

SARS suspect puts China on alert

Agence France Presse

BEIJING, Dec. 28. — China stepped up its nationwide alert for a possible outbreak of SARS today, a day after a man in Guangdong province in the south was diagnosed as a suspected case.

The patient, a 32-year old freelance reporter from a southern China TV station, came down with Sars-like fever symptoms on 16 December and was admitted to a hospital for pneumonia four days later.

He was listed as a suspected Sars case on Saturday by China's health ministry.

"We have been told by Chinese health authorities that over the past several days the patient's tempera-

ture has been normal," Mr Roy Wadia, a spokesman for the WHO office in Beijing, said. The absence of fever appeared to indicate the man was recovering, he added.

A WHO expert was expected to arrive in Beijing tomorrow and

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would quickly go on to the Guangzhou Number Eight People's Hospital in the capital of Guangdong province to help diagnose the patient, the spokesman said. "The diagnosis that the patient is a suspected SARS case still stands, so far the tests have been mixed, in testing done so far there have been some positive results and some negative results," he said, adding that they have to do a lot more testing.

Meanwhile, the Guangzhou hospital had isolated the patient and some 32 medical workers who have treated him, while the rest of the country began scrambling to set up Sars surveillance mechanisms, officials said.



KEEPING DOCTORS AWAY: A Chinese swims in a half-frozen lake in Beijing on Sunday. An increasing number of people, especially elderly Chinese are taking to winter swimming, which claimed to boost ones immune system, in the wake of concern of a resurgence of SARS in the country.— AFP

THE STATESMAN 29 DEC 2003

41,000 residents evacuated amid rising toll two days after incident

China gas well burst kills 193

Beijing, Dec. 25 (Reuters): At least 193 people were killed and hundreds poisoned when a natural gas well in southwestern China burst and released a cloud of toxic fumes, medical workers, officials and state media said today.

Authorities evacuated 41,000 people, most of them farmers, from the mountainous area after the government ordered everyone cleared from within five kilometres of the site of Tuesday's disaster in Kaixian county, in densely populated Chongqing municipality, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Twenty teams were dispatched to villages in the surrounding area to search for survivors and identify casualties. Local officials feared the death toll would rise, Xinhua said.

Children were among hundreds poisoned or suffering chemical burns, hospital workers said. "We're very busy. There are patients everywhere. We haven't counted the casualties," said another hospital worker.

In hospitals, the injured had swollen and sensitive eyes and some had difficulty standing, the private *www.sina.com* website said. The total number of injured was not clear.

Rescue workers carrying oxygen tanks on their backs and wearing masks were seen near the site, one official said.

At one Kaixian hospital, more than 200 people were being treated for poisoning, an administrator said by telephone from the area, which is about 1,000 km west of Shanghai.

China has a notoriously poor

work safety record. More than 120,000 people died in work-related accidents from January to November this year, the official *China Daily* said earlier this month.

The cause of the latest disaster, one of the deadliest of this year, was being investigated. An oil industry official in Chongqing said the well had burst while it was being drilled.

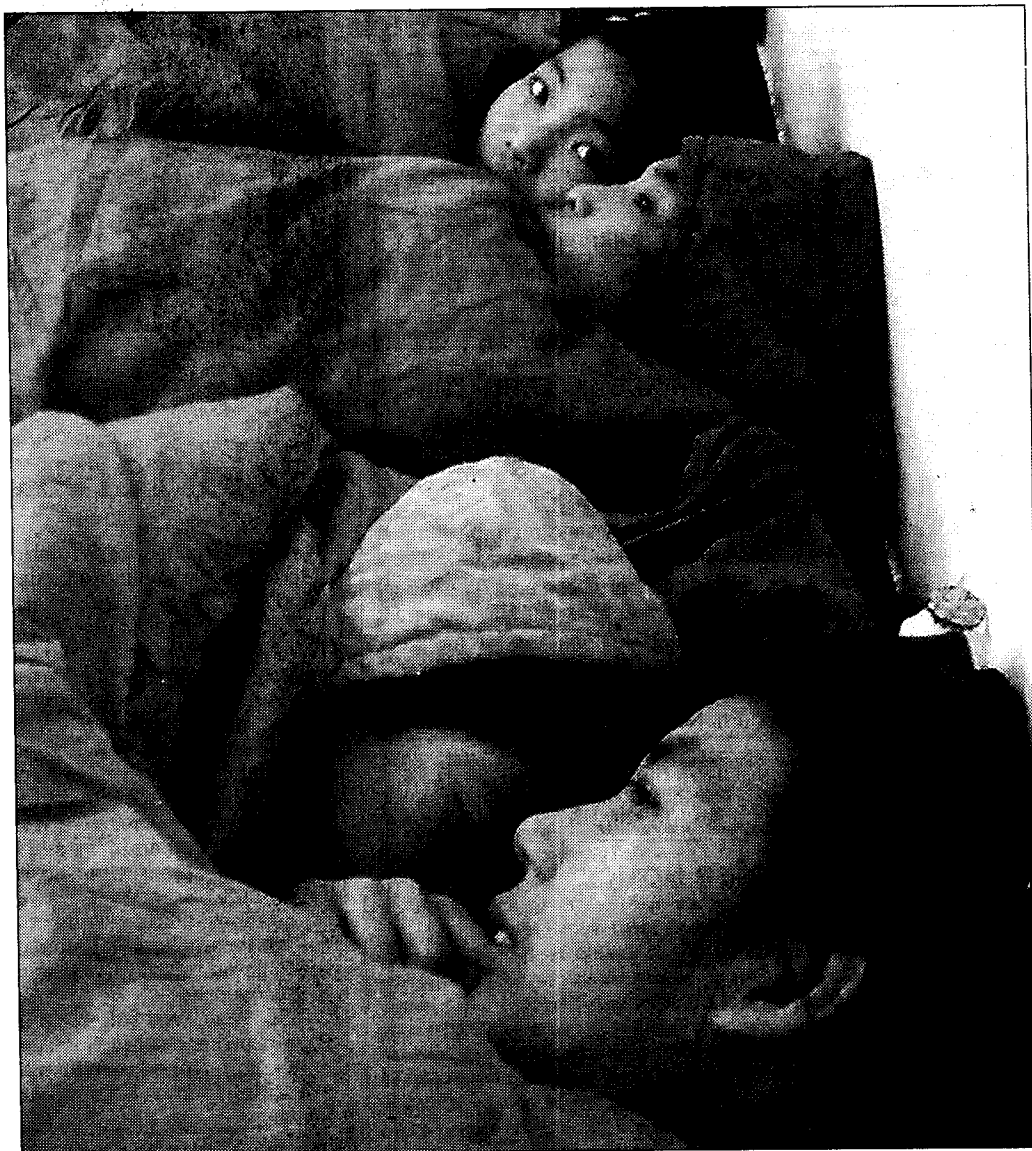
Xinhua said at least 193 people had been confirmed dead by today evening. It said the gas well burst on Tuesday, spewing a high concentration of natural gas and sulphurated hydrogen 30 metres into the air at the Chuandongbei field, which is owned by China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC), parent of oil major PetroChina. Evacuees were organised into 10 shelter areas as temperatures hovered around freezing, a county government official said.

Xinhua said sulphurated hydrogen is a toxic gas that can poison or kill people who inhale 760 to 1,000 milligrams per cubic metre.

It was also unclear why the reported death toll had shot up two days after the accident. Earlier today, Xinhua reported that 133 had died but soon raised that to 163 and then 191.

An industry source said top CNPC officials said they did not know the exact number of casualties as of yesterday morning before going to the scene.

Xinhua said 260 cubic metres of mud, to be pumped into the well to plug it up tomorrow morning, and 13 special rescue vehicles were en route to the scene.



Survivors of China's gas explosion at a makeshift hospital in Chongqing municipality's Kaixian county. (AFP)

China shuts down 673 state publications

China Daily/ ANN & IANS

BEIJING, Nov. 24. — The Chinese government has suspended publication of 673 party and government newspapers in an effort to reform its state newspapers.

Mr Liu Yunshan, head of the publicity department of the Communist Party of China central committee, said the CPC and government's efforts to rectify the management of state newspapers has paid off. He acknowledged that the more than four-month endeavour to stop the mandatory subscription to party and government newspapers — aimed at relieving the financial burden of farmers and units at the grassroots level — has been widely welcomed by cadre and people nationwide.

A total of 1,452 party and government newspapers have been affected by the state newspaper reform, 673 of which have been suspended for yielding no profits and 87 of which have been made free publications.

Forced subscription has been wreaking havoc on the media industry and this forced Beijing to reduce it by 1,000 unwanted publications. While the rest of China strides onwards from central planning to a market economy, much of the print media remains in the hands of government agencies, and their products are force-fed to all levels of government offices, at a cost ultimately assumed by the taxpayers.

By one estimate, China's media market takes in from 16 to 20 billion yuan (\$1.93-2.42 billion) a year.

Forced subscription has been wreaking havoc on the media industry and has forced Beijing to consider shutting down more than 1,000 publications

And government spending covers about 6 to 10 billion yuan (\$725 million-1.21 billion) of that. Of the 2,137 newspaper titles in the country, as many as 1,250 depend upon people like local officials in villages and small towns whose offices may or may not have the budget, much less the inclination, to pay for subscriptions.

A recent government regulation specifies that those titles earning less than 50 per cent of their revenues through voluntarily paid subscriptions will be forced to shut down. As media economist Mr Cao Peng explains, whether a subscription is paid for out of one's own pocket or out of a government expense account is not the issue. The determining factor is whether the subscription is the result of free will or coercion. When a tax collector solicits subscriptions for a publication produced by his agency, the small-business owner is not really in a position to choose.

"It's all about power," Mr Lu Hualing, president of the China Newspaper Industry Association, asserted. "China's media system is incorporated in the bureaucracy. When selling a newspaper is part of administrative power, mandatory purchases are unavoidable," he added.

Pro-Beijing party loses in Hong Kong

Associated Press

HONG KONG, Nov. 24. — Hong Kong voters turned out in record numbers (44 per cent) to hand the territory's top pro-Beijing party a stunning defeat in local elections that showed pro-democracy forces maintaining momentum from a huge anti-government march on 1 July.

"I believe the government got the message," said Mr Yeung Sum, chairman of the Opposition Democratic Party, which claimed 92 District Council seats yesterday, compared with 86 in the 1999 elections. "The citizenry's democratic aspirations are very clear."

The record turnout yesterday was bad news for the pro-Beijing and pro-government Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), which said it got 62 contested seats, a drop of 21



PEOPLE'S VERDICT: The result of the Hong Kong polls is viewed as a backlash against unpopular pro-China Chief Executive Mr Tung Chee-hwa. — AFP

from last time.

Party chairman Mr Jasper Tsang responded by offering his resignation over "the worst defeat we have suffered since the founding of the DAB 11 years ago".

All sides viewed the outcome as the result of a backlash against unpopular Hong Kong Chief Executive Mr Tung Chee-hwa. It raises the stakes for legislative elections next year — with pro-democracy politicians hoping to gain control of the legislature or at least to get enough seats to make things difficult for the government.

The DAB has been closely allied with Mr Tung ever since he took the helm of Hong Kong. The party paid the price for backing the unpopular former shipping tycoon as he sought earlier to pass an anti-subversion Bill that many in viewed as a threat to civil liberties.

THE STATESMAN

25 NOV 2003

Beijing embarks on military reforms

China
11-11-03

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, NOV. 6. China is embarking on a 'scientific' process of military 'reform' to wage successful battles in the emerging era of "information war".

The call for a guideline has been issued by the Chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission (CMC), Jiang Zemin. He chairs the Commission at the State level as also within the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC). The move coincided with political indications that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) may prune its strength of servicemen by 200,000 personnel by 2005.

At a conference on restructuring military academies, Mr. Jiang said the proposed 'reform' of the PLA, with definitive "Chinese characteristics", was aimed at achieving success in the information wars.

The other objective was to re-

inforce the army's mobility, competitiveness and its overall combat capabilities.

Noting that 'talent' was as crucial in this regard as scientific prowess, the CMC Chairman urged the military academies to participate in the process of reform and 'restructuring' by recognising the general situation in the country and turning the spotlight on the imperatives of national politics as well, besides paying attention to the relevant scientific aspects.

The conference was attended by the Chinese President and the CPC General Secretary, Hu Jintao, who is also the CMC Vice-Chairman.

The other CMC Vice-Chairmen, Guo Boxiong and Cao Gangchuan, were also present. Coinciding with the conference, the CMC and the State Council decided to downsize China's Army, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

CHINA UNAVOIDING.

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek dies at 105

Taipei: Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, famous for using her beauty, charm and fluent English to lobby the United States to help China fight the Japanese in World War II and later sought the US help to battle the Chinese communists, has died in New York at age 105, a relative said on Friday.

She caught a cold on Wednesday and developed pneumonia symptoms "before going very peacefully" at home on Thursday night, said Chiang Fang Chih-Yi, widow of her husband's grandson Chiang Hsiao-Yung.

She spent much of the time in semi-seclusion in her Manhattan apartment. In 1995 she made her last visit to Taiwan, where Chiang Kai-Shek, who briefly ruled China, had fled with his nationalist army after losing a civil war to China's communists in 1949.

Chiang and her husband were once major players in the nationalist government that ruled Taiwan.

But the Chiangs' authoritarian influence faded fast as Taiwan evolved into a democracy and its people lost interest in the nationalists' goal of retaking the mainland — an idea which seemed less and less feasible as the years passed. AP

New drug for flu hones in on symptoms, not virus:

A new therapy to cure influenza by discouraging the body's response to the infection and clinical tests on mice have yielded promising results that could lead to human trials.

The new method might also work for other diseases in which body's defences over react, such as asthma or multiple sclerosis, "Nature" magazine has reported quoting one of its developers, Tracy Hussell of Imperial College, London. "There are many situations where the immune system goes mad," she says. PTI



Madame Chiang Kai-Shek

China's leap upward

Our neighbour joins the club of space powers, while we spend time fobbing off kar sewaks

THE irony is stark: headlines across the world focus on China's launch of its first manned flight into space while ours are preoccupied with the launch of kar sewaks into Ayodhya! China now is ahead of Europe and alongside the United States and Russia as the real space powers. And it is the first developing country to do so. Western observers are keen to point out the similarities of the launch vehicle, Shenzhou-5, the 'Heavenly Vessel', the first of which was launched in 1999 soon after America's technological support for the Chinese space launch vehicles was terminated, with the Soviet Soyuz. The reality is that China's indigenous space programme was built up over four decades by Tsien Hsue-Shen, a Chinese who moved over from America in 1955 after he helped the Americans obtain rocket technology and scientists from post-war Germany.

China's 20-year plan clearly aims at transforming it into a "world leader in the field of space science and exploration of outer space" by 2020. Its capabilities in space are beginning to eclipse even those of the European Space Agency. Its space programme, like its nuclear programme, expanded from military to civil uses unlike ours. China built up its space launch capabilities on the foundations of its ICBMs and the technology to improve their performance from the US. The manned space flight, therefore, must be seen in the

context of integrated civil-military benefits. At the beginning of this year China had 27 foreign-made and 57 indigenous satellites up in space, a large number of them performing military roles. Its short-term plan till 2010 calls for integrated civil-military observation and remote sensing capabilities from space. Establishing independent satellite navigation and positioning system, so critical for military missions, and surveillance capabilities from space are part of that plan. It exports satellite technology to Pakistan, Iran, Thailand, among others.

The launch of 'Heavenly Vessel' essentially highlights the rather rapid evolution of China as a world power. There is a lesson that we need to learn. We have an extensive and well-developed programme for the exploitation of space. This so far has focused, and rightly so, almost exclusively on developing space capabilities for "national socio-economic objectives". What we need to do is to step up our space programme for peaceful applications with clearly defined goals. In this context, the Chinese example of training 30 million in colleges and technical schools in 1988 through its space assets is instructive. At the same time we need to pay serious attention to the use of space for national defence. A country that is not able to use space for military purposes is bound to have major holes in its defence capabilities.

China basks in glory of perfect space odyssey

Beijing, Oct. 16 (Reuters): Looking slightly dazed at all the fuss, China's first man in space returned to a hero's welcome today, completing an historic odyssey four decades after the Soviet Union and the US pioneered manned spaceflight.

Yang Liwei emerged from the Shenzhou V capsule and waved, drawing cheers from the horde of 600 locals, recovery workers and police who greeted him on the chill, sun-lit steppes of Inner Mongolia.

Suspended by a giant parachute, the bronze-coloured capsule carrying the "taikonaut", coined from the Chinese word for space, touched down at around 2223 GMT after a 21-hour journey that took him around the world 14 times.

Premier Wen Jiabao sent immediate congratulations, hailing the mission as a "complete success" after a chat with Yang.

The 38-year-old fighter pilot turned astronaut, raised in China's decaying northeast "rust belt", was presented with flowers and ribbons by well-wishers and then carried in a chair to awaiting doctors for a checkup.



Chinese astronaut Yang Liwei after landing on the grasslands of Inner Mongolian. (AP)

"The spacecraft operated smoothly. I'm feeling good. I'm proud of my motherland," Yang said before being whisked off for a flight to the capital, Beijing.

His return brought a triumphant climax to China's maiden space voyage that came four decades after Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin and Amer-

ican astronaut Alan Shepard pioneered manned space flight in 1961. The mission marked the crowning moment for a programme launched by Mao Zedong in 1958.

A year later, China launched its first satellite aboard a Long March rocket, which orbited the Earth blaring out the Cultural Revolution anthem *The East is Red*.

Yang's feat highlighted the emerging power of China, a permanent UN Security Council member now pursuing more active diplomacy, one of the world's fastest growing economies and chosen host of the 2008 Olympics.

"Our space hero Yang Liwei walked out of the capsule himself," mission commander Li Jinai was quoted by Xinhua as saying.

"Our country's first manned space flight achieved complete success."

In a mission that appeared to run like clockwork, a Long March 2F China lifted off into a clear blue sky over the Gobi desert at 0100 GMT yesterday and entered its predetermined orbit 10 minutes later.

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CHINA'S BIG LEAP IN SPACE

China

WITH THE LAUNCH of its first "yuhang yuan" (or space traveller), China has joined Russia and the United States as elite, space-faring nations of the world, becoming the first developing country to achieve this distinction. Rocketry was conceived with dreams of space travel and exploration, but it was the Cold War and the space race between the Soviet Union and the U.S. that brought it to fruition. Unremitting rivalry drove the two countries to send humans into space, make landings on the moon and set up manned space stations. China, on the other hand, is racing no one. China's first astronaut, Lieutenant Colonel Yang Liwei, is only the 431st human on the world's 241st manned space mission. But while the Russian space programme has been shattered by the economic collapse of the Soviet Union and the U.S. is too absorbed by its terrestrial problems to pay much attention to space, China's space programme is a potent symbol of an economically resurgent nation. More importantly, China has a clear long-term vision for its space programme, something the space programmes of other nations seem to lack at present.

While India based its first launch vehicle, the SLV-3, on the Scout rocket of the U.S., China has modelled its Shenzhou spacecraft on Russia's successful Soyuz series. The manned mission, with all the attendant challenges of safety and reliability, is far more complex than anything China has attempted up to now, and the successful completion of the first manned flight is a big leap forward for its space technology. Analysts now expect to see Chinese astronauts make their first spacewalks and carry out the docking of two Shenzhou spacecraft. China is building a new generation of more

powerful launch vehicles, which would allow it to put a space station into orbit. In three years, China expects to have its Chang'e-I scientific probe orbiting the moon. Chinese officials have talked about manned missions to the moon and even lunar bases.

Yet its manned space programme is just one component of a larger plan. In November 2000, China released a white paper outlining short- and long-term goals for its space programme. The nation, which invented gunpowder and made the early rockets with that fuel, intends in the coming decades to use space for national development, including the "industrialisation and marketisation of space technology and space applications", and to undertake the peaceful exploration of outer space. Since placing its first satellite into orbit in April 1970, China has flown 50 satellites of various kinds, including ones for remote sensing, communications, meteorology, navigation, and the military. China's white paper on space has emphasised the importance of further developing its satellite systems. In addition, China has actively built cooperative links with other nations.

Should India, another developing nation with a successful space programme of its own, embark on manned spaceflight? China is reported to have spent \$2.3 billion (about Rs. 10,350 crores) on its manned space programme over a decade or so. India's would cost no less. As it is, atomic energy, defence and space account for over 60 per cent of the Indian Government's research spending. In the words of the chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation, a national debate is necessary before embarking on such a programme.

