

# News Update

Mid-May to Early August, 2004

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## LEGAL REFORM AND CAMPAIGNS

The Chinese government introduced a series of new laws, regulations and campaigns in an effort to maintain stability and increase effectiveness in a time of rapid economic development and social dislocation.

The central government passed the Administrative Approval Law on July 1 after ten months of review. The law aims to reduce government bureaucracy by limiting requirements for official approval and permission in most areas, with the exception of public security, environment and health, and hygiene. Also enacted was the State Compensation Law, which gives greater protection to those seeking restitution from the government for violating their civil and property rights. The law is an amendment to the 1994 version under which only one-third of the 15,867 claimants between 1995 and 2003 won cases against the government. Critics complain that the new bill is still too limited in scope, too complicated, and exempts law enforcement officials from liability. (SCMP)

The Ministry of Personnel reported in early August that it had finalized a government self-appraisal system to measure the ability of local governments to meet community needs on the basis of 33 criteria such as impact on the environment, economy and market oversight, following completion of a pilot program in Qingdao, Shandong Province. The ministry stressed that more emphasis would be placed on service to the public and less on quantifiable economic success. However, critics such as Yang Fenchun, a professor of Public Administration at Peking University, said a system for the public to evaluate government performance was more important than a system for the government to appraise itself. (SCMP)

The Supreme People's Procuratorate in May announced a new one-year campaign to investigate and punish officials who infringed human rights in five key areas: illegal detention, torture and maltreatment

of prisoners, malpractice causing loss of life and property, forced confession by torture, and obstructing elections and violating citizens' democratic rights. Official statistics show 1,064 cases of human rights violations by officials in 2003, resulting in 66 deaths or injuries, but human rights groups estimate the actual number to be much higher. The procuratorate did not call for systemic changes to China's prisons and judicial system, which rights advocates say are key components of substantive change. (AFP Reut)

Rural families will be rewarded for effective family planning under a new scheme in which local governments will pay an allowance of at least 600 *yuan* a year for life to each peasant family that produces only one boy or two girls. More than 5,000 peasants qualified for a pilot program started in Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province, and pilot programs are set to begin in 13 other provinces and Chongqing municipality. The program came as the UN Population Fund released statistics indicating that China's society is aging faster than any major country in the world, with the median age projected to rise from 32 to 44 by 2040. The Population Fund said China will not be able to support its aging population financially and socially without considering solutions such as raising the retirement age, creating more white-collar jobs and easing the one-child policy. Exacerbated by a society that favors male children, China's one-child policy has resulted in a birth ratio of 118 males to 100 females, the most unequal in the world. (AP, NYT, PD, SCMP)

The recent uncovering of two trafficking rings in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia and Nanning reflects a black market for healthy babies, preferably boys. Close to 100 people were arrested for selling 76 babies in Hohhot, and 52 people were convicted in Nanning in relation to a March 2003 incident in which 28 baby girls were found on a bus in Anhui Province. Most of the trafficked babies are believed to have come from migrants, unemployed workers, college students and unmarried women. Experts believe the law prohibiting giving up healthy babies for adoption drives some to sell their babies illegally on the black market. (AP, NYT, PD, SCMP)

A national campaign against drug trafficking begun earlier this year was in full swing as authorities identified 2,201 cities

and counties considered to have serious drug problems affecting social security and stability. Drug abuse and trafficking were found to be particularly severe in Guangdong Province, where vast international borders contribute to the province's dubious distinction of claiming 87 percent of China's drug seizures and 116,000 registered drug users. Overall, seven major drug routes were identified and targeted for monitoring in Sichuan, Gansu, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Guizhou and Chongqing. State-run media said new legislation was being considered to clarify the criminality of drug-taking and appropriate punishment. (SCMP)

Two merchants, Li Xingdao and Zhu Xuejun, were sentenced to eight years and one year in prison respectively after being convicted of violating hygiene rules on August 4. Li and Zhu were among 130 people arrested after an incident in Fuyang in April in which at least 12 babies died of malnutrition after being fed fake formula. The scandal provoked Premier Wen Jiabao to announce a new food safety campaign. In an interview on state television, Zheng Xiaoyu, director of the State Food and Drug Administration, admitted that the government needed to improve its efforts in consumer protection, and called for better inter-departmental communication in government inspections. However, Zheng did not take responsibility for the milk scandal.

