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National People's Congress of China

XI CHAIRS MILESTONE SUMMIT, HAILS NEW ERA OF CHINA-CENTRAL ASIA TIES



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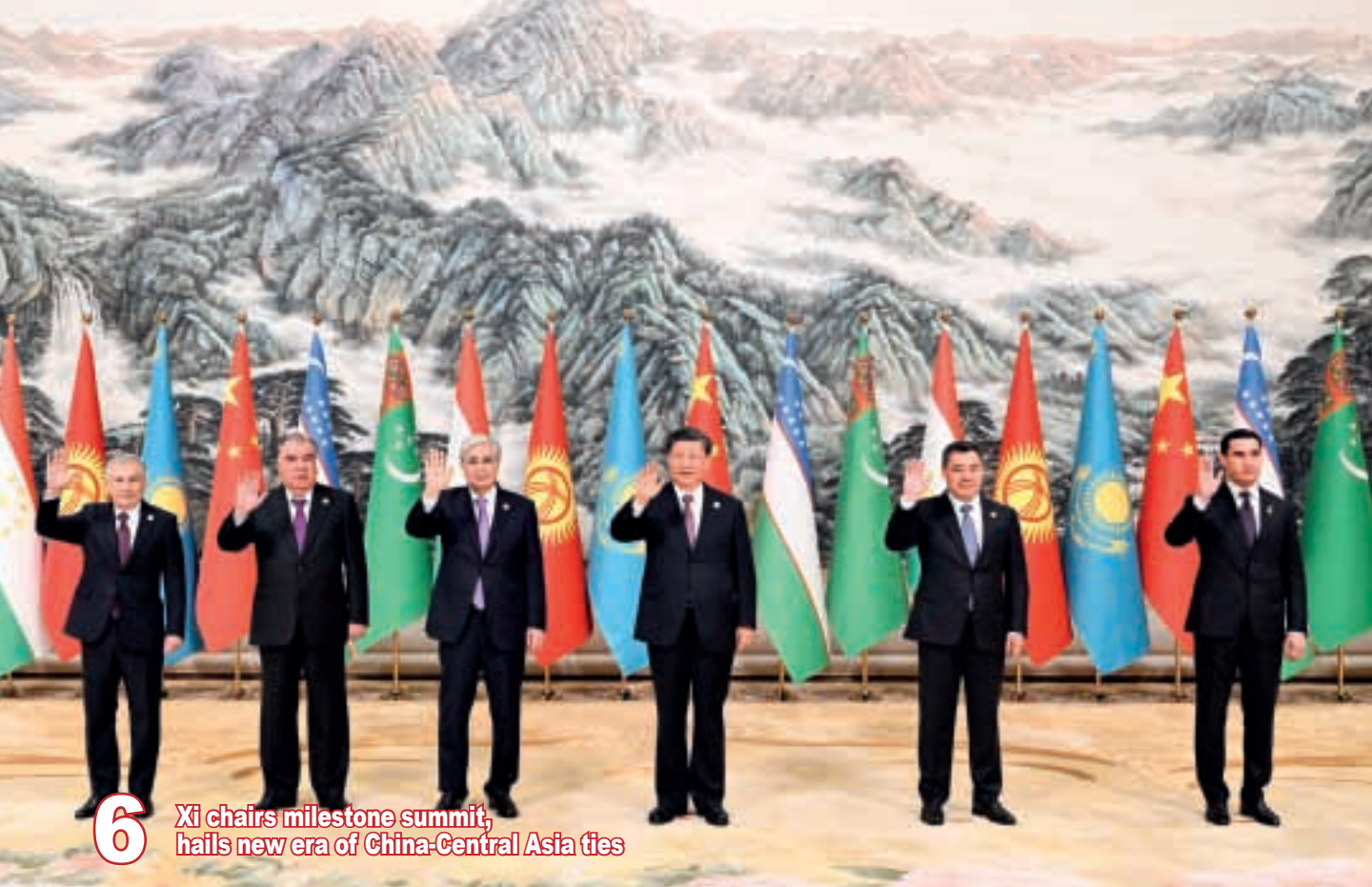
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President Xi Jinping and leaders of five Central Asian countries plant six pomegranate trees that represent China-Central Asia solidarity and cooperation after the first China-Central Asia Summit in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on May 19, 2023. *Liu Bin*



友谊林
— Центральная Азия»
5.19



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COVER: President Xi Jinping chairs the first China-Central Asia Summit and delivers a keynote speech themed "Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security, and Everlasting Friendship" in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on May 19, 2023. *Huang Jingwen*



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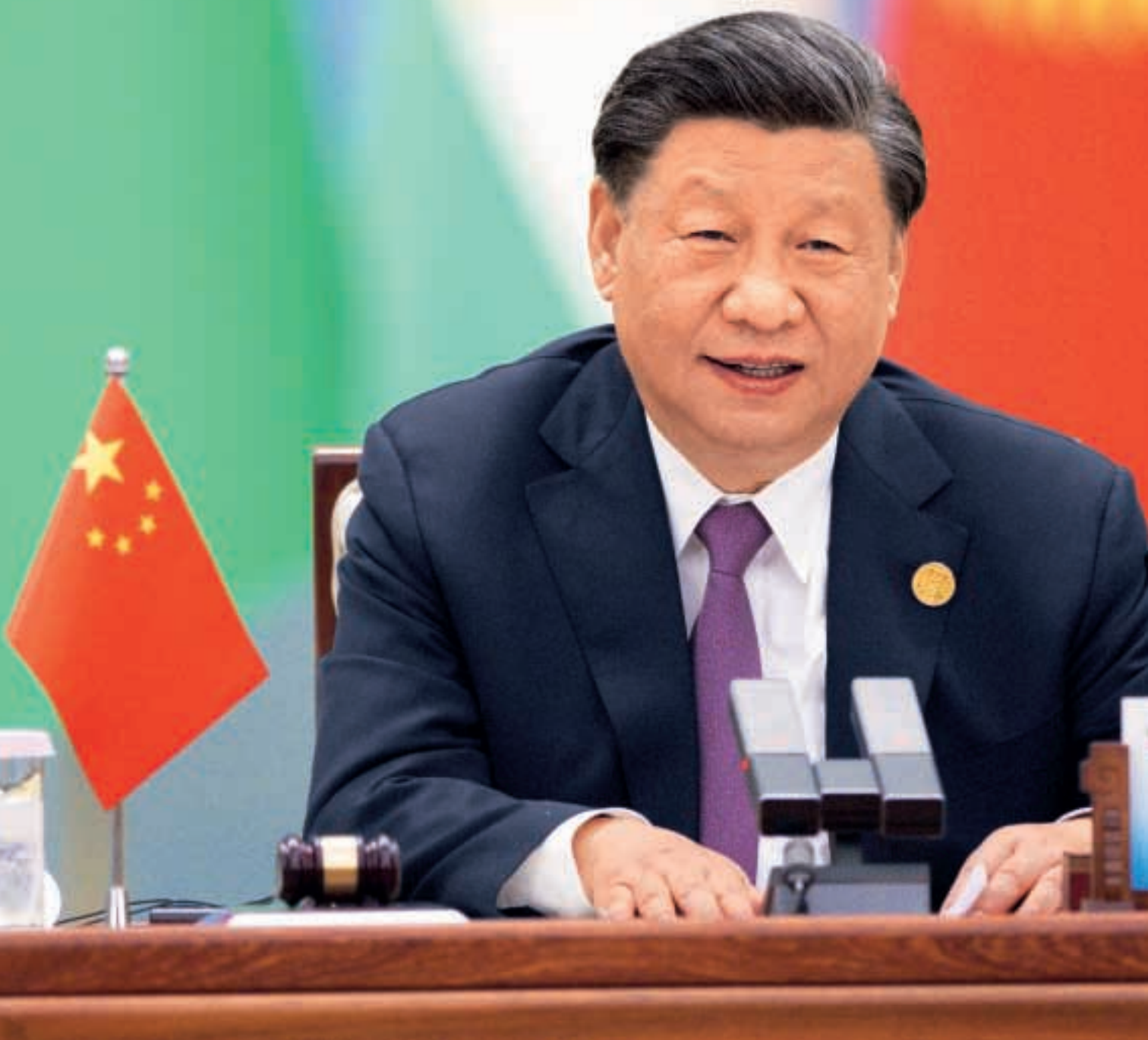
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Xi chairs milestone summit, hails new era of China-Central Asia ties





President Xi Jinping chairs the first China-Central Asia Summit and delivers a keynote speech themed “Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security, and Everlasting Friendship” in Xi’an, northwest China’s Shaanxi Province, on May 19, 2023. *Huang Jingwen*

President Xi Jinping hailed the new era of China-Central Asia relations and announced a slew of proposals and measures to strengthen cooperation, while chairing a high-level summit in the northwestern city of Xi’an in Shaanxi Province, on May 19.

