luck opening an ice-cream factory in Yingkou, planting crabapple trees in Gaixian, and selling pork in Dalian , but each failed.

In 1993, Wang took his savings and went to Guangzhou to open a taxi company with 15 cars, one of which he drove himself. Five years later, he sold his company for his first bucket of gold and went back to Shenyang to open Shenyang Dingxi Technology, on which he built his ant empire.

He started a joint venture with a Hong Kong connection he made in Guangzhou and established the Yilishen Tianxi Group in 1999. The group comprised nine companies and had interests in health products and property. Wang ran it for eight years on hype, connections, and what appeared to be an irresistible offer...

...Wang made a reputation for himself as a philanthropist and entrepreneur. He donated more than 10 million yuan over the years, for which he won a number of public honours.

He was said to have wide connections and escaped rounds of scrutiny about the nature of his fundraising method. The Ministry of Commerce gave the company a licence for a direct-selling business in 2006, even after the US Food and Drug Administration concluded that its major product's active ingredient was Viagra and banned the import of the company's products because they were being sold as health supplements rather than pharmaceuticals (Pinghui, Zhuang 2008, 'Pillar of community falls from his perch', *South China Morning Post*, 7 January – Attachment 15).



“Wang Fengyou at the Helm” (O’Neill, Mark 2007, ‘A Chinese Pyramid Scheme Built on an Anthill’, *Asia Sentinel*, 3 December
http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?Itemid=32&id=910&option=com_content&task=view – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 3).

3. Please provide information on Mr Xi Lai BO.

China.org.cn provides the following information on Bo Xilai:

Bo Xilai, ethnic Han, native of Dingxiang, Shanxi Province, born in July 1949. Joined the CPC in October 1980 and began working in January 1968. Graduated from the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, majoring in international journalism. Master of Arts.

Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Minister of Commerce and Secretary of the Leading Party Members’ Group in the Ministry of Commerce.

1968-1972: Did manual labor in a “study class” during the “cultural revolution.”

1972-1978: Worker of the Hardware and Machine Repair Plant under Beijing Second Light Industry Bureau.

1978-1979: Undergraduate student majoring in world history at the Department of History of Peking University.

1979-1982: Postgraduate student majoring in international journalism at the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

1982-1984: Staff member of the Research Office of the Secretariat and of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee.

1984-1988: Served successively as deputy secretary and secretary of the CPC Committee of Jinxian County, Liaoning Province, and secretary of the CPC Committee of Jinzhou District of Dalian City (1985-1988: concurrently as deputy secretary and secretary, of Party Committee of Dalian Economic and Technological Development Area).

1988-1989: Member of the Standing Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Dalian Municipal Committee, Liaoning Province.
1989-1992: Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Dalian Municipal Committee of Liaoning Province and vice mayor of Dalian City.
1992-1993: Deputy secretary of the CPC Dalian Municipal Committee of Liaoning Province and acting mayor of Dalian City.
1993-1999: Deputy secretary of the CPC Dalian Municipal Committee of Liaoning Province and mayor of Dalian City.
1999-2000: Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Liaoning Provincial Committee, secretary of the CPC Dalian Municipal Committee and mayor of Dalian City.
2000-2001: Deputy secretary of the CPC Liaoning Provincial Committee and acting governor of Liaoning Province.
2001-2004: Deputy secretary of the CPC Liaoning Provincial Committee and governor of Liaoning Province.
2004-2007: Minister of Commerce, deputy secretary and then secretary of the Leading Party Members' Group of the Ministry of Commerce.
2007-: Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, and Minister of Commerce and secretary of the Leading Party Members' Group of the Ministry of Commerce, secretary of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee.

Member of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth CPC Central Committees. Member of the Political Bureau of the Seventeenth CPC Central Committee ('Bo Xilai' (undated), China.org.cn website <http://www.china.org.cn/english/chuangye/56454.htm> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 16).

For a photo of Bo Xilai please see Attachment 16 ('Bo Xilai' (undated), China.org.cn website <http://www.china.org.cn/english/chuangye/56454.htm> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 16).