Beijing bosses ink China's reforms blueprint

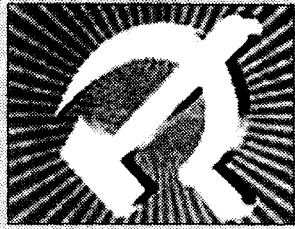
China Daily/ ANIN 55

BEIJING, Oct. 15. — Narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas, promoting employment and improving the social security system have been listed among the main tasks in improving China's socialist market economic system.

A communique passed at the Third Plenum of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which closed

yesterday, defined these tasks as follows:

- Improving the basic economic system of keeping public ownership as the mainstay of the economy and allowing diverse forms of ownership to develop side by side;
- Narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas;
- Promoting co-ordinated development of different regions;
- Establishing a unified, open and orderly modern market system;



While keeping public ownership as the mainstay of the economy, the Communist Party of China has called for allowing diverse forms of ownership to develop side by side

for actively promoting the development of diversified forms of public ownership, noting that a share-holding system that absorbs investment from various channels should be the major form of public ownership.

The communique also called for vigorously promoting and guiding the private sector of the economy and granting all private enterprises the same treatment in investment, financing, taxation, land use and foreign trade.

- Improving employment, income distribution and social security systems;
- Establishing a mechanism to promote sustainable social and economic development.

The communique called

china **NATION JUBILANT / A MILLENNIAL DREAM, SAYS HU** *HPD-12*

China puts man in space *16/10*

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, OCT. 15. Raising visions of a new space odyssey, China today successfully put an astronaut in orbit around the earth. The astronaut, Yang Liwei, who greeted the people of the world with a 'hello' from his spaceship, Shenzhou V, will return to earth tomorrow after completing 14 orbits and performing scientific tasks. China thus joined the elite club of Russia and the U.S. as a highly skilled space-faring nation.

The Chinese President, Hu Jintao, who witnessed the launch at the site, hailed the flight as the "millennial dream". Shenzhou V ('Divine Vessel V') blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in China's northwestern Gansu province at 9 a.m. (Beijing Time) on Wednesday, and exactly 10 minutes later, entered precisely into the pre-set orbit, Beijing said. The initial elliptical orbit had a perigee of 200 km. and an apogee of 343 km., it was said. At about 9.30 a.m., the astronaut, a lieutenant colonel of the People's Liberation Army, spoke to his doctor.

According to the Beijing Aerospace Command and Control Centre, Mr. Yang's first words from outer space were: "I feel good, and my conditions are normal."

The feel-good factor in this space mission was felt across China and among people around the world with a feel for man's destiny in space.

At 3.57 p.m., the spacecraft completed an orbit shift, as the controllers propelled the vessel into a circular orbit of 343 km. from the earth.

The Defence Minister, Cao Gangchuan, spoke to the astronaut during which Mr. Yang



The first Chinese astronaut, Yang Liwei, waves as he boards the spacecraft Shenzhou V before blasting off on Wednesday. — AP

conveyed his real-time greetings to the people across the world. He also said that he would "ensure the full success of the mission", it was reported. Mr. Hu earlier asked Mr. Yang to perform the "glorious, sacred

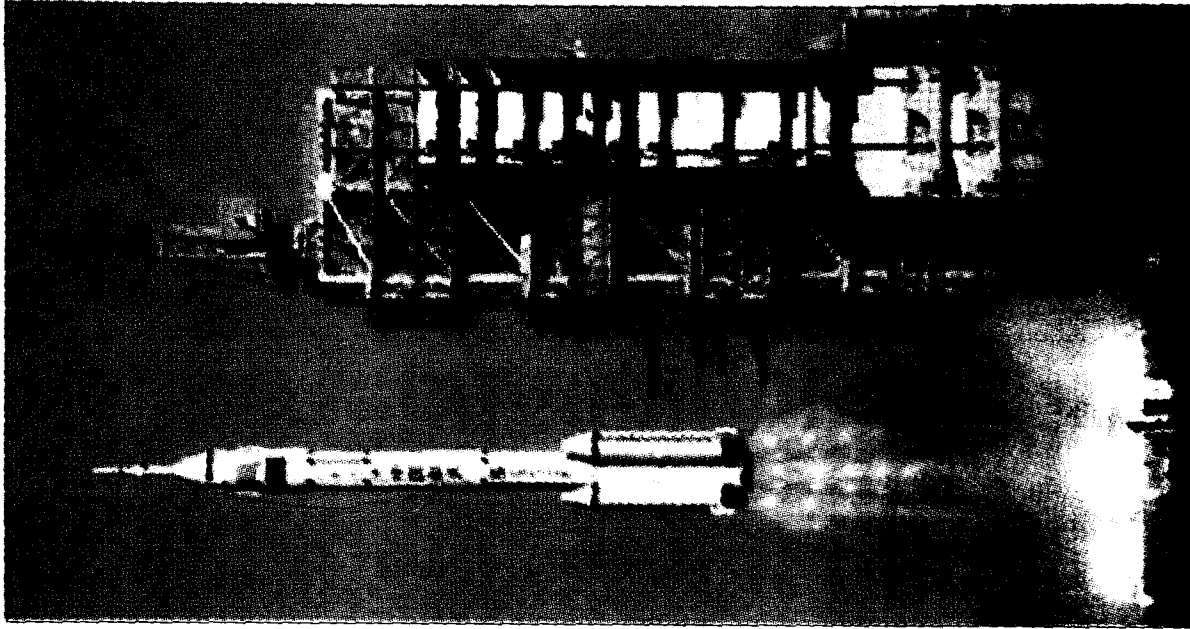
mission" in the spirit of a 'warrior' exploring the outer space on behalf of China. "We are waiting for your triumphant return," he told Mr. Yang before the final preparations for the launch began.

Legend has it that China's space dream began with the fairy tale about a woman flying to the moon after taking some medicine with magical potency and stayed as the Moon Goddess, it was recalled today.

SHENZOU-V LAUNCHED AT 9 A.M. ■ FLIGHT EXPECTED TO LAST FOR ABOUT 22 HOURS

China blasts off to space glory

Chen 9-5 16/10



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT: The long March-2F rocket carrying the manned craft *Shenzhou-V* is launched into space from the Jiuquan launch centre in the Gobi desert on Wednesday. — AFP

China Daily/ ANN & PTT

BEIJING, Oct. 15. — China launched its first manned spaceship today, becoming the third country in the world to send a person into orbit after the former USSR and the USA. Astronaut Yang Liwei became China's first space man.

A long March-2F rocket blasted off the Gobi desert launch pad and with a column of beautiful smoke, the *Shenzhou-V* (Divine Vessel V) craft cut across a bright northwest China sky at exactly 9 a.m. and went into orbit 10 minutes later.

The craft is expected to orbit 14 times, before landing in the inner Mongolia region of Northern China in about 22 hours' time.

China Central TV's Channel One cut into its regular programming to announce the launch. The station later showed *Shenzhou-V* streaking into the sky and disappearing, its tracer billowing behind it.

Minutes after the launch, a CCTV announcer said *Shenzhou* and Yang, had "entered orbit at 9:10". It reported: "Yang was reading a flight manual in the capsule of the *Shenzhou-V* spacecraft and looked composed and at ease."

"I feel good," Yang radioed back from space after a half-hour in flight in the earth's orbit, his

face vividly seen on the watch big screen in the Beijing Control Centre, located in Haidian District, north-western Beijing. Yang's report drew loud applause. Gen. Li Jinai, commander of the country's manned space programme, was quoted by CCTV as saying the spacecraft was operating normally in orbit.

Referring to China's earlier

The glory of our great motherland and a mark for the initial victory of China's first manned space flight... A historic step of the Chinese people

— President Hu on the launch

lier unmanned space launch, an announcer on the English-language CCTV-9 invoked Neil Armstrong's words upon first walking on the moon. "If these were small steps," the announcer said, "then now we are taking a giant leap into space."

The *Shenzhou-V* launch came after four test launches of unmanned capsules that orbited the Earth for nearly a week before parachuting back to China's northern grasslands.

President Hu Jintao watched the launch at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch

Centre in north-west China's Gansu Province.

He called the launch "the glory of our great motherland and a mark for the initial victory of the country's first manned space flight and for the significant, historic step of the Chinese people in the advance of climbing over the peak of the world's science and technology."

In Washington, a Pentagon spokeswoman said: "We wish them success and for their astronaut's safe return." Russia welcomed the successful launch of the Chinese manned spacecraft and congratulated "China on joining the select club of nation with manned space programmes."

Chinese space scientists today undertook several experiments and a crucial manoeuvre to prepare for *Shenzhou-V*'s scheduled return tomorrow by shifting its orbit. *Shenzhou-V* successfully completed orbit shift and is flying on a circular orbit 343 km from the earth, Xinhua quoted a report by Yang and the Beijing aerospace command and control centre.

Space elevator

Researchers are proposing an elevator reaching 100,000-km into the sky that would be able to launch payloads into space at a far lower cost than the space shuttle, AP adds from Los Alamos, New Mexico.

First among equals

BEIJING, Oct. 15. — China's first astronaut Yang Liwei today radioed back to mission control that he was "feeling good" and expressed confidence in fulfilling his task during the maiden space voyage on board the *Shenzhou-V* spacecraft.

The ace fighter pilot-turned astronaut said he was fully confident of the nation's first-ever spaceflight. The menu for Yang's flight included freeze-dried shredded pork with garlic sauce and fried rice, and he brought along a sleeping bag for naps, CCTV said.

Yang, who is 5 feet 6 inches tall, was born in 1965 into a teacher's family in Youzhong County in Liaoning province, an industrial area in China's northeast. His older sister said he was an athletic child who enjoyed swimming and ice skating. He works for the Aviation Military Unit of the People's Liberation Army. He has an eight-year-old son.

While a fighter pilot, Yang had at least 1,350 hours of flight experience. His comrades describe him as a "miraculously dedicated" man. Yang had two backups, Zhai Zhigang and Nie Haisheng. — ANN & PTT

China all set to launch manned space flight

By N. Gopal Raj

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT. 13. China is days away from sending its first astronaut into space, becoming the third nation after Russia and the United States to have the capability for manned spaceflights. The Long March 2F rocket, carrying the Shenzhou (SZ) spacecraft, is expected lift-off from the Jiuquan space centre in the Gobi desert between October 15 and 17.

As yet, China has not revealed the identity of its first astronaut. A report in the *People's Daily* said that three astronauts have been short-listed. China has trained 14 astronauts, all experienced fighter pilots, but their identities have been kept a secret.

The Shenzhou spacecraft was flown unmanned four times between 1999 and 2002. The launches took place at night to aid visual tracking during lift-off and the re-entry capsule's return. But for the manned mission, the intention is to have the launch and the re-entry during daytime.

The official Chinese Xinhua news agency, quoting a senior official, has confirmed the date of the launch. Many senior Chinese figures, who want to be present at the launch, are currently attending a meeting of the Central Committee of the

Communist Party of China, which ends on October 14.

Press reports say the launch would be telecast live, an indication of China's confidence in the mission, and that senior Chinese leaders would speak to the astronaut while he is in orbit.

One agency report quoted a Chinese newspaper as saying that the launch would be at 9 a.m. Beijing time.

Phillip Clark, a British expert on the Chinese space programme, has estimated that the launch could happen between 10 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. Beijing time (7.30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Indian time).

After a mission lasting about 21 hours, China's first astronaut should be landing the next day in Inner Mongolia between 7.30 a.m. and 9 a.m. Beijing time (5 a.m. to 6.30 a.m. Indian time).

According to Xinhua, the SZ-5 spacecraft will initially be in an oval orbit, 200 km by 350 km. Then, it would move to a circular orbit at an altitude of 343 km, essentially a mission profile similar to that in the unmanned SZ-3 and SZ-4 flights. Mr. Clark pointed out that this manoeuvre places the spacecraft in position for a rendezvous or a docking mission with a second spacecraft launched from Jiuquan. Such docking and Chinese space

walks are expected to occur during subsequent missions.

Although modelled on Russia's Soyuz capsule, the Shenzhou (SZ) is based entirely on Chinese designs and equipment. Like the Soyuz, the Shenzhou has three modules. The orbital module holds experiments and provides the living space for astronauts. Behind this is the re-entry capsule, which can seat up to three astronauts at lift-off and during re-entry. At the rear, is the service module, with instrumentation, another set of solar panels and the spacecraft's main propulsion system.

Unlike its Soyuz equivalent, Shenzhou's orbital modules are equipped with their own solar arrays and propulsion systems. In the last three unmanned missions, the SZ orbital modules have carried out independent manoeuvres and remained in space for six months after the re-entry capsule returned to Earth.

The SZ-5's orbital module is said to be equipped with imaging camera having a ground resolution of 1.6 metres. China has long-term plans for a space station and even human exploration and colonisation of the Moon.

"The next footsteps on the Moon could be Chinese," predicts Mr. Clark.

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Chinese leaders discuss reforms

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, OCT. 11. The toning up of China's "socialist market economic system" and the proposed revision of a part of the State Constitution are the main subjects on the agenda of an important political meeting that began in Beijing today. The meeting — the third plenary session of the 16th Central Committee of the governing Communist Party of China (CPC) — is expected to last four days.

The latest plenum has been convened in the light of a decision by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in August this year. It was noted, at that time, that China's Constitution required "appropriate revisions" as also some supplementary provisions so that it could continue to facilitate the ongoing process of reforms and modernisation. The August meeting of the Political Bureau had observed that China's current Constitution did, on the whole, meet the needs of reform besides the opening-up and modernisation drive. While the Constitution should, therefore, be kept 'stable', it could also do with certain suitable revisions in accordance with the relevant legal procedures.

While the details of the proposed changes were not made public at that time, the idea was that the "objective demands" and realities of the current process of China's economic and social development would determine the revisions.

The Political Bureau will, for the first time, report on its work to the CPC Central Committee that began its latest plenum today. The official Xinhua news agency quoted analysts and experts as saying that this procedure would further enhance the party's internal democracy and political vitality under Hu Jintao's stewardship as the CPC's General Secretary.

The overall political context of the present initiatives of the party can be traced to the commencement of the reform process about a quarter century ago. What is now being fashioned is a "new starting point" for China's reform process against the backdrop of the decisions made, nearly a decade ago, on issues relating to the firm establishment of a socialist market economic system.

Diplomats in the Chinese capital note that the latest moves by the CPC could perhaps be linked to the new ideas, now in vogue, about the political representational character of the party for the purpose of the country's economic development.

China lifts veil of space secrecy

Beijing, Oct. 10 (Reuters): China will launch its first manned spaceship next week, aiming to become the third country after the Soviet Union and the US to put a man in orbit.

The official Xinhua news agency said today the Shenzhou V would be launched between October 15 and 17 at an "appropriate time" from a launch pad in the Gobi desert in northwestern China and orbit the Earth 14 times. It was the first official confirmation of the launch window on a mission China has kept under tight wraps.

"The Shenzhou V spacecraft will carry out the first manned space mission and will lift off from the China Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre," Xinhua quoted an official in charge of the country's space programme as saying. "Now all preparatory work for the launch is progressing smoothly."

Sources at two major state-run television stations and a tour operator said early this week the launch had been provi-

sionally set for the morning of October 15, barring bad weather.

And Hong Kong's Beijing-backed *Wen Wei Po* newspaper said the craft would fly for 21 hours, or 90 minutes per orbit, before floating back down to Earth the next morning.

It did not say how many astronauts would be taking part in the maiden voyage, but that a team had been trained for the mission. Qi Faren, chief designer of the vessel, was quoted by the *China Daily* as saying he and his colleagues were confident about the mission despite the fact China had so far conducted only four unmanned test flights due to "limited funds".

China has kept a veil of secrecy on details of the launch, with scant details leaking in a few state newspapers and in Hong Kong. State media have said that up to three "taikonauts" could be aboard the craft, although the Shanghai-based *Liberation Daily* said yesterday a single astronaut would be chosen from 14 experienced fighter pilots.

China party high on pro-poor promise

Beijing, October 1

CHINESE PRESIDENT Hu Jintao has for the first time called for "democratic elections" and "people's participation in political affairs", probably indicating a change in the mindset of the new generation of leaders.

While what exactly Hu meant by "democratic elections" and "people's participation in political affairs" are not known, analysts say the usage of these terms by the new leadership, which assumed power this March, is "significant" considering the dramatic changes happening in the world's most populous nation. Hu made the speech at a meeting of the politburo, the second-highest decision-making body of the CPC. The meeting was held on Tuesday, the eve of China's 54th National Day.

As Chinese families thronged tourist spots on National Day, the Communist Party marked its 54th anniversary in power today with promises to do more to help the poor left behind during the country's economic boom.

Government events were low-key, in line with the President's orders to cut back on official

pomp. There were no military parades or other largescale festivities like those of other political holidays.

The party newspaper, *People's Daily*, called on its 67 million members to fight waste and live frugally even as the government promotes profit-oriented capitalist policies. It invoked promises to build a "well-off society" — the slogan for efforts to spread prosperity to the rural poor and the jobless.

Hu, who is also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), called for "efforts to expand citizens' orderly participation in political affairs and guarantee the people's rights to carry out democratic election, decision making, management and supervision according to law," the official Xinhua news agency said.

"All the policies of the party and the government must be in the interests of the people and meet the needs for economic and social development," he said.

China has been holding grassroots-level elections on a non-party basis to village offices for nearly a decade. However, the CPC, which has monopolised po-



A young girl waves the national flag next to figures of women Red Army soldiers at a sculpture exhibition in Shanghai coinciding with the National Day celebrations on Wednesday.

litical power since 1949, is seen as slow in widening the process of democratic elections in the country of 1.3 billion.

Though the Communist Party has allowed four non-Communist parties to function in an ad-

visory capacity, the party-led government has put down any efforts by individuals or small groups to set up any real opposition to the CPC.

Hu also called for "active and steady promotion of political sys-

tem reform, expansion of socialist democracy and improvement of the socialist legal system"

Premier Wen Jiabao expressed confidence that China's goals of reform and development set for this year will "undoubtedly be

fully realised". He was speaking at a reception on Wednesday marking the 54th anniversary of the founding of the country. Wen said the Chinese people have won a decisive victory over SARS epidemic? "various other difficulties. These achievements, as well as progress in social programmes, he said there is no doubt that China's goals will be fully realised.

China's top leaders Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, Jia Qinglin, Zeng Qinghong, Huang Ju, Wu Guanzheng, Li Changchun and Luo Gan attended the reception, along with more than 1,000 guests, including top diplomats. Wen reiterated China's unswerving pursuit of its independent foreign policy of peace and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. "Instead of being a threat to anybody, a strong and prosperous China can only bring benefits to the world... China will never seek hegemony."

National Day marks the anniversary of the declaration by Mao Zedong of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, following a civil war.

PTI

Is Chinese democracy a contradiction in terms?

Confucian oxymoron

JAIRAM RAMESH

First, it was the SARS epidemic that forced a whole new culture of transparency on Hu Jintao and his colleagues. Then it was Mr Vajpayee's visit to Beijing that showcased India's plurality. Now it is massive public protests in Hong Kong. The "democracy deficit" in China has once again come under sharp focus, leading to renewed questions as to how long a vibrant market economy and an authoritarian, if not totalitarian polity can co-exist.

China is neither an electoral nor a liberal democracy as India is. There have been public dissent and protest movements that have erupted every once in a while but they have all been brutally suppressed as was done to students at Beijing's historic Tiananmen Square in May 1989 and to the Buddhist-influenced Falungong in April 1999. For a very brief while in 1998 it looked as if a competitor to the Chinese Communist Party in the form of the Chinese Democratic Party would emerge but the CDP was soon banned. The CDP however is very active in the United States of America and elsewhere.

But paradoxes — mostly unappreciated in this country particularly — abound. The CCP has been able to challenge its icons in a manner that no Indian political party has done or can do. Historically, Chinese provinces have enjoyed greater economic and administrative powers than the states in India. The CCP has been as faction-ridden as some major Indian political parties. Policy-making in China has been a pluralistic, often acrimonious process but with definite finality, unlike in India.

In the past decade China has seen what the noted American political scientist Suzanne Ogden has called the "inklings of democracy". While rule of law is a distant dream, rule by law — as crafted, interpreted and adjudicated by the CCP — is a reality. The man responsible for this was Peng Zhen who had been mayor of Beijing in the Fifties and Sixties. If Mao made China strong, if Zhou made it internationally acceptable and if Deng made it rich, posterity will record that Peng laid the foundations of "democracy with Chinese characteristics". And there could not have been a more unlikely candidate for this honour. A die-hard Marxist, a victim of the Cultural Revolution for supporting critics of Mao, he rebounded in the late Seventies and ended his long political career as head of the National People's Congress during 1983-88.