China and Central Asian countries have joined hands over the past decade to usher in a new era of relations, Xi said during his keynote speech at the China-Central Asia Summit, the first in-person summit attended by heads of state of China and the five Central Asian countries, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The summit is lauded for creating a new platform and opening up new prospects for China-Central Asia cooperation.

Relations between China and Central Asian countries have great vigor and vitality in the new era, Xi said, as he highlighted the region’s important geographic location, stressing that the world needs a stable, prosperous, harmonious and well-connected Central Asia.

The sovereignty, security, independence and territorial integrity of Central Asian countries must be safeguarded, the development paths that Central Asian people have independently chosen must be respected and regional efforts to pursue peace, amity and tranquility must be supported, he noted.

“No one has the right to sow discord or stoke confrontation in the region, let alone seek selfish political interests,” Xi said, adding that the region has the right foundation, conditions and capability to become an important connectivity hub of Eurasia and make unique contributions to trade, the interplay of civilizations and the development of science and technology in the world.

On May 17-18, Xi met or held talks with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov.

The Central Asian leaders expressed their confidence and resolve to strengthen cooperation with China and pursue common development.

In Xi’an, the historical starting point of the ancient Silk Road, Xi held a banquet for the leaders on the evening of May 18 in Tang Paradise, a complex based on the site of the original relic of an imperial garden dating back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

In 2013, Xi put forward the initiative of jointly building a Silk Road Economic Belt in Kazakhstan, which was met with enthusiastic response and active participation from Central Asian countries.

Over the past decade, the joint development of the Belt and Road Initiative between China and Central Asian countries has yielded fruitful results, playing an important role in propelling economic growth in Eurasia and the international community.

China-Central Asia community with shared future

In his keynote speech, Xi said that to build a China-Central Asia community with a shared future, efforts should be made to stay committed to the four principles of mutual assistance,



President Xi Jinping chairs the first China-Central Asia Summit and delivers a keynote speech themed “Working Together for a China-Central Asia Community with a Shared Future Featuring Mutual Assistance, Common Development, Universal Security, and Everlasting Friendship” in Xi’an, north-west China’s Shaanxi Province, May 19. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev attended the summit. *Shen Hong*

common development, universal security and everlasting friendship.

China and Central Asian countries should deepen strategic mutual trust, and always offer clear and strong support to each other on issues of core interests such as sovereignty, independence, national dignity and long-term development, he said.

Xi called on the six countries to continue to set the pace for Belt and Road cooperation; fully unlock the potential in traditional areas of cooperation such as trade, industrial capacity cooperation, energy and transportation; and forge new drivers of growth in finance, agriculture, poverty reduction, green and low-carbon development, medical service, health-care and digital innovation.

They should all resolutely oppose external interference in the internal affairs of regional countries and attempts to instigate “color revolutions,” and maintain a zero-tolerance stance against the “three forces” of terrorism, separatism and extremism, he stressed.

The two sides should carry forward their traditional

friendship, enhance people-to-people exchanges, do more to share their experience in governance, deepen cultural exchanges, mutual learning and increase mutual understanding, Xi added.

Closer cooperation

Xi made an eight-point proposal for strengthening cooperation, ranging from expanding economic ties to promoting cultural exchanges and safeguarding regional peace.

China proposes the establishment of meeting and dialogue mechanisms on industry and investment, agriculture, transportation, emergency response, education and political parties, he said.

More trade facilitation measures will be rolled out and bilateral investment treaties will be upgraded to push two-way trade to new heights, he added, pledging to support the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor and encourage capable enterprises to build overseas warehouses in Central Asian countries.

China will formulate a cooperation program for poverty reduction through sci-tech, Xi said. Chinese companies in Central Asian countries are encouraged to create more local jobs. China will provide a total of 26 billion yuan (3.7 billion U.S. dollars) in financing support and grants.

China is ready to help Central Asian countries strengthen capacity building on law enforcement, security and defense in an effort to safeguard peace in the region, Xi said, adding that efforts should be made to leverage the role of the coordination mechanism among Afghanistan's neighbors, and jointly promote peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Summit mechanism

Speaking at the summit, the Central Asian leaders thanked China for proposing and successfully hosting the first China-Central Asia Summit.

China has become a key force in safeguarding global security and stability and promoting sci-tech and economic de-

velopment, and that cooperation with China is indispensable for countries to achieve sustainable development, the leaders said.

Lauding the summit for steering China-Central Asia relations into a new era, they vowed to better coordinate the development strategies of their respective countries with the Belt and Road Initiative, and to join hands to cope with challenges and achieve win-win cooperation.

Xi and presidents of the five Central Asian countries signed the Xi'an Declaration of the China-Central Asia Summit and adopted a list of outcomes.

They also announced a decision to officially inaugurate the China-Central Asia Summit Mechanism, with the two sides taking turns hosting the biennial summit. The next summit is scheduled to be held in Kazakhstan in 2025.

After the summit, Xi and leaders of the five Central Asian countries met the press. They also planted six pomegranate trees that represented China-Central Asia solidarity and cooperation. (Xinhua) ■

Highlights of Xi's quotes on cooperation between China, Central Asia

The following are some highlights of Xi's quotes on cooperation between China and Central Asia.

China is willing to share with Central Asian countries its super-large market, complete industrial system and advanced technologies; deepen pragmatic cooperation; achieve mutual benefit and win-win results; work together to promote high-quality development of regional economy; and build a closer community with a shared future.

— President Xi Jinping in a congratulatory letter to the China + Central Asia (C+C5) industry and investment cooperation forum on February 16, 2023.

We have established strategic partnerships, deepening political trust and mutually beneficial cooperation, blazing a new trail of good-neighborly friendship and win-win cooperation, and setting a good example of fostering a new type of international relations.

— Remarks by President Xi Jinping at the Virtual Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between China and Central Asian Countries on January 25, 2022

The 58 pairs of sister cities and the hundreds of thousands of mutual visits every year help carry forward a friendship of over 2,000 years between the peoples of our countries. "I am a foreigner, but I am not an outsider." These words of Ismail Daurov, a young Kazakh helping with the local COVID-19 response in Shaanxi Province, have touched the hearts of many in China. It is heart-warming episodes like this that have formed a stirring

symphony of Chinese and Central Asian people supporting each other through thick and thin.

— Remarks by President Xi Jinping at the Virtual Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between China and Central Asian Countries on January 25, 2022

The key to the successful cooperation between China and the five Central Asian countries over the past three decades lies in our abiding commitment to mutual respect, good-neighborly friendship, solidarity in trying times and mutual benefit.

— Remarks by President Xi Jinping at the Virtual Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between China and Central Asian Countries on January 25, 2022

As an ancient Chinese saying goes, "Even the shortest journey can't be finished without taking the first step. Even the most trivial task can't be completed without taking action." To promote the wellbeing of the people of our six countries, let us renew our friendship, advance cooperation, and work together to create a brighter future for relations between China and Central Asian countries and build a community with a shared future for humanity.

— Remarks by President Xi Jinping at the Virtual Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between China and Central Asian Countries on January 25, 2022
(Xinhua)



The photo taken on May 16 shows the China-Central Asia Summit press center in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. Zhang Bowen

China and Central Asian countries pave the way for a new stage of cooperation

By Ma Miaomiao

Some 2,100 years ago, Zhang Qian, a diplomat of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), set off from Chang'an, now known as Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi Province in northwest China, to visit regions including parts of Central Asia as a royal envoy. His missions of peace and friendship opened the original Silk Road with Xi'an as the starting point, which later expanded into a network of East-West trade routes linking Europe with Asia.

The connection between Xi'an and Central Asia is grow-

ing even closer. It was in Xi'an that the China-Central Asia Summit took place on May 18-19. The event drew together Chinese President Xi Jinping, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov, marking the first in-person summit attended by leaders of the six countries since establishing diplomatic ties more than three decades ago.

China and Central Asian countries have joined hands over the past decade to usher in a new era of their relations, Xi said in his keynote address at the summit on May 19. The world needs a Central Asia that is stable, prosperous, harmonious and well-connected, he added.

During the summit, the leaders exchanged views on China-Central Asia institution building and cooperation as well as major international and regional issues of common interest. It was also decided that the next summit between the six countries will be held in Kazakhstan in 2025.

Highly anticipated

When the five Central Asian countries declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, China was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with them. China has established comprehensive strategic partnerships with all the five countries. The Central Asian region is China's first neighboring cluster of strategic partners.

In 2020, the nations established the China+Central Asia (C+C5) mechanism for regular foreign ministers' meetings, and in early 2022, they held a virtual summit to commemorate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations. In June of the same year, during the third C+C5 foreign ministers' meeting, the six countries agreed to establish a meeting mechanism for the heads of state in the C+C5 format.

China proposed to establish meeting and dialogue mechanisms in areas including industrial development and investment to facilitate the all-around cooperation between China and Central Asian countries, Xi said, adding that the mechanisms will also cover agriculture, transportation, emergency management, education and political party affairs.

Serik Korzhumbayev, Editor in Chief of the *Delovoy Kazakhstan* newspaper, told Xinhua News Agency he believes the summit will enhance long-term cooperation and development across multiple fields between the six countries, adding that "a new format of cooperation will make it possible to involve the Central Asian region with China's large market in close economic ties."