Epoch Times reports that Jurist Professor Yuan Hongbing “pointed out that the Yilishen Company was a typical collusion between government and business enterprises, and that the growth of Yilishen had close ties with Bo Xilai, the former government of Liaoning.” The article continues:

Jurist Professor Yuan Hongbing analyzed the background and cause for the Yilishen incident in an interview. He advised the victims to line up with other rights defending movements across the country, and warned them not to rely on the CCP [Chinese Communist Party].

Yuan pointed out that the Yilishen Company was a typical collusion between government and business enterprises, and that the growth of Yilishen had close ties with Bo Xilai, the former governor of Liaoning. Yuan said the company's development and collapse show that the “economic reform” of the CCP has not established real free market economy based on fair competition, but rather an anti-social market economy dominated and controlled by Party bigwigs.

...Yuan believes that the Yilishen incident is directly linked to corrupt officials. It's widely believed that the growth of Yilishen was connected to Bo Xilai. During Bo's governorship Yilishen grew rapidly because the open support from the authorities and the high exposure on official media quickly won Yilishen people's trust.

“Bo repeatedly guaranteed Yilishen's credibility in the name of the government, which is why so many people believed in it and invested their life savings into this company,” said Yuan.

Yuan revealed that Yilishen finally fell because the company's chairman failed to develop a good relationship with the son of the incumbent Liaoning premier. Hence after Bo left Liaoning the company lost support from the authorities, which ultimately led to Yilishen's collapse (Xiao, Fang 2008, 'Jurist: Yilishen Ant Farmers Should Not Rely on Chinese Authorities', *The Epoch Times*, 10 January <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/8-1-10/63865.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 17).

4. Please provide information on the aphrodisiac producing ants including their care and the boxes.

A 2006 journal article on the nutritional composition of *Polyrhachis vicina* Roger reports that the edible black ant "is rich in nutrients and is a potential ingredient for health food." The article continues:

In ancient China, edible ants were called Xuanju and were widely used in Chinese medicines. During Zhou dynasty (11th century BC-256 BC), larvae of the ants were tribute food to be eaten by the emperors and the nobles (Li, 1999; Tang et al., 1995). Edible ants are still used as an ordinary food in some ethnic districts of Yunang, Guangxi and Guizhou in China (Wu, 1994).

...Chinese black ant, *Polyrhachis vicina* Roger belongs to Formicidae, Hymenoptera, Insecta in zootaxy, and is widely distributed in subtropical southeast China, India, Malaysia, Srilanka and Bangladesh (Tang et al., 1995). It has been used as a nutritional ingredient and processed into various tonics or health foods. Its products available in Chinese market include powder products, drinks such as wines and capsules (Zhon, 1996; Shen and Ren, 1999). More than 30 ant-containing health products have been approved by the State Food and Drug Administration or State Health Ministry of China since 1996. Some ant products have been exported to Japan, South Korea, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. Ants are rich in nutrients (Cai et al., 1993; Li et al., 1995), and have several healthcare functions, e.g. regulating immune system, relaxing fatigue and anti-aging (Tian and Zhang, 2002). However, their nutritional compositions, especially functional characteristics, have not been sufficiently elucidated. The purpose of this study was to determine some nutritional composition of edible Chinese black ants.

...Results from the present study indicate that *P. vicina* Roger is rich in nutrients including protein, fat, vitamin E and SOD, especially essential amino acids, unsaturated fatty acids and minerals. Therefore, the ant could be considered a potential health food and may be of use to the food industry as a source of ingredients with high nutritional value (Shen, Lirong, Li, Duo, Feng, Fengqin & Ren, Yucui 2006, 'Nutritional composition of *Polyrhachis vicina* Roger (Edible Chinese black ant)', *Songklanakar Journal of Science and Technology*, Vol. 28, Supplementary 1, Prince of Songkla University, pp.108 & 113 http://www2.psu.ac.th/PresidentOffice/EduService/Journal/28_suppl1_pdf/14_Chinese_black_ant.pdf – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 18).

