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## 3,000 join protest for release of students

By CHRIS YEUNG and SHIRLEY YAM

MORE than 3,000 people took part in a cycle rally yesterday to demand the immediate release of Chinese student leaders and dissidents arrested in the June 4 military crackdown.

The rally at Sha Tin was one of a series of pro-democracy activities to commemorate the anniversary of the imposition of martial law in Beijing last year which fuelled student unrest and led to the crackdown.

Organised by the Hongkong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China, supporters began converging on Tai Wai bicycle park early in the morning.

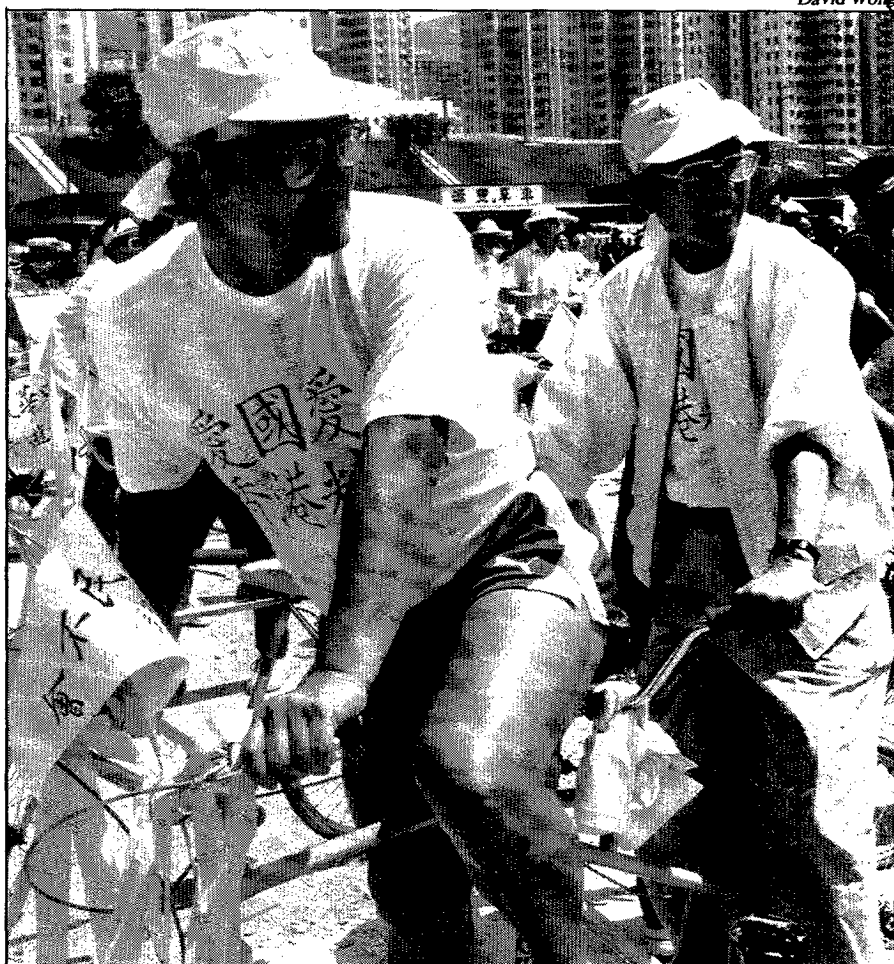
Then the kilometre-long procession, led by the Alliance chairman, Mr Szeto Wah, rode for two hours along the scenic Sha Tin cycle path in remembrance of a rally organised by Beijing student leader, Wang Dan, in the mainland capital during the democratic movement last year.

At the end of the ride the protesters gathered outside the New Territories branch of the New China News Agency in Tai Wai shortly after noon.

They sang patriotic songs such as *Brave Chinese* and chanted for the immediate release of Wang Dan.

More than 1,000 balloons carrying names of student leaders and dissidents in the June 4 suppression were also released.

An Alliance leader, Mr Cheung Man-kwong, said: "We are satisfied with the



David Wong

Alliance chairman Szeto Wah (right) leads the cycle rally in Sha Tin. More than 3,000 people joined the protest calling for the release of dissidents in China.

turnout. There would have been more, but it was hot and a long way for people to come from home."

The pro-democracy group contributed about \$800,000 to sponsor 28 memorial programmes overseas in the United States, East and West Germany, Canada, Australia, Italy, Switzerland, France and Britain.

In the afternoon, about 80 people attended a public forum at Victoria Park organised by the Chinese University's student union and sponsored by the Alliance on the development of the democratic movement on the mainland.

Meanwhile, a leading social scientist has urged Hongkong people to start bringing in greater democracy in schools and families to pave the way for a democratic political system.

Dr Huan Hsin-chi, head of the Chinese University's government and public administration department, told a seminar people should stop using democracy as a weapon against China which, as a sovereign state, would never accept it.

"Democracy for Hongkong should be rooted here, not in China," he told the seminar organised by a Catholic group.

He said there was still a

chance that Beijing would tolerate democracy at regional level.

Though the political framework had already been fixed by the Basic Law, Dr Huan said local people could still try to get more democracy through some undefined areas in the mini-constitution, such as the electoral law and the composition of the grand electoral college which will return a third of the first post-1997 legislature.

"We should also try to develop democracy in the non-political areas, such as families, schools and church."