In 2013, during a speech in Kazakhstan, Xi proposed the Silk Road Economic Belt. "Today, as I stand here and look back at that episode of history, I can almost hear the camel bells echoing in the mountains and see a wisp of smoke rising from the desert," he said while speaking at Nazarbayev University.

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, which was proposed by Xi in Indonesia later that same year, constitute the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. China has signed Belt and

Road cooperation documents with all the five Central Asian countries.

The strategic significance of Central Asia in jointly promoting cooperation under the BRI has become more prominent in recent years, and the five countries in the region are willing to further strengthen cooperation with China, Ding Xiaoxing, Director of the Institute of Eurasian Studies at China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, told Beijing Review.

Shavkat Alimbekov, a researcher with the International Institute for Central Asia Studies of Uzbekistan, agreed with Ding's assessment, saying he believes the summit will give new impetus to high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

"One of the key aspects of this cooperation is the Green Silk Road program, which focuses on using green development strategies, innovative solutions and advanced technologies to achieve environmental efficiency and sustainability," Alimbekov told Beijing Review, adding that given China's tremendous experience in low-carbon transition, its joint efforts with the five Central Asian countries would be "a powerful catalyst for sharing best practices and establishing cooperation to create a future of sustainable green development in the region."

China is ready to promote green innovation cooperation with Central Asian countries, according to Xi.

China has established comprehensive strategic partnerships with all the five (Central Asian) countries.



Tourists look at pottery figurines of "Hu Ren" (the northern tribes in ancient China) at Xi'an Museum in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on May 8, 2023. Li Yibo

Closer cooperation

On April 26, a freight train carrying more than 260 new-energy vehicles left Xi'an for Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan. There are now 17 railway routes connecting Xi'an with Central Asian countries and many other Asian and European destinations, with more than 1,100 train trips from the city made in the first quarter of this year.

As of the end of 2022, over 65,000 China-Europe freight trains had transported more than 6 million twenty-foot equivalent units of cargo worth \$300 billion, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. Nearly 80 percent of these trips passed through Central Asia.

Trade volume between China and Central Asian countries registered a record of over \$70 billion in 2022, official statistics showed. Quality agricultural products from these countries, including wheat, soybeans, beef and mutton, have been exported to China, contributing to the balance of bilateral trade.

China and Central Asian countries should deepen strategic mutual trust, and always offer clear and strong support for each other on issues of core interests such as those involving sovereignty, independence, national dignity and long-term development.



The photo taken on April 3, 2023, shows some wind turbine generators of the 100-MW Zhanatas wind farm in Zhanatas, Kazakhstan. *Xinhua*

“China has now become an important partner in trade and economic cooperation of the five countries,” Tursunali Kuziev, a professor of general education at the Journalism and Mass Communications University of Uzbekistan, told Xinhua, adding that innovation and exchange in agricultural sciences have constantly pushed forward common progress in this field.

Trade in agricultural products between China and the five countries increased from \$175 million in 1992 to \$1.07 billion in 2021, according to the General Administration of Customs of China. The import and export volume between China and Kazakhstan, coming in at \$574 million, accounted for 53 percent of the total, followed by that between China and Uzbekistan, at \$302 million or 28 percent.

Chinese capital, combined with new technologies and better solutions in agriculture, water management, industry, engineering, transport and other sectors, is of particular importance to the Central Asian countries, Alimbekov said.

The vast market, complete industrial chain and advanced technology of China are attractive to these countries, and their upholding the principle of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit has enabled bilateral cooperation to achieve sustained and stable growth, Ding said.

According to Ding, China's participation in infrastructure construction projects in the region serves as a vivid demonstration of its support for the development of the neighboring countries.

Over the years, a number of major projects have facilitated industrial upgrades and living standard improvements in Central Asia, including the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Highway and the Qamchiq Railway Tunnel in Uzbekistan. In addition, the China-Central Asia Natural Gas Pipeline runs from the border of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, passes through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and links up with China's West-to-East Gas Pipeline in Khorgas, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

By the end of last year, China's direct investment stock in the five Central Asian countries reached nearly \$15 billion, covering fields such as oil and gas exploration, processing and manufacturing, connectivity and digital technologies, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

The countries have elevated their economic cooperation from mainly bilateral programs to a combination of bilateral and multilateral undertakings, with trade in goods and services increasingly diversified, and the cooperation model being institutionalized, according to Lu Shanbing, Dean of the Central Asia Institute of Northwestern University in Xi'an.

In his keynote speech at the Xi'an summit, Xi called for efforts to fully unleash cooperation potential in traditional areas such as trade, industrial capacity, energy and transportation, and to foster new growth drivers in areas such as finance, agriculture, poverty reduction, low-carbon development, health and digital innovation.

For a better future

“China stands ready to work with Central Asian countries to build on the good momentum and strive shoulder-to-shoulder to build an even closer China-Central Asia community with a shared future,” Xi said at the virtual summit in 2022.



A China-Europe freight train loaded with raw materials of liquorice, a Chinese medicinal herb, which departed from Turkmenistan, arrives at Xi'an international port in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on August 31, 2022. *Li Yibo*

At the in-person summit in Xi'an, the president further expounded on how to build such a community. China and Central Asian countries should deepen strategic mutual trust, and always offer clear and strong support for each other on issues of core interests such as those involving sovereignty, independence, national dignity and long-term development, Xi said.

He stressed the six countries should continue taking the lead in Belt and Road cooperation and promote the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilizations Initiative, so as to achieve common development, as well as uphold universal security and everlasting friendship. The three initiatives, proposed by Xi in 2021, 2022 and 2023, are platforms to turn the vision of a community with a shared future for humanity into reality.

The six countries should resolutely oppose external interference in the internal affairs of regional countries and attempts to instigate "color revolutions," and maintain a zero-tolerance stance against terrorism, separatism and extremism, Xi said.

The summit sends a signal to the world that, in the face of threats and challenges in the complex world situation, China and Central Asian countries will work together to tide over hardships, take China-Central Asia relations and cooperation to new heights, and upgrade their mechanisms for collaboration, Ding said.

In an interview with People's Daily ahead of the summit, Turkmenistan's Ambassador to China Parahat Durdyev said he hopes the meeting can be a new starting point for addressing urgent regional and global tasks. Amid a complicated international atmosphere, the summit demonstrated China and Central Asian countries' determination and effort in strengthening regional and international safety and the push for regional prosperity, he added.

Sheradil Baktygulov, a foreign affairs consultant with the Kyrgyz National Institute for Strategic Studies, told Xinhua that China deserves great respect and support for contributing to relations of peace, friendship and cooperation in Central Asia and for advocating mutually beneficial cooperation and peaceful development among all countries. ■



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Diplomatic activities to boost confidence in global recovery

By Ma Miaomiao



President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron jointly attend and address the closing ceremony of the fifth meeting of the China-France Business Council in Beijing on the afternoon of April 6. *Xie Huanchi*

After the conclusion of the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, and the First Session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, in mid-March, China is now receiving a batch of foreign leaders this post-COVID spring.

Leaders from both developed and developing countries, as well as emerging economies, all showed their enthusiasm to visit China and their expectation of strengthening bilateral ties and working with China to boost economy and trade.

Exchanging ideas

From late March to mid-April, leaders from Spain, Malaysia, Singapore, France, the EU and Brazil traveled to China to firm up their partnerships with the country.

The visits saw bilateral and multilateral interactions, direct contacts between heads of state and government as well as consultations in economic and trade fields.

"China has plans, actions, will and capability, which makes it more influential in shaping the current international landscape," Li Haidong, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University's Institute of International Relations told *Global Times*.

During his visit from March 27 to April 1, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visited Beijing as well as Guangzhou in Guangdong Province and Boao in Hainan Province.

During his meeting with Lee on March 31, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that of the Southeast Asian countries, Singapore has been the most involved in China's reform and opening up and its interests are most closely intertwined with China. China is ready to share opportunities with Singapore and other countries that are willing to cooperate with it, the Chinese president added.

The two countries have agreed to increase the quality of their partnership and make it more comprehensive and future-oriented.

China and Malaysia reached a consensus on building a China-Malaysia community with a shared future, which will open a new chapter in the history of bilateral relations, Xi said during a meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim that same day.

For his part, Anwar said Malaysia is ready to work with China to ensure the implementation and effectiveness of the Global Security Initiative, the Global Development Initiative and the Global Civilizations Initiative put forward by Xi, and advance cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Ahead of Singapore and Malaysia, leaders of other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members—Viet Nam, the Philippines and Cambodia—have all visited China in the past months, reflecting the importance they attach to relations with China, Ge Hongliang, a researcher of ASEAN studies at the Guangxi Minzu University, told *Global Times*.

Post-COVID economic recovery and regional geopolitical stability are the top concerns and major tasks at present for countries in Southeast Asia, he added.