Contaminated food remains a common problem throughout China. *The China Quality Journey Weekly* reported in June that spoiled rice was being repackaged and sold all over the country. The bacteria-ridden grain, a favorite of labor contractors to feed their unsuspecting workers, has become known as "migrant workers' rice." (SCMP)

Several other incidents have come to light since the new food hygiene campaign began. The Guangdong Health Department detained twelve people and confiscated 444 kilograms of rice wine tainted with methanol in Beiyun District after 33 consumers were hospitalized and nine died. Raids by the Administration for Industry and Commerce discovered high levels of toxins in bamboo shoots in Pengzhou, Sichuan Province and canned fruit in Guangdong Province, but no associated illnesses were reported. (AP, SCMP)

## CORRUPTION

The official campaign against corruption within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) churned on through nationwide investigations, more stringent banking regulations and criminal prosecution of local officials for financial crimes. However, questions arose over systemic reforms as some well-connected individuals escaped harsh sentences.

The China Banking Regulatory Commission's nationwide investigation found that three out of four State-owned commercial banks were involved in two corporate IOU fraud cases. The China Construction Bank, Agriculture Bank of China and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China were implicated in fraudulent transactions totaling more than 250 million *yuan*, and thirty-five bank officials were punished. In another initiative to increase accountability in the banking industry, the State Banking Regulatory Commission stated on July 25 that bank lending officers would be held personally responsible for ensuring that borrowers were not acting fraudulently. The Commission said that officials who fail to fully investigate a client's credibility will be disciplined accordingly. (DJ)

Huang Yantian, the former general manager of the bankrupt Guangdong International Trust and Investment Corporation, was found responsible for China's largest-ever corporate failure, which resulted in losses of at least 900 million *yuan*. The Guangzhou Intermediate People's Court sentenced Huang to 14 years in prison on June 28. Another corporate executive, Liu Weifeng, the general manager of three State-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, was found guilty of embezzling more than 20 million *yuan* in public funds in 1998 and 1999. The Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's Court sentenced Liu to death on July 16. Additionally, 16 officers of the Jiangsu Tieben Iron and Steel Company and its subsidiaries, Changzhou Yinglian Iron and Steel and Changzhou Sanyou Roller, were arrested for fraud and tax evasion for falsifying accounts to avoid paying 300 million *yuan* in taxes. A two-month inquiry by the State Administration of Taxation also found that the corporate officers, led by Deputy General Manager Zhang Xiqing, had gained illegal approval from the Jiangsu provincial

government to build a steel plant on land inhabited by 6,000 peasants. Another investigation found that Xu Guojian, a senior CCP official in charge of personnel in Jiangsu Province, had solicited about 100 million *yuan* from lower-ranking officials seeking promotions since 2001. Xu allegedly kept the cash in an enormous refrigerator. He was arrested and removed as a Standing Committee member for Jiangsu Province. (AP Reut, SCMP)

A more well-connected miscreant escaped with much lighter punishment. Real-estate tycoon Zhou Zhengyi, who is purported to have close ties to Jiang Zemin's Shanghai clique, was found guilty of fraud and sentenced by the Shanghai No. 1 Intermediate People's Court in late May to just three years in prison, including time served. Zhou was arrested in September 2003 in connection with an illegal property redevelopment scheme that defrauded Shanghai residents of millions of *yuan*. Zhou's massive fraud brought the same sentence as that imposed earlier this year on lawyer **Zheng Enchong**, who was advising Shanghai residents in a lawsuit against Zhou. Zheng was convicted of attempting to provide information to the international community about residents' protests. (AFP, AP, LAT)

Some observers attribute inconsistent action against corruption to the general conflicts within the CCP regarding reform, stemming in part from a power struggle between President Hu Jintao and former President Jiang Zemin, who retains his position as head of the Central Military Commission. Jiao Guobiao, Professor of Journalism at Peking University, published an essay on the Internet in May in which he criticized the Central Propaganda Department for contributing to corruption through lack of transparency. Jiao claimed he was encouraged to write the article by Party elders who desire political reform. (The Standard, WP)

## PETITIONS, PROTESTS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS

As local governments struggle to adjust to China's break-neck economic expansion, increasing numbers of ordinary Chinese citizens have begun petitioning and protesting at all levels of government on issues such

as democratic reform, unemployment, healthcare, labor rights and unjust government regulations. According to official police data, at least three million people participated in political protests in 2003 alone by blocking roads, swarming government offices and even self-immolation at Tiananmen Square. However, there has been little sign of official response apart from punishment of petitioners and protesters. (NYT)

Many individuals and groups in the exile community held commemorative events on the 15th anniversary of the June 4th Massacre, during which they called for democratic reforms and a reassessment of the violent official crackdown in 1989. A vigil in Hong Kong's Victoria Park drew 82,000 people, and the June 4th Memorial Global Coalition organized commemorative protests and vigils in front of Chinese consulates and embassies across North America and Europe. The U.S. Congress also passed Resolution 655 condemning the crackdown and voicing hope that democratic reforms would be realized in China. (AFP, HRIC, Pasadena Star News)