Between 1982-87, there was a heated debate in China on what the ongoing decollectivization and the newly-introduced "household responsibility" sys-

tem meant for rural self-governance. This system freed peasants from most production and distribution controls. Peng took the position that village democracy was essential for consolidating the spectacular gains from farm liberalization. Opposition was intense. Finally, a law was passed in November 1987 to introduce village-level elections. Reflecting the widespread ambivalence it was called a provisional law. This law was regularized in 1998. Other than Peng (and Deng himself) only the ministry of civil affairs under Cui Naifu showed enthusiasm for this

wide interest and a number of foreign institutions like the Ford Foundation, Asia Foundation and the Carter Centre are involved in both monitoring and impact assessment. Five years ago, the law making village elections compulsory went through radical changes that introduced free nomination of candidates, secret voting, transparent ballot counting and the right to recall. Undoubtedly, the party is still paramount but gradually elected village committees are taking root in the countryside. These committees comprise three to seven people elected to



Zhu Rongji clearly expressed his preference for direct township elections

revolutionary step.

Finally, the support of influential leaders like Bo Yibo tilted the balance in favour of the political reformers. The motivations for taking such a step are now being unravelled. There was no popular demand for village elections. It has been argued that "progressive conservatives" like Peng feared the collapse of rural order following the dismantling of the commune system. Elections were seen as a way of placing party officials in control. Although he did talk of accountability of the party to the people, Peng himself saw no contradiction between strong state control and village democracy.

Officially, the claim is that direct elections to village committees have taken place in China's approximately 930,000 villages at least once since 1987. Independent scholars, however, estimate that this proportion is much less, at between one-third and one-half. These elections have evoked world-

doing without asking". Thus, it was that Nancheng and Buyan townships in Sichuan province had direct elections in November and December 1998 respectively. Buyan hit the world headlines. Subsequently, direct township elections have taken place in Shanxi, Henan and Shenzhen provinces. Indeed, this "doing without asking" approach provided the backdrop to the 1987 village democracy law, since in late 1980 and early 1981 a few villages in Guangxi province had simply gone ahead on their own and formed village committees.

It is most improbable that democracy in China will evolve along Indian lines — even Chinese champions of greater democracy in the mainland do not have such an agenda. The greatest fear of the modern-day Chinese intellectual elite especially is chaos. This mindset is born out of the trauma caused by the collapse of social order during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-69. The difference between Indian-style democracy and chaos to any observer outside India is thin. The dominant view is that the experience of Taiwan in the Nineties notwithstanding, democracy is simply not in the Chinese gene.

Indeed, this was one of the themes of Samuel Huntington's influential *Clash of Civilisations* based on a selective reading of Confucianism. But with increasing globalization and with the explosive growth of mobile telephony and the Internet (now around 120 million netizens), civil society could well open up with unpredictable consequences. Globalization is both strengthening Han nationalism (even though "Han" is a mixture of various ethnic groups) and creating space for Western values, culture and consumption styles. Chinese rebels are neither extinct nor endangered. The community is growing as Ian Buruma describes in his recent *Bad Elements*, although as he himself recognizes many of the protesters and dissidents are Christians.

In 2000, Jiang Zemin saw the need to broaden the CCP and came up with his famous "three represents" theory to make the party more widely acceptable, particularly to the newly emerging entrepreneurial classes. How the Chinese deal with Hong Kong will reveal their intentions — according to the Basic Law that governs the city for fifty years after Chinese take-over in 1997, direct elections are permitted after 2007. How the Chinese deal with increasing agitations of unemployed workers and frustrated farmers and with the backlash arising out of the dilution of the powers of provinces as the full impact of the World Trade Organisation accession plays itself out will also be crucial.

serve a term of three years and are overseen by a village representative assembly comprising of all village residents. All administrative matters of the village, including tax collection, are entrusted to these committees.

Between 1997 and 2001, the issue of elections at higher levels became a subject of considerable controversy. Jiang Zemin made contradictory statements but Zhu Rongji clearly expressed his preference for direct township elections. While Beijing dithered, Lianjiang Li writing in the *China Quarterly* pointed out that some provinces "adopted the time-tested strategy of

Hu's concern over Hong Kong situation

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JULY 22. The Chinese President, Hu Jintao, who is also the General Secretary of the governing Communist Party of China, has expressed Beijing's serious 'concern' over the political unrest in Hong Kong over the issues concerning the eventual enactment of a national security law there for the territory's gradual political integration with the mainland over a specified period.

Mr. Hu told the Hong Kong Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, during their meeting in Beijing on Saturday, that China was "very concerned with the recent situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region".

The "recent situation", a reference to the 'protest' rallies in Hong Kong over the relevant bill, has now eased to some extent following the resignation of the territory's Secretary for Security, Regina Ip.

Mr. Hu conveyed China's 'concern' even as he firmly backed Mr. Tung in his efforts to steer Hong Kong out of its phase of political disquiet that could



Protesters call on Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, to step down outside Central Government offices in Hong Kong recently.

yet snowball into a major crisis if not managed with sensitivity.

It was in this context that Mr. Hu spelt out, at considerable length, how China viewed the situation.

He said that "Hong Kong belongs to China and the people of Hong Kong". Therefore, he affirmed that China was "strongly

opposed to the attempt of any foreign forces and other forces from outside to interfere in the internal affairs of Hong Kong".

While making it abundantly clear that there was no question of a slide-back by either China or Hong Kong from the principle that bound them, the formula of "one country, two

systems", Mr. Hu underlined that "only by maintaining social stability can Hong Kong preserve a sound business environment, keep its features as a free port and its status as an international financial, trade and shipping centre".

He told Mr. Tung how important it was to "create favourable conditions for economic recovery and further development" in Hong Kong.

On the political side of the equation between the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong as a special part of China, Mr. Hu reminded Mr. Tung that it was the territory's 'responsibility' to enact a national security law.

However, it was also "a necessary part of implementing the Basic Law", which spelt out the China-Hong Kong ties, that the special administrative region should "independently draft the law to safeguard national security and reunification".

Mr. Hu's plain-speak on these lines is expected to guide Mr. Tung's governance of Hong Kong in the present delicate circumstances.

Beijing trip bolsters Tung's confidence

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JULY 19. The Hong Kong Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, today held crisis talks with the highest ranking Chinese leaders in Beijing and claimed later that they had expressed "total confidence" in him at this delicate stage in his moves to integrate the territory more firmly with mainland China.

Mr. Tung met the Chinese President, Hu Jintao, and the Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao. The charm that Mr. Hu exuded in welcoming the beleaguered Mr. Tung was quite in evidence, according to regional diplomats and analysts monitoring the event in Beijing.

Mr. Tung's visit, planned some time ago, acquired unusual importance in the context of the resignation by Hong Kong's Secretary for Security, Regina Ip, whose piloting of a controversial national security bill has

caused much political unrest. Mr. Tung, who was selected by China, has not only deferred the consideration of the bill but also promised to consult the people of Hong Kong more closely before making further moves to pilot the legislation.

The bill, designed to deal with treason and subversion, is reckoned to align Hong Kong more closely with mainland China, which took possession of the former British colony six years ago under the principle of "one country, two systems".

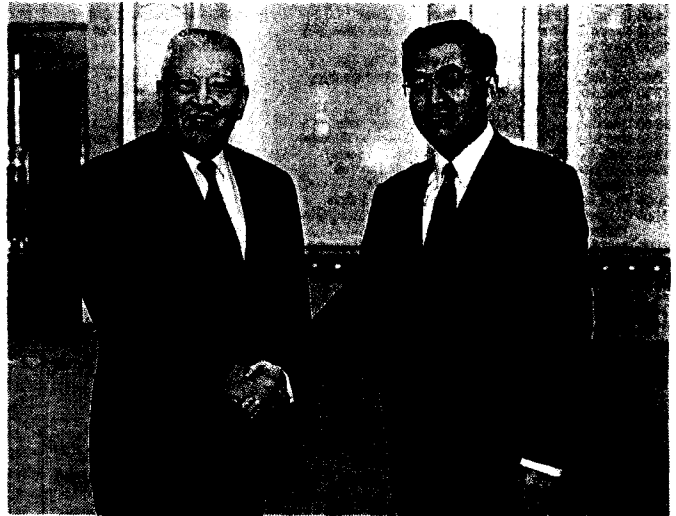
After briefing the Chinese leaders on the situation in Hong Kong, Mr. Tung told reporters that the mainland authorities were now fully aware of how and why the events unfolded the way they did.

It now remains to be seen how the Chinese leaders themselves will deal with the Hong Kong situation.

With Mr. Wen himself having visited Hong Kong for the cele-

bration of the sixth anniversary of its return to the Chinese fold, Beijing has so far upheld the

principle of the territory's distinctive political identity in the present crisis.



The Chinese President, Hu Jintao (right), with the Hong Kong Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, in Beijing on Saturday. — AP

THE HINDU

20 JUL 2003

Beijing's reply to protests is 'social stability'

By P. S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, July 2. With Hong Kong attracting international attention on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of its return to 'motherland' from British colonial rule, the Chinese Central Government in Beijing has made it clear that the social stability and economic development of the region and the mainland would receive precedence over all other issues.

Hong Kong was never really administered under the norms of conventional democracy during the British colonial rule. However, the 'demand' for a "democratic dispensation" is now being voiced in some vocal sections in the territory which joined the People's Republic of China (PRC) under the formula of "one country, two systems" exactly six years ago.

The formula allowed Hong Kong to keep its distinctive identity in politics and economics for a specified period, without being integrated fully with mainland China's political system of "socialism with Chinese characteristics". It was in this milieu that a significant "protest rally" was organised in Hong Kong on Tuesday to coincide with the official celebrations of its identity as a distinctive part of the PRC. The main theme of the march, according to its organisers and Western supporters, is the need

to "defend Hong Kong's freedoms" in the face of the moves to enact legislation banning "acts of treason and subversion" in terms of Article 23 of the Basic Law.

It is this law that governs Hong Kong's links with the PRC for the duration of the implementation of the principle of "one country, two systems". The PRC's Central Government in Beijing is of the view that the legislation, expected to be enacted soon, has no anti-democracy devil in the detail. The measure is certified to be just that - to enhance peace and stability of Hong Kong as a special administrative region of the PRC.

It is in this context that the PRC's Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, said in Hong Kong on Monday that the territory should create a stable environment for foreign investment. Not surprisingly, the sixth anniversary celebrations were preceded by a free trade agreement between the territory and the PRC. Mr. Wen, who is being increasingly noticed on the international circuit for his people-friendly style in politics, hailed the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), and offered the people of the territory "a real big gift".

Firm resolve

The gift consisted of a firm resolve to honour the principles of "one country, two

systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and "a high degree of autonomy".

During the formal celebration in Hong Kong on Tuesday, an event that preceded the march, Mr. Wen said: "I hope our Hong Kong compatriots will cherish the hard-won position, as masters of their own affairs, and make efforts to fulfil the popular aspiration for social stability and seize precious opportunities for development".

The accent on "social stability" is the answer of the PRC to the demand for sustainable 'freedoms' voiced by a section of the people in Hong Kong with regard to the Basic Law.

The view from Beijing is not confined to the portals of power in Beijing. An opinion within the foreign diplomatic circles in the Chinese capital is that the protest in Hong Kong is directed more against the territory's Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, than against the proposed legislation itself. Mr. Tung is seen in Hong Kong as a leader out of sync with the "democracy brigade" there.

The Hong Kong protesters have also come in for criticism for their real intentions, given their proclivity to mix issues concerning the territory with those of the 1989 incidents at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

In Jiang's shadow, Hu tries to tone up party



Hu Jintao

Beijing, July 1 (Reuters): China's Communist Party, which swept to power in a bloody civil war in 1949 and turned 82 today, must re-dedicate itself to the people if its grip is to remain unshaken, party chief Hu Jintao said.

Hu told a three-day seminar in Beijing the party "should dedicate itself to the interests of the public and govern for the people's benefits", the official Xinhua news agency reported.

"Power should be used for the people. Concern should be shown for the people and benefits sought for the people," Hu said. Analysts say the party has become increasingly alienated from the people over the course of reform in the past two decades and its image has been dented by a string of corruption scandals involving senior members.

Hu took over the party leadership from Jiang Zemin last November in the first orderly succession since 1949. He then succeeded Jiang as state President in March. "This new leadership has cut out its role as being caring for the people," one Asian diplomat said.

Xinhua made no mention of any call by Hu for reforms or inner party democracy, contrary to widespread speculation.

Hu invoked his Jiang's "Three Represents" political theory — a blueprint for broadening the party's membership to include previously shunned private entrepreneurs — which analysts interpreted as a sign that he was not strong enough to push through his own agenda.

They said Hu was struggling to emerge from the shadow of the still influential Jiang.

The party is under growing pressure to introduce bolder changes after monopolising politics for more than five decades, but any reform would be aimed at preserving party rule.

The party "will not reform for the sake of reforming", the Deng Xiaoping Theory Research Centre at the elite Peking University said in an essay carried in the official *People's Daily*, the party mouthpiece.

"Rather, we will strengthen and improve the party's construction through reforms," said the centre, which interprets Deng Xiaoping Theory, considered as one of the party's bibles.

Hong Kong protest

In Hong Kong, handed over to China in 1997, protesters burned a Communist Party flag as Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao tried

to reassure the territory that citizens' basic rights and freedoms would be protected. Hundreds of thousands of protesters denounced the Hong Kong government's planned anti-subversion law and demanded the right to elect their own leaders.

The new party leadership must tackle a plethora of problems — up to 60 million state workers have been laid off and overtaxed peasants have rioted in some places. The party, founded by 12 people at a secret meeting in a girls' school in Shanghai on July 1, 1921, boasted 66.94 million members at the end of last year, the *People's Daily* said.

Under the Communists' 53-year watch, 30 million people have died in famine and millions were banished to the countryside or hounded to death during the leftist 1966-76 Cultural Revo-

lution. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, were killed on June 3-4, 1989 when the army brutally crushed student-led demonstrations for democracy centred on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

But under the Communists, China's 1.3 billion people have gained greater freedom in what to eat and wear, where to live and travel and the ability to get rich.

Brandishing banners, umbrellas and fans, a crowd estimated at hundreds of thousands braved stifling heat today to denounce Hong Kong's planned anti-subversion law and demand the right to elect their own leaders.

"Return rule to the people," they chanted. Many wore black to mourn what they said was the demise of rights and freedoms in one of the world's key financial centres.

Hu pushes forward Jiang's theory



Mr Hu Jintao

China Daily/ ANN & PTI

BEIJING, July 1. — Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao called on the Communist Party of China and the whole nation to show greater enthusiasm for the study and implementation of the important thought of “Three Represents” today.

The President was speaking at a symposium in Beijing today to mark the 82nd founding anniversary of the CPC.

Mr Hu said the study and implementation of the “Three Represents” thought should be brought to a new high, so as to guarantee that the CPC will do a better job in leading the people to push forward the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Presented by Mr Hu's predecessor, Mr Jiang Ze-

min in February 2000, the “Three Represents” thought states that the CPC must always represent “the development trend of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people”.

This thought is a fundamental guideline for the Chinese to learn from the past and advance into the future, keep pace with the times and build a well-off society in an all-round way, Mr Hu told the symposium. “The essence of this thought is that the CPC should dedicate itself to the interests of the public and govern for the people's benefit.”

Political analysts said the ruling party is determined to ensure that it does not succumb to criticisms after China joined the WTO in December 2001.

However, there was no mention of “inner party democracy” as expected by China watchers in the President's speech.

The new and younger Chinese leadership under Mr Hu has been shifting away from dogma. But Mr Hu, still struggling to emerge from Mr Jiang's shadow, is unlikely to flirt with western-style democracy in China any time soon, analysts said.

Hu commends Jiang ideology

By P. S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, JULY 1. Top Chinese leaders today underlined two fundamental aspects of their polity, even as the Communist Party of China (CPC) celebrated the 82nd anniversary of its formation and Hong Kong marked the sixth years of existence as a special administrative region under the overall jurisdiction of the Central Government in Beijing.

Hu Jintao, the CPC's General Secretary and China's President, exhorted the party leaders and cadre to uphold and advance the cause of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" by adhering to the idea of "Three Represents".

This concept, first propounded by the previous General Secretary of the CPC, Jiang Zemin, was adopted as a basic feature of the Chinese polity at the party's 16th National Congress held in Beijing last November. The principle of "Three Represents" is that the CPC would represent three aspects of the

dynamic Chinese society of the present times. The three aspects are "the development trend of China's advanced productive forces", labelled in the West as "red capitalism", "the orientation of China's advanced culture" and "the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people".

While the cultural dimension is related to China's sustained pride in its civilisational strengths, the reference to the "overwhelming majority of the Chinese people" is designed to enhance the CPC's acceptability quotient of the political kind among a billion-plus population in a fast-changing social and economic milieu.

As for the other basic feature of the Chinese polity, namely the issue "one country, two systems" in respect of Hong Kong, Wen Jiabao, China's Prime Minister, today pledged his country's continued adherence to this principle as also the Basic Law governing the territory's acceptance of the overall au-

thority of the Central Government in Beijing.

Participating in the celebrations to mark the sixth anniversary of Hong Kong's re-accession or return to the motherland, Mr. Wen said the territory's existence under China's wings was a testimony to the far-sightedness of Deng Xiaoping, the late paramount leader, who had envisioned the idea of "one country, two systems". Under this principle, Hong Kong is allowed to retain its capitalist characteristics and its related political identity for a specified period even under the auspices of mainland China as a "socialist" country with "Chinese characteristics".

Mr. Wen said Hong Kong belonged to its people even as it belonged to China as well.

At a press conference in Beijing, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Kong Quan, today asserted that any international criticism of the current debate on the Basic Law relating to Hong Kong was totally "unacceptable" to Beijing.

2 JUL 2009

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Hu, Shanghai Gang in covert clash

Beijing, June 29 (Reuters): First, a hit television epic challenged official history was yanked off the air. Then came a blatant about-face by a health official, an opaque Shanghai banking probe and abrupt curbs on the press.

The developments, Chinese sources say, signal inner strife between increasingly confident Communist Party boss Hu Jintao and his influential predecessor Jiang Zemin, seven months after China's smoothest power handover since the 1949 revolution. They said Jiang, who remains chief of the nation's vast military machine, had made calculated stabs to reassert his authority in recent weeks. Hu supporters have cried foul.

"It's not an overt struggle. It's a covert struggle," said one party official of an intrigue unfolding at a critical juncture.

Hu is preparing to mark the party's July 1 birthday with a speech expected to touch on "inner party democracy".

In the run-up to July 1, jour-

nalists and intellectuals have fuelled hopes Hu will push for faster systematic change and increased openness after the embarrassing cover-up of the SARS epidemic and a rash of legal scandals.

But analysts see the cautious Hu taking only small steps to-

ward political reform, particularly with Jiang still in the wings.

"Under these circumstances, Hu has to be careful," said one party newspaper editor. "He will not bring up much that is new."

Hu, 60, was once seen as



Former President Jiang Zemin (left) with Hu Jintao in happier times

prone to pressure by Jiang and his allies known as the "Shanghai Gang". But by declaring an all-out "people's war" on SARS, he has established himself quicker than expected since becoming President in March.

By contrast, Jiang drew flak after the army's initial refusal to disclose SARS cases, the dismissal of health minister Zhang Wenkang — once Jiang's personal physician — and the aloofness of his camp during the SARS campaign. The Shanghai probe into improper loans to property barons could also taint Jiang allies. Frictions have surfaced.

In early June, talk spread that party elders had written a letter urging Jiang to retire.

The petition, signed by Hu's patron Song Ping and Jiang's old conservative rival Qiao Shi, questioned whether Jiang's protégés would be implicated in the Shanghai case, one source said.

"They basically wrote, 'Your handling of SARS and other matters is affecting the current

leaders' leadership'." Jiang, 76, has not taken criticism lying down.

"The West is capitalising on the Iraq war and SARS to pressure China. That's what Jiang is saying," the editor said.

In late May, when Hu made his first trip abroad as President to Russia and France, Jiang swooped into Beijing from his home in Shanghai, three sources said.

The first person he met was Zhang, they said. The two nibbled dumplings, another editor added, in a meeting clearly aimed at exculpating the disgraced health boss.

Then on May 30, vice-health minister Gao Qiang defended his former boss at a televised news conference and denied any cover-up. But state media criticised Gao and, one source said, superiors rebuked him.