International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said at the recently concluded China Devel-

opment Forum 2023 that a 1-percentage-point increase in China's GDP growth leads to a 0.3-percentage-point increase in growth in other Asian economies. She also said that China and India are expected to account for half of global growth in 2023, while others face a steeper climb.

Cooperation remained the keyword for all the meetings held between the Chinese president and leaders who paid a visit to China recently.

In his meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez in Beijing on March 31, Xi said China is ready to work with Spain to use the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties as a new starting point to deepen and strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation.

Spain will take over the rotating presidency of the EU in the second half of this year, and will commit itself to promoting dialogue and cooperation between the EU and China, Sánchez echoed.

During the trilateral meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on April 6, Xi called on China and the EU to seek common ground while shelving differences, and learn to accommodate, appreciate, draw upon and facilitate each other's development.

In a world full of uncertainties, the EU and China should work with each other to stay away from the trap of economic decoupling and severing supply chains, carry out mutually beneficial cooperation on an equal footing, tackle pressing global challenges such as climate change and continue to deepen the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership, Macron said.

China and the EU have established more than 70 consultation and dialogue mechanisms covering politics, economy, trade, culture, science and technology, energy and environment. They have become important and indispensable forces

in the process of economic globalization and world multipolarization, Cui Hongjian, a senior researcher with the China Institute of International Studies, told Beijing Review.

As a positive example of China-EU cooperation, the China-Europe Railway Express service has now connected China with over 200 European cities. In 2022 alone, China-Europe freight trains made 16,000 trips, carrying 1.6 million twenty-foot equivalent units of goods, data from the China State Railway Group Co. Ltd. showed.

The Europe-China relationship is a crucial "component of the future," Romano Prodi, former president of the European Commission, said, adding it is important for both sides to resume their direct exchanges in various areas, according to Xinhua News Agency on April 9.

Seeking opportunities

A major reason behind the political leaders' intensive visits is that "China remains an important enabler and anchor of global economic stability," Adhere Cavince, a Kenya-based international relations scholar, told Xinhua.

World Bank Group President David Malpass announced on April 10 the group has raised its global growth forecast for 2023 to 2 percent from 1.7 percent in January, due to China's recovery.

EU countries still face considerable economic uncertainties this year. Moving forward while avoiding recession remains the main task for them, Dong Yifan, a researcher with China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, told Beijing Review. "Therefore, further embracing the Chinese market will be an important booster for the steady recovery, and even upgrading, of EU economies," he said.

Bilateral trade in goods between China and the EU stood at \$847.3 billion, up 2.4 percent year on year, according to a report released by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade on March 29.

The French president was accompanied by a strong business delegation including European aircraft manufacturer Airbus and France's largest electricity company Électricité de France, in an effort to bolster commercial ties.

On April 6, 36 Chinese and French enterprises signed 18 agreements to expand cooperation in areas including manufacturing, green development, new energy and innovation at a meeting of Chinese and French entrepreneurs.

Taking Airbus as an example—the company and its Chinese partners signed an agreement to open a second assembly line for A320 aircraft at its Final Assembly Line Asia facility in Tianjin. The new assembly line will contribute to its goal of creating a global production network capable of producing 75 A320-family aircraft per month by 2026.

China and Singapore also signed a memorandum of understanding to announce the substantive conclusion of negotiations on an upgraded bilateral free trade agreement (FTA).

The upgraded FTA, which will boost market access for businesses from both countries, adds a new standalone chapter on telecommunications and incorporates high-level economic and trade rules on national treatment, market access, transparency and the digital economy, according to a statement by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

As for Anwar's visit, an op-ed in Malaysian newspaper *Sin Chew Daily* said it had laid the groundwork for some exciting



People watch lion dance during the celebrations of Lantern Festival in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on February 5. Zhang Wenzong



A freight train heading for Yiwu of China departs from Madrid, Spain, on March 9. The commemoration trip came as March 9 marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Spain. *Meng Dingbo*

possibilities in the future, which should provide many economic and trade opportunities for Malaysia.

China, which is working to improve the quality of its development, stands not only as the world's most important consumer market, but also as an important global innovation, manufacturing and industrial chain center. It is now the top destination for the overseas operations of many multinationals, Dong said.

Pursuing stability

The EU and China are each other's important trading partners and the two economies are highly intertwined, von der Leyen said, adding that decoupling from China is neither in the EU's interests nor its strategic choice.

Europe is concerned that a sudden shock to the supply chain caused by geopolitical conflicts, such as the Ukraine crisis, would hit the European economy hard, Dong said. Against this backdrop, strengthening cooperation with China, which has always advocated open and inclusive collaboration, is an important guarantee of stability for Europe.

"Europe is looking for, and needs, this supply chain guarantee," he added.

While in an informal meeting with Macron in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, on April 7, Xi stressed that China will never allow selfish interests to influence the way it responds to the Ukraine crisis, and will always stand for fairness and justice. All parties should shoulder their responsibilities and make joint efforts to create conditions for a political settlement, he said.

Macron and von der Leyen both appreciated China's efforts to promote a political settlement and said that they expected China to play a more important role in the process. They also said that they are prepared to work with China to find a way to facilitate peace talks.

China successfully brokered Saudi Arabia-Iran talks in Beijing [in early March], which once again demonstrated China's constructive role in promoting peace, Anwar said.

In the process of building consensus among countries, the calls for a peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis are growing and will become the only correct path out of the crisis, Cui said. (Beijing Review) ■



Zhao Leji, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, meets with Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch in Rabat, Morocco, on May 11, 2023. Zhao paid an official friendly visit to Morocco from May 11 to 14 at the invitation of the speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives Rachid Talbi Alami. *Zhai Jianlan*

Zhao Leji visits Morocco, Senegal, Malaysia

Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), paid an official visit to Morocco, Senegal and Malaysia from May 11 to 20 at the invitation of the speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives Rachid Talbi Alami, president of the Senegalese National Assembly Amadou Mame Diop and speaker of the lower house of the Malaysian parliament Johari Abdul.

Deepen cooperation, exchanges with Morocco

Zhao visited Morocco from May 11 to 14, and held talks with Alami, Moroccan prime minister Aziz Akhannouch and Mohamed Hanine, the first vice-speaker of the Moroccan House of Councilors.

While meeting with Akhannouch, Zhao said that under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and Moroccan King Mohammed VI, China-Morocco relations have developed by leaps and bounds and are in the best shape ever.

Zhao called for further implementation of the important consensus reached by the two heads of state and the lifting of the China-Morocco strategic partnership to a higher level.

China thanks Morocco for abiding by the one-China principle and providing China with valuable support on issues including Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet and human rights, he said.

China is willing to deepen cooperation with Morocco within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, actively implement the outcomes of the first China-Arab States Summit and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), tap the potential for cooperation, expand people-to-people exchanges and promote mutual learning between the two civilizations and people-to-people connectivity, Zhao said.

China stands ready to work with Arab states, including Morocco, to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era so as to create a better future for the China-Arab strategic partnership, he added.

Akhannouch said the establishment of strategic partnership between Morocco and China, which was announced by the two heads of state in 2016, opens up a new era of bilat-

eral relations.

Morocco adheres to the one-China principle and firmly supports China in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, he added.

The prime minister voiced willingness to strengthen cooperation with China in various fields, such as Belt and Road cooperation, trade and investment, and people-to-people exchanges, in order to promote the development of bilateral ties.

During his respective talks with Alami and Hanine, Zhao said that Morocco was one of the first Arab and African countries to establish diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China, and the two countries have stayed true to their original aspirations to help each other and make progress together.

Since this year marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of China-Morocco diplomatic ties, Zhao called on the two countries to unwaveringly support each other, deepen practical cooperation, strengthen multilateral coordination and promote further development of the China-Morocco strategic partnership.

Zhao explained that President Xi proposed the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilizations Initiative (GCI), providing China's solutions to development and security problems, and promoting the progress of human civilization.

China appreciates Morocco's support for the GDI and its participation in the Group of Friends of the GDI, he said, welcoming Morocco to join the GSI and the GCI.

Zhao said the NPC is ready to strengthen regular exchanges with the Moroccan parliament to share experience on governance and create a sound legal environment for practical cooperation.

For his part, Alami said the two countries remain committed to upholding justice and providing mutual support on issues concerning each other's core interests and major concerns.

Noting that China is one of Morocco's main trading partners, he called on the two sides to deepen pragmatic cooperation and jointly explore the African market for mutual benefit and win-win results.

He also thanked China for helping Morocco fight the COVID-19 pandemic, expressing the willingness to give a full play to the legislative body's role in promoting bilateral economic and cultural exchanges.

Hailing the strong political trust between China and Morocco, Hanine said that Morocco actively supports the major initiatives proposed by President Xi and is willing to work with China to make bilateral ties an exemplar of friendly relations between nations.

During the talks, Zhao briefed the Moroccan side on Chinese modernization and the socialist path of political development with Chinese characteristics, among others.