Activists and NGOs such as Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights in China (HRIC) estimate that anywhere from 50 to 120 people remain in prison in 2004 for their activities during the 1989 protests. These figures are impossible to verify, as Beijing has never released official statistics. Despite calls domestically and abroad for a reassessment of the crackdown, the CCP maintained its position that the 1989 Democracy Movement was a "counterrevolutionary riot." Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Jianchao defended the government's actions as necessary for stabilizing the political turmoil and enabling peaceful economic development. Bao Tong, a former aide to purged Party Secretary **Zhao Ziyang**, accused the government of trying to erase Zhao's memory from the public consciousness by restricting his contact with the outside world. While any mention of the term June 4th was banned in the Chinese media, the Ministry of State Security in May accused two exiled leaders of the 1989 Democracy Movement, **Wang Dan** and **Wang Juntao**, of having relatives on the mainland spy for Taiwan. (AI, AP, LAT, Reut, RSF)

The tense run-up to the June 4th anniversary brought official pressure on

known dissidents, many of whom were detained or kept under strict surveillance. The authorities placed key leaders of the **Tiananmen Mothers** under house arrest or surveillance to thwart the group's plans to file a legal complaint against former Prime Minister Li Peng on behalf of 126 relatives of victims of the 1989 crackdown. **Dr. Jiang Yanyong**, the semi-retired People's Liberation Army (PLA) surgeon who exposed the government cover-up of the SARS epidemic in December 2003, was detained by the Central Military Commission on June 1 in connection with a February 24 petition he wrote to CCP leaders calling for a reassessment of the June 4th crackdown. He was released on July 20 after 49 days of political indoctrination sessions. Jiang and his family have not made any public statements about his detention, but sources told reporters that Jiang did not cave in to pressure to admit errors. In August Jiang received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for public service for his "brave stand for truth in China" that led to the containment of the SARS virus in 2003. (AFP, BBC, NYT)

Other dissidents or their family members detained or kept under surveillance around the June 4th anniversary included **Liu Xiaobo, Hu Jia, Ren Wanding, Wang Tiancheng, Hua Huiqi, Zhang Chunzhu, Liu Anjun, Jia Jianying** and **Li Shanna**. Foreign journalists reported that at least 16 people were detained for attempting small acts of commemoration at Tiananmen Square. (AP, HRIC, Reut)

Nine Tiananmen student leaders, including **Wang Dan** and **Wuer Kaixi**, wrote an open letter to the CCP calling for a fair and open retrial for **Zhang Ming**, a former leader of the Democracy Movement recently imprisoned on bogus charges of "abuse of corporate benefits." The Supreme People's Court in Shanghai granted Zhang Ming permission to appeal his sentence in late May. (AAP, AFP, Reut)

Several individuals came under official censure for their outspoken views. **Chen Qin**, 41, a professor at Guangxi Normal University, suffered a stroke while being held for questioning by the Ministry of State Security in Guilin, Guangxi Province on July 23. Chen posted an essay entitled "Seven Nauseating Things in China" in the *Beijing Xin Bao*, as well as many other online essays criticizing political and social institutions under the pen name "Northwest

Wolf," or "Qw315." **Yuan Hongbing**, dean of the law school at Guizhou Normal University, sought asylum in Australia while on a university legal mission on July 21. Yuan said he had recently learned that the authorities planned to arrest him for distributing CDs containing his work on persecution of dissidents and mistreatment of Mongolians and Tibetans. Yuan was previously arrested and imprisoned in 1994. **Li Hai**, a political activist imprisoned for cooperating with overseas organizations in assisting dissidents, was released from Liangxiang Prison on May 30 after completing a nine-year sentence. Chinese authorities reportedly warned Li's mother to ensure that Li's release would not spark any "unanticipated events." (HRIC, SCMP)

In the high-profile case of **Yang Jianli**, the Beijing Intermediate People's Court handed down a sentence of five years in prison on May 13, more than two years after Yang, a U.S. resident, was arrested for illegally entering the country and espionage. According to Yang's lawyer, Mo Shaoping, Yang refused to appeal the sentence because he believed the judicial system was a sham. Two other Chinese-born U.S. citizens also found themselves in detention. Scholar **Wang Fei-ling**, arrested in Shanghai on July 25, was held on suspicion of espionage until August 8. The U.S. consulate was not informed about his detention until August 4. In July, Chinese authorities acknowledged that they had arrested U.S. citizen **David Wei Dong** back in September on charges of spying for Taiwan, and that he would stand trial soon. (AFP, VOA)

## INTERNET AND PRESS CENSORSHIP

The Chinese government continued its efforts to control freedom of expression and the press by introducing more regulations and standards targeting pornography and violence that can also be applied to political dissent and journalists.

