

Xi joins the league of Mao and Deng

The Communist Party of China (CPC) on Tuesday bracketed its General Secretary, Xi Jinping with its star icons, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.

Mr. Xi's status as a theoretician has been elevated at a time when China is gearing up for a major transition. At the closing session of the 19th Party Congress, the CPC enshrined the "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" in its Constitution.

Only Mao's 'Thought' and Deng's 'Theory' have been embedded in the basic law of the Party-state. Deng's name was added after his death in 1997.

Guide for the party

The contribution of two other former Presidents — Jiang Zemin Hu Jintao — do not carry their names in the Constitution. Mr. Xi's 'Thought' would act as a guide to the Party's work in the coming decades.

As expected, the amended Constitution affirmed that Mr. Xi's signature fight against corruption will continue. The "Belt and Road" initiative, an ambitious programme to build infrastructure linking China with its neighbours and beyond, was also included in the party Constitution.

During his work report read out at the inaugural on October 18, Mr. Xi unveiled a two-stage plan. China, he said would become a "moderately prosperous" society by 2021 — the centenary of the formation of the CPC.

That status would be consolidated till 2035. From 2035, China will aspire to become an advanced socialist country — a target that it wishes to accomplish by 2050, a year after the People's Republic of China (PRC) celebrates its centenary.

During the day, 2,336 delegates approved the new Central Committee consisting of a total of 204 members along with their 172 alternate members. On Wednesday, the Central Committee will endorse the 25-member Politburo, and the top seven leaders comprising the apex Standing Committee of the Politburo. Candidates on Tuesday also voted for the 133 member Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) — the country's top anti-corruption body.

There were some indications of likely changes in the Standing Committee, where only the names of Mr. Xi and Prime Minister Li Keqiang stand confirmed. Dousing earlier speculations, Wang Qishan, the spearhead of the anti-corruption drive, will not be part of the new Standing Committee. The 69-year old anti-graft czar has not been included in the new Central Committee, from where the apex leadership is drawn.

Analysts say that there is a strong likelihood that Mr. Wang would be replaced by Zhao Leji, who has been included in the new CCDI list. Mr. Zhao is currently the head of the Party Organisation Department.

Li Zhanshu, another rising star, who is expected to make it to the top seven, is not among the new CCDI members, signalling that he may have been earmarked for another role in the new Standing Committee line-up.

Mr. Li, currently the President's Chief of Staff, has known Mr. Xi since the early eighties, when both served as provincial county chiefs in the northern Hebei Province.

Other possible candidates for the Politburo include Wang Huning, a well-established thinker from Shanghai, who is likely to run the CPC's Central Secretariat focussing on ideology — his prime area of interest. Observers say that Han Zheng, with roots in Shanghai, where he is the Party Secretary, could also be elevated to a top leadership slot.

Another candidate likely to make it to the Standing Committee is Wang Yang. Already a Vice-Premier, he has extensive administrative experience in the Guangdong Province and Chongqing.

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