An article dated 14 January 2008 in *The New York Sun* reports that the "boxes at the heart of the ant farming business are made of cardboard with a 2-inch-square plastic window and a small feeding hole framed so badly with duct tape that they look like the work of a kid with a box cutter." The article continues:

In return for their money, ant farmers were given the boxes, ants, and a list of strict instructions: The ants need a spritz of water mixed with white sugar or honey at 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. every day. They should be fed cake and egg yolks every three to five days. And they should be kept indoors. In return, the company would come and pick up dead dried ants every 74 days. Under no circumstances were the ant farmers to open their boxes and look inside,

they were told, to ensure that the special Yilishen ants weren't mixed with inferior ants. (Magnier, Mark 2008, 'In China, a Million Fall For Ant Farm Ponzi Scheme', *The New York Sun*, 14 January <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/in-china-a-million-fall-for-ant-farm-ponzi-scheme/69460/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 19).

An article dated 21 February 2008 in *New Statesman* reports that the ant box is “a cardboard box, twice the size of a shoebox. A small, square window had been crudely cut into one side, next to a larger, mesh-covered opening.” The article also reports that the ants “had to be sprayed with sugar water, and fed egg yolk and cake” (Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, 'Anger of the ant farmers', *New Statesman*, 21 February <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2008/02/ant-farmers-china-government> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 2).

For pictures of the ant boxes and individuals feeding the ants please see Attachment 13 and Attachment 20 or view the news programs included at the start of the response (Cheng, Tony 2008, 'Chinese conned over insect investment', *Al Jazeera*, 19 February, You Tube website http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vu_9druDVOo – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 20; and Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, 'Chinese ant farmers left with crumbs', *Channel 4 News*, 22 February <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fozHJwinmM> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 13).

5. Please provide any reports on the 20 November 2007 protest outside the headquarters of the Yilishen Group.

The Epoch Times reports that starting on 20 November 2007 “farmers started to gather from all over the province and protested for three days in front of the company’s headquarter, the Liaoning Provincial Government, and the U.S. Embassy...in Shenyang, demanding the return of their money.” The article continues:

On October 10, the company announced a one month delay of payments, and subsequently failed to keep its promise another two times. Starting on November 20, farmers started to gather from all over the province and protested for three days in front of the company’s headquarter, the Liaoning Provincial Government, and the U.S. Embassy [to attract attention to the situation] in Shenyang, demanding the return of their money.

A Shenyang farmer told *The Epoch Times* reporter that during the protest, a middle aged female committed suicide in the main hall of the company’s headquarter and died immediately. Her body was carried out by the security personnel under the watchful eyes of over 500 people.

Facing the anxious crowd, the company and the provincial government told them to “go home and wait for one month to get an answer.” On November 22, the authorities mobilized over 20,000 police to disperse the crowd with water canons in temperatures below -20 degree

...A farmer from nearby Tieling City revealed to *The Epoch Times* that he obtained some inside information from the Liaoning Provincial police department that there were about 18 farmers who committed suicide, but the actual number could be much higher because of tight information controls (Xiao, Fang 2007, 'US\$2 Billion Chinese Bankruptcy Scandal', *Epoch Times*, 11 December <http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/7-12-11/62810.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 4).

Another article by *The Epoch Times* reports that on 20 November 2007 “tens of thousands of ant farmers held demonstrations in front of the Liaoning Provincial Government, the

Shanyang Municipal Government and the Headquarters of Yilishen Tianxi Group. The authorities sent Liaoning's entire police force to suppress the protest" (Xiao, Fang 2008, 'Jurist: Yilishen Ant Farmers Should Not Rely on Chinese Authorities', *The Epoch Times*, 10 January <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/8-1-10/63865.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 17).

The New York Sun reports that when the promised payment did not materialise on 20 November 2007, "thousands of anxious ant farmers descended on the company headquarters and provincial government offices." The article continues:

When it started missing payouts, Yilishen announced that new funds from investors in Kuwait would allow it to pay everyone by November 20.

That didn't happen, and thousands of anxious ant farmers descended on the company headquarters and provincial government offices. Authorities claim irate investors overturned cars and blocked rail lines. But one witness said the crowd was peaceful and that the real aggressors were the hundreds of riot police officers who detained and roughed up victims (Magnier, Mark 2008, 'In China, a Million Fall For Ant Farm Ponzi Scheme', *The New York Sun*, 14 January <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/in-china-a-million-fall-for-ant-farm-ponzi-scheme/69460/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 19).