The official China Internet Network Information Center (CNet) reported that Internet usage in China grew by 28 percent compared with 2003. Among China's 87 million users, 30 percent were believed to be students, and 50 percent under the age of 24. CNet expected the total number of Internet

users in China to exceed 100 million by the end of this year. Some of the Chinese government's new regulations appeared to target Internet venues favored by young people. The Ministry of Public Security started a crackdown on pornography on the Internet on July 16, closing 700 sites in two weeks and detaining 224 suspects. The State Administration of Press and Publicity conducted a campaign from April to June to crack down on video games containing "unhealthy" content. Fifty-six games were deemed illicit, including some that authorities said promoted independence for Tibet and Taiwan. In a related announcement, the Ministry of Science and Technology said it plans to spend \$1.3 billion this year developing its own high-technology standards on video discs, cell phones and the Internet. (AFP, AP, CNet, NYT)

Several provincial and municipal governments also initiated measures to censor Internet usage. The Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture, Radio, Film and Television introduced regulations requiring Internet café patrons to register their Internet usage through swipe cards bearing their national identification numbers. The department said the measure was intended to combat pornography and ban entry to cafés by minors. Although there was little public opposition to the new regulations, online protests adamantly condemned the restrictions as an impediment to freedom of expression. Some international rights groups also expressed anger over what they described as cooperation between some Internet companies and the Chinese government to censor the Internet. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) rebuked Yahoo!, Google and Cisco Systems for acquiescing to government demands to limit the scope of information accessed on their sites. (NYT, RSF)

Individuals expressing their political opinions online continued to suffer persecution. **Du Daobin**, 39, whose case has become well known both in China and overseas, was sentenced to three years in prison on the charge of "incitement to subvert state power" by the Xiaogan Intermediate People's Court in Hubei Province on May 11. One month later, at a 15-minute trial during which neither Du nor his lawyer, Mo Shaoping, were allowed to speak, the court suspended that sentence for four years. The court said Du will have to report

to his local Public Security Bureau every week, and he will be deprived of his political rights for an additional two years. Many observers believe the court was bowing to popular pressure after 2,000 people from all over China signed an Internet petition calling for Du's release. The Supreme People's Court of Hubei Province upheld the Intermediate Court's decision on appeal in August. (AJC, LAT, NYT, RSF, WP)

The government also introduced measures to censor cell phone text messaging, one of the few remaining forms of information technology not under heavy official scrutiny. An official campaign launched in July requires private companies to install monitoring devices in all cell phones, allowing the authorities to read messages and receive automatic notification when certain keywords are typed. Text messaging was credited with much of the spread of information about the SARS crisis among members of the public during the government's information blackout in early 2003. (CJFE)

Many popular television shows with sexual, violent or foreign content have been put on hold since the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television began enforcing decency standards on April 30. The agency also announced that digital movies would require prior approval before distribution in a measure specifically targeting documentaries and films about religion, nationality, peasant hardship and worker protests. There were also claims that Chinese authorities were applying political pressure to TV satellite operators to decline transmission of programming by the New Tang Dynasty television station, which the government says is linked to the banned Falungong spiritual movement. New Tang Dynasty claimed the government used threats, financial pressure and blackmail to prevent the station's programs from being aired in several countries. (Reut, RSF, WSJ)

Print censorship remained harsh, with several newspaper reporters and editors punished for writing and publishing articles on sensitive subjects. In the controversial *Nanfang Dushi Bao* (Southern Metropolis Daily) incident, two editors had their sentences reduced on appeal, while a third has yet to be formally charged. **Yu Huafeng**, the newspaper's former general manager, and **Li Minying**, the former editor-in-chief, appealed their convictions and respective sentences of 12 years and 11 years in

early June. The Guangdong Intermediate People's Court convicted Yu on embezzlement charges in March, soon after his newspaper broke the news of the reemergence of SARS in December 2003, before the government reported it to the World Health Organization (WHO). The paper had also reported the case of **Sun Zhigang**, a college student beaten to death in a Guangzhou administrative detention camp in March 2003. On June 15, a higher court reduced Yu's sentence to eight years and Li's to six years. **Cheng Yizhong**, another editor at the paper, was arrested on corruption charges but has not yet been formally charged. Outrage over the editors' arrests and convictions was expressed in online petitions, and some 20 Guangdong officials wrote letters calling on the provincial government to reconsider the verdict. The newspaper has suffered tremendous staff turnover and financial loss since the arrests. (AP, CPJ, WP)

In a separate case, **Liu Shui**, 37, a reporter and editor for publications such as the *Nanfang Dushi Bao* and *Shenzhen Wanbao* (Shenzhen Evening News), was sentenced to two years of administrative detention on what some said was a trumped-up charge of "soliciting prostitution." Liu, who had previously been arrested for his writing on politically sensitive topics, recently published a number of essays online commemorating the June 4th Massacre, advocating the release of political prisoners and calling for political reform. Two Taiwanese journalists were also detained in July, although the reason for the detentions was unclear. **Ju-Ching Yang** and **Yu Renwang** were detained in Shanghai on July 9, interrogated for four days and then released without an apology.