Two weeks later, he reversed himself, blaming Zhang for the slow response to SARS and the weakness of the health system.

China rules out concessions to Dalai Lama

Press Trust of India

BEIJING, June 12. — China today ruled out any concessions to the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, Dalai Lama, but hoped that the just-concluded visit to the country by his envoys would help him make the "correct choice" on the Tibet issue.

"Our policy towards the Dalai Lama is consistent and clear without any change," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Mr Kong Quan said.

China, in the past, has said "only when

the Dalai Lama really abandons his support for 'Tibetan independence', stops separatist activities aimed at splitting China, we'll contact and negotiate with him".

A four-member team led by special envoy Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari visited China for two weeks. It is the second direct contact between Beijing and the Dalai Lama's representatives since September 2002.

Mr Kong said the visit of the Tibetan patriots would enhance their understanding of the development in China and Tibet and also the efforts of the Chi-

nese central government in the remote Himalayan region. "The visit will also be conducive for the Dalai Lama to see the situation and make the correct choice," Mr Kong said.

Analysts say the re-establishment of contacts between China and the Dalai Lama's representatives reflects a slight softening in Beijing's position as it tests the waters for some kind of political solution to the vexed issue. In September 2002, the Dalai's envoys visited China in the first direct contact between them since 1993.

Hu puts party reform back on agenda

China
5/3
10/11

**Oliver August/
The Times, London**

BEIJING, June 9. — President Mr Hu Jintao is planning to reform the Chinese Communist Party, with a pledge to introduce “internal democracy”, government insiders have said.

A senior official in the party’s reform wing said that Mr Hu, who has been President for just three months and general secretary of the party since November, would make an important policy address on 1 July, to mark the party’s 72nd anniversary, in which he would outline the most significant reforms in more than a decade. Chinese leaders have shied away

from political reform since the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989.

The main thrust of the reform plan is a move towards greater competition inside the party, for example in the selection of cadres for official posts and committee memberships. At present these are mostly filled by appointment rather than election. A number of posts, including the presidency, are nominally elective but never seriously contested.

Were Mr Hu’s plans

to be implemented, middle-ranking posts could eventually be filled through elections in



Mr Hu Jintao

which party members or members of party committees were given real choices. Competition is likely to foster more open and possibly adversarial debate inside the party.

Such a system would constitute a departure from the Leninist model of “democratic centralism”. Reformers may be contemplating something along the lines of Japan’s Liberal

Democratic Party which has been able to retain power while enduring open battles between its various factions.

China’s leaders are not, however, renouncing their right to rule. The security services continue to suppress political activity that is not officially sanctioned. Anyone caught setting up a political party favouring liberal democracy is likely to be jailed for several years. In recent weeks, journalists have been dismissed after reporting on sensitive matters and liberal newspapers in Guangdong have been brought under government control. Monitoring of the internet has been strengthened.

China's great leap westward

10-10 9/6
By Raviprasad Narayanan

SINCE THE former Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, first proposed the idea in early 1999, the "western development strategy" has emerged in the policy discussions and economic decision-making of China as being at the "core" of the next generation of economic reforms that were begun in 1978. The importance of the strategy can be gauged from its recurrent theme being detailed in every annual Government work report since 1999. And also from the fact that it was the focus of policy deliberations at the national economic conference in 2000 and at the State Council's special conference on the development of the vast western region in January 2000.

China's western region encompasses the six provinces of Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou, the three autonomous regions of Ningxia, Xinjiang and Tibet, and the Chongqing Municipality which is directly under the administration of its Central Government. The region is spread over 5.4 million square km and takes up about 56 per cent of the country's total land area and is home to around a quarter of China's population. In comparison with the eastern region, the western provinces are resource-rich, with abundant supply of labour, low investment costs and the potential of becoming a large market. This potential market remains underdeveloped as the ongoing reform process has led to the rapid development of the eastern and southern provinces, thereby creating a regional imbalance, which the authorities in Beijing are determined to set right.

During the 17 years between 1979 and 1995, the average economic growth of China reached 9.8 per cent, which, when broken down region-wise, revealed the growth rate in the eastern provinces at 12.8 per cent, while that in the west was only 8.7 per cent, falling a percentage short of the national average. Also, while the eastern provinces have contributed around 65 per cent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in recent years, the western region has contributed only around 15 per cent. It has also been estimated that the per-capita GDP of the western region equals only 60 per cent of the national average. That the western region

should develop after the success of the reforms and their implementation in the eastern coastal provinces was explained by the former Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji, who quoted Deng Xiaoping as having advanced the strategic thinking of "two major concerns" in China's modernisation drive. One concern was to "expedite the opening of the eastern coastal ar-

railway, the diversion of natural gas and electricity from the western to the eastern regions, water control projects and trunk highways. The ambitious Three Gorges Dam and the Ertan Hydroelectric Station, currently China's largest hydropower generating unit, are large-scale infrastructure projects that are expected to provide a fillip to further

sisting on pushing forward the "great western development" according to plans and in phases; giving full play to the region's advantages and adjusting the economic structure; achieving long-term development goals; promoting the development of different regions and coordinating the acceleration of development in central and western regions with further development of eastern coastal areas; policy measures that launch the "great western development" into the 10th Five Year Plan, and lastly, giving full play to the advantages arising from the support of all quarters. With China's economic reforms increasingly transforming its western region that lies adjacent to the geographical proximity of India, there arises an opportunity to increase Sino-Indian bilateral cooperation, with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's coming visit to Beijing. While

China's western development strategy involves the maximum development of its domestic resources, creation of infrastructure and the establishment of reliable commercial links with neighbouring countries of Southeast Asia, the need for India is to reorient its approach by presenting a shared economic perspective that would primarily benefit north-east India, which borders southwest China. A powerful imperative calling for an enhanced level of economic engagement with China is the rapidly expanding bilateral trade which is estimated to be worth around \$ 5 billion. The logic dictated by trade could be further stretched to include investments in the respective regions that stand to benefit from a further improvement in Sino-Indian ties. The likely emergence of an economic arc of cooperation in this region was earlier proposed by the Kunming Initiative, itself a product of track two diplomacy, following India's nuclear tests in 1998.

For sceptics, there is also the possibility that the "great western development" could be one of "those great political surges that come and go in a flash." From China's perspective, if the campaign were to fall short of the expectations generated, it would be a lost opportunity to rejuvenate a region that has clearly not benefited from the ongoing economic reforms.

(The writer is a doctoral scholar, Centre for East Asian Studies, JNU.)

In comparison with the eastern region of China, the western provinces are resource-rich, with abundant supply of labour, low investment costs and the potential of becoming a large market.

reas" in the beginning, and when China were to "develop to a certain stage" where a moderate level of prosperity is ensured, more "efforts should be pooled to quicken the development of the central and western regions." Mr. Zemin had also stated that "large-scale development of the western region is a major strategy for China's overall development. Now the conditions are basically available and the time is ripe."

Substantiating the debate is the growing realisation that the methods used in the development of the east certainly will not work in the west. This is because the eastern and western regions not only differ greatly in natural resources, historical backgrounds and other factors, but also in the starting point of economic development that largely depends on the existing domestic and international environment.

The State Development Planning Commission (SDPC) of China is of the view that the western region should take the strengthening of ecological construction and environment protection as a basic starting point for its large-scale development, bearing in mind the ecologically fragile environment and the need for sustainable development. Over the past three years since the introduction of the western development strategy, the Central Government in Beijing has given a powerful push to the region's development by increasing investment, stepping up transfer payments and introducing preferential fiscal and taxation policies.

Work on new key projects, among others, includes the Qinghai-Tibet

economic development in the region. The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC) is also formulating an industrial catalogue for foreign investment in the western region and planning the construction of state-level development zones too. The State Administration of Taxation will also provide foreign-funded enterprises with more favourable tax benefits in order to encourage investment in the western region.

In his last work report delivered at the first session of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) on March 5, 2003, Mr. Rongji, while highlighting the development of the western region, emphasised the need for "economic activities with local characteristics," and to "accelerate the development of science, technology and education in the western region." Dong Funai, an economist, noted that the development of the western region is extremely important given the widening gaps between the eastern and western regions and added that "if China wants to realise modernisation, the Government has to speed up the development of the western region to narrow the chasm between the western and eastern regions."

With a broad consensus on the need and approach required to implement the strategy of developing China's western region, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) elaborated on "six persistences" that need to be adhered to on the development of the western region. These include per-

Pro-democracy activists, critics jailed in China crackdown

The Times, London

BEIJING, May 30. — President Hu's drive for greater openness was called into doubt today after a court gave lengthy jail sentences to four men for publishing pro-democracy essays on the internet.

Beijing's continuing hostility to criticism was also revealed by the dismissal of three journalists at a Communist Party newspaper who reported that students were working as prostitutes to finance their studies.

The sentences, totalling 36 years, were announced by the Beijing Intermediate Court in the aftermath of the SARS epidemic which prompted official pledges to act with greater transparency. So far, however, the government has done little to change its attitude towards critics of the regime.

The court had taken more than a year to reach the verdicts following the men's trials in September 2001. Mr Jin Haikang, a geologist, and Mr Xu Wei, a journalist, were each sentenced to 10 years for "incitement to subversion". Mr Yang Zili, an internet engineer, and Mr Zhang Honghai, a freelance writer, were each sentenced to eight years on the same charge.

The men were arrested in March 2001 after posting essays on the internet with titles such as China's Democracy is Fake, and Be a New Citizen, Remake China, according to a copy of the original indictment. In

May 2000, they had set up the New Youth Society to discuss reform of China's social and political system. They were charged after a government agent infiltrated their group.

"The verdicts were very unfair. There was no evidence to prove they tried subversion," said Mrs Lu Kun, Mr Yang's wife.

"It is ridiculous that the Chinese government considers the peaceful expression of one's views a subversive act," said Ms Ann Cooper, director of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists.

Beijing's continued tight grip on the media has also made itself felt in the newspaper sector. Three journalists were sacked after reporting that 10 per cent of students in Hubei province were working as prostitutes to pay their way through college.

Mr Fan Yongsheng, deputy editor of the *China Youth Daily* and deputy Communist party secretary at the newspaper, was the most senior journalist to lose his job. He may be able to retain his salary but is said to have lost his titles.

The *China Youth Daily* is affiliated to the Communist Youth League, an organisation once led by President Hu and considered one of his power bases.

According to Human Rights in China, an activist group, Mr Xu told the court police tortured him with electric shocks to his genitals. He slammed his head against the judge's desk in protest, fell unconscious and had to be carried from the courtroom.



Business as usual in Hu's China?

THE STATESMAN

31 MAY 2003

China issues a stern warning against violent protests

Beijing: Over 300 panicked residents rioted against the construction of a Sars observation centre in north China's Tianjin city as several violent protests were reported across the country, prompting the government to warn those involved of "severe punishment."

Stating for the first time that rioting and blocking of roads had been occurring in places like Tianjin and Chaffagang city, the official Xinhua news agency said severe punishment would be meted out to the perpetrators of such incidents who attempted to defeat the government's efforts to combat Sars. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome has so far killed 235 people in China and infected over 5,000 others.

Over 300 local residents gathered at the medical unit construction site in Hongqiao province and used telephone poles and bricks to block the road leading to the medical unit on Tuesday and Wednesday to prevent construction activity.

They also forced the driver of a truck loaded with building materials to dump the materials on the road causing a traffic jam.

Three persons have been arrested in connection with

the incident. "Police are in hot pursuit of the individuals who beat medical staff and destroyed treatment facilities in response to alleged delays in treatment in a hospital in Hedong district, leading to the death of a family member on Tuesday night," the report said.

Similar violent protests occurred on April 27 as local people indulged in arson and rioting to express their opposition to setting up of a local medical centre or suspected Sars patients in Chagugang town, in Wuqing district.

Demonstrations were also staged at the local middle school and township government building, it said, adding the police have nabbed 13 and detained nine individuals in this regard. "Some of the demonstrators carried out criminal activity such as assault, destruction of property and theft. In addition, two policemen on patrol duty were severely beaten," the report said.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and top Chinese experts and leaders, including premier Wen Jiabao, have stressed the urgent need to curb the spread of Sars into China's vast and underdeveloped rural areas where



Members of a newly set-up Sars task force put on protective suits and gas masks during an exercise at a Beijing neighbourhood on Saturday.

millions of people live. An outbreak of Sars in rural China, where medical facilities are inadequate, would have a catastrophic impact, WHO experts have repeatedly cautioned the Chinese government.

Of China's total cases of Sars, farmers accounted for 5.9 per cent. However, in

north China's Hebei and Shanxi provinces and Inner Mongolia autonomous region, the percentage jumped to 26, 18 and 9.1, respectively, a study published by China's national Sars prevention and treatment team has found.

Since the infection rate among migrant workers in Guangdong, Beijing and

week visited north China's Hebei province, which surrounds the Chinese capital.

Authorities are working hard to stop transient farmers from fleeing Sars-hit cities as part of the nationwide efforts to prevent the spread of the deadly virus into rural areas, where medical conditions are much poorer than cities. The WHO has cautioned Chinese government against its optimism that the killer Sars epidemic in Beijing had been tamed saying many factors crucial to the outbreak's future remain unknown.

Although Beijing has been reporting lower Sars cases in recent days, the WHO experts have "cautioned against any clear conclusions that the Sars outbreak has begun to decline in the city," the UN body said in a statement in Beijing.

"Many factors that influence the outbreak's future evolution remain unknown," the who, which is working to fight the outbreak, said.

WHO officials will be working with Beijing authorities to improve data analysis and develop policy options for responding to the outbreak. Agencies

70 killed in Chinese submarine accident

Beijing, May 2 (Reuters): An accident aboard a conventional Chinese submarine killed 70 officers and crew in one of the worst naval accidents in Communist China's history, state media and military sources said today.

The accident, in Chinese territorial waters off its northeastern coast, was caused by mechanical problems during training, the official Xinhua news agency said. It did not elaborate but said the incident happened in recent days.

"Unfortunately, all 70 men and officers aboard the submarine died," Xinhua said. The submarine has been towed to an unidentified port, the agency added. The terse report did not give a date or the class of the submarine, only identifying it as No 361. It was also unclear if the submarine crew sent an SOS.

Former President Jiang Zemin, still chairman of the Central Military Commission, sent his condolences to the families of officers and crew.

China has embarked on a decade-long campaign to modernise its armed forces, and defence planners are trying to draw lessons from incidents such as the loss of Russia's nuclear submarine *Kursk* in 2000 which killed all 118 crew on board. "In the wake of the *Kursk* incident, the Chinese have become increasingly interested in submarine rescue," said Robert

Karniol, *Jane's Defence Weekly* Asia Pacific editor. "They have been looking to improve their submarine rescue capability."

"This is the worst naval accident in almost two decades," one military source said.

The fact that state media reported the submarine accident at all was surprising, given the Chinese military tradition of operating behind shadowy state secrecy laws, analysts said.

"The strange thing is Xinhua released anything at all," said a Western diplomat. "Usually

state media are silent on such incidents. They do not talk about it. The transparency was highly unusual."

The accident, one of the most deadly for China's navy since the Communists took power in 1949, put a spotlight on the shortcomings of the country's outmoded submarine forces, which Beijing is trying to upgrade to help build up its ability to retake rival Taiwan. China's new leaders have been gingerly prodding the media to report more openly on disasters.

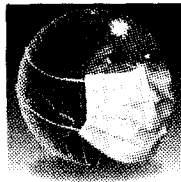
4 MAY 2003

3 MAY 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

8,000 more isolated in Beijing, global toll 332

Beijing: With 13 more deaths and 217 fresh cases of Sars in China and Hong Kong, 8,000 more people were quarantined in Beijing on Monday amid warning by WHO that the epidemic appeared to be spreading rapidly in China but



appeared on its way out in most affected countries.

Eight new fatalities were reported in China and five in Hong Kong while one woman died in Canada, raising the worldwide toll from the killer flu to 332. The atypical pneumonia has so far infected more than 5,000 people, since it first appeared in China's Guangdong province seven months ago.

"It appears from the reports that we have from Hong Kong, from Singapore, from Toronto and from Vietnam that the epidemic has peaked in those countries," said WHO chief for communicable diseases, David Heyman, in Bangkok.

He said these countries had fewer fresh infections, indicating that the outbreak was contained there, even as China continued to be a subject of concern.

According to the figures released by the Chinese health ministry, the toll in mainland stood at 139, with Hong Kong following closely at 138. More than 3,600 confirmed cases are undergoing treatment in China and 847 sickened people in the neighbouring Hong Kong, where a total of 710 people have recovered and sent home. More pti akj sp msa sp 04281832 d urg gen int

The rise in Sars cases, despite tough measures, raised concerns in Beijing, where 128

- Eight new fatalities were reported in China and five in Hong Kong
- Sars has so far infected more than 5,000 people
- Six deaths from Inner Mongolia prompt the administration to shut libraries, museums, cinemas and internet cafes

medical facilities have been isolated and more than 8,000 people quarantined to avoid the spread of the deadly virus.

Six Sars deaths from Inner Mongolia province, prompted the administration to shut libraries, museums, cinemas and internet cafes to check the spread of the pandemic. Authorities temporarily laid off nine health department workers for abandoning their work.

Seven government officials were sacked in Changsha city in Hunan province, including the director of the city disease control centre for neglecting their duties in fighting Sars.

The central government despatched a fourth group of monitoring team to 13 provinces and regions where few or no cases have been reported to track the spread of the virus. As the country trembled under the Sars-scare, premier Wen Jiabao said the country would emerge stronger than ever from the crisis. Mr Jiabao and 10 leaders of the Asean nations are meeting in Bangkok on Tuesday for an emergency gathering on the Sars epidemic, described as the worst crises the region has seen since the financial meltdown in 1997-98. PTI

China names Vice-Premier to tackle pandemic

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 26. China, in its latest effort to contain the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), entrusted the Vice-Premier, Wu Yi, with the concurrent charge of the Health portfolio, it was officially announced in Beijing today.

The upgrading of the political importance of the Health portfolio was effected following the formal resignation by Zhang Wenkang, who was only a few days ago sacked from his key post in the ruling Communist Party's unit of the Ministry of Health in the context of the global criticism of China's handling of the SARS crisis.

China's political priority at this moment is to address the enormous public health challenge of taming the SARS epidemic. It is in this context that the Chinese leadership briefed key visiting leaders from abroad — the Indian Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the French Prime Minister, Jean Pierre Raffarin — about the measures being taken by China to combat the menace.

This became doubly important for Beijing in view of France being inclined to associate China with the Group of Eight — seven industrialised countries plus Russia. On a related front, the Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, presided over the "founding ceremony" for the



The Chinese Vice-Premier, Wu Yi, who has been named to serve concurrently as Health Minister. — Reuters

National SARS Control and Prevention Headquarters.

Outlining the tasks before China on this front, Mr. Wen called for free medical services to the poor among the SARS patients in the rural areas. He urged the research institutions to utilise the scientific resources at home and abroad to develop anti-SARS medicines and methods. He also called for closer cooperation between China and the World Health Organisation.

154 new cases

The Chinese mainland today reported 154 new SARS cases, which took the total to 2,753. The updated death toll in China was put at 122. There was no sign of any improvement in the

situation in Hong Kong, with a grim sentiment defining the mood there.

In Singapore, where a stringent anti-SARS legislation was passed on Friday, Michael Lim, a Member of Parliament with medical qualifications, said he was "in favour of more draconian measures." The new law, in effect an expansion of the existing legislation on infectious diseases, provides for fines and/or jail terms for home-quarantine breakers and others who might endanger the community's health through such actions as going to public places while suspecting that they might have been SARS-infected.

On the overall question of Singapore's "war on SARS," *The Straits Times* noted in its editorial today that "the home fight has some way to go," especially in the context of the "public apprehension about going for screening at the dedicated SARS centre, ironically for fear of contracting SARS there."

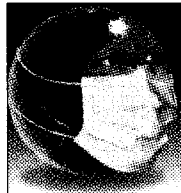
In Kuala Lumpur, the Health Ministers of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as also China, Japan and Canada met to address the SARS-related issues such as the severity of the health crisis, the need for international cooperation in controlling the new disease, the impact on economies and the possible turbulence in "social tranquillity."

27 APR 2003

THE HINDU

China is heading for major Sars outbreak: WHO

Beijing: China and Hong Kong reported 10 new deaths from Sars on Tuesday and Beijing tried to



stop people from travelling to the vast countryside in a frantic effort to contain the deadly virus.

The official Xinhua news agency, quoting health ministry data, said the death toll in China— epicentre of a virus that has killed 235 people and infected 4,100 in 25 countries— had risen by five to 97.