Expressing full respect for China's history and development path, the Moroccan side said that only when countries respect each other's political systems and development models can the world achieve peace, stability and development, adding that Morocco is willing to work with China to contribute to building a community with a shared future for humanity.

During his visit, Zhao attended a banquet hosted by the

China stands ready to work with Arab states to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era so as to create a better future for the China-Arab strategic partnership.

prime minister in the name of King Mohammed VI.

He also visited the Confucius Institute at the Mohammed V University, where he expressed hope that the two countries could jointly cultivate more envoys to enhance China-Morocco, China-Arab states and China-Africa friendly exchanges.

Zhao called for greater efforts to deepen the pragmatic cooperation between China and Africa during a tour of CITIC Dicastal, a Chinese auto parts manufacturer in Morocco.

He stressed that it is necessary to practice the principles of China's Africa policy—sincerity, real results, amity and good faith—while pursuing the greater good and shared interests, so as to make greater contributions to deepening China-Africa pragmatic cooperation.

Deepen cooperation with Senegal

Zhao paid an official visit to Senegal from May 14 to 16, holding meetings with Senegalese President Macky Sall and president of the Senegalese National Assembly Amadou Mame Diop.

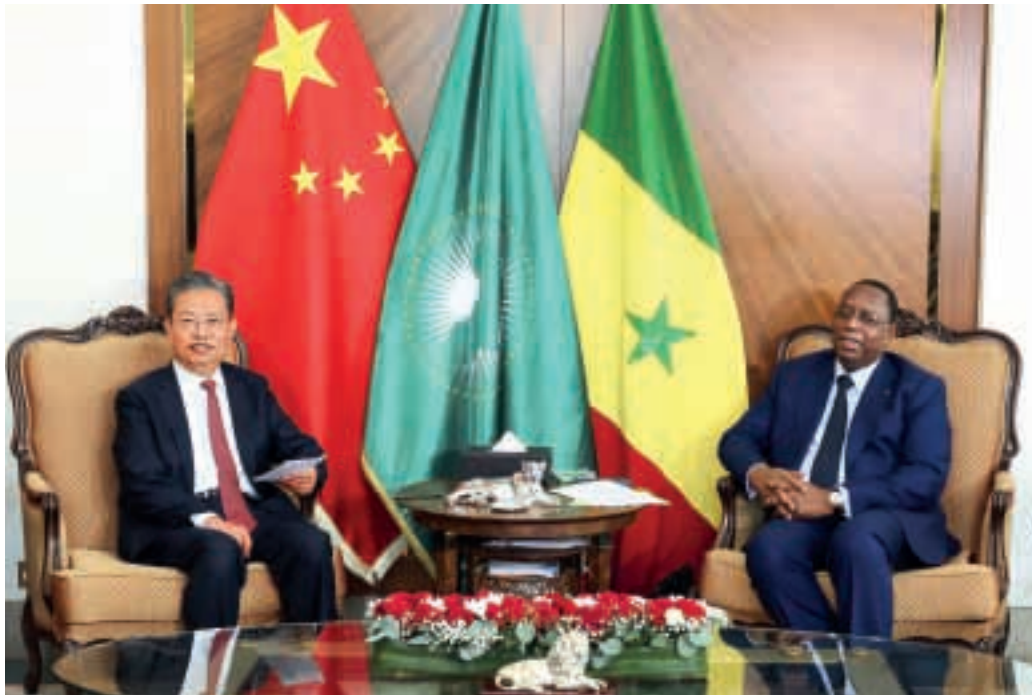
While meeting with Sall, Zhao conveyed sincere greetings and best wishes from President Xi, adding that under the guidance and promotion of the two heads of state, the China-Senegal comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership has been moving forward, while the political mutual trust between the two countries has been enhanced and cooperation in various fields has yielded fruitful results.

China appreciates Senegal's active support for a series of major initiatives and ideas put forward by Xi, and thanks Senegal for its invaluable support on the Taiwan question and issues related to human rights and Xinjiang, Zhao said.

China is ready to expand practical cooperation with Senegal, strengthen synergy between the nine programs for China-Africa cooperation and the Plan for an Emerging Senegal, and deepen exchanges in the fields of culture, education and medical care, Zhao said, adding that as co-chairs of FOCAC, China and Senegal should implement the forum's outcomes and jointly build the Belt and Road Initiative.

He noted that China has always followed the principles of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith, and pursuing the greater good and shared interests in cooperation with Africa, adding that it never ties its cooperation with Africa to political considerations nor does it make empty promises.

Sall asked Zhao to convey his best wishes to Xi, saying that Senegal and China are good friends and strategic partners, and that the two countries have achieved important results in cooperation in such fields as politics, economy and trade, infrastructure, culture and health.



Zhao Leji, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, meets with Senegalese President Macky Sall in Dakar, Senegal, on May 15, 2023. At the invitation of President of Senegalese National Assembly Amadou Mame Diop, Zhao paid an official friendly visit to the country from May 14 to 16. *Pang Xinglei*



Senegal abides by the one-China principle and opposes the politicization of human rights, Sall added.

Noting that China sincerely helps Africa, he said FOCAC has played a positive role in promoting solidarity and cooperation between Africa and China.

The achievements of China's new Long March, with development as its goal, has set an example for Africa, Sall said, adding that in particular, China insisted on independently exploring a development path suited to its own national conditions and organized its people to efficiently promote national construction, which is of great enlightenment significance.

During the meeting with Diop, Zhao said that China and Senegal are important cooperation partners, and the two peoples, sharing weal and woe, have written a new chapter of friendship in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The two sides should consolidate political mutual trust, enhance people's friendship, and push for the development of high-quality and sustainable practical cooperation that benefits people's livelihood, Zhao said.

He urged the legislative bodies of the two countries to take the implementation of the important consensus reached by the two heads of state as the primary task and continue to carry out exchanges at multiple levels and fields, in order to provide a solid legal guarantee for mutually beneficial cooperation.

The two sides should also closely coordinate and cooperate in the multilateral parliamentary mechanism to safeguard the common interests of China, Senegal and Africa at large, Zhao added.

Diop said that Senegal and China have firmly understood and supported each other, and have established a bilateral relationship with a high degree of mutual trust.

Thanking China for its long-term support for and assistance to Senegal's economic and social development, Diop said the Senegalese National Assembly is willing to strengthen friendly exchanges with China's NPC and promote bilateral cooperation in various fields including economy, trade, culture, sports, science and technology at national and sub-national levels.

Zhao briefed the Senegalese side on the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the people's congress system.

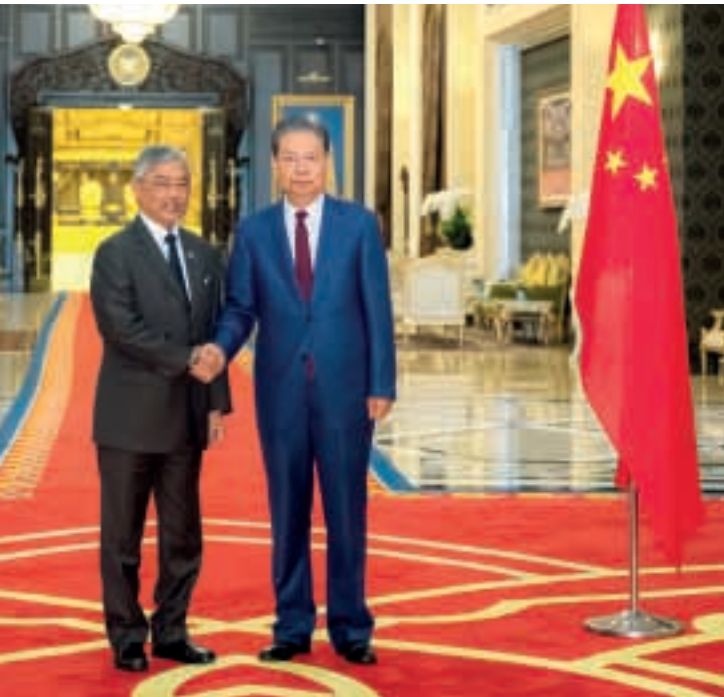
While expressing belief that China will surely achieve its goal, the Senegalese side said the development and growth of China is conducive to a more balanced world pattern and to safeguarding global fairness and justice.

During his visit, Zhao made a field trip to the Diamniadio Industrial Park, an important achievement of the Belt and Road Initiative under the joint efforts of China and Africa. He expressed hope that the park will give full play to its economic and social benefits and help Senegal improve its independent development capabilities.

He also attended a symposium of Chinese-funded enterprises in Africa, encouraging the enterprises to carry forward the spirit of friendly cooperation between China and Africa, and expand the breadth and depth of China-Africa economic and trade cooperation.

He visited the Museum of Black Civilizations and proposed to actively practice the GCI, as well as to jointly create a new picture of people-to-people communication, cultural exchanges and integration of hearts and minds from the two countries.