An agreement to translate an Olympics reference book from English to Chinese was canceled by the author, David Walenchensky, after Chinese editors told him that certain facts about past Olympic Games would have to be excised. Walenchensky expressed astonishment that historical facts were kept secret from the Chinese public. (CPJ, IFS, IHT)

## RURAL ISSUES

Economic statistics for the first quarter of 2004 released in July showed that the

number of people classified in the lowest income stratum, earning less than \$75 per year, had grown for the first time in 25 years to 85 million people, an increase of 800,000 over the previous year. This came as the economy grew nine percent in the same quarter. The government officially recognized 29 million people living at a poverty level defined as less than 20 cents a day. Using the World Bank's measure of less than \$1 a day, that number jumps to 200 million Chinese. The average annual income for urban residents was \$1,000 per year, while the average for rural residents was just \$300 per year.

The desperation of China's rural poor was highlighted when an 18-year old student from Pujia committed suicide because he did not have the \$80 school fee required before he could take a college entrance exam. Sources close to the family told reporters that **Zheng Qingming** threw himself in front of a train on June 4 after school authorities put pressure on him to pay the fee.

Discontent over social injustice in rural areas boiled over into a series of protests and petitions. Four thousand peasants from villages surrounding Zigong City, Sichuan Province submitted a petition in June to President Hu Jintao. The petition alleges that a group of individuals headed by Liu Youlin, the deputy secretary of Sichuan's disciplinary inspection committee and head of the provincial procuratorate, illegally appropriated land and absconded with funds related to a redevelopment project, and that some 30,000 peasants forcibly removed from their villages were never paid the compensation promised them. (HRIC)

In another case alleging inadequate compensation and corruption in land confiscation, peasants from Shijiahe, Henan Province staged a protest alleging wrongdoing by village head Liu Guozhao. Six hundred police raided the village with tear gas, shotguns, dogs and electric batons on July 31 to quell the protests, resulting in the injury of 30 peasants and the detention of four. (SCMP)

Peasant leader Zhang Youren was put under house arrest by the Tangshan Municipal Public Security Bureau on June 30 and later detained by PSB officials on July 6 ahead of a visit by Premier Wen Jiabao on July 8-10. Zhang earlier this year spear-

headed a petition by more than 11,000 peasants from Tangshan Village, Hebei Province demanding the recall of Tangshan's Party secretary, Zhang He, as their delegate to the NPC and the Hebei Provincial People's Congress. The petition alleges that Zhang misappropriated compensation funds in a relocation project that took place in the 1990s. **Zhao Yan**, a journalist covering the Tangshan protests, has also been subjected to official persecution. (HRIC)

**Zhen Shuqing**, 46, the Chair of the Finance Committee of the village of Sanlilitun, Hebei Province was severely beaten in May, and his daughter was jailed in June on what he believes are trumped-up charges in retaliation for his investigation into the misappropriation of land-compensation funds embezzled by the local party boss and his clique. Zhen's assailants were not brought to justice. (HRIC)

As the rising incidence of peasant protests raised the specter of social instability, Premier Wen Jiabao ordered local officials to reduce taxes on farmers in July. He said the government was promoting a "Scientific Development" plan, emphasizing social justice in addition to rapid economic growth. Wen ordered local governments to address the needs of farmers, villages and agriculture, although he did not mention fighting corruption and abuse of power, which experts said was necessary to solve the problem. On the international level, the need for relief to poor farmers and peasants was also noted during a World Bank meeting in Shanghai in May. During the meeting, which included leaders from Africa and Latin America, developing countries reiterated the need to end agricultural subsidies and fight world poverty and hunger, measures called for at the Fifth Ministerial meeting in Cancun last year.

