

## Merkel stands by meeting Dalai Lama

Berlin, December 2: German Chancellor Angela Merkel brushed off criticism from China over having received the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, in an interview with German radio broadcast on Sunday.

"I receive who I think should be received," Merkel told Deutschlandfunk radio.

Beijing reacted angrily to the September meeting, calling on Berlin to acknowledge it had made a mistake.

"Germany and its government are partisans of a united China, there is no question about it. The Dalai Lama (only) wants cultural independence which is why it in no way calls China into question," said Merkel.

Berlin wants friendly relations with China, but it should be possible for there to be differing opinions within a friendly relationship, she added.

On Wednesday, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said that Germany and China could remain friends as long as Berlin recognises that it had committed an error.

Merkel had a private meeting with the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama at the end of September despite warnings from Beijing.

German industry criticised her decision to hold the meeting because the damage it would do to commercial relations with China.

German news magazine Der Spiegel became the latest casualty from the chill in Sino-German relations.

It announced on Friday that it was pulling out of a week of cultural events in which it was to have participated in China due to what it called official "censors



Angela Merkel with the Dalai Lama in Berlin on September 23, 2007.

Despite China's protest, Chancellor Merkel of Germany met with the exiled Tibetan leader at the Chancellery, making it the first historic visit of its kind. Merkel's meeting with the Dalai Lama was reportedly praised by some senior officials in her party and from the opposition. (File Photo: The Tibet Bureau, Geneva)