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sion's higher-learning department, as saying the reform "will transform the country's system of cultivating professional talent, and it will have a great impact on China's social, economic, scientific, and cultural development."

The coming reform, he added, would "directly affect enrollment, training, graduation, and employment, as well as teaching programs."

—TED PLAFKER

## Jewish Group Sues Israel Over Arab Universities

A suit filed in Israel's High Court of Justice this month seeks to have the Israeli government shut down two Palestinian universities that the plaintiff claims are operating illegally in East Jerusalem.

The suit was filed by a right-wing organization called Betsedek that seeks to protect the rights of Israelis and Jews in the West Bank and Gaza. The group's lawyer, Elad Rosenblatt, noted in his petition that Israeli law prohibits institutions from calling themselves universities and awarding their own academic degrees without the approval of Israel's Council of Higher Education. He argued that since the entire city of Jerusalem is, under Israeli law, part of sovereign Israel, Al-Quds University and the Open University of Jerusalem should be shut down and their operators punished.

The two universities have not sought the approval of the council because they are Palestinian-run institutions in a section of the city that they identify as part of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The petition asks the court to order Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Minister of Education Zevulun Hammer to comply with the terms of the law.

Officials at the Ministry of Education, the Council of Higher Education, and Al-Quds University declined to comment on the suit because they had not seen the document.

—HAIM WATZMAN

## Mexico's National U. to Limit 'Automatic Pass'

The National Autonomous University of Mexico last week decid-

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## China to Cut Number of Academic Specialties

China, in an effort to boost competitiveness and combat overspecialization in its colleges and universities, has announced plans to slash by more than half the number of subjects available for study.

There are 624 specialties now available, but officials of the State Education Commission said the number would be reduced to 300 by 1999. The fields to be eliminated will be announced next year.

Many of the disciplines now offered are so specialized that graduates cannot find jobs, officials said.

China began to establish academic specialties in 1952, based on the Soviet model. Disciplines focusing on such things as Marxism and state-planning techniques, which have fallen into disfavor, will probably be among those dropped, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency.

The agency quoted Zhong Binglin, head of the education commis-