Hong Kong also reported five more deaths from Sars for a total of 99, the highest in the world, and 32 fresh cases. After raising the number of cases in Beijing 13-fold in two days, China warned people against travelling to the provinces, which the World Health Organisation said may see big outbreaks.

The warning was issued ahead of the now shortened "Golden Week" holidays in early May marking International Labour Day, when tens of millions of people were expected to journey to their home villages.

The WHO representative in China Henk Bakedam told Reuters it would be "quite a challenge to contain Sars" in China and "I think we're going for a very big outbreak."

That dire prediction was reinforced by premier Wen Jiabao, who admitted the health system was ill-prepared in the countryside,

where 70 percent of China's 1.3 billion people live.

A Sars epidemic could spread "before we know it" and "the consequences could be too dreadful to contemplate," he said in a speech published on Monday. China, where Sars first appeared in southern Guangdong province in November, reported 157 new cases on Tuesday for a total of 2,158— more than half the world's total. Hong Kong has 1,434 cases.

The sudden surge of Chinese cases appeared to back allegations that officials had tried to hide the extent of the deadly flu-like disease. Malaysia reported the death of a second probable Sars victim after a 26-year-old man who had recently visited China and Thailand succumbed on Tuesday.

In Singapore, which has the world's fourth-highest number of confirmed Sars cases at 184 with 14 deaths, prime minister Goh Chok Tong said China should have told the world of Sars earlier and that its initial handling of the illness was wrong.

Malaysia has decided to lift visa restrictions imposed on travellers from Hong Kong, a Hong Kong government spokesman said on Tuesday.

The spokesman said "The Malaysian government is satisfied with the measures taken by the Hong Kong government to contain the spread of the virus, especially the checking of body temperatures of all departing passengers at the Hong Kong's international airport. Reuters

'China developing lethal super tank'

Beijing: China, which has the world's largest number of main battle tanks, is currently developing a lethal 'super tank' that, if fielded, would be the most powerful military vehicle of its type, according to a leading defence publication.

The new Chinese main battle tank would incorporate most of the advanced systems used in modern western armour, and would be equipped with a 152 mm main gun fed

by an automatic loader, said *Jane's Defence Weekly* in its upcoming issue.

Most tanks use 120mm or 125mm main guns. The main gun would be coupled to an advanced day/thermal sighting system that will allow moving targets to be engaged with a high first-round hit probability while the vehicle is stationary or mobile, it said.

The London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies estimates that the

2.5-million-strong Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), the world's largest standing army, has 8,300 main battle tanks, more than any other nation.

About 6,000 of the tanks, however, are based on a design from the 1950s and are obsolete. Only a few hundred PLA tanks could match tanks fielded by the US or European nations, *South China Morning Post* quoted the defence weekly as saying. PTI

Heads roll in China over Sars bungling

Beijing: Heads began to roll in the aftermath of China's disastrous handling of the Sars epidemic with the Communist Party on Sunday sacking health minister



Zhang Wenkang

Zhang Wenkang and the deputy party boss in Beijing, Meng Xuenong.

"The central committee of the Communist Party of China has removed Zhang Wenkang as secretary of the leading CPC members' group of the ministry of health and Meng Xuenong as deputy secretary of the CPC Beijing municipal committee," the official Xinhua news agency reported. The government also cancelled a week-long national holiday, signalling the serious nature of the epidemic.

The news of the sacking of Mr Zhang and Mr Meng came just hours after officials disclosed a ten-fold leap in the number of Sars cases in Beijing. Vice health minister Gao Qiang, standing in for Mr Zhang, admitted there were 339 people infected with Sars in Beijing and 402 suspected cases as of April 18.

Amidst international pressure, the death toll from the epidemic in Beijing was dramatically revised from four to 18, confirming the worst fears of the World Health Organisation, which had reported that Beijing was under-reporting the magnitude of the epidemic that has killed over 200 people worldwide.

Mr Gao said the new figures included 235 confirmed and suspected cases at the highly-secretive military hospitals run by the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Until Sunday, the ministry of health had reported only 37 infections and four fatalities in the city despite WHO experts estimating that Beijing could have up to 200 cases.

On Sunday, Hong Kong reported seven more Sars deaths,

pushing the death toll in the territory to 88. Malaysia announced a possible Sars death of a 30-year-old male. "We consider this case as 'pending' because the patient is young and has no history of travelling to Sars-affected countries or coming in contact with Sars-infected patients," the government said.

Meanwhile, reports from Thailand said China had not been invited to join Asean leaders for their one-day Sars summit in Bangkok on April 29. "Asean has not invited China. But we will inform China about the result of the meet," a Thai foreign ministry spokesman said. The statement jars with comments made on Friday by a government spokesman who said China, as the epicentre of the mystery disease, had been invited. Agencies

Another Sars suspect in city

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: A 47-year-old passenger who arrived from Bangkok on Saturday night was admitted to the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital at Chinchpokli after health officials at Sahar airport suspected that he was suffering from Sars.

BMC's executive health officer R.M. Kathuria said airport officials alerted them as the person, Manjit Gurmukh Singh, was suffering from hypertension and showed high blood pressure and slight breathlessness. However, he added that doctors attending to Mr Singh did not think he was suffering from Sars.

But the authorities are taking no chances and have kept the patient under observation as he had spent long hours in Hong Kong. "I will check on him on Monday and then decide whether to let him go," Mr Kathuria said.

21 APR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

China to declare open war on Sars

Beijing: China's Communist Party leadership, accused of half-hearted cooperation with the world on the Sars outbreak and masking its own numbers, has ordered an all-out—and open—war against the deadly virus.

And in a sign the message may be getting through, the World Health Organisation said Beijing would "significantly" raise its Sars toll after agreeing to alter the way it defines patients with symptoms of the flu-like bug.

The powerful politburo standing committee said all officials had to come clean on all aspects of what it said would be a long and tough fight against a disease that has spread to about 25 countries, killed 170 people and infected more than 3,400.

"There must be no delay

and no deceit in reporting," Friday's state newspapers quoted the committee as saying, after a special meeting chaired by party boss Hu Jintao.

The policy making body held Thursday's meeting just a day after World Health Organisation experts accused Beijing of not reporting all its cases, saying the city might have up to 200 Sars cases instead of the 37 reported officially. City officials initially ignored the WHO charge and the government said it had acted responsibly since the first Sars case appeared in the southern province of Guangdong last November.

But on Friday, the WHO team learned Beijing had slackened its rigid case definition in a meeting with health minister Zhang Wenkang. "Their expectation is that the number will be greater than what is officially reported right now," Mr James Maguire, head of the team, said. Reuters



19 APR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

25 new SARS cases in China

Press Trust of India

BEIJING, April 18. — China today reported 25 new cases of SARS, including the first case in central China's Henan province, taking the nation-wide cumulative total of infections to 1,482. Fatalities from SARS remained unchanged at 65.

In Hongkong, Four more people died of SARS in Hong Kong today, raising the toll to 69 even as 30 new cases were reported, health officials said.

South Korea's health authorities said today two travelers from China, suspected of being infected with SARS, had been put under observation, adds AFP from Seoul. The pair brought the total number of patients suspected of having been infected with the SARS virus to six in South Korea, as the NIH already reported four similar cases yesterday.

SARS killed another person in Singapore, bringing the death toll here to 16, as officials tightened restrictions on hospital visits and took measures to keep the deadly illness from spreading in taxis.

'Super-Spreader'

A 28-year-old woman in northwest China's Shanxi province has been described as a "super-spreader" of the SARS virus. The first SARS case in Shanxi province was found on 7 March in the woman, who travelled to the south China's Guangdong province,

Contaminated cargo

BANGKOK, April 18. — Authorities are investigating how and why a 25,260-kg cargo shipment returned from Hong Kong to Klong Toey port contained used gloves contaminated with dangerous bacteria, a senior official said. The cargo, which indicated Klong Toey as the port of origin, was rejected and returned by Hong Kong authorities to Klong Toey, where it was abandoned at a port warehouse last year, natural resources and environment permanent secretary Mr Plodprasop Suraswadi said. — The Nation/ANN

thought to be the epicentre of SARS, before falling ill. Subsequently, 18 of her close relatives and friends were infected. According to WHO, a "super-spreader" is a source case who has, for as yet unknown reasons, infected a large number of persons. Shanxi has reported 104 cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) so far, with seven recoveries and seven deaths. Although transmission patterns of SARS remain incompletely understood, evidence suggests that such "super-spreaders" may have contributed to the evolution of SARS outbreak across the world.

19 APR 2003

THE STATESMAN

China completes smooth leadership transition

Beijing: China on Sunday completed a smooth transition of political and military powers by installing an energetic and younger generation of technocrats led by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao as leaders to steer the Communist nation's destiny for the next five years.

As expected, the National People's Congress, the largely rubber-stamp Chinese Parliament, on Sunday formally approved the candidature of Wen Jiabao, 60, as Premier to succeed Zhu Rongji in a well-orchestrated session.

Mr Wen, who as Vice Premier under Mr Zhu, has experience in handling financial, agriculture reforms and disaster relief matters, re-

ceived 2,906 votes in his favour, while three votes went against him and 16 abstained, entitling him to take the reins of the world's sixth-biggest economy. Attired in western suit, a beaming Mr Wen rose and shook hands with his mentor Mr Zhu as the nearly 3,000 legislators in the cavernous great hall of the people applauded.

Mr Wen, born in the booming northern post-city of Tianjin, majored in geology and joined the Communist Party in 1965. His career path remained smooth despite an eight-year stint in the party's head office during which two of the three men he worked for were purged.

On Saturday, the general

secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) Hu Jintao was appointed as the Communist nation's President, succeeding Jiang Zemin, at the ongoing session of the NPC.

Mr Hu, considered as the leader of the fourth generation of Chinese leaders, was elected unopposed as the CPC had fielded only one candidate for each of the top posts in the most sweeping leadership changes in a decade.

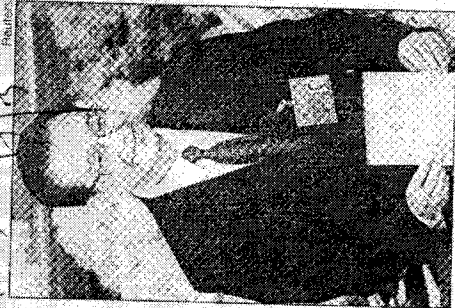
Mr Hu, despite holding top party and government posts, faces challenges from rivals on the party's all-powerful politburo standing commit-

tee, which is stacked with Mr Jiang's proteges.

"It could be years before Mr Hu consolidates control," a diplomatic source commented.

Mr Jiang had handed the party's top post to Mr Hu in November last year in China's first orderly transition since the Communist Party took power in 1949.

The NPC, China's Parliament also chose a new head for itself when it elected Wu Bangguo, 62, in place of Li Peng, who retired as the chairman of the standing committee of NPC, the highest legislative body. PTI



China's new premier Wen Jiabao casts his ballot during the election of leaders by the National People's Congress in Beijing on Sunday.

17 APR 2003

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

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China completes smooth leadership transition

Beijing: China on Sunday completed a smooth transition of political and military powers by installing an energetic and younger generation of technocrats led by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao as leaders to steer the Communist nation's destiny for the next five years.

As expected, the National People's Congress, the largely rubber-stamp Chinese Parliament, on Sunday formally approved the candidature of Wen Jiabao, 60, as Premier to succeed Zhu Rongji in a well-orchestrated session.

Mr Wen, who as Vice Premier under Mr Zhu, has experience in handling financial, agriculture reforms and disaster relief matters, re-

ceived 2,906 votes in his favour, while three votes went against him and 16 abstained, entitling him to take the reins of the world's sixth-biggest economy. Aired in western suit, a beaming Mr Wen rose and shook hands with his mentor Mr Zhu as the nearly 3,000 legislators in the cavernous great hall of the people applauded.

Mr Wen, born in the booming northern post city of Tianjin, majored in geology and joined the Communist Party in 1965. His career path remained smooth despite an eight-year stint in the party's head office during which two of the three men he worked for were purged.

On Saturday, the general secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) Hu Jintao was appointed as the Communist nation's President, succeeding Jiang Zemin, at the ongoing session of the NPC.

Mr Hu, considered as the leader of the fourth generation of Chinese leaders, was elected unopposed as the CPC had fielded only one candidate for each of the top posts in the most sweeping leadership changes in a decade.

Mr Hu, despite holding top party and government posts, faces challenges from rivals on the party's all-powerful politburo standing committee, which is stacked with Mr Jiang's proteges.

Mr Hu consolidated control, a diplomatic source commented.

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China's new premier Wen Jiabao casts his ballot during the election of leaders by the National People's Congress in Beijing on Sunday.

China admits Sars situation is grave

Beijing: In sharp contrast to its earlier assurance to the public that a deadly disease outbreak was "under control," China has warned that a "grave" situation is facing the nation in the fight against Sars and appealed to the medical community to do their utmost to prevent the killer disease from spreading further.

"Much progress has been made in combating the disease so far, with the epidemic brought under control in some areas, but the overall situation remains grave," premier Wen Jiabao was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency.

Six more people succumbed to Sars in mainland China as the virus killed seven more patients in Hong Kong where deaths of "younger and fitter" persons sparked concerns that the virus had mutated. As many as 109 fresh infections were reported in mainland China, where the disease is supposed to have originated, while Hong Kong has reported 40 new cases.

The disease has so far claimed 65 lives in mainland China, the ministry of health said in a daily report to the WHO. It is followed by Hong Kong with 47 deaths, Canada 13, Singapore 12, Vietnam five, Thailand two and Malaysia one. The worldwide toll of the killer virus rose to 144.

Addressing a national conference on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars) here on Sunday, two days after the

World Health Organisation added the Chinese capital to the list of Sars-affected cities, Mr Wen urged the nation to work closely together to win the fierce battle against the disease.

Mr Wen urged concerned departments to be fully aware of the importance and urgency of the prevention and treatment of the disease, saying it has a bearing on the overall situation of china. Mr Wen singled out a number of locations, including planes, trains, ships, automobiles and exit and entry ports, as key areas that quarantine work should be enhanced.

China has been criticised by many for its slow reaction to the outbreak of Sars in November last year. A prominent Beijing-based Chinese doctor last week alleged that the ministry of health was attempting to cover-up the real situation by announcing a lower death toll and a lower infection rate in Beijing.

Beijing's mayor was also reported as saying that the outbreak of Sars was first recorded in Beijing on March 1, almost a month after its existence was finally admitted.

More than 200,000 secondary school students in Singapore returned to their classes on Monday after an 18-day shutdown to contain the spread of the Sars virus, but only after facing stringent screening measures. Agencies

15 NOV 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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3 more SARS deaths in China

Press Trust of India

BEIJING, April 11. — Five more people died of SARS in mainland China and Hong Kong during the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 90 while the number of new patients zoomed to 87, health department officials said.

Three SARS patients died in mainland China while 19 new patients were reported till 10 April, the ministry of health said here in its daily report today.

The three fatalities raised mainland China's SARS death toll to 58 while the cumulative number of cases reached 1,309. According to official figures, SARS claimed one life and all the 19 new cases were reported in the worst-hit Guangdong province in south China, where the epidemic first occurred in November last year.

Shansi province in north China reported two deaths but no new cases were reported yesterday, the ministry said.

With a cumulative total of 1,059 cases

and 32 deaths, Hong Kong ranks just below China in the list of countries worst affected. Hong Kong today reported two deaths and 61 new patients of SARS, taking the death toll to 32.

An additional 61 patients with symptoms of SARS were admitted to public hospitals. They include 11 healthcare workers and 11 patients from Amoy Gardens, the worst-hit housing complex in Hong Kong. The remaining 39 were new patients and contacts of patients with SAS, a health department press release said.

So far, 169 SARS patients have recovered and have been discharged from public hospitals, the release said. The probe into the source of infection in the cluster of cases in Amoy Gardens has failed to detect the virus in animals. WHO said, which refuted previous hypotheses SARS may have been spread by cockroaches or rodents.

A report from Shanghai added that about nine foreigners suspected of having contracted SARS are being treated at a hospital there. In China, a top epidemiologist

today strongly disputed government claims that SARS was under control.

Mr Zhong Nanshan, director of the Guangzhou Respiratory Disease Research Institute who has been at the forefront of China's battle with SARS, said the central government's long-held view was not objective and lacked medical analysis.

"In China (on Wednesday) there were 1,290 cases, of which in Guangdong there were 1,213 cases," Mr Zhong said referring to official government statistics. "But the recent news I got yesterday from Guangdong was the number has risen to 1,257."

"So looking at this from a medical point of view, this disease has not been effectively controlled at all, including in Hong Kong."

"The origin of this disease is still not clear, so how can you say it has been controlled?" Since China's first public statements on the epidemic on 9 February when it was announced that 305 people were infected and five had died — the government has insisted that the spread of the virus was "effectively controlled".

The changes in China — II

By P. S. Suryanarayana

19-10
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ALL IT China's designer diplomacy or "independent foreign policy of peace". Beijing's worldview, under the new leaders, is centred on the United States. This aspect certainly does not connote a negative sense of China playing second fiddle to Washington. However, Beijing's diplomacy over the current Iraq war is more in line with its own enlightened interest than with any idea of an international united front against the U.S. On balance, the new Chinese leaders have drawn a fine line of pragmatism even while opposing the ongoing Iraq war. A relevant poser is not whether the present "fourth generation" of Chinese leaders has had little time to go beyond the vision-line of the previous generation. Jiang Zemin, whose influence as Beijing's chief foreign policy designer is still conspicuous, has so far been the greatest practitioner of *realpolitik* on China's external front since the beginning of the Mao era in 1949. The plain logic today is that a U.S.-friendly foreign policy, or more precisely a line that is not intrinsically hostile to Washington in every respect, is in the best interest of China. Even while trying to checkmate the U.S. in its unilateral efforts to set a new agenda worldwide, Beijing wants a good equation with Washington to ensure peace in its geo-strategic neighbourhood.

China lost no time in urging the U.S., as decisively as possible, to call off its military offensive against Iraq as the campaign began on March 20. China's explicit peace call did not, however, mask the complex considerations it contended with before the U.S. shocked the moral conscience of almost the entire world. China had, during the pre-war phase, drawn a fine line across the shifting sands of war-and-peace diplomacy as regards the Iraq question in the United Nations Security Council. Unlike Russia and France, China did not quite tease and test the U.S. and the United Kingdom. The U.S.-U.K. "coalition" had sought an explicit war mandate from the U.N. even while maintaining that there was no need for a new resolution as the legal basis for a

planned military strike (as it then was). Significantly, during the pre-war period, China's general refrain, too, was that there was no need for a new proposal to supersede the Council's resolution 1441. Adopted with the unanimous support of China and others, the resolution consisted of elaborate dos and don'ts that Iraq's Saddam Hussein was mandated to follow in the context of a rein-

and others have underlined that Beijing's "independent foreign policy of peace and development" should be read primarily as an agenda of "friendly" relations with "peace-loving countries". Given that a warring nation such as the U.S. would not necessarily forfeit all claims to being a "peace-loving country" in all circumstances, China's position is rich in subtleties. Opinion-makers with

competitor in East Asia, remains a steadfast strategic ally of the U.S. Not surprisingly, in this regional situation, China tends to annoy the U.S. by allowing North Korea to challenge Washington on issues concerning the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. While the U.S. may regard Beijing's action as a deliberate ploy, at least one Chinese diplomat has spoken about the challenges of dealing with a "mysterious" North Korea.

India, which lies in China's other neighbourhood of South Asia, is of some pivotal importance to Beijing as it braces for strategic encounters with the U.S. at this stage. In a purely bilateral idiom, without any reference to the calculations of and about third countries, India's Ambassador to China, Shiv Shankar Menon, says that New Delhi and Beijing have decisively moved towards a comprehensive dialogue on a wide range of issues that include and go beyond the old controversies. As for China's global profile, Western Sinologists such as Andrew J. Nathan have argued, in the past, that it played the role of a "swing player" in the "strategic triangle" between 1972 and 1989, last phase of the Cold War. The "triangle" consisted of the U.S. and the former Soviet Union besides China itself, while the "swing player" could help one or the other superpower of that period tilt the balance of forces within the "triangle". Given the present subtleties of China's foreign policy, a puzzle that the old and new Sinologists are struggling to decode is whether Beijing will once again want to play a "swing" role — this time, in reshaping the world after the current Iraq war.