The meeting came after World Bank President James Wolfensohn proposed in May that human rights be included among the criteria for loans to developing countries. Wolfensohn did not specify which human rights would be considered. The UN Food and Drug Organization (UNFAO) released a report on May 17 advocating more funding for research into the use of agricultural biotechnology and genetic engineering to alleviating world hunger. (AP, the Independent, NYT, WP)

## LABOR RIGHTS

The restructuring of an increasing number of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) under China's economic reforms continues to spur worker unrest and protests all over the country. In the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, hundreds of miners from the city of Hegang began protesting in front of the Hegang Mining Bureau in June. The workers claim non-payment of severance pay to laid-off employees and accuse officials of embezzling the mine's funds. A group of 23 miners who attempted to take their complaints to the central government were arrested in Beijing in early July after threatening to jump off a building. Six hundred more miners made the long trek to Beijing later that month to petition for the release of the original 23. Four hundred were intercepted by police outside of Beijing, but 200 managed to submit their petition to the complaints office of the State Council. (RFA, UPI)

Elsewhere in the north, retrenched workers from the Inner Mongolia North Heavy Industries Group Corporation, Ltd. (NORHEINCO) in Baotou, Inner Mongolia, are protesting lay-offs and compensation packages they say they were tricked into accepting in 1997. The workers have been protesting in front of the factory every day since early May in rotating shifts of 500 workers, and also sent groups of delegates to petition the municipal and regional government before taking their complaints to the Letters and Complaints Office in Beijing on July 7. Eighty retrenched workers went to the capital to demand reinstatement of their jobs and payment of promised redundancy benefits, but most were forcibly returned to Baotou. (CLB)

In the ongoing struggle of workers laid off from the Liaoyang Ferro-Alloy Factory in Liaoning Province, imprisoned protest organizers **Yao Fuxin** and **Xiao Yunliang** marked the first anniversary of their sentencing on May 9. The two are reportedly in dire health and have been deprived of proper medical attention for political reasons. (CLB)

In the south, 33 Hong Kong labor rights groups signed an open letter to the management of two electrical battery factories operated by GP Batteries International Ltd. in Huizhou, Guangdong Province after reports that female workers at the factories

had been poisoned by toxic mine cadmium. Workers brought the situation to the attention of the news media and labor groups in Hong Kong after receiving no response from GP management to their requests for proper medical examinations and treatment. (CLB)

The Chinese government's commitment to health and safety in the mining industry was brought into question after statistics from the first eight months of 2003 revealed a 25 percent increase in mining deaths over the previous year. More than 7,000 mining deaths were reported during the eight-month period, with many attributed to the reopening of unsafe mines to meet China's burgeoning demand for coal. (AFP)

Four thousand taxi drivers in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region staged China's largest taxi strike to date against local government plans to revoke their taxi licenses. After several days of striking, the government announced that the plans would be put on hold, although they have not been canceled. (HRIC, SCMP)

## RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

China's Minister of Public Security, Zhou Yongkang, in August put the Falungong spiritual movement at the top of the CCP's list of the six biggest threats to social stability. The Falungong group said that about 1,000 of its practitioners have been tortured to death in police custody and many more have been sent to forced labor and psychiatric detention in the four and a half years since the Chinese government launched its crackdown against the spiritual movement. (Epoch Times, SCMP)

Ethnic and religious groups such as Tibetans, Uyghurs and underground Christian church groups came second on the CCP's list. Some observers attributed the perceived threat from Christian groups to a religious revival in which thousands of Chinese are reportedly converting to Christianity and other religions. In an effort to keep pace with the rising popularity of Christianity, the Beijing Municipal Administration for Religious Affairs said in May that two new Christian churches would be constructed in Beijing for members of China's officially recognized Christian community. The \$4.8 million project will accommodate 1,000 worshippers in each church. (AP, SCMP)

Meanwhile, persecution of unofficial Protestant house churches and leaders continued apace. **Zhao Wenquan**, the leader of an unofficial protestant church in Meng Cheng, Anhui Province was arrested on May 9 for “disturbing social order” and “illegal religious gathering” after 4,000 Christians showed up for an unregistered church festival. **Gu Xianggao**, a teacher at a house-church in Heilongjiang Province, was beaten to death by Public Security Bureau officers on May 24, and **Jiang Zongxiu**, a church member from Guizhou, was beaten to death in police custody on June 18 after being arrested on suspicion of “spreading rumors and inciting to disturb social order” while handing out Christian bibles in Guizhou. One hundred church leaders were arrested at a Ying Shang Church retreat in Xinjiang on July 22. (CAA, Zenit)

Three bishops from China’s underground Catholic church in Hebei Province were detained in May and June. The Vatican issued a statement on June 23 protesting the detention of the **Bishop of Xuanhua**, the **Bishop of Xiwanzi** and the **Bishop of Zhengding**. The Bishops of Xiwanzi and Zhengding were released after five to ten days, while the Bishop of Xuanhua remained in detention through July. Two Catholic priests, **Lu Genjun** and **Cheng Xiaoli**, were arrested by security police in An Guo, Hebei Province on May 14 as they prepared religious education classes. (Reut, Zenit)

## PUBLIC HEALTH

The Chinese government made progress in controlling public health crises such as SARS and AIDS, but its efforts continued to be hampered by lack of transparency and abuse of power.

