

China fires mayor, health official as number of SARS deaths jumps

By William Foreman
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING — Jolted by a jump in SARS deaths and a tenfold increase in infections in Beijing alone, China's Communist Party stripped the health minister and the capital's mayor of power Sunday. It also canceled an annual weeklong holiday for tens of millions of people to keep them from traveling and curb the spread of the disease.

Just hours after announcing 12 new deaths nationwide, the official Xinhua News Agency said Health Minister Zhang Wenkang and Beijing Mayor Meng Xuenong were removed from their Communist Party posts but kept their government titles. The reported number of infections in Beijing increased from 37 to 346.

The party is the true power in China, and Zhang's and Meng's party posts were far more important than their government offices. Their loss left the two men greatly diminished as political figures and possibly foreshadowed their demotion or outright ouster from government.

The dismissals came two days after President Hu Jintao threatened serious punishment for officials who didn't quickly and accurately report cases of SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome.

Last week, Chinese leaders had declared fighting SARS a national priority after weeks of criticism that the communist government reacted too slowly to the mysterious, deadly outbreak. The illness is believed to have originated in China.

Gao Qiang, an executive vice health minister, said the decision to cancel the May Day holiday

beginning May 1 was made "to prevent the massive movement of people and the possible spread of the disease."

He acknowledged that the move "will mean massive losses in tourism revenue, but people's lives and health had to be put above everything."

May Day, the international holiday celebrating the workers of the world, has become a major way for China to boost its travel industry and pump cash into the economy.

In China, May Day, the Spring Festival and October's one-week National Day vacation set in motion one of the largest mass movements of humanity on the planet.

The new fatalities raised China's death toll to 79 and its total number of reported cases to 1,814, Gao told a news conference. The most dramatic jump was in Beijing.

In a rare admission, Gao said his ministry was not properly prepared for the outbreak and didn't give "clear instructions or effective guidance."

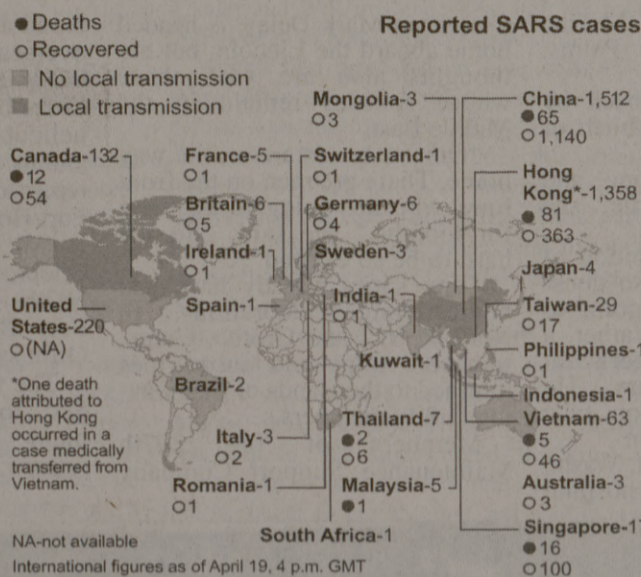
But he denied that SARS cases were intentionally hidden from investigators, warning that "any such act will be severely punished."

The first known SARS case occurred in southern China's Guangdong province last November, but no cases were disclosed until February. As SARS began to spread around the world, China faced allegations that it wasn't sharing all of its statistics.

So far, officials have not detected the spread of SARS in large rural areas, Gao said. He noted that farmers have lower incomes and less access to medical care. If the outbreak hit the countryside, he said, "the conse-

China reports dozens more SARS cases

China reported a jump in the number of deaths from SARS and a tenfold increase in the number of infected people in the capital Beijing on Sunday. There are 3,547 cases reported worldwide and 182 deaths from the disease.



SOURCES: World Health Organization

quences would be grim."

Across Asia, governments weighed tougher measures in their struggle to stop the outbreak that has killed at least 205 people worldwide and infected more than 3,800 — most of them in Asia.

Singapore ordered all 2,400 workers at its largest wholesale vegetable market quarantined and shut the market for 10 days after several SARS cases were reported there.