Mao, in his revolutionary fervour of the 1950s, maintained that the U.S. could not annihilate China. By the second half of the 1990s, Mr. Jiang gave a definitive thrust to Deng Xiaoping's post-Mao legacy by opening the way for a substantive engagement with the U.S. The anti-terror factor and the Iraq puzzle, besides the North Korean issue, will now define the ongoing China-U.S. paradigm shift.

(Concluded)

Even while trying to checkmate the U.S. in its unilateral efforts to set a new agenda worldwide, Beijing wants a good equation with Washington to ensure peace in its geo-strategic neighbourhood.

vigorated weapons inspection in his country under U.N. auspices. In the end, the U.S.-U.K. "axis of war", too, came up with the theory that no new U.N. mandate was, after all, required *ab initio* for any military strike against Iraq.

The question, therefore, is whether the congruence of China's pre-war position and the eventual stand adopted by the U.S.-U.K. team would indeed place all of them in the same league. The answer, surely, is an emphatic 'no' because of a major nuance in China's position. Responding to a question from *The Hindu*, Kong Quan, Foreign Ministry spokesman, said that the current U.S.-led military campaign against Iraq is "not in conformity with resolution 1441". This should set China's record straight. It has implicitly indicated that resolution 1441 did not at all authorise the use of military force against Iraq. This clearly separates China from the U.S., the original view of which was that the provision for "serious consequences", spelt out in that document, could be seen as a war mandate, if Mr. Hussein were to refuse to disarm Iraq of its suspected weapons of mass destruction.

Authoritative Chinese sources told this correspondent that Beijing's pre-war stance was entirely traceable to the complexities of an uncertain international situation. Seasoned Chinese diplomats such as Liu Jinfeng

links to the Chinese establishment, such as Wang Hongwei and others, are of the view that Beijing had made the right strategic choice of not seeking to form a futile united front against the U.S., a "hyper-power", in the pre-war period. The inevitable "negative consequences" of the current U.S.-led war in Iraq would indeed hold a "few lessons" for Washington in the long run, it is said. In fact, China did not openly announce whether or not it would veto, or perhaps abstain from voting on, Washington's pre-war moves, finally aborted though, to arm itself with an explicit U.N. mandate for war against Iraq. Beijing was eager to keep all its options open, including an abstention in particular, until the political end-game of the pre-war period could be played out before the U.S. would inexorably strike against Iraq.

For Beijing, Iraq is an important case study of how Washington wants to toy with the world, in terms of international energy security issues including Beijing's own concerns in this sphere. More important, Wang Jisi and other strategic analysts have, at different times, drawn attention to China's efforts to promote "pragmatic nationalism" by seeking "a new role in world affairs" since the end of the Cold War. Beijing's main objective in the present context is to keep the U.S. guessing in East Asia, China's natural domain. Japan, China's

8 APR 2003

THE HINDU

The changes in China — I

By P. S. Suryanarayana

China 110-110

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CHINA'S MODEL of political succession, meticulously evolved, has delivered new leaders in a smooth fashion, as with the latest succession. With China now riding a wave of phenomenal economic reforms, the new leaders have quickly vowed to manage the state's ongoing transformation into a "well-off society" without causing tears in the world's most populous country. In a sense, the future of China will depend on how it manages a gigantic process of economic change. However, the politics of the process itself remains a question of critical mass, in a salutary sense of the term, if the goal of a "well-off society" is to be attained "in an all-round way".

These catch-phrases, conceived by the Communist Party of China (CPC), the sole repository of power, have a vibrant political resonance in today's Beijing. Given the CPC's undisguised desire to retain its firm control over the state's levers of power during and after the current social-economic transformation of China, the stage is set for a new political experiment in history. The CPC reckons that it is in its own hands to make this experiment a grand and memorable exercise. In a positive sense, history's grand jury is still out, of course. The CPC and its acolytes are aware of this, and the historical significance of the latest political changes in China can be traced to this consciousness. The latest emergence of Hu Jintao as China's new President and Wen Jiabao as the Prime Minister in mid-March this year has indeed come as no political surprise. Their successful nominations for these high positions were virtually settled as part of a political package that was agreed upon during the CPC's Sixteenth National Congress in November last year. However, a striking feature of the new spectacle of image politics, which unfolded before an international audience in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in March 2003, was an atmosphere of transparency, much as the CPC choreographed the fine event in minute detail. Endorsed, this time, by the Tenth National People's Congress (NPC), or the new Parliament, is the

sustainable continuance of Jiang Zemin as the Chairman of China's Central Military Commission (CMC). He retains this portfolio in addition to his more important political position as the Chairman of the mirror-image CMC within the ruling CPC. It was in November last year that he was re-elected supreme commander of China's powerful military establishment.

CPC is not unaware of the reality that this system is no pluralist democracy. The party is attempting, nonetheless, to democratise its preferred system in a manner that might help silence the stories in the West about "the secret files" that lay behind the choice of "China's new rulers". These "files" are said to have been translated from Chinese and also edited by Western

in the NPC as China's elder statesman was repeatedly emphasised during the sessions, with Mr. Hu, the new first leader among equals in China's state-and-government hierarchy, openly conferring with him on the stage reserved for the presidium.

Two qualitative aspects of the leadership equations have now come to the fore. First, Mr. Hu, who has been Mr. Jiang's heir-apparent for the presidency for a few years now, was originally spotted by Deng himself even as the patriarch zeroed in on Mr. Jiang as his own successor. Interestingly at present, no similar and definitive attempt has so far been made to look beyond the "fourth generation" of communist leaders. Not much political significance in terms of China's long-term future can be read as a result, though. In fact, the Jiang-Hu equation was, until recently, linked to the manner in which Mr. Hu, as the "successor-designate" could interact with his "patron". Likening this "patron-protege relationship" in China to the classical "vice-presidential dilemma" in the U.S., a Sinologist, Zheng Shiping, has drawn attention to the delicacy of how Mr. Hu, as China's designated number two until recently, may have had to look to a non-communist model in determining his style for the future without falling out with his "patron" of that period, Mr. Jiang. Now, Mr. Hu, who still seems to value Mr. Jiang's political presence on the Chinese centrestage, has yet to indicate his style as President and CPC General Secretary. The second qualitative aspect of the present leadership changes is that Mr. Wen, as the new technocrat Prime Minister, has already identified an ambitious administrative agenda. He has also spoken of the need to satisfy the rising economic expectations of the masses without causing any debilitating risks to the paradigm shift in China's economy. Overall, the political cohabitation among Mr. Hu and the new Vice-President, Zeng Qinghong (Mr. Jiang's protege?), as also Mr. Wen besides Wu Bangguo, who has succeeded the communist veteran, Li Peng, as the NPC Chairman, will be watched with interest.

The future of China will depend on how it manages a gigantic process of economic change.

Given the CPC's historical role as the creator of communist China in 1949 under Mao Zedong's leadership, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has remained under the substantive supervision of the party. So, Mr. Jiang's dual control over the PLA at the levels of the CPC and the Chinese State, without being the leader of either the party or the government, confers on him a unique status. However, Mr. Jiang is only following the example set by Deng Xiaoping, China's late patriarch of the post-Mao period, when Mr. Jiang himself was made the party chief and the state leader in the tumultuous circumstances of the "June 4 incident" at Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989. The memories of that "incident", which involved the "suppression" of an "externally-inspired pro-democracy protest", did not hang over the Great Hall of the People as the NPC Deputies assembled there to choose the country's new leaders at the present juncture. In the vicinity of the hall, the famed Tiananmen Square, bathed in a harsh winter's weather that the Beijingers are so accustomed to, was singularly free of any kind of political dissent that the assembled NPC Deputies could have discerned at this time. For them and the leaders they elected, it has been a good political spring. Now, China may still exude the confidence of a party-state, even as the new leaders have been voted into office on the basis of a single-candidate system for each separate post. Surely, in this context, the

Sinologists such as Bruce Gilley and others. The "files" are claimed to be nothing less than portions of the CPC's own internal documentation on "Disidai" or the "fourth generation". Reminiscent of the "Tiananmen Papers", these "files" are traced to a Chinese individual, with a pseudonym Zong Hairen and with access to the purported documents of the CPC itself. At one level, the issues at stake may go well beyond the legitimate unanswered question about the authenticity of such "files". A pertinent debating point, though, is that about the evidence contained in these "files" that many among China's new leaders, now actually chosen by the NPC, are "determined modernisers" who would be inclined to "integrating" the Chinese economy with the rest of the world's system and "maintaining good relations with the United States".

What then are the trends and perceptions in China itself? Of all the leaders now chosen, Mr. Hu and Mr. Wen have acquired their positions on the basis of overwhelming majorities. These were marked by less than a handful of negative votes out of a total balloting figure of well over 2000 NPC Deputies. In some minor contrast, the negative votes cast for Mr. Jiang's candidature for the Chairmanship of China's CMC exceeded the negligible margin, although he too obtained a truly overwhelming majority. In any case, these leaders were not competing among themselves. Mr. Jiang's political standing

7 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Pneumonia Outbreak Under Control, Says China; India Braces Itself For Any Eventuality

WHO team reaches SARS epicentre

Anil K. Joseph
BEIJING 3 APRIL

CHINA on Thursday asserted the outbreak of atypical pneumonia, which has killed 46 people in the country and 78 worldwide, is under effective control even as a WHO team reached the southern province of Guangdong, the suspected epicentre of the deadly disease for an inspection.

"There is no need to worry. The spread of atypical pneumonia in Mainland China has been effectively curbed and it is safe to work, tour and live in China," Chinese health minister Zhang Wenkang told a news conference. The minister decided to hold a press conference after international pressure mounted on China because of its apparent reluctance to release information on Severe Acute Respiratory



WHO Duwami: Hong Kong tourists wear masks at the international airport in Seoul on Thursday. — AFP

Syndrome (SARS).

The WHO, which was earlier not allowed by China to visit Guangdong, has advised travellers not to travel to Hong Kong and Guangdong. Providing the latest official figures, Zhang said there is no evidence for saying

that SARS cases are spreading in Guangdong province, which the WHO says could be the source of the disease which has spread to Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Canada and the US.

At least 78 people have died in Asia and Canada and more than 2,200 have been sickened in over a dozen countries, the WHO said. No effective cure has been found and scientists have not confirmed which virus causes the flu-like disease. Zhang said under the "second phase" of Sino-WHO cooperation against SARS, an expert team of the WHO has arrived in the province for an on-the-spot inspection at China's request. Asked why China delayed reporting the spread of SARS to the WHO and the media kept quiet since November 2002 till February, Mr Zhang said under China's regulations, reporting of contagious diseases were not allowed. — PTI

No foolproof way to prevent virus entry

New Delhi
3 APRIL

THERE is no foolproof mechanism to prevent the entry of the new pneumonia (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus into the country and if it comes to India, containing it would be difficult owing to dense population, experts said, even as the unknown infection continues to rock the world and government braces up its machinery to face any eventuality.

The only thing that can be done in the wake of current worldwide outbreak is to be alert and vigilant and have a good surveillance system, Dr Sudhanshu Vrat from the National Institute of Immunology said. Screening at airports and seaports is an appropriate step, but there are some viruses which spread even by the people who are at sub-clinical stage or are not having any symptoms due to their strong immune system, Dr Vrat said. These people are the silent incubators and can transmit the virus even by breathing if the virus level crosses a certain threshold, he said. "Thus, there is need to have a good diagnostic facilities." — PTI

China takes steps to check disease

P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, APRIL 2. With China coming under the microscope of the World Health Organisation (WHO) as regards the ongoing and world-wide spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) or "atypical pneumonia", the Chinese authorities in Beijing have moved swiftly to reassure the international community about their increasing efforts to control the disease.

Although the Guangdong province in southern China and Hong Kong have been identified as the areas where the new disease was first identified, SARS has spread to many countries in East Asia, including Singapore, and beyond.

For the past several days, Singapore has led the way in East Asia in raising the level of popular awareness about this disease and about the means of combating it in the absence of a cure being evolved yet. Accord-



Pedestrians waiting to cross the street in Hong Kong's Central District wearing masks to protect themselves from the mysterious illness, on Wednesday. — AP

ing to the Chinese authorities, the WHO had, in consultation with them, determined that over 800 people were so far affected by SARS in China itself and that 34 among them were killed as a result.

Three of these deaths oc-

curred in Beijing itself. While the Chinese health authorities would issue an "authoritative report" on the disease later this week, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said that preventive measures were under way to protect the foreign nationals

and native citizens in China.

The Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention said it had posted a 'bulletin' on the internet, a fast-track system that was widely being used in China today, in order to provide more information about SARS to the country's health officials and public alike.

Said to have been drafted by 'experts', the 'bulletin' was being projected as the sure means to control and 'prevent' the spread of the disease.

The epidemic in Guangdong province had been brought under "effective control" by now, the Chinese authorities said.

According to them, there were "no findings of SARS cases" in China in places other than Guangdong province in the south, Shanxi province in the north and Beijing.

Despite the overall confidence being exuded by the Chinese authorities, it appeared that the country was bracing for a possible spin-off effect on various facets of the economy.

THE HINDU

3 APR 2003

China
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CHINA'S NEW LEADERSHIP

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IN A SMOOTH transition, along expected lines, a new generation of leaders has stepped into the offices from which the affairs of the Peoples Republic of China are run. Following up on the decisions taken at the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China, which was held in November last, Hu Jintao has taken over as President of China, Wu Bangguo as head of the legislature and Wen Jiabao as Prime Minister respectively replacing Jiang Zemin, Li Peng and Zhu Rongji. Once the CPC had decided to replace the leadership which had run the affairs of the party and state for the past decade and more the elevation of the fourth generation of party cadre to the highest echelons of the administration — effectuated at the on-going session of the Tenth National Peoples' Conference (NPC) — was a formality. But while the new leadership has taken over charge of China's bureaucratic machine, and with it the responsibility for internal affairs especially economic management, the older leadership in the person of Mr. Jiang continues to retain effective control of the country's foreign policy and strategic affairs. Such an arrangement has been wrought through the confirmation by the NPC of Mr. Jiang as the chairman of the country's Central Military Commission. However, the fact that ten per cent of the members of the NPC — a significant count given the limited levels of dissent traditionally registered — voted against Mr. Jiang would tend to show that the urge for a new orientation in China's dealings with the rest of the world is stronger than was anticipated. Given the grave uncertainty in global affairs that has been created by the crisis over Iraq, the new generation of China's leaders would probably not be entirely displeased that those with greater experience have not really taken their hands off the helm.

The new leaders, especially Mr. Hu and Mr. Wen, have their hands full as it is since their

primary task would be to guide China's economy through a turbulent phase as it transits from a Government-controlled model to a more market-determined one. The new leadership is not expected to reverse the trend of allowing private entrepreneurs a greater role in running the country's economy or of promoting its greater integration with the globalising market. But both Mr. Hu and Mr. Wen have gone out of their way to show their concern for those sections of the Chinese people whose lives have been severely disrupted by the economic transformation. Included in these sections are the factory workers of China's northern "rust belt" and the peasantry in different parts of the country — the traditional core of the CPC's strength — who are burdened by inadequate pensions and declining health care as the social welfare system unravels. The new leadership, which has stated that the future of the 700 million people who live in rural China is their central concern, has promised to build a social security system to replace the disintegrating welfare apparatus.

As the new Chinese leadership tries to implement a pragmatic programme of economic reform that can be accommodated within broad ideological parameters and which does not neglect those sections of the people for whose sake the revolutionary processes were launched and sustained, it is not likely that they will make haste to initiate political changes. Some of them, notably Mr. Wen, had been involved with the drafting of political changes in the past but it is not clear whether they did so out of personal conviction or because these tasks had been assigned to them by Mr. Jiang's predecessors as party chief who were perceived as being more liberal. But even as China goes about transforming itself internally, the developing world would continue to hope that Beijing will not withdraw from the leading role that it has performed for the past many decades.

21 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

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Wen to head China Cabinet

China Daily/ ANH and PTI

BEIJING, March 17. — Chinese lawmakers yesterday elected Mr Wen Jiabao as the new Prime Minister by a landslide vote entrusting the former vice-premier with the task of keeping China's economy moving on the right track and furthering its reform process.

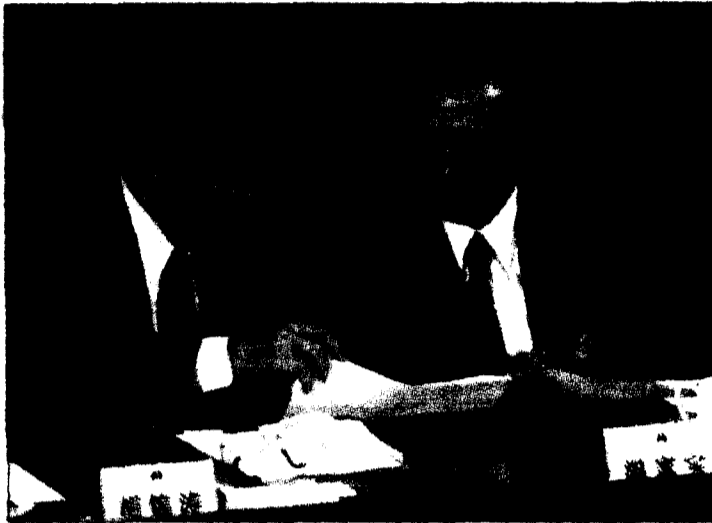
Mr Wen Jiabao today unveiled his 28-member cabinet which was dominated by the proteges of the former president and military chief Mr Jiang Zemin.

Nearly 3,000 deputies of the National People's Congress (NPC) applauded warmly, congratulating Mr Wen and saluting his predecessor Mr Zhu Rongji as the two shook hands after the election at the Great Hall of the People yesterday.

The legislature also approved newly elected Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao as one of the three vice-chairmen of the Central Military Commission of the People's Republic of China. In a secret ballot, long-time judge Mr Xiao Yang (64), was re-elected president of the Supreme People's Court, while Mr Jia Chunwang (64), was promoted to procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

The constitution of China stipulates that NPC members elect the nation's top judge and prosecutor and requires that the candidate for the Premier's post be nominated by the president. According to the Constitution, the candidates for vice-chairmen and members of the CMC must be nominated by the CMC chairman.

All candidates are subject to approval by NPC vote. All the appointments and elections follow the single-candidate system — that is, the legislators were appointed or elected from an equal number of candidates by secret ballot.



NEW ORDER: President Mr Hu Jintao (left) with Prime Minister Mr Wen Jiabao at the National People's Congress in Beijing on Monday. — AFP

hoped the new leadership will tackle.

Li Zhuqi, a NPC deputy from Beijing, said: "I was very much impressed by his (Wen's) work during the summer of 1998, when he played an important role in fighting the floods.

"I was also impressed by his diligent, down-to-earth working style. I hope he will maintain it."

Li, also deputy executive director of National Foundation for Natural Sciences, urged the new leadership to address the challenges brought about by China's entry into the World Trade Organisation.

NPC deputy Peng Zhenkun of Central China's Hubei Province said the new government should invest more to develop the country's relatively poor western regions, especially those where ethnic minorities live.

The development of western regions in China, especially in the education sector, is crucial to its goal of building a well-off society in an all-round way, said Peng, president of Hubei Institute for Nationalities. The Premier's Cabinet nominations, which include 17 new faces, sailed through the NPC, the official Xinhua news

Saturday gave up his second post as Chinese President.

Mr Wen appointed four vice premiers to the state Council, China's cabinet, to assist him. The appointees are Mr Huang Ju, Mr Wu Yi, Mr Zeng Peiyan and Mr Hui Liangyu.

Mr Huang will be executive vice-premier while Mr Wu will handle foreign affairs, Mr Zeng will be involved in overall management of the economy, and Mr Hui will focus on agricultural and related issues, sources said.

Mr Wen also nominated Mr Zou Yongkang, General Cao Gangchuan, Mr Tang Jiaxuan, Mr Hua Jianmin and Mr Chen Zhili as state councillors (senior cabinet ministers).

Mr Zhou will be public security minister concurrently while Gen Cao will be the new defence minister. Mr Tang, former Chinese foreign minister, was promoted as state councillor and he will assist Mr Wu in handling foreign affairs while Mr Chen will be in charge of education and cultural issues. Mr Hua will also be appointed as state council secretary.

With Mr Huang as executive vice-premier and Mr Hua as cabinet secretary, the state council will be firmly controlled by

New Chinese Cabinet installed

By P. S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, MARCH 17. China's new leaders on Monday formed a State Council to meet the challenges of governance in the context of geopolitical uncertainties on the global stage and the rising expectations on the domestic front.