In addition, he visited the exhibition commemorating the 60th anniversary of the dispatch of the Chinese medical team



Zhao Leji, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, meets with Malaysian King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on May 19, 2023. At the invitation of speaker of the lower house of parliament of Malaysia, Johari Abdul, Zhao paid an official friendly visit to the country from May 18 to 20. *Zhai Jianlan*

to foreign countries and visited members of the medical team to Senegal.

Zhao made a technical stop in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on his way to Malaysia after finishing his visit to Senegal.

In his meeting on May 17 with Ghobash Saqr, speaker of the UAE Federal National Council, the two sides exchanged views on strengthening cooperation between legislative bodies and promoting the development of the China-UAE comprehensive strategic partnership.

Further promote practical cooperation, cultural exchanges with Malaysia

Zhao visited Malaysia from May 18 to 20, where he met with Malaysian King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, prime minister Anwar Ibrahim and speaker of the lower house of parliament Johari Abdul.

At a meeting with King Abdullah, Zhao said China and Malaysia have developed sound and stable relations, and achieved fruitful results in practical cooperation under the strategic guidance of the two countries' leaders.

He noted that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-Malaysia comprehensive strategic partnership, while next year will be the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

China is ready to join hands with Malaysia to build a China-Malaysia community with a shared future at a high level and with high quality, Zhao said.

Noting bilateral relations are at their historical best, King Abdullah said both sides should strengthen practical cooperation and deepen cultural exchanges so as to further promote

Malaysia-China ties in the next 50 years.

During the meeting with Anwar, Zhao said practical cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges are the twin engines driving the development of China-Malaysia relations.

He said he hopes that both sides will jointly build high quality Belt and Road projects and expand cooperation in various fields.

China is willing to enhance cultural exchanges with Malaysia and boost mutual understanding between the two peoples, especially among the youth, Zhao said.

China is also ready to deepen friendship and mutual trust, and achieve common development with its neighbors, including Malaysia, by upholding the policy of neighborhood diplomacy featuring amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, as well as building friendship and partnership with neighbors, he added.

For his part, Anwar said Malaysia places great importance on relations with China, and is willing to further deepen its comprehensive strategic partnership and jointly build the Malaysia-China community with a shared future.

The prime minister noted that Malaysia regards China as a trustworthy, good friend and is willing to continue to push for the high-quality construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, strengthen cooperation in various fields, including trade and investment, the digital economy, agriculture, poverty reduction, culture, tourism and youth, and advance the major projects of "Two Countries, Twin Parks," so as to bring more benefit to the two peoples.

At a meeting with Johari, Zhao said developing bilateral ties should be guided by the joint efforts of building the China-Malaysia community with a shared future, calling for closer mutually beneficial cooperation and cultural and people-to-people exchanges as part of efforts to create a favorable external environment for the common development of the two countries.

China's NPC is willing to strengthen exchanges with the parliament of Malaysia at all levels and share experience in order to provide policy and legal guarantees for the cooperation between the two countries, he said.

Johari expressed the hope that the friendly exchanges with China's NPC will be strengthened and the exchanges between the lawmakers of the two countries closer, adding that the two sides can exchange views on food security and other issues, and work toward getting more Malaysian students to study in China.

Zhao briefed the Malaysian side on China's modernization and whole-process people's democracy, among others. The Malaysian side said that the fruits of China's development will benefit the whole region and the world at large.

During his stay in Malaysia, Zhao also visited the Asia-Pacific office of the Chinese telecom giant Huawei, where he encouraged Huawei staff members to work harder and strengthen technological innovation, in order to make contributions to China-Malaysia mutually beneficial cooperation.

Zhao also met with chief minister of Malacca state Ab Rauf Yusoh and said the Chinese side is willing to further expand cooperation with the Malaysian side at the regional level. (Xinhua) ■



Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, learns about seed breeding and germplasm resources at the Modern Agricultural Science and Technology Innovation Demonstration Park of Sichuan Academy of Agricultural Sciences in southwest China's Sichuan Province, on June 8, 2023. *Li Tao*

Zhao Leji stresses applying new Party theories to people's congress work

Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, has called on lawmakers to work to grasp the Party's new theories and apply them to their work related to people's congresses.

Chairman Zhao made the remarks during a research tour in Sichuan Province from June 6 to 9.

He urged concrete efforts to promote the country's high-quality development and implement the new development philosophy through work related to people's congresses.

Leading an inspection team, Zhao examined the enforcement of the Seed Law in several cities in Sichuan. They conducted onsite inspections in scientific research institutes,

seed production bases and agricultural enterprises in places including Chengdu, Deyang and Mianyang. Zhao listened to the opinions and suggestions of local government departments, deputies to the people's congresses of various levels and experts on managing and promoting seeds.

Seed Law was adopted on July 8, 2000. It was amended and revised in the following years. On March 1, 2022, the revised Seed Law went into effect, strengthening the protection of the legal rights and interests of owners of new plant varieties.

In previous meetings, Zhao stressed the importance of conducting law-enforcement inspections to improve the protection and utilization of seed resources, enhance original innovation, and intensify supervision and management of seed quality.

During his tour in Sichuan, Zhao presided over a meeting,

where he reemphasized the need to recognize the importance of revitalizing the seed industry from the perspective of safeguarding national security, and called for efforts to advance the high-quality development of the modern seed industry through legal means.

Zhao also underlined the protection and utilization of germplasm resources in accordance with the law. Innovations should be supported and seed infringement be cracked down, he said.

Zhao added more efforts will be in place to support the modern seed industry, accelerate the improvement of the seed industry legal system with the focus on Seed Law, and provide more comprehensive legal protection for independent innovation in the seed industry.

Zhao underlined the practice of whole-process people's democracy, stressing the need to improve mechanisms that seek and assimilate public opinions in law-making.

In 2022, the country's grain output reached 685 million metric tons, an increase of 3.7 million metric tons year on year. China's annual grain output remained steady at over 650 million metric tons for many consecutive years.

China has developed agricultural belts for ensuring national food security. Thanks to the accelerated pace of innovation in seed technology and agricultural machinery and the application of new research advances, the rate of mechanization in crop plowing, planting and harvesting increased from 67 percent to 73 percent.

According to this year's report on the work of the government delivered in March, China aims to adopt an all-encompassing approach to food and build a diversified food supply system.

"We should improve contingency plans for ensuring the provision of agricultural supplies at stable prices. We should strengthen farmland protection and ramp up the development of high-standard cropland, facilities for irrigation and water conservancy, and other agricultural infrastructure. We should invigorate the seed industry and support the development of agricultural science, technology, and equipment," it said. (NPC) ■



Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, listens to a report on the work for the education campaign on the study and implementation of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era in southwest China's Sichuan Province, on June 6, 2023. Zhao made a research tour in southwest China's Sichuan Province from June 6 to 9. Leading an inspection team, Zhao inspected the enforcement of the Seed Law in several cities in Sichuan. *Li Tao*

Zhao Leji calls for boosting seed industry through law-based governance

Zhao Leji, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, called for promoting the development of the seed industry through law-based governance and further consolidating the legal basis for the industry's revitalization on April 21.

Zhao made the remarks while presiding over the first plenary meeting of inspection teams for the enforcement of the Seed Law.

He called on the NPC to fulfill its duty in areas including legislation and oversight, and to contribute to boosting the high-quality development of China's seed industry, while safeguarding the country's seed and food security.

Zhao stressed the importance of scrutinizing prominent issues facing law enforcement and the high-quality development of the seed industry, while conducting law-enforcement inspections to improve the protection and utilization of seed resources, enhance original innovation and intensify supervision and management of seed quality. (Xinhua)



Li Hongzhong inspects enforcement of Wetlands Conservation Law in Shandong

Li Hongzhong, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), stressed the need for further efforts to fully understand and implement Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and important instructions of President Xi Jinping on wetlands protection.

Li, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks during an inspection tour in east China's Shandong Province on the enforcement of the Wetlands Conservation Law, from June 19 to 21.

Li said that the Wetlands Conservation Law should be enforced in the strictest and most comprehensive way to ensure that major decisions and plans of the CPC Central Committee are implemented effectively.

The inspection team heard a report on the enforcement of the law by the provincial government, and visited the cities of Dongying and Jinan.

At the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve, they inspected the restoration of the Dawenliu wetlands, the ecological environment monitoring at the national reserve and comprehensive control of *Spartina alterniflora*, a type of marsh cordgrass found on the estuary coastline that is seriously threatening the habitats of numerous native species. They also learned about the progress made in the planning of the Yellow River Estuary National Park and fully acknowledged the outcomes achieved by local governments in estuarine wetland ecosystem restoration.

During the inspection at the bird museum and bird science park of the Yellow River Delta, they urged for greater endeav-



The aerial photo taken on May 12, 2021, shows the scenery at the Qingfeng Lake in Dongying, east China's Shandong Province. Guo Xulei



Tourists visit a lotus pond in Suma Village of Baiyunhu subdistrict in Jinan, east China's Shandong Province, on July 15, 2022. *Zhu Zheng*

ors to protect the habitat and breeding environment of water fowl and promote wetlands ecosystem protection across the whole of society.