As China’s last SARS patient was declared fully recovered and released from a Beijing hospital in late May, the government announced it had tested the first SARS vaccine on humans. Four of 36 volunteers were inoculated with a vaccine developed by the government and Peking University on May 21. The patients were reported to be in good condition in the week following the test, and will continue to be monitored for the next seven months. The origins and spread of the disease are still not completely understood. (AP, NYT, WP)

The repercussions of SARS were still

being felt in regions hard-hit by the outbreak. Li Liming, the director of the Center for Disease Control, resigned on June 30 to take responsibility for the latest outbreak of the disease in a Beijing laboratory in which nine people were infected and one person died. Similarly, two officials from the Hospital Authority in Hong Kong stepped down in July to take political accountability for a local outbreak. The resignations were not accompanied by any announcements of changes to official policy to better deal with crises as they arise. Eight people protesting outside a meeting for heads of provincial governments in south China at the end of May accused Guangdong leader Zhang Dejiang of covering up the SARS crisis and demanded an end to CCP dictatorship. They were dispersed following a scuffle with police. (AP)

As the latest SARS outbreak wound down, China’s growing AIDS epidemic attracted urgent attention from the international community. The UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria announced in May that it would scale up its AIDS treatment in more than 100 developing countries. This was followed by the release in July of a joint report by UNAIDS and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimating that AIDS would cost Asian nations \$17.5 billion per year by 2010 if measures were not taken to stop the spread, and that poverty in these countries would increase as a direct result. UNAIDS Director Dr. Peter Piot said that all levels of the Chinese government needed to step up preventative measures in order to curtail a 30 percent increase in infections each year. UNAIDS specifically recommended actions such as protecting women and promoting human rights if Beijing was to meet its goal of limiting infections to less than 1.5 million. (AP)

The challenges of the AIDS epidemic were also discussed at the 15th annual International AIDS conference in Bangkok on July 11, which was attended by 100 health officials from around the world. At the meeting, China’s Vice-Minister of Health, Wang Longde, appealed to the international community for help in fighting AIDS in China because the government lacked adequate resources. The international conference’s ability to mobilize international leadership was called into question when a key closed summit for world leaders had to be canceled because of poor turnout. (AP, NYT)

The Chinese government continued preventative and education measures such as the Ministry of Health’s crackdown on official blood-selling centers that violated health safety regulations. Punishments ranged from fines to closure of clinics. More than 20 percent of the nation’s blood is still obtained through purchase from individuals, a proportion experts consider far too high. In another preventative initiative, officials distributed free condoms in an office building in Shanghai in late July as part of an AIDS awareness and safety program that may be expanded to 50 office buildings in the future. Other cities, such as Beijing and Haikou in Hainan Province, intend to launch similar condom distribution initiatives at locations favored by young people and migrant workers. (SCMP)

In an effort to ease the financial burden on some AIDS patients, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Labor and Social Security announced that 12 types of AIDS drugs would be covered by medical insurance for those workers enrolled in the medical insurance system. However, this program is limited to Beijing, and requires people to openly reveal having AIDS, leaving them susceptible to discrimination. The high cost of antiretroviral drugs and use of generic drugs was the topic of a July report by TreatAsia, an NGO that promotes effective treatment of HIV/AIDS. The report found that only three of 27 Asian companies known to manufacture anti-HIV drugs had WHO approval. The report warned that widespread access to unapproved drugs could lead to misuse and the development of drug-resistant strains. (AFP, NYT, SCMP)

While the Ministry of Health claimed in June that villagers with AIDS were living “very comfortable lives,” several AIDS activists fighting official abuse and inadequate assistance for people with AIDS came under official persecution. Prominent AIDS activist **Hu Jia** was put under house arrest in Beijing during the last week of May, shortly before the U.S. ambassador to Beijing, Clark Randt, was scheduled to deliver medicine and other supplies to AIDS orphans in Henan Province. Hu was detained for several days in early June after conflicts with police officers monitoring his home, and police instructed his parents to admit him to a psychiatric institute for testing and treatment. Hu’s parents refused to comply with the order.