The slate of 35 State Council members was proposed by Wen Jiabao who succeeded Zhu Rongji as Prime Minister on Sunday. The new Council, "right-sized" compared to the previous one, consists of four Vice-Premiers, five State Councillors and 26 Ministers in addition to the Prime Minister, besides the Governor of the People's Bank of China and the Auditor General.

The appointments were approved by the Tenth National People's Congress (NPC), or Parliament, at its sitting here on Monday. Mr. Wen too held the centre stage during Monday's NPC sitting, while Mr. Zhu, no longer at the highest echelons of power, was not present. The



The New Chinese Vice-Premier, Wu Yi, attends the NPC session in Beijing on Monday. Ms. Wu is the only woman member on the Politburo. — AP

most noteworthy appointment on Monday was that of Tang Jiaxuan, the outgoing Foreign Minister, as a new State Councillor, on a political promotion. He will function as China's new Foreign policy Czar, in a salutary sense of the term, and in

place of Qi Qichen, who was Vice-Premier in the outgoing administration. China's new Foreign Minister, whose name tops the list of Mr. Wen's Cabinet, is Li Zhaoxing, who is no stranger to international politics and diplomacy.

The portfolio of Defence has gone to Cao Gangchuan, who will concurrently serve as State Councillor and hold the positions of Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commissions at the levels of the CPC and the state. Mr. Cao, who joined the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in July 1954, is considered to be well-versed in the political art and strategic business of China's military affairs. He is, therefore, expected to lend substance to the PLA-CPC equation as before. The new State Councillors include Hua Jianmin and Chen Zhili, a woman leader, besides Mr. Tang, Mr. Cao and Mr. Zhou. At Monday's NPC sitting, soft musical strains heightened the political drama of electronic balloting as on the two previous days as well.

18 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

China completes smooth leadership transition

Beijing: China on Sunday completed a smooth transition of political and military powers by installing an energetic and younger generation of technocrats led by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao as leaders to steer the Communist nation's destiny for the next five years.

As expected, the National People's Congress, the largely rubber-stamp Chinese Parliament, on Sunday formally approved the candidature of Wen Jiabao, 60, as Premier to succeed Zhu Rongji in a well-orchestrated session.

Mr Wen, who as Vice Premier under Mr Zhu, has experience in handling financial, agriculture reforms and disaster relief matters, re-

ceived 2,906 votes in his favour, while three went against him and 16 abstained, entitling him to take the reins of the world's sixth-biggest economy. Attired in western suit, a beaming Mr Wen rose and shook hands with his mentor Mr Zhu as the nearly 3,000 legislators in the cavernous great hall of the people applauded.

Mr Wen, born in the booming northern post-city of Tianjin, majored in geology and joined the Communist Party in 1965. His career path remained smooth despite an eight-year stint in the party's head office during which two of the three men he worked for were purged.

On Saturday, the general



China's new premier Wen Jiabao casts his ballot during the election of leaders by the National People's Congress in Beijing on Sunday.

secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) Hu Jintao was appointed as the Communist nation's President, succeeding Jiang Zemin, at the ongoing session of the NPC.

Mr Hu, considered as the leader of the 'fourth generation' of Chinese leaders, was elected unopposed as the CPC had fielded only one candidate for each of the top posts in the most sweeping leadership changes in a decade.

Mr Hu, despite holding top party and government posts, faces challenges from rivals on the party's all-powerful politburo standing commit-

tee, which is stacked with Mr Jiang's proteges.

"It could be years before Mr Hu consolidates control," a diplomatic source commented.

Mr Jiang had handed the party's top post to Mr Hu in November last year in China's first orderly transition since the Communist Party took power in 1949.

The NPC, China's Parliament also chose a new head for itself when it elected Wu Bangguo, 62, in place of Li Peng, who retired as the chairman of the standing committee of NPC, the highest legislative body...

China

Wen Jiabao, China's PM

By P.S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, MARCH 16. Wen Jiabao, an archetypal technocrat-politician with communist credentials, was today chosen China's new Prime Minister in sync with the country's ongoing search for specialised skills in governance. The 60-year-old Wen succeeds Zhu Rongji, a proactive architect of China's continuing transition from a planned economy to a market-oriented "socialist system".

With Mr. Wen's elevation in the current session of the Tenth National People's Congress (NPC), or Parliament, China's new political configuration has taken a definitive shape. Hu Jintao, new President, will be the first among equals, even as he steers the Communist Party of China (CPC), the sole political arbiter. Mr. Wen will run the administration, while Jiang Zemin, who retains power over the military establishment, will have a final say over China's strategic status as a major play-



er on the international stage.

Mr. Wen's election was modelled on the pattern by which Mr. Hu was appointed. In yet another display of 'designer-politics', an external perception of the pre-determined style and work of China's NPC, the top managers of the CPC, today organised the latest encore in the country's orderly transfer of power. The baton has now passed from the third generation of party leaders to the fourth, without the tumult and the troubles of some of the earlier episodes of power shift within the context of the CPC's

political monopoly.

The new refrain in Chinese politics is that the CPC pulsates with the heartbeat of almost all the people, including those who might wish to articulate alternative views on matters of state policy. But there was no indication at today's NPC session that a pluralist democracy, as widely understood outside China, was on the cards. In today's voting, in which red-toned computerised ballot boxes were used, Mr. Weng secured 2,906 votes in favour of his single-candidature for the prime ministership and three against, with 16 abstaining. Mr. Hu was re-elected Vice-Chairman of China's Central Military Commission.

Xiao Yang was re-appointed President of the Supreme People's Court, while Jia Chunwang became the new Procurator-General. For the country's presidency, Mr. Hu on Saturday obtained 2,937 votes, with four NPC deputies opposing his exclusive candidature and three others abstaining.

17 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Hu Jintao is China's President

By P.S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, MARCH 15. The General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Hu Jintao, today succeeded Jiang Zemin as the country's sixth President in a largely symbolic election in Beijing. With this, China signalled its transition to a possible new era of orderly politics of succession from the painful memories of succession struggles that often marked the country's contemporary history since the formation of the communist state in 1949.

Mr. Hu's rise today from the position of China's Vice-President came as no surprise at all, although the balance of power might now be determined by the parallel reality that Mr. Jiang retained his ultimate authority over the country's powerful military establishment in a separate ballot here.

China will elect its next Prime Minister on Sunday.

The new National People's Congress (NPC), or parliament, served as the electoral college, even as the pre-determined succession saga for the presidency was choreographed with a touch of innovation. A state-of-the-art process of advanced electronic voting was adopted to signal China's intention to



move towards a system of political transparency.

The secret ballot papers were cast into a computerised box that scanned the voting pattern for tabulation purposes in a so-called "in camera" process. Less than a handful among the 2,951 NPC deputies, who attended the session, voted against Mr. Hu.

Mr. Hu's place as Vice-President has now gone to Zeng Qinghong, generally believed to be Mr. Jiang's political protégé and close lieutenant. The other major election today was that of Wu Bangguo as Chairman of the

new NPC Standing Committee — the parliament's presiding officer and final arbiter. Mr. Wu succeeds Li Peng, a veteran of the vestigial old guard of communism in China. Several Vice-Chairmen of the new NPC Standing Committee and all its members, numbering about 160, were also elected in a session that lasted almost three hours.

While the final political configuration of the "new generation of leaders" will be known after the next Prime Minister is elected, today's montage of leadership changes was replete with not only its theatrical appeal but also a central theme. The theme of change with continuity was reflected by the soft manner in which Mr. Jiang greeted his successor with a firm handshake and a studied smile after it was announced that Mr. Hu would assume China's presidency without securing the final say over the country's military forces.

Yet, even as Mr. Hu bowed to the delegates who acclaimed his election, he seemed to herald a specific "Chinese model of succession", as envisioned by China-watchers such as Zheng Yongnian and John Wong, for now.

Icon of Deng legacy: Page 14

16 MAR 2003

Hu, an icon of Deng legacy

By P. S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, MARCH 15. The superstition of a feared 'Ides of March' is, of course, alien to the political culture of communist system such as the one that sustains itself in China. Not surprisingly, therefore, the rise of Hu Jintao, China's Vice-President and General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), as the next President today occurred in as smooth a manner as might have been possible.

Also, there simply is no justification whatsoever to see the political equation between Jiang Zemin, who today yielded way to Mr. Hu at the presidency, and the new President, in the historical context of Julius Ceasar and his supposed luck on the 'Ides of March', March 15. While it is too early to foresee the political niche that Mr. Hu might be able to carve for himself as President and as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, a pivotal post, the parameters of his jurisdiction have now become clear.

At the party level, the ruling elite has now come to be characterised as a collective leadership with Mr. Hu as the General Secretary.

This formulation is different from the one that came to be associated with Mr. Jiang until he relinquished the CPC's highest post in favour of Mr. Hu last November.

Mr. Jiang had commanded a collective leadership with he himself being at the 'core' of such a dispensation. This differentiation is a reflection of the political stature of Mr. Hu in re-



PICKING UP WHERE JIANG LEAVES?: The new Chinese President, Hu Jintao (right) picks up a piece of document dropped by the former President, Jiang Zemin, in Beijing on Saturday. — Reuters

lation to Mr. Jiang. However, the CPC and Government insiders' view is that the description of Mr. Hu's standing is not at all a slur on his capabilities which have propelled him to the top. In fact, it is widely acknowledged that Mr. Hu was chosen by Deng Xiaoping, the post-Mao patriarch of China, as the prime leader of the "fourth generation" which is now poised to take over China's reins as a socialist or communist state.

At the Government level, Mr. Hu will not have, in the foreseeable future, any ultimate say over the military establishment. This factor is magnified by the fact that Mr. Jiang will continue to call the political shots as regards the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in his status as the Chairman of the CPC's Central Military Commission, a post he was re-elected to in November 2002. This aspect should be

seen in the light of the reality that Mr. Hu's presence within the panels that control the PLA is next only to that of Mr. Jiang himself. In a sense, this arrangement is designed to help China weather the strategic crises such as those concerning Iraq and the anti-terror war on the international stage.

The division of functions between Mr. Hu and the Prime Minister, who will be elected tomorrow, may have something to do with the management of China's economy.

Overall, the 60-year-old Mr. Hu, whose political experience includes that of overseeing Tibet, is no stranger to high-voltage politics despite his political status as someone several paces behind the 76-year old Jiang, who is emulating, for the present at least, a partial aspect of the Deng legacy of having a final say over strategic affairs at home and abroad.

1 6 MAR 2003

SEE FINDU

Hu set to take over from Jiang

By P. S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, MARCH 14. China's new Parliament, the Tenth National People's Congress (NPC), is poised to choreograph a political succession at the top echelons of the Government and the State-hierarchy. The process is expected to begin at the Great Hall of the People here on Saturday and last a couple of days. Topping the list of changes, widely predicted in China itself, is the likely transfer of power from the President, Jiang Zemin, to Hu Jintao, currently Vice-President and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The party intends to retain its absolute control over the commanding heights of the country's Government as also the larger State-apparatus. To promote this objective through means in tune with the changing realities on the global stage, several key NPC deputies have already suggested, during the ongoing NPC session, that the CPC should attune itself to the principles of "market economy" and the trends of 'globalisation'. The country's new leaders, expected to be elected by the NPC now, should themselves be the proactive spokespersons of "market economy" and globalisation within the Chinese 'socialist' political culture, these deputies have suggested.

The overall objective is that



The Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, who is expected to step down, rubs his eyes at the closing ceremony of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing on Friday. — AP

the CPC's political primacy and power-monopoly can be sustained unchallenged if the party can tune itself to the new wavelengths of the people's aspirations — a pragmatic economic agenda for its own sake and for the sake of the CPC's sustainable role as the sole authority in power.

Mr. Hu's likely elevation as China's President is a logical sequel to his election as the CPC's General Secretary at the party's last national congress that was held here about four months ago.

A matter of considerable in-

ternational attention in this situation is whether Mr. Jiang will continue to function as the Chairman of the CPC's Central Military Commission as also the Chairman of China's Central Military Commission. These twin positions are central to the scheme of power-politics in China in view of the almost sym-

biotic relationship between the CPC and the country's military establishment since the inception of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Another key appointment of interest to both the Chinese and others is that of a new Prime Minister in the place of Zhu Rongji, who had in recent years become the visible face of China's rapid economic liberalisation.

Given the current geo-strategic tensions on the global stage, the nomination of a new Foreign Minister, with or without the parallel appointment of a separate "foreign policy czar" is also awaited with interest.

15 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

China elects new brass

China Daily/ANN & PTI

BEIJING, March 13. — With the election today of Mr Jia Qinglin as the chairman of the 10th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) during the Fourth Plenary meeting of the First Session of the 10th CPPCC in Beijing, China today began naming a new generation of leaders to head the government for the next five years. CPPCC National Committee is the country's top advisory body.

Mr Jia, member of the standing committee of the ruling Communist Party of China Central Committee, was elected at the Fourth Plenary meeting attended by 2,151 members, Xinhua reported. Mr Jia (62) replaced Mr Li Ruihuan (67).

Mr Jia's appointment is expected since it was known last November that he would be the head of the CPPCC, an Asian diplomat said, adding that the CPC would like to go strictly according to the wishes of the top leadership so as to ensure continuity and political stability.

Mr Jia, the former Communist



Mr Jia Qinglin (centre) at the opening session of CPCC meet in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday. — AFP

Party secretary of Beijing, is considered a close aide of the outgoing Chinese President Mr Jiang Zemin. Mr Jia and other close friends of Mr Jiang are expected to carry his legacy after he relinquishes Presidency on Saturday.

Mr Jiang is expected to be succeeded by his deputy Mr Hu Jintao, who was made the general secretary

a 'draft list' of candidates to the other top posts which they could use for discussions and voting on Saturday and Sunday.

The draft list, still a state secret, were finalised today by top leaders attending the third presidium of the NPC session, Xinhua reported.

The meeting, chaired by president-chairman Mr Wu Bangguo endorsed the draft list of candidates for senior Chinese leaders and decided to distribute the list for discussion by all NPC deputies to the ongoing NPC annual session, it said.

The list includes candidates for Chairman of the NPC standing committee, Chinese President and Vice-President, chairman of Central Military Commission of China, President of the Supreme People's Court and procuratorate general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate and chairman, vice-chairmen and members of specialised committees.

The Vice President's post which would become vacant after Mr Hu's elevation as Chinese President on Saturday, is likely to be filled in by Mr Zeng Qinghong, a close aide of Mr Jiang.

China

China begins appointing top leaders

Beijing: China on Friday began naming a new generation of leaders to head the government for the next five years with the appointment of Jia Qinglin as the chairman of CPC-CC National Committee, the country's top advisory body.

Jia, member of the standing committee of the politburo of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) central committee, was elected to the post at the fourth plenary meeting of the body's first session, attended by 2,151 members, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Jia, 62, replaced Li Ruihuan, 67.

Jia's appointment comes as no surprise as it was known last November that he would be the head of the CPCCC, an Asian diplomatic committee, adding that the CPC would like to go strictly according to the wishes of the top leadership, so as to ensure continuity and political stability.

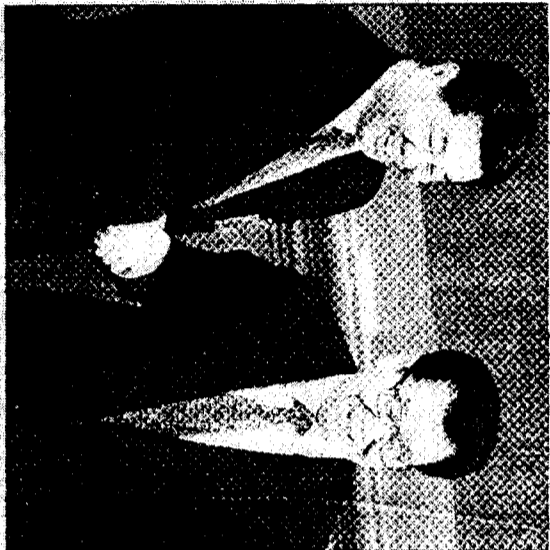
Jia, the former Communist party secretary in Beijing is considered a close aide of the outgoing Chinese President Jiang Zemin. He and other close friends of Jiang are expected to help Jiang retain political power behind the scenes after he relinquishes the presidency on Saturday.

Jiang is expected to be succeeded by his deputy Hu Jintao, who was made the general secretary of the CPC in November last year.

Apart from electing a new CPCCC chairman, the meeting also appointed 24 new vice-chairmen, a secretary-general and 239 standing committee members.

Meanwhile, the nearly 3,000 members to the newly-elected 10th National People's Congress (NPC), China's parliament, will get a 'draft list' of candidates to the other top posts which they could use for discussions and voting on Saturday and Sunday.

The draft list, still a state secret, were finalised on Thursday by top leaders attending the third presidium of the NPC session, Xinhua News Agency reported.



Newly-elected chairman of the Chinese people's political consultative conference, Jia Qinglin (left), is congratulated by outgoing chairman Li Ruihuan in Beijing on Thursday.

The meeting chaired by presidium chairman Wu Bangguo endorsed the draft list of candidates for senior Chinese leaders and decided to distribute the list for discussion by all NPC deputies to the ongoing NPC annual session, it said.

The list includes candidates for chairman of the NPC standing committee, Chinese president and vice-president, chairman of Central Military Commission of China, President of the Supreme People's Court and Procurator General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate and chairman, vice-chairmen and members of specialised committees.

The vice president's post, which would become vacant after Hu's election as Chinese President on Saturday is likely to be filled in by Zeng Qinghong, a close aide of Jiang.

Li Peng, the chairman of the 9th NPC standing committee is expected to be replaced by Wu Bangguo, currently number two in the CPC hierarchy. Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji is expected to give up his post to his deputy, Wen Jiabao, who rose to

- Jia Qinglin is appointed chairman of CPCCC National Committee
- Jia is considered a close aide of outgoing President Jiang Zemin
- Zhu Rongji is expected to give up his post to his deputy, Wen Jiabao

number three rank in the CPC last November.

A new crop of vice premiers, ministers and top officials of the government departments would be decided later next week before the NPC winds up its 15-day annual session.

Meanwhile, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman on Thursday parried questions on whether China would opt for a new foreign minister in place of Tang Jiaxian. Asked to comment on reports that Tang would be promoted as a state councillor (senior cabinet minister), foreign ministry spokesman Kong Qian said "please have patience".

"You will come to know in the coming days," Kong said, in response to a question at a regular foreign ministry briefing, the last one before the formation of the new Chinese government next week. While the top leadership line up is more or less certain, no one is able to predict whether Tang, who has been China's foreign minister since 1998, will get a promotion to become a state councillor under a new Chinese government.

Jia Qinglin to head political panel

By P. S. Suryanarayana *Wiva* *10-15* *1/13*

BEIJING, MARCH 13. The ongoing session of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which should not be confused with the National People's Congress (NPC) or Parliament, today elected new leaders.

Even as Jia Qinglin was elected as the Chairman of the new CPPCC National Committee, China's highest advisory forum chose Zheng Wantong as its Secretary General.

Two dozen other officer-bearers were also elected.

With the CPPCC completing its leadership selection process in the first phase of the present season of political changes in China, the focus will now shift to the anticipated managerial changes at the country's highest echelons of power at the government and state-levels.

A question with no authorita-



Jia Qinglin (centre), who will head the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), addresses a meeting as the President, Jiang Zemin (left) and the Vice-President, Hu Jintao, chat in Beijing, recently.

tive answer at this stage was whether China's President, Jiang Zemin, would retain his current duality of positions as

the Chairman of the CPC's Military Commission as also the leader of a parallel military commission at the state level.

14 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Jiang outlines theory of 'well-off society'

By P. S. Suryanarayana

BEIJING, MARCH 12. The creation of a "well-off Chinese society" in "an all-round way," the strategic task of safeguarding China from terrorism as also other threats, the objective of raising the country's "social security profile" and the management of the current transition from a planned economy to a market-oriented 'socialist' dispensation have come to dominate the agenda of the ongoing first annual session of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC), the new Parliament, in Beijing.

These and other related issues are being discussed as specialised aspects of an integrated national agenda. The debate is being conducted within the overall political framework of the paramount power that the Communist Party of China (CPC) continues to exercise.

The deliberations on the polity are, therefore, focused exclusively on the intended leadership changes at the highest levels of Government. It is in this context that a list of names for the top positions within a consultative mechanism was finalised today, and the list is expected to be voted upon tomorrow by the same body, which functions as the NPC's complementary organisation.