Hong Kong newspaper, *Ping Kuo Jih Pao* reports that "tens of thousands of ant farmers" have "continuously staged protests outside the Yilishen Group and the provincial party committee offices beginning on the 20th of" November 2007 ('Protests over ant-farming scheme spread in north-eastern China – HK paper' 2007, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, source: *Ping Kuo Jih Pao*, 6 December – Attachment 21).

Reuters reports that "Shenyang resident told Reuters that about 1,000 people had collected in front of the company's head office on Wednesday [21 November 2007]. Repeated calls to the office by Reuters went unanswered" (Buckley, Chris 2007, 'Thousands protest over China ant aphrodisiac scheme', *Reuters*, 21 November <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP70669.htm> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 10).

Asia Sentinel reports that on 22 November 2007 "the depositors took to the streets, going first to the Yilishen headquarters and then the provincial government." The article continues:

On October 11, the company missed a repayment day for the first time. It told depositors to wait until October 27. On that day, Wang wrote an open letter, saying that he had raised new capital from a Kuwaiti investment group which would be available on November 22. When there was no money that day, the depositors took to the streets, going first to the Yilishen headquarters and then the provincial government (O'Neill, Mark 2007, 'A Chinese Pyramid Scheme Built on an Anthill', *Asia Sentinel*, 3 December http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?Itemid=32&id=910&option=com_content&task=view – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 3).

Xinhua News Agency reports that "police allege that the angry demonstration actually started at Yilishen's offices, but then Wang paid employees, including company executives, to organize a protest against the government instead. Why he would do this is not clear from the Xinhua report". The article continues:

In the end, the scheme collapsed, Yilishen went bankrupt and investors had nowhere to turn. The company is now being liquidated. Wang was arrested last month, but the charge against him is not fraud; rather, he is being held for “instigating social unrest” after thousands of out-of-pocket investors, demanding compensation for their losses, stormed the provincial government offices in the capital of Shenyang last November. The demonstration reportedly turned violent, and police were called in to quell the riot.

According to the official Xinhua News Agency, police allege that the angry demonstration actually started at Yilishen’s offices, but then Wang paid employees, including company executives, to organize a protest against the government instead. Why he would do this is not clear from the Xinhua report, but it is clear that he is now in jail, his reputation in tatters, and his once successful company is no more (Ewing, Kent 2008, ‘Ants and pyramids: China scams abound’, *Asia Times*, 12 January <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/JA12Ad01.html> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 5).

For pictures of the headquarters please see Attachment 13 and Attachment 20 or view the news programs included at the start of the response (Cheng, Tony 2008, ‘Chinese conned over insect investment’, *Al Jazeera*, 19 February, You Tube website http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vu_9druDV0o – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 21; and Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, ‘Chinese ant farmers left with crumbs’, *Channel 4 News*, 22 February <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fozHJwtnmM> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 13).

6. Please provide any reports on the 21-22 November 2007 protests outside the Shenyang City Intermediate People’s Court.

Reuters reports that thousands of people in Shenyang “have protested on the streets and surrounded government offices demanding help recovering money from a get-rich-quick scheme to raise ants to make an aphrodisiac tonic.” *Reuters* reports that the “irate investors” have demonstrated since 19 November 2007:

Hundreds of anti-riot troops and police in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning province, were deployed to stop protesters reaching the provincial government and Communist Party headquarters, residents said on Wednesday [21 November 2007].

The irate investors from across Liaoning, a rustbelt province striving to attract investment, have demonstrated in Shenyang since Monday [19 November 2007] and sporadic clashes with police have broken out, they said.

Several thousand protesters gathered near the provincial government offices on Wednesday [21 November 2007], a resident told Reuters by telephone.

...“We strongly demand the government offer a way out for Yilishen!” read a banner held by protesters as they marched along a Shenyang street (Buckley, Chris 2007, ‘Thousands protest over China ant aphrodisiac scheme’, *Reuters*, 21 November <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP70669.htm> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 10).