Two activists from Henan's Shuangmiao Village, **Wang Guofeng** and his wife, **Li Suzhi**, were detained on July 11 for "interrupting public orders" after they led two dozen villagers to stop officials from shutting down a school for AIDS orphans. Another AIDS activist from Shuangmiao Village, **Pan Zhongfeng**, 35, was detained on July 8 for disturbing traffic. Wang's and Pan's fathers went to Beijing to petition the central government for the release of their sons, but they received no response. (HRIC, Reut, SCMP)

### HONG KONG PROTESTS

Thousands of Hong Kong residents turned out for a march and a vigil commemorating the 15th anniversary of the June 4th Massacre. A march on June 1 calling for the PRC to vindicate the Tiananmen Movement and return political power to Hong Kong people drew a crowd of about 5,600, organizers said, up from 2,500 the previous year. A few days later, on June 4, organizers said 82,000 people turned out for a candlelight vigil, up from 45,000 in 2003. Other events included an outdoor performance sponsored by the **Tiananmen Mothers Campaign**, and a prayer session sponsored by the Catholic Church. Media coverage of the two events was blocked in China.

With an even larger turnout anticipated for a protest scheduled for July 1, Chinese authorities severely curtailed the usual 400-600 mainland tour groups that pass through Hong Kong each day, with none allowed to enter the SAR from June 30 to July 3. On July 1, one year after 500,000 people protested a proposed anti-subversion law, another 350,000-530,000 people turned up in sweltering heat for a protest march demanding return of political power to the people. Organizers attributed the heavy turnout to widespread anger over an April 27 decision by Beijing to refuse direct elections for the Chief Executive in 2007 or for the legislature in 2008. There were no major disturbances during the peaceful demonstrations, but 42 people were taken to the hospital with heat exhaustion, authorities said. A Shenzhen factory producing umbrellas with the words "direct elections" for the July 1 protest was closed and its owner detained on May 27. (AP, NYT, Reut, SCMP)

Beijing also attempted some concilia-

tory gestures to soothe Hong Kong citizens' anger over its suffrage decision. The Buddha's finger, a relic of ancient Buddhism, was loaned to the SAR for ten days in May to celebrate the Buddha's birthday, and a *People's Daily* commentary in late June called for "peace and unity." In addition, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, met with democracy lawmakers for the first time in eight months on June 19, and Hong Kong's No. 2 official, Donald Tsang, said more middle class people would be included in government advisory bodies. Members of Hong Kong's democracy camp have described these measures as attempts to sway the upcoming September 12 elections, in which pro-democracy groups are expected to win over pro-Beijing parties. Meanwhile, PRC officials commented that their invitations to pro-democracy lawmakers to attend the People Liberation Army's (PLA) first parade in Hong Kong on July 21 should not be interpreted as an olive branch. (AP, SCMP, WP)

Worries over freedom of expression in Hong Kong intensified as the National People's Congress (NPC) stated through the New China News Agency that any move to voice "discontent" or "condemn" its April decision was against the law and the constitution. Meanwhile, three popular radio talk show hosts from Commercial Radio's popular *Teacup in the Storm* resigned in May following harassment, assaults and vandalism of their property. Allen Lee Peng-fei, Albert Cheng King-hon and Raymond Wong Yuk-man all reported that they had been the targets of repeated death threats and vandalism, and Raymond Wong was beaten by a group of unknown men. Hong Kong's *Spike* magazine published a report in July quoting informed sources as saying that Cheng and Wong had been intimidated by a much-feared local business figure claiming to speak on behalf of a senior Chinese official. Pro-democracy lawmakers have reported similar harassment, and callers to radio talk shows said Chinese officials were putting pressure on their mainland relatives to influence their votes in the upcoming September 12 elections, in which 30 out of 60 legislators will be popularly elected. Albert Cheng announced in August that he was renouncing his Canadian citizenship and would run as a candidate in the Legislative Council election. (DJ, NYT, SCMP, AP)

Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) raided the offices of eight news outlets on July 24 after local media disclosed the identity of a witness under protection in a fraud case. The Hong Kong Journalists Association called on the ICAC to explain the raids and to avoid future similar threats to press freedom. Hong Kong's High Court ruled on August 10 that the ICAC could have used less intrusive measures in its investigations. In a lawsuit brought by *Sing Tao*, one of the newspapers, the court set aside the July 24 search warrant and ordered the return of seized property. (AP, CD, CPJ)

### ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	the Age Australia Press
AFP	Agence-France Presse
AJC	Atlanta Constitution Journal
AP	Associated Press
CAA	China Aid Association
CD	China Daily
CLB	China Labour Bulletin
CNet	CNet.com News Service
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
DJ	Dow Jones
FIDH	International Federation of Human Rights
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
LAT	Los Angeles Times
NYT	New York Times
PD	People's Daily
Reut	Reuters
RFA	Radio Free Asia
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
SCMP	South China Morning Post
UPI	United Press International
WP	Washington Post
WSJ	Wall Street Journal