Dozens of police in face masks barricaded the Pasir Panjang Wholesale Center to keep people out. The closure will cause a "significant disruption" of vegetable supplies in the city-state, the government said.

After reporting a record 12

deaths in a single day Saturday, Hong Kong reported seven more Sunday as officials began re-evaluating the drug treatment being used in the modern metropolis — one of the world's hardest-hit places with 88 deaths.

Although there is no evidence the virus can be transmitted through blood, South Korea was considering banning blood donations by people recently returned from China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam.

Indonesia deployed troops to help nurses and doctors examine Indonesian workers returning from SARS-hit countries.

Several governments have urged their citizens to avoid unnecessary travel to China.

Saddam's son-in-law in custody, Iraqis say

By Charles J. Hanley
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Saddam Hussein's son-in-law has left the Syrian capital and surrendered to the Iraqi National Congress in Baghdad, a spokesman in London said Sunday.

One of Saddam's top bodyguards was also arrested Sunday by the group, the spokesman said. And U.S. Central Command said Iraq's minister of higher education and scientific research was apprehended by coalition troops.

Jamal Mustafa Abdallah Sultan al-Tikriti is married to Saddam's youngest daughter, Hala, and was deputy head of the Tribal Affairs Office in Saddam's ousted regime. Dubbed by the U.S. military as the ninth of clubs in its deck of most wanted, he ranks No. 40 out of the 55 top Iraqi officials sought by the allies.

"There have been some negotiations until he was persuaded to come to Baghdad and surrender to our people in Baghdad," said Haider Ahmed, a spokesman for the congress, a London-based umbrella group of Saddam opponents.

He said he did not know precisely when al-Tikriti surrendered, but believed it was Sunday. Al-Tikriti had been persuaded to leave Damascus and surrender in Baghdad, Ahmed said.

He said his information came "from my colleagues in Baghdad."

Al-Tikriti was being questioned by intelligence officers of the Free Iraqi Forces on Sunday and would be turned over to the U.S. military "in a

matter of hours, not days," Ahmed said.

Entifadh Qanbar, the congress' liaison to U.S. Central Command in Qatar, said it was "our general policy is to turn over war criminals to the Americans."

He said al-Tikriti is in his mid-30s and had no information about the whereabouts of the daughter.

Officials at Central Command said they had heard the reports but could not confirm the surrender. Syrian officials were not immediately available for comment on al-Tikriti's reported surrender.

The report comes as President Bush applauded signs Sunday that Syria is beginning to heed American demands for cooperation against Saddam's defunct regime.

Tensions between the United States and Syria escalated after reports surfaced that members of Saddam's deposed government had crossed the border to flee the U.S.-led war.

Syrian President Bashar Assad told two U.S. congressmen Sunday that the country will not give asylum to war crimes suspects from Iraq and will expel any Iraqi who should cross the border. Reps. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., and Darrell Issa, R-Calif., visiting Damascus, described the Syrian president as eager to deal with U.S. concerns.

Ahmed said al-Tikriti was accompanied from Syria by one of Saddam's top bodyguards, who also was arrested Sunday by the Iraqi National Congress.

Khalid Hmood was the head of Iraqi intelligence during the war and ranked a major in Saddam's personal security detail, according to Ahmed.

