

Wang Dan detained during southern trip

From **GEOFFREY CROTHALL** in Beijing

FORMER student leader and democracy activist Mr Wang Dan was detained for two days in Guangzhou after he attempted to return to Beijing before the conclusion of the National People's Congress (NPC).

Mr Wang, who had been sent on an enforced "vacation" in southern China two days before the congress opened, was arrested at Shenzhen's Huangtian airport as he was about to board a plane to Beijing on March 29 and was taken to a detention centre in the centre of Guangzhou.

The 23-year-old former history major at Beijing University was held for 48 hours before being allowed to return to the capital on Thursday, one day after the NPC closed.

"They really did not want me to be in Beijing during the NPC," Mr Wang said last night.

Speaking at his parents' small apartment, Mr Wang said he had staged a four-hour hunger strike in protest against his "illegal detention".

"I only agreed to eat again after the leaders promised me I could leave but on condition I did not go back to Beijing before the end of the two meetings [the NPC and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference]," he said.

Mr Wang went on what he jokingly referred to as his *naxun*, or imperial southern tour, after his mother's



Democracy activist Wang Dan, shown leading a student protest in 1989, has returned to Beijing.

work unit, the Revolutionary History Museum, had been presented by the authorities with 3,000 yuan (about HK\$3,900) and told to organise a trip for the troublesome Mr Wang.

Accompanied by his brother-in-law and constantly shadowed by the police, Mr Wang first flew to Haikou, the capital of Hainan Island, then on to the resort town of Beihai and the capital of Guangxi, Nanning.

The entourage then travelled to Guangzhou and finally Shenzhen. Mr Wang said he only spent one day in the Special Economic Zone and did not get too close to the border with Hongkong because, "that would have been asking for trouble".

"Southern China is much better than the north both politically and socially," he said.

"The south is the future hope of China."

Mr Wang, who was released from nearly four years in jail on February 17, spent most of his time in the south either on the road or catching up with old friends and said he had very few opportunities to read the news from the NPC.

He did say, however, that he was encouraged by comments from the two new leaders of the NPC and CPPCC, Mr Qiao Shi and Mr Li Ruihuan, on strengthening the supervisory role of

the legislature and its advisory body.

"In promoting democracy, I will concentrate on individual activities that are within the law," he said.

"However, that kind of activity is rather limited in China at the moment," he added.

Mr Wang said he still hoped to return to his studies at Beijing University some time but thought it was unlikely the college would re-admit him.