Asia Sentinel reports that on 22 November 2007 “more than 10,000 angry people besieged the Liaoning provincial government in the capital of Shenyang, demanding compensation of millions of yuan from a pyramid sales scheme which bought dead ants, supposedly to be turned into health products. The demonstrators blocked a railway line and overturned cars, requiring the government to mobilize more than 1,000 police and armed police to disburse

them” (O’Neill, Mark 2007, ‘A Chinese Pyramid Scheme Built on an Anthill’, *Asia Sentinel*, 3 December http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?Itemid=32&id=910&option=com_content&task=view – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 3).

For footage of the protests please watch the news programs included at the start of the response.

Sources told Hong Kong newspaper *Ping Kuo Jih Pao* that “the recent massive protests by ant farmers in Shenyang escalated yesterday [5 December 2007], spreading from Shenyang to various parts of the province. Tens of thousands of ant farmers in Shenyang, displeased that the government has to date chosen to sit idly by and do nothing about the incident, besieged the provincial government offices, airport, train stations, and foreign diplomatic missions. People in other cities besieged train stations and held aloft placards that read “China Yilishen, Give Me Back My Hard-Earned Money!”” (‘Protests over ant-farming scheme spread in north-eastern China – HK paper’ 2007, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, source: *Ping Kuo Jih Pao*, 6 December – Attachment 21).

An article dated 11 December 2007 in *SOH News* reports that “[l]ately, every day tens of thousands of people surrounded the provincial government” (Anderson, Michael 2007, ‘Declared Bankruptcy of ‘Yilishen Scheme’ Left Millions Impoverished’, *SOH News*, 11 December <http://sohnews.com/2007/12/11/breaking-news-declared-bankruptcy-of-yilishen-scheme-left-millions-impoverished/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 14).

An article dated 13 December 2007 by *Reuters* reports that residents from Shenyang “have said police had set up checkpoints and taken other steps to keep a close eye on potential trouble. Breeders heading to provincial capital Shenyang were stopped.” *Reuters* continues:

Underlining the sensitivity of the issue, almost all online discussions about the case have been censored and the Beijing city government has asked lawyers in the capital not to represent any breeders to ensure “political stability”, according to a notice on the Web site of the Beijing Municipal Lawyers Association (www.bmla.org.cn [<http://www.bmla.org.cn>]).

Lawyers were also advised not to accept interviews by Chinese and foreign media (Lim, Benjamin Kang 2007, ‘Sting in the tail for China ant aphrodisiac scheme’, *Reuters News*, 13 December – Attachment 22).

An article dated 14 December 2007 in *South China Post* reports that “Shenyang-based activist Sun Haiyang said nearly 30 police cars had been stationed outside the government offices since last month to prevent further protests” (Chan, Minnie & Pinghui, Zhuang 2007, ‘Officials blamed in ant-potion scandal’, *South China Morning Post*, 14 December – Attachment 23).

An article dated 17 December 2007 by *SOH News* reports that an ant farmer who volunteered to represent all ant farmers was detained:

The breeders only want a refund of their deposits and now as a result of the government’s actions, each region office is asking for a promise signed by the ant breeders not to appeal.

...The ant breeders said that the collapse of one enterprise will affect so many creditors and that the government should seek a common solution with representatives of the ant breeders. One ant breeder said that they have volunteered a representative but he was instead detained.

...“No media in China dares to expose this case, since we tried to lodge a lawsuit against the people involved in the scheme. They simply refuted the case. There are so many media outlets but they do not report on the case. The victims are crying for desperate help. The fire brigade used rubber hoses to get rid of people in freezing weather of minus 12 degrees on the 22nd.”

...Travelers into Beijing by train will need to have an identification check and main transport routes also have enforced road checks to prevent the public from appealing. However, the victims of Power Ant are currently posting notices about an appeal in Beijing and other lawful means of protest and protecting their rights (Reynolds, Wilma 2007, ‘Ant breeders call for help in Liaoning Province as CPP experts take control over Ant Power’, *SOH News*, 17 December <http://sohnews.com/2007/12/17/breaking-news-ant-breeders-call-for-help-in-liaoning-province-as-cpp-experts-take-control-over-power-ant/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 9).