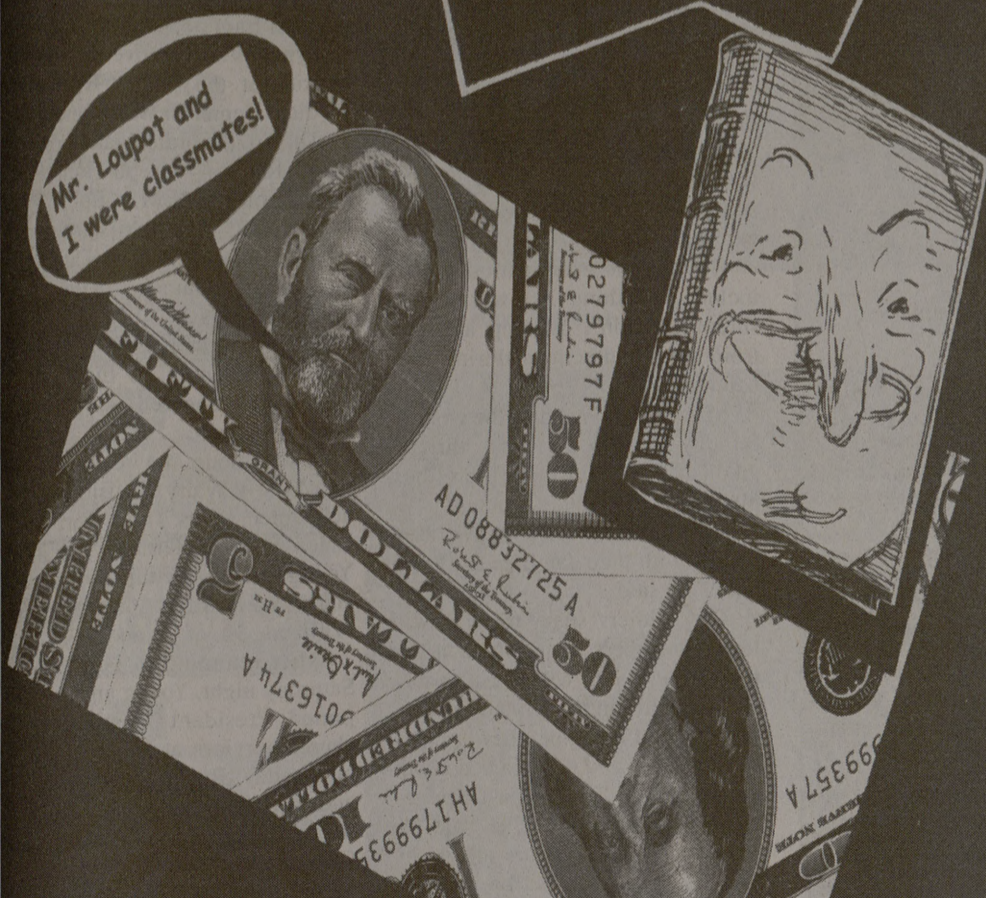
LOUPOT'S BOOKSTORES

AN AGGIE TRADITION OF FRIENDLY SERVICE SINCE 1932

RESERVE FOR SUMMER - FALL

BUYBACK TIME!

Mr. Loupot and I were classmates!



Website: www.loupots.com E-mail: info@loupots.com

NORTHGATE 335 University Dr. College Station, TX 77840 (979) 846-6312 FAX: (979) 846-0748
WOLF PEN PLAZA 1907 Texas Ave. S. College Station, TX 77840 (979) 693-0838 FAX: (979) 764-7355
SOUTHGATE 308 George Bush Dr. College Station, TX 77840 (979) 693-2278 FAX: (979) 764-7273

College Station Utilities & the College Station Parks Department proudly present the

2003 STARLIGHT MUSIC SERIES

SATURDAY, APRIL 12 Leon Russell w/ Bobby Hall	SATURDAY, APRIL 26 Gary P. Nunn w/Randy Rogers	SATURDAY, MAY 3 Marshall Tucker w/Tracy Conover
SATURDAY, MAY 10 Radney Foster w/Bonnie Bishop	SATURDAY, MAY 17 Earl Thomas Conley w/Diamondback, TX	SATURDAY, MAY 31 Killer Bees w/I-Tex
SATURDAY, JUNE 7 Duck Soup	SATURDAY, JUNE 14 Trout Fishing in America w/Terri Hendrix	SATURDAY, JUNE 21 Malford Milligan and Friends
SATURDAY, JUNE 28 Indian Jazz Group w/The Big Apple Trio	SATURDAY, JULY 12 Hanna's Reef	SATURDAY, JULY 19 Big Otis

Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater College Station, TX

Bring your picnic baskets, chairs, coolers, BYOB. (No glass containers or pets, please.)

For more information, call: (979) 764-3486
www.ci.college-station.tx.us

Water is Life
Power is Progress
Service is Pride
College Station Utilities
Community Owned

PARKS & RECREATION
College Station

Aggietland Jewel
EQUICOM
RADIO BROADCASTING
KORA • KTAM • KXCS • KZTR