At the Jixi National Wetland Park in Jinan, the team called on the local government to give priority to wetlands protection and provide better eco-leisure services for its residents after hearing detailed reports on the development of urban wetlands.

Li lauded the fruitful progress made in the comprehensive protection of wetlands ecology in Shandong, noting that Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization has led to historic, transformative, and comprehensive changes in China's ecological environment protection in the new era, and has made contributions to the sustainable development of the Chinese nation and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind that are of strategic, global and decisive significance.

It is imperative to thoroughly and accurately understand Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, especially the scientific concept of wetlands conservation, to have a full apprehension of the significance, requirements, objectives, and key tasks of wetlands protection, and to materialize related systems and provisions, Li stressed.

Efforts should be made to raise legal awareness and education, enhance law enforcement and supervision, and improve local laws and regulations on wetlands protection to conserve wetlands water, maintain biodiversity and safeguard the beauty of wetlands for future generations, he added. (NPC) ■



A visitor admires pictures at China's Achievement Exhibition for the 30th Anniversary of Accession to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, on November 6, 2022. *Yao Qilin*

China's top legislature to inspect Wetlands Conservation Law enforcement

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) will send lawmakers to six provinces between May and July to inspect the enforcement of the Wetlands Conservation Law.

Meanwhile, the NPC Standing Committee will entrust local legislatures in eight other provincial-level regions with law enforcement inspection, according to a meeting of the law enforcement inspection groups of the NPC Standing Committee on May 16.

Lawmakers will inspect law enforcement from seven aspects, including how local governments and related authorities fulfill their statutory duties of protecting wetlands, and wetlands' utilization and restoration, according to the meeting.

The NPC Standing Committee will hear and deliberate a report on the law enforcement inspection in late October.

The Wetlands Conservation Law was passed in December 2021 and put into effect on June 1, 2022. (Xinhua)

The aerial photo taken on August 17, 2022, shows the wetland at the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in Dongying, east China's Shandong Province. *Zhu Zheng*





China passes landmark law to protect Qinghai-Tibet Plateau ecosystem

The second session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) adopted a law on April 26 to protect the fragile ecosystem of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, known as "the roof of the world."

The law on ecological conservation on the plateau will take effect on September 1.

It is a new addition to China's laws for special regions,

following the enactment of the Yangtze River Protection Law, the Yellow River Protection Law and the Black Soil Protection Law.

"The plateau is an important shield for China's ecological security. Therefore, the promulgation of the law bears great significance," said Yuan Jie, head of the administrative law section of the Legislative Affairs Commission under the NPC Standing Committee.



Tibetan antelopes are seen in Tsonyi County of Nagqu City, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on July 17, 2022. *Jigme Dorje*

He went on to add that the significance of the law goes far beyond the plateau region.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with an area of about 2.58 million square km, spans six provincial-level regions in western China. It is the source of several major Asian rivers, such as the Yangtze, Yellow and Mekong, which together nourish around 3 billion people.

“Despite having one of the best ecological environments in the world, the natural ecosystem of the plateau is inherently fragile and sensitive,” said Shui Yanping, deputy director of the Department of Ecology and Environment of Tibet Autonomous Region. “Once damaged, it is difficult to repair.”

The plateau is facing multiple ecological challenges, including retreating glaciers, melting permafrost and impacts of global warming, Shui said.

According to lawmakers, formulating the law will help strengthen the top-level design of the ecological protection system for the plateau.

The law outlines the overall layout of the plateau ecology security and stipulates protection and restoration measures, risk prevention and control, and monitoring and supervision.

The draft law entered its second reading late last year with enhanced provisions on preserving biodiversity. It underscored the protection of snow-capped mountains, glaciers and frozen soil in the third reading.

Limit human activities

Protection is the cornerstone of the new law, which stresses the principle of respecting, complying with and protecting nature.

As a lawmaker participating in the legislation once said, “We have no quick fix to prevent ecological changes such as the melting of glaciers on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. What we can do, however, is to keep human activities within the ecological limit. This is the best way to protect it.”

The law prohibits production and construction activities that may cause soil erosion in areas that already suffer severe soil erosion or have a fragile ecology.

It bans sand mining and mining activities that do not meet conservation requirements in nature reserves for river sources and imposes strict rules against the construction of new small hydropower stations on the plateau.

The law specifies that nature reserves should be established to protect rare, endangered or endemic wild animals and plants so that the authenticity and integrity of important natural ecosystems can be maintained.

It is noteworthy that more than a dozen endangered or endemic wild animal and plant species, including the wild yak, snow leopard and giant panda, were listed in the law and put under protection, Yuan said.

The law includes provisions for dealing with unruly or uncivil travelers. It prescribes penalties for those who litter on the plateau, stipulating that individuals with serious violations shall be fined between 500 yuan (72 U.S. dollars) and 10,000 yuan (1,440 U.S. dollars).

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is home to the world's highest summit, Mount Qomolangma.

Lhapa Tsering, staff member with the Qomolangma National Nature Reserve Administration, was particularly up-



Rangers patrol around Yoigilangleb Qu (river) in Qumarleb County of Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, northwest China's Qinghai Province, on April 21, 2022. Zhang Long

beat about the new law.

“As the May Day holiday approaches, the number of tourists visiting Mount Qomolangma is increasing,” he said. “I believe the law will raise public awareness about protecting the environment and help curb bad behaviors.”

Progress in legislation

Wang Xiangtao, associate professor at Tibet Agricultural and Animal Husbandry University, said promoting ecological advancement must rely on institutions and laws, and people must respect, comply with and protect nature.

Over the past 10 years, China has made remarkable progress in legislation on ecological and environmental protection, while a comprehensive, pragmatic and rigorous legal system for ecological and environmental protection has been created.

In 2014, the Environmental Protection Law was revised and has since been called “the strictest” environmental protection law in history. In 2018, “ecological advancement” was

written into the Chinese Constitution.

Today, China has more than 30 laws concerning ecological and environmental protection, as well as over 100 administrative regulations and over 1,000 local laws and regulations putting various natural resources, including mountains, waters, forests, fields, lakes, grasses, deserts, glaciers and snow mountains, under sound legal protection.

The past decade has seen improvements in the ecological environment in the country, and people living in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau are eyewitnesses of these positive changes.

“In recent years, the government has strengthened ecological protection and built a sewage treatment plant near Basum Lake in Tibet. Better ecology in the area has attracted more birds,” said Tsering Yangzom, a tour guide of the region.

“Only when priority is given to ecological protection in regional development can clean waters and lush mountains truly bring wealth,” Wang said.

“A good ecological environment is a blessing for all on the plateau,” he added. (Xinhua) ■

China ratifies National Ecology Day to enhance public awareness, actions

China's top legislature on June 28 voted to designate August 15 as National Ecology Day.

The decision was made at the third session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress, which ended on June 28.

The move is aimed at enhancing public awareness and actions to protect the ecological environment.

The decision also underscored the importance of enhancing publicity and education on ecological conservation through various forms.

It explained that China has emphasized the importance of ecological progress in sustaining the development of the Chinese nation.

China has made historic, transformative and comprehensive changes in protecting its ecological environment and secured world-renowned achievements since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, bringing a strong sense of fulfillment and happiness to the Chinese people, the decision highlighted.

The concept, "green is gold" (lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets), has evolved into a collective belief among all Chinese people, while green, circular and low-carbon development has become a joint endeavor embraced by all regions and authorities in the country, it noted.

China's commitment to ecological conservation has led to groundbreaking initiatives with long-term significance over the past decade.

Red lines for the protection of ecosystems, the quality of the environment and rational resource utilization have been drawn for ecological conservation.

China has established and improved systems in related areas, including property rights for natural resource

assets, performance evaluation and accountability for ecological conservation and compensation for ecological conservation. Corresponding laws and regulations have been formulated or revised.

In parallel, the country has doubled down on its efforts in multiple domains, such as protecting and improving the ecosystems of major rivers, lakes, wetlands and coastlines; safeguarding biodiversity; and combating air, water and soil pollution.

Additionally, the country has played an active role in global environment and climate governance, pledging to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

The efforts over the past decade to diversify the energy mix have yielded positive results, with a decreased share of coal and an increased share of clean energy within total energy consumption. By 2022, the installed capacity of renewable power had exceeded the impressive milestone of 1.2 billion kW.

These endeavors have paid off, bringing tangible benefits to the Chinese people, who are enjoying blue skies, clear waters and lush mountains.

In Chinese cities, air quality was good or excellent on 86.5 percent of days in 2022, marking an improvement of 20.8 percentage points from 2013.

The proportion of surface water at or above Grade III in the country's five-tier water quality system reached 87.9 percent last year, up by 26.3 percentage points from 2012.