A Chinese language article by Human Rights in China reports that on 13 February 2009 over 1,000 ant farmers in Liaoning attempted to take part in a meeting of the creditors and were driven away by the police (‘上千辽宁”蚁民”参加债权人大会遭警方驱赶’ 2008, *Huaxia Dianzi Bao*, Issue No. 231, 14 February, Human Rights in China <http://www.huaxiabao.org/article.asp?IssueId=231&ArtNb=6> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 24).

A *Channel 4 News* report from 22 February 2008 reports that “[p]olice beat those who tried to protest and are now harassing those who speak out.” The article continues:

Angry investors demonstrated outside the government offices in Shenyang and surreptitiously filmed their protest. Many were arrested, others beaten by police determined to stop any more Chinese coming out on the streets.

...In a nearby village, at first no-one would talk on camera. Some had already been beaten by plain clothes police when they tried to go to Beijing to petition the authorities.

The ant farmers of Shenyang were more terrified than any other Chinese people I have met. None would let us use their names or show their faces.

An old lady, who had lost both her and her sister’s life savings, shoved us into her flat so the neighbours couldn’t see. She smoked nervously and pushed us out after a less than an hour. Her children had told her not to talk, it would bring more trouble.

In a nearby village, at first no-one would talk on camera. Some had already been beaten by plain clothes police when they tried to go to Beijing to petition the authorities.

After we left, those we had interviewed were briefly arrested. We kept changing sim cards so our calls would not be tapped. Our producer had secret assignments to collect video tape of protests.

The ant farmers are threatening to disrupt the Olympics, so no wonder the government is determined to stamp out their protest (Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, ‘The magic power of ants’, *Channel 4 News*, 22 February

http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/world/asia_pacific/the+magic+power+of+ants/1622547 – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 6).

The Epoch Times reports that on 9 January 2009 a bankrupt ant farmer killed herself in Fushan. Sister Blood and Tears, her internet name, had “appealed and protested to local authorities” in 2007 and had two previous unsuccessful suicide attempts since then:

Farmers said their protests had been cruelly suppressed.

“The government pushed Sister Blood and Tears to death,” said an elderly ant farmer. “They are ruining all of us ant farmers. We have no way out.” He also said the ant farmers are under the authorities’ surveillance. When Sister Blood and Tears was hospitalized after her first suicide attempt, the authorities sent officials and police to blockade the hospital to prevent information from going out, the ant farmer said (Xiao, Fang 2009, ‘Bankrupt Ant Farmer Commits Suicide’, *Epoch Times*, 10 January <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/10125/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 29).

Qiang XIAO, Director of the China Internet Project and founder of the online news portal *Chinese Digital Times* at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California – Berkeley provided information to the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China on ‘The Rise of Rights Consciousness and Citizen Participation on the Chinese Internet’. Xiao provides information on the “complete news blackout on reporting” on the protests in Shenyang:

While the cases above demonstrate the weaknesses in the official Internet censorship, we should not forget that the government is still able to exert almost near control over information distributed online in particularly sensitive cases where officials make that a priority. In November 2007, 10,000 people demonstrated in front of local government offices in Shenyang, Liaoning province, against a corrupt pyramid scheme, through which up to a million people, mostly poor or unemployed workers, had invested their life savings but received nothing when the company went bankrupt. The story was politically sensitive because the company, Yilishen, had ties with powerful officials including Bo Xilai, the former governor of Liaoning province and current Minister of Commerce, as well as because of the mass protests that it inspired. The central government quickly imposed a complete news blackout on reporting about the incident. For a period, news about the scheme and subsequent protests could not be found through searches on the Chinese Internet. Once the foreign media began covering the case, those news reports found their way back into online forums, but were censored before they could be distributed in a mass way that reached the mainstream of Internet users.

...Yet the Yilishen story also shows us that when it is a political priority, the central government still has the means and the will to exert almost complete control over information online (Xiao, Qiang 2008, ‘The Rise of Rights Consciousness and Citizen Participation on the Chinese Internet’, Hearing before the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 18 June <http://cecc.gov/pages/hearings/2008/20080618/xiao.php> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 25).

