

China leaders set in motion plans for 2012 succession meeting

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BEIJING, Oct 18 — China's leaders ended their latest closed-door conclave today with a decision to convene a Communist Party congress in the second half of 2012 that will install a new leadership to succeed President Hu Jintao's generation.

Brief reports from Chinese state-run Xinhua news agency gave few other details of the five-day meeting of the ruling Communist Party's Central Committee.

Central committee plenums are annual gatherings of some 370 senior officials — about 200 full committee members, the rest auxiliary members — who approve broad decisions on the direction of government policy.

The official topic of this latest meeting at a walled-off hotel in west Beijing was cultural reform.

But the gathering also gave central and provincial leaders a chance to discuss clouds gathering over China's economy and the delicate process of choosing a leadership to take over when President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao step down after a party congress in late 2012.

In China, power resides in the party elite and meetings of the Central Committee offer chances for powerful provincial chieftains to make known their policies and promotion hopes.

In economic policy, the meeting might have discussed, but probably did not decide on, any big changes to an economy that had grown rapidly but suffered from nagging inflation and worries about a global economic downturn, analysts said earlier. — Reuters

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