With the overarching goal-post being that of a 'well-off society,' the Chinese

President, Jiang Zemin, has told the NPC deputies that the idea of a prosperous society is in sync with the "Theory Three Represents" about the basic new identity of the CPC as a representative of the advanced production forces as also the cultural forces and the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

This Theory, widely regarded as Mr. Jiang's own contribution to contemporary China's political ideology, was enshrined as the CPC's new credo at the party's 16th national congress that was held here last November.

According to Mr. Jiang, the goal of a 'well-off society' is in line with Deng Xiaoping's doctrine of transforming China into a modern economy in stages. Deng was the patriarch who had placed Maoist China on the path towards a socialist market economy over 20 years ago.

Terrorism, economy

And, the present debate is all about remaking China as a state-of-the-art economy in the first 20 years of the present century. To secure the necessary environment for the realisation of such priorities, the NPC has turned the spotlight on such issues as the fight against terrorism and the need to promote the high-tech skills of China's military establishment on the basis of higher defence allocations.

On the anti-terror front, where China's Xinjiang region was recently in the news, a top official from there has briefed the NPC on the latest situation.

The threat posed by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a banned terrorist outfit, is now said to have been contained. As for the external dimension of China's security profile, Mr. Jiang has called upon the country's military to upgrade its skills, while the CPC General Secretary, Hu Jintao, reaffirmed the importance of reunifying Taiwan with the Chinese mainland in a peaceful manner on the basis of "one country, two systems."

As for the social dimension of China's internal security, the Labour and Social Security Minister, Zhang Zuoji, today spelt out measures to manage the transition from a planned economy to a market-oriented one without any upheavals of mass unemployment or work-force dislocations.

In an episode, apparently designed to catch the NPC's attention, a man today made an intrusive entry into a Western news agency's office in Beijing.

Claiming to have a 'bomb' in his possession, the person was said to have wanted to draw attention to 'corruption' in the Chinese society.

The intruder's claim of being in possession of a weapon later turned out to be a 'hoax,' the authorities indicated.

13 MAR 2005

THE HINDU

Beijing meet will witness orderly change of power

By Harvey Stockwin
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hong Kong: The 10th National People's Congress which opened in Beijing on Wednesday will mark the completion of the transfer of power from the third to the fourth generation of Chinese Communist Party leaders.

While everything appears to be going smoothly in the first orderly transfer of power since the 1949 communist revolution, at the end of this NPC session in ten days time, it is likely that in one important way, the generational change will still be incomplete.

The 16th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party last November began the generational changeover by reshuffling those holding party positions. This session of the NPC formally will mark the related changeover in governmental posts.

Last month, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra had to apologise for breach of protocol when he congratulated CCP secretary-general Hu Jintao on his elevation to the Presidency. This was because the Chinese insist on maintaining the image of the NPC actually deciding who gets what post and the Thai congratulations came before the NPC had met.

But Mr Thaksin was only making a correct assumption—that party posts control government positions, and that the actual transfer of power at the top was decided long ago at the highest CCP levels. Since Hu Jintao became CCP secretary-general last November, and was ranked first in the nine-member Standing Committee of the politburo (PSC), he will now be appointed President at this NPC session, replacing retiring President Jiang Zemin.



Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji delivers a report to the annual session of the National People's Congress in Beijing on Wednesday.

Since Wu Bangguo was ranked second in the PSC, he will replace Li Peng as chairman of the NPC.

Vice Premier Wen Jiabao was ranked third in the PSC and it is confidently expected that he will now replace Zhu Rongji as Premier. Former Beijing first party secretary Jia Qinglin was ranked fourth in the PSC and it is already clear that he will replace Li Ruihuan as chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The CPPCC, representing the united front backing communist rule, is also currently in session in Beijing.

Since fifth-ranked Zeng Qinghong has replaced Hu

Jintao as president of the CCP Party School, and as head of the CCP central committee secretariat, it is assumed that he will also replace Hu Jintao as China's vice-president.

At the end of this session, the NPC will go through the motions of discussing, nominating and voting for all these top positions. But in fact the NPC members will be merely rubber stamping these and other appointments. Nevertheless this carefully arranged changeover is a far cry from the bitter succession struggles which marred the rule of the CCP first generation under Mao Zedong.

6 MAR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Zhu uses gentler Taiwan rhetoric

5-3 67

Associated Press

BEIJING, March 5. — Only three years ago, China's premier scowled and wagged his finger as he issued a warning to voters on the island of Taiwan: Electing an independence-minded president could mean war with China.

But, on the eve of his retirement, Mr Zhu Rongji on Wednesday voiced a different message about Taiwan — an appeal empty of threats and filled with soft language that urged the two sides to unify peacefully.

Mr Zhu's remarks about Taiwan came in a lengthy report that opened the annual meeting of China's legislature, the National People's Congress. His speech appeared to be part a new Chinese strategy to abandon the old threats and use kind words to lure self-ruled Taiwan back to the motherland.

"We must implement the basic principles of peaceful reunification," the premier said in an address heavy with the jargon of China-Taiwan relations. A civil war split the two sides five decades ago.

Mr Zhu said China would "strive for an early resumption of dialogue and negotiation between the two sides." Beijing would also further expand economic and cultural exchanges as well as promote restoring direct shipping and aviation links, severed in 1949, Mr Zhu said.

"We should increase our exchange of views with all political



Chinese President Mr Jiang Zemin (left) with his successor Vice-President Mr Hu Jintao (centre) and Premier Mr Zhu Rongji wait as the new parliamentary chairman Mr Wu Bangguo (front) announces the end of the opening session of the National People's Congress in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. — AFP

parties and prominent people of giving the world the impression Taiwan," said Cho Hui-wan, an assistant professor of international politics at National Chung Hsing University in Taiwan's central city of Taichung.

China for friendly ties

BEIJING, March 5. — China today said it will pursue an "independent foreign policy of peace", resist hegemonism, forge good-neighbourly relations with its neighbours and play a constructive role in the fight against terrorism. "We will unwaveringly pursue an independent foreign policy of peace," Premier Mr Zhu Rongji said while expounding China's foreign policy in his fifth and final work report to the National People's Congress in China's parliament here. — PTI

The strategy is working in the international arena because China is

TV news stations aired Mr Zhu's comments. They were especially interested in a part of the speech in which Mr Zhu apparently blundered by referring to Taiwan and China as "two countries." In the past, Beijing — which considers Taiwan to be a province of China — had harshly criticised Taiwanese leaders who insisted the island was a country.

Mr Zhu quickly backed up and corrected his mistake, referring to Taiwan and China as the "two sides."

The Taiwanese government only offered a brief reaction to Mr Zhu's report.

"Zhu's speech was a continuation of the more positive mood apparent in China's attitude since last November" when the Communist Party appointed a new slate of leaders, said Jan Jyh-horng of the Mainland Affairs Council, responsible for Taiwan's China policy.

The tone and content of Mr Zhu's remarks were drastically different from the comments he made during the National People's Congress in 2000 — just days before Taiwanese voters were to elect a new president.

Shaking his finger and raising his voice, Mr Zhu stressed that Beijing disliked the opposition candidate Chen Shui-bian, whose Democratic Progressive Party has advocated independence.

He cautioned Taiwanese that Chen could cause a war with China.

Zhu stresses on 'socialist democracy'

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MARCH 5. An agenda of change and continuity was today set out to reinvent the Chinese State so that it might be able to attune itself to the political ambience of a 'globalising' world.

The Chinese Prime Minister, Zhu Rongji, raised visions of the country's ability to maintain a high level of economic growth at home and play a global role for international 'peace' and 'development' as Asia's only permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

As the first annual session of the tenth National People's Congress (Parliament) began in Beijing today, Mr. Zhu reviewed China's progress during the past five years of the previous NPC's existence and sketched the country's future profile at home and abroad on a canvas of corrective reforms. The session, scheduled to last until at

least March 18, is widely expected to usher in a new leadership, at the highest levels of State and Government, within the framework of a sustained political supremacy of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Mr. Zhu as also China's President, Jiang Zemin, are among the top leaders likely to make way for others before the end of the new NPC's first annual session. In a significant sense, the prospective configuration of power at the highest levels has been determined in the context of the CPC's own power equilibrium, which was decided during the party's sixteenth national congress held in Beijing last November. Authoritative Chinese sources have told *The Hindu* that the current indications point to the possibility of a continuation of "collective leadership" at the helm.

Mr. Jiang has in recent years modelled a collegiate leadership, with his own position be-



The Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji, delivering his final report at the National People's Congress in Beijing on Wednesday. — Reuters

ing at the 'core' of the team. This 'system' is in sharp contrast to the previous models of Deng Xiaoping's 'paramount' leadership and Mao Zedong's singular supremacy as the found-

der-architect of the People's Republic of China.

Addressing the new NPC deputies, numbering 2916, Mr. Zhu called for steps that could prevent any form of unrest at home even as China might wish to keep itself on the current growth trajectory of the average order of 7.7 per cent every year.

Reforms

He underlined the importance of keeping the farm sector in good humour and creating jobs even during the ongoing period of incremental reforms. Delivering what was virtually

China's version of the American 'state of the union' address, Mr. Zhu said the country "should develop socialist democracy" and a socialist market economy. Lending a touch of an updated Confucian value system, he said China should place its passion for 'rule of law' with the 'rule by virtue' at home.

He suggested that China

should carry forward its "independent foreign policy of peace" so as to meet the challenges of political-level "multipolarisation" and economic globalisation on the international scene. He also called for an early and peaceful reunification of China so that Taiwan could, like Hong Kong and Macao, rejoin Beijing under the principle of "one country, two systems". With Li Peng, the overall chairman of the previous NPC, having vacated that post on Tuesday, the new NPC session today was presided over by Wu Bangguo in the name and style of an executive chairman of the presidium of this NPC session. While the session will determine the new leadership line-up across the board, China-watchers like Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian draw attention to the challenges of 'legitimacy', among other priorities, in the ongoing process of "power succession" in China.

INDIA HINDU

MAR 2003

People's Congress to give final touches to reshuffle

BENJAMIN KANG LIM
BEIJING, MARCH 3

CHINA heads into a two-week session of Parliament on Wednesday that will put the finishing touches to a sweeping leadership transition and rubber stamp plans to streamline the bloated bureaucracy.

The National People's Congress, a legislature subordinate to the ruling Communist Party, will see Jiang Zemin, 76, hand his presidency to the leader of a younger generation, Vice-President Hu Jintao. Jiang, however, will retain his post as head of the state Central Military Commission, and call the shots in military and foreign affairs as his predecessor Deng Xiaoping did, Chinese sources and foreign analysts said.

The Parliament is the culmination of a transition begun last year in which Jiang handed the party leadership to Hu — the first orderly succession since the Communists took power in 1949.

The new government leaders will take over one of the world's

The 2,984 Parliament deputies will attend the proceedings at the Great Hall of the People on Tiananmen Square under tightened police security after bomb attacks last week at two prestigious Beijing universities, Peking and Tsinghua. After its own shake-up in November, the Communist Party put the finishing touches at a plenum last week to the reshuffle of government posts. They will be ratified by the legislature, which will elect a new Vice President, premier and Parliament chief.

Leaving the stage will be popular but prickly Premier Zhu Rongji, 74, who campaigned with mixed results to trim the government and eliminate official waste and corruption. Parliament chief Li Peng, reviled by many in Beijing and renowned in the West for his role in the bloody crackdown on Tiananmen democracy protests in 1989, also will step down.

Vice-premier Wu Bangguo, 61, a Jiang ally named party number two in November, is tipped to take over as Parliament chief. Party number three, Vice-pre-

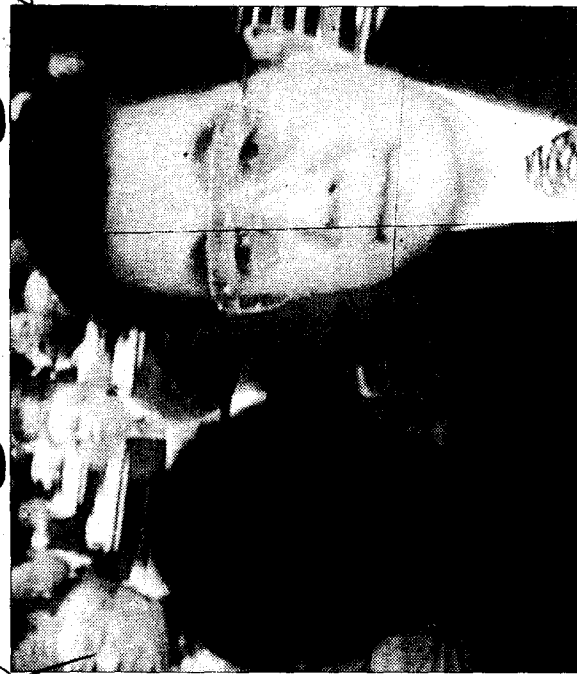
mier Wen Jiabao, 60, is due to replace Zhu. Delegates are also expected to elect Jiang's closest ally, Zeng Qinghong, 63, Vice-President. Chinese sources and analysts say the streamlining aims to build up key ministries with sweeping powers over trade, economic policy and state assets.

Analysts have given mixed reports cards to past restructuring in 1993 and 1998, which cut the number of Ministries from 86 in the early 1990s but failed to eliminate much red tape and shifted government employees to other departments.

Ahead of the session, a former aide to ousted Communist Party chief Zhao Ziyang urged the Parliament to free the tightly-controlled state media to curb endemic corruption.

Bao Tong, once a top aide to Zhao who was purged for opposing the Army crackdown on student protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, also appealed for political reform in the countryside and criticised Hong Kong's contentious anti-subversion law.

—Reuters



A delegate watches Chinese Vice-President Hu Jintao on a TV screen in Beijing on Monday. Reuters

fastest growing economies, but one beset with pressures from swelling ranks of unemployed, disgruntled farmers burdened by oppressive taxes and rampant corruption. "The government has a desire and recognises the need to resolve the problem," said economist Zhong Dajun.

"But the widening gap between urban and rural residents will not disappear due to one or two meetings," Zhong said. "Industrialisation is a process taking more than 10 years," he said. "But hopefully the meeting can come up with policies conducive to bridging the gap."

China sets its sights on lunar expedition

ANIL JOSEPH
BEIJING, MARCH 3

CHINA, which is poised to send a manned spacecraft after June this year, could launch an unmanned lunar mission within the next two-and-a-half years, a top space official said.

"We will be able to embark on a maiden unmanned mission within two-and-a-half years if the government endorses the scheme now," the chief scientist of China's lunar exploration programme, Ouyang Ziyuan was quoted as saying by the official *China Daily* today.

The chief scientist of China's lunar exploration programme said the "Chang'e programme," which is awaiting government approval, is named after the Chinese legend on a young fairy who flies to the moon.

—PTI

Political season of 'change' begins in China

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MARCH 3. A new political season of anticipated "change" began in China, even as the first session of the 10th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) started its deliberations in Beijing today.

The CPPCC, China's highest advisory body, is expected to set the general political tone, as different from a definitive state agenda, for the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) whose first session will begin in Beijing on Wednesday.

Today's meeting of the CPPCC's was presided over by Jia Qinglin, in the presence of prominent state leaders like China's President, Jiang Zemin, and Vice-President,

Hu Jintao who, besides being the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), is widely regarded as Mr. Jiang's heir-apparent for the Presidency of the country.

The others present at today's CPPCC's meeting included Li Peng, the head of the outgoing ninth National People's Congress, and the Prime Minister, Zhu Rongji.

Besides taking note of the progress report on the activities of the previous (ninth) National Committee of the CPPCC, today's meeting signalled the commencement of a process in the specific context of the socio-political goal that the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) had set last November.

The stated goal is to create a "well-off

society" in an "all-round" fashion. The CPPCC, which "represents" the Chinese people at large, will supplement the efforts of the NPC, the country's Parliament.

The primary significance of the prospective NPC session is that it will choose China's top leaders, inclusive of President and Prime Minister. The international spotlight is on the style and substance of the "Chinese model of succession" which, in the opinion of China-watchers like John Wong and Zheng Yongnian, might be institutionalised even as the leaders of the CPC learn from the mistakes and blunders of the failed communist states. It is in this context that the work of the CPPCC has acquired some relevance to the deliberations of the prospective NPC session in Beijing.

China for non-nuclearisation of Korean peninsula

China (W)

PRD-15
14/2

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 13. China today underlined its 'insistence' on the "non-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula" in the context of the decision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to report to the United Nations Security Council that Pyongyang was fully in "non-compliance" with the 'binding' Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a related Safeguards Agreement.

The stand was enunciated by the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, during talks in Beijing today with Lee Hae-chan, visiting Special Envoy of the South Korean President-elect, Roh Moo-hyun. The Chinese stand over N. Korea's suspected nuclear weapons programme is important on account of Beijing's substantive strategic equation with Pyongyang. As a veto-empowered permanent member of the Security Council, China is in a position to determine the

U.N.'s view of North Korea's NPT infractions.

At the relevant meeting of the IAEA's Board of Governors in Vienna on Wednesday, China voted in favour of the resolution that tossed the North Korean issue onto the Security Council's lap. The overall technical reasoning by the IAEA was that North Korea's recent exit from the NPT would not free that country from its non-proliferation commitments as regards facilities that had been originally placed under international surveillance in terms of the Treaty.

Of the disparate triumvirate of East Asian countries most directly concerned with this issue, Japan today insisted on having a say during the Security Council's likely debates on North Korea. Tokyo argued that its strategic interests on the Korean peninsula should be as much a compelling factor in the Security Council's reckoning as in the IAEA's. The Foreign Min-

istry in Tokyo called upon Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme in "a verifiable manner." Japan was also seized of North Korea's potential ballistic missiles programme.

South Korea, ethnic kin of the North, welcomed the IAEA's move but did not call off the ongoing inter-Korean dialogue on economic cooperation. Mr. Roh said that Seoul "should be different from the United States" where necessary and discuss 'differences' with Washington to prevent the present crisis from escalating into a war. North Korea itself, "a nation in its own style," a studied depiction by Kongdan Oh and Ralph Hassig, today remained convinced of its strategic capabilities to meet the new challenges from the U.S. and the U.N. (as perceived from Pyongyang).

The North officially refuted, too, the American allegations that it was but a "terrorist regime"

14 FEB 2003

Hu packs key posts with comrades

BENJAMIN KANGLIM

Beijing, Jan. 19 (Reuters): An ally of China's new Communist Party chief Hu Jintao was named mayor of Beijing and six other supporters were promoted to key provincial posts, giving notice of his increasing clout, state media and analysts said today.

The weekend appointments were the latest sign that Hu was consolidating power. He took over from Jiang Zemin as party chief in a generational leadership change at the 16th party congress in November, the Communists' first orderly succession since 1949.

Beijing vice-mayor Meng Xuenong, 53, was appointed mayor of the capital and Qian Yunlu, 58, was named head of the provincial legislature of south-western Guizhou today.

Both men once worked under Hu in the Communist Youth League and are considered by China watchers to be his allies.

Mayor Meng was openly supportive of Hu at a news conference hours after his appointment when asked about his own Youth League background.

"Comrade Hu Jintao is just, honest and upright," he said. "He is not swayed by personal considerations and left a very deep impression on me. This is probably his personal charm and what Youth League cadres should learn," the mayor added.

The weekend appointments were another significant step in what analysts say will be a long road to building power.

"Hu is slowly showing his strength. He is not that simple. He will slowly consolidate power," said Jin Zhong, a veteran China watcher and publisher of Hong Kong's *Open* monthly magazine.

Hu, 60, is due to replace Jiang, 76, as state president at

the national legislature's annual session in March.

Jiang packed the party's upper echelons with his own allies and is expected to remain chief of the military, wielding power from behind the curtain like his predecessor, Deng Xiaoping. Though still in Jiang's shadow, Hu has tried to make his mark by promoting several allies to key posts and by media exposure.

In a highly publicised bid to burnish his and the party's image, Hu also has taken up the cudgels for China's poor — one of the few non-controversial areas where he can make a difference without the risk of stepping on his predecessors's toes.

Yesterday, five other Hu allies were appointed to key provincial government and parliamentary posts. Li Keqiang, 47, one of China's youngest regional leaders, became parliamentary chief of Henan, the most populous province with 95.6 million people.

Li already had been named Henan party boss even though in his previous post he had to take administrative blame for a disco fire in Luoyang city in December

2000 which killed 309 people.

Also under Li's watch, thousands of rural residents were infected with HIV, the virus that can cause AIDS, in a blood-selling scandal in the 1990s when government-backed clinics failed to properly clean needles.

"Toeing the party line is more important than the fire or the AIDS scandal," said Jin, the publisher.

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THE TELEGRAPH