Danwei reports that Yilishen “is no longer a searchable keyword.” A posting on the Black and White Cat website on 22 November 2007 shows that search engines in China “have been scrubbed” of the Shenyang protests: A Chinese language search using Google.cn and Baidu (a leading Chinese search engine for websites, audio files, and images) returned no results whereas a Google.com search returned 248,000 results (Rob 2007, ‘Natural viagra arouses

farmers' anger', Black and White Cat, 22 November <http://www.blackandwhitecat.org/2007/11/22/natural-viagra-arouses-farmers-anger/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 26; and Martinsen, Joel 2007, 'The ants, the tigers and responsible journalism', *Danwei*, 27 November http://www.danwei.org/media/ants_yilishen_tiger_ben.php – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 27).

A post dated 7 December 2007 on Global Voices Online provides an account of Zola the blogger's treatment by police in Liaoning where he had travelled to talk to the ant farmers. For the full account please see Attachment 28:

It's not the specific type of violence he claims he encountered at the hands of police while in custody there, he seems to have brushed that off. Nor is it having been in custody for more than the legally allowed 24 hours or possibly having been turned in by the ant farmer he was trying to help. Zola, reminding readers of his rural socioeconomic background, wants back the USD160 he says security agents confiscated while he was being held; in this message to readers, he threatens to sue to get it back (Kennedy, John 2007, 'China: A blow to citizen bloggers', Global Voice Online, 7 December <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2007/12/07/china-a-blow-to-citizen-bloggers/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 28).

While Tony Cheng of *Al Jazeera* was reporting in front of the Yilishen headquarters in Shenyang, the police turned up and threatened them with arrest. The relevant footage of the news program can be found at around the two minute mark (Cheng, Tony 2008, 'Chinese conned over insect investment', *Al Jazeera*, 19 February, You Tube website http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vu_9druDVOo – Accessed 13 March 2009 – MRT-RRT Library).

7. Please provide any reports on the arrest of Feng You WANG on 23 November 2007.

Asia Sentinel reports that on 23 November 2007, "the police chief of Shenyang announced Wang Fengyou's arrest, banned further demonstrations and ordered depositors to register their losses at local government offices" (O'Neill, Mark 2007, 'A Chinese Pyramid Scheme Built on an Anthill', *Asia Sentinel*, 3 December http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?Itemid=32&id=910&option=com_content&task=view – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 3).

Channel 4 News provides footage of the arrest which can be found at around the four and half minute mark (Hilsum, Lindsey 2008, 'Chinese ant farmers left with crumbs', *Channel 4 News*, 22 February <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fozHJwtnmM> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – MRT-RRT Library).

The International Herald Tribune reports that Fengyou Wang was charged with "instigating social unrest". The article continues:

Wang Fengyou, head of the now-bankrupt Yilishen Tianxi Group, was arrested in Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning province, and charged with instigating social unrest, the official Xinhua News Agency said late Tuesday.

The charges stem from discontent over the scheme in which Wang convinced thousands of farmers to put up capital and supply ants to get a greater final pay out, Xinhua said.

But Wang's company stopped giving the farmers their cut of profits and they staged demonstrations in November across Liaoning.

According to charges, Wang paid his employees and company executives about 1.4 million yuan, (US\$186,000, €140,000) to launch protests outside government offices, snarling traffic, Xinhua said, possibly to distract attention from his scheme.

It did not give any details or reasons why Wang staged his own demonstrations. Telephones were not answered at Yilishen headquarters in Shenyang.

An official from the press office of Shenyang Public Security Bureau said he had no comment on this case. He refused to give his name ('Chairman of ant aphrodisiac company arrested in connection with protests' 2007, *International Herald Tribune*, source: *Associated Press*, 12 December <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/12/12/asia/AS-GEN-China-Ant-Fraud.php> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 30).

An article dated 10 January 2009 in *The Epoch Times* reports that Fengyou Wang is "still in detention" (Xiao, Fang 2009, 'Bankrupt Ant Farmer Commits Suicide', *Epoch Times*, 10 January <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/10125/> – Accessed 13 March 2009 – Attachment 29).

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