Forest coverage rose to 24 percent in 2022, with a forest stock volume of 19.5 billion cubic meters, representing increases of 2.39 percentage points and 4.36 billion cubic meters, respectively, from 2012. (Xinhua)

Photo taken on June 9, 2023, shows herdsmen herding on the grassland in Zeku County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, northwest China's Qinghai Province. Zhang Long



Conserving the Roof of the World enshrined into law

A law to protect the fragile ecosystem of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau was adopted on April 26

By Lu Yan



A law to protect the fragile ecosystem of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau was adopted on April 26 at a standing committee session of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature. It will take effect on September 1.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is known as the Roof of the World, the Third Pole and the Water Tower of Asia. "The plateau is an important shield for China's ecological security. Therefore, the introduction of the law is of great significance," said Yuan Jie, head of the administrative law section of the Legislative Affairs Commission under the NPC Standing Committee, adding that the significance of the law goes far beyond the plateau region.

Unique role

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is the highest and youngest plateau in the world, with an average altitude of more than 4,000 meters. Stretching 2.58 million square km, it covers not only the entire Tibet Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province, but also parts of four other provincial-level regions in west China, namely Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces. The plateau is also home

to the world's highest mountain—Mount Qomolangma.

The plateau has abundant sunlight and geothermal resources. Permafrost is widely distributed and the vegetation is mostly natural grasslands. It is home to a large quantity of lakes, the area of which accounts for more than 45 percent of China's total. Many of its mountains are covered by glaciers and snow.

It is the origin of several large rivers in Asia, including the Yangtze River, the longest river in China and Asia, and the third longest river in the world, as well as the Yellow River, China's second longest and often referred to as the Cradle of Chinese Civilization.

The plateau's fragile ecosystems are now facing a number of challenges from climate change and human activities such as overgrazing, urbanization and road construction.

"Despite having one of the best ecological environments in the world, the natural ecosystem of the plateau is inherently fragile and sensitive," Chen Haisong, a law professor and specialist in environmental law at Wuhan University's School of Law, said in an interview.

Specifically, the degradation of land on the plateau, including through soil erosion, desertification and deterioration of grasslands, is largely due to rising temperatures. This



Tourists visit a rapeseed flower field on the shore of Qinghai Lake in Xining, northwest China's Qinghai Province, on September 14, 2019. Zhang Long

degradation also affects transportation and living standards in the region through landslides and other geological disasters. Glaciers are continuously retreating and permafrost is thawing, damaging the plateau's ability to conserve water.

Moreover, habitat damage poses a high risk to the plateau's biodiversity. "The risk of invasive alien species, including insects, plants and fish, is increasing," Ouyang Zhiyun, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Science's Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences, told Beijing-based China Environmental News.

The plateau is a global hotspot for biodiversity research, as it is one of the most biodiverse high-altitude regions in the world. The region has a near complete set of living records of the stages of plant evolution since the Tertiary Period 65 million years ago, making it a key area for studying the evolution and conservation of global plant diversity.

The chiru, or Tibetan antelope, kiang, a type of wild ass, goa, also known as the Tibetan gazelle, and other unique species of wild animals reside on the plateau; with many of them endangered. It is also one of the regions with the highest bird diversity in China, with over 700 bird species, accounting for about half of the total bird species in the country.

Thanks to decades of biodiversity protection, the populations of some wild species are growing.

For example, the number of Tibetan antelope, mostly found in the plateau region of northwest China and once a victim of poachers, quadrupled nationwide in recent decades. The status of the animal in China has been downgraded from endangered to near threatened.

Legal backup

"Currently, it is very difficult to overcome the challenges on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. For example, once the grassland is damaged, it is difficult to repair," Chen said. "But what we can do now is take more action to prevent further damage. The new law will ensure that."

Yuan said the new law on ecological conservation on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau stresses "prioritizing protection, and letting nature restore itself."

The law outlines the overall layout of the plateau's ecological security, stipulates protection and restoration measures, risk prevention and control, and safeguards and supervision.

It prohibits commercial and construction activities that may cause soil erosion in areas that already suffered severe soil erosion or have fragile ecologies. It bans mining activities that do not meet conservation requirements in nature reserves that protect river sources, and imposes strict rules against the construction of new small hydropower stations on the plateau.

More than a dozen endangered or endemic wild animal and plant species, including the wild yak, snow leopard and giant panda, were listed in the law and put under protection. The law also specifies that nature reserves should be established to protect these wild animals and plants to maintain the authenticity and integrity of important natural ecosystems.

This law is a new addition to China's protection laws for special regions, following the entry into force of the Yangtze River Protection Law on March 1, 2021, the Black Soil Protection Law, to protect this type of soil which mainly lies in northeast China and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, on August 1, 2022, and the Yellow River Protection Law in April this year.

China has formed a 1+N+4 framework of environmental laws. "1" is the Environmental Protection Law, the comprehensive and fundamental law; "N" represents specialized laws covering specific types of protection such as water pollution control and wetland conservation; "4" indicates the aforementioned four laws dedicated to special regions.

"Such a framework aims to target challenges from multiple angles, offering a strong legal guarantee for the ecological conservation of such a large country," Chen said, adding it is expected for the framework to be continuously upgraded as the conditions change with time.

"The laws reflect the long-term commitment to ecological protection," Dambaru Ballab Kattel, an associate professor of physical geography at the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said in an interview.

The protection of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau began a long time ago, even before it was codified into law. Relevant State Council departments and each government of the related re-

gions have adopted regulations and plans for protecting the ecological environment and biodiversity, such as Measures of Tibet Autonomous Region on Environmental Conservation Appraisal, and the Action Plan on the Protection of Biodiversity in northwest Yunnan.

Back in 2018, the State Council Information Office published a white paper titled Ecological Progress on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. It read that air quality on the plateau had improved through the promotion of green energy, the progress in building ecological towns and efforts to improve the rural environment.

The paper further said the plateau had, as of publication, established 155 nature reserves, covering an area of 822,400 square km. This is equivalent to over 31 percent of the plateau's landmass and represents more than 57 percent of China's land nature reserve areas. "Basically, all of the plateau's unique and fragile ecosystems and rare species can be found in these reserves," it said.

Efforts from all

One of the highlights of the new law is that it prohibits travelers from causing damage to the plateau's ecology.

As one of the nation's most popular tourist destinations, especially for hikers who love to conquer high mountains, this popularity also brings pollution. "Garbage and feces can be seen along the routes up Mount Qomolangma, which is becoming a huge concern for nature," Chen said.

Accordingly, the law prescribes penalties for those who litter in the region, stipulating that individuals with serious violations shall be fined between 500 yuan (\$72) and 10,000 yuan (\$1,440). Visitors should take away the garbage they generate or dispose of it at designated locations. The law also includes provisions for dealing with unruly or uncivil travelers.

Chen suggested local governments should further formulate more detailed regulations and rules based on the new law and based on their specific conditions, as supplements to the law.

"China's efforts could serve as a model to share in order to protect ecology and the environment in other complex high mountain systems, not only in the Third Pole region but also in the rest of the world," Kattel said.

The Nepali professor added that cooperation between China and Nepal in recent years has been very helpful in biodiversity conservation, especially through information sharing and actions to combat the smuggling of wildlife and wildlife products, and timber and non-timber forest products.

Kattel calls for further global cooperation in the region, as it is significant not only to sustain the life and livelihoods of the billions of people, but also the habitat of the thousands of species of flora and fauna. "Subtle changes to the ecosystem caused by regional climate warming influence not only the Asian but also the northern hemispheric climate system," he said. ■



Photo taken on June 4, 2023, shows the scenery of Mount Qomolangma at sunset in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. *Fei Maohua*



Flags of UN member countries at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland VCG

Law on Foreign Relations to act as safeguard

By Cao Desheng

China's first foreign relations law, which was passed by the nation's top legislature on June 28, provides the necessary legal guarantees for the country to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests amid increased foreign sanctions and restrictions, a senior Chinese diplomat said.

Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, said that the law, which will take effect on July 1, provides a legal basis for China to exercise its legitimate rights to counter sanctions and interference.

It is also conducive to firmly and effectively safeguarding national interests through the rule of law and to better upholding international fairness and justice, Wang said in an article published in People's Daily on June 29.

The Law on Foreign Relations comes as the nation's development faces increasing challenges in foreign relations including export restrictions, "long-arm jurisdiction" and sanctions. China, for example, has been subjected to mounting sanctions from the United States over advanced technologies as well as issues related to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

However, international law has failed to provide adequate

The Law on Foreign Relations provides a legal basis for China to exercise its legitimate rights to counter sanctions and interference.

remedies. To protect its national security and interests, China recognized the urgent need for a domestic legal framework to regulate foreign relations.

In December, the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, issued the Law on Foreign Relations draft. The draft legislation won broad support from NPC deputies, political advisers, legal experts and the public, according to the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the NPC.

The law states that China "has the right to take, as called for, measures to counter or take restrictive measures against acts that endanger its sovereignty, security and development interests in violation of international law or fundamental norms governing international relations."

In formulating the law, China makes it clear it opposes all forms of hegemony and power politics, unilateralism, protectionism and bullying, Wang said.

The law also has provisions to counter interference, sanctions, sabotage and other actions by foreign countries against China. These provisions will have a preventive and deterrent effect and act as a warning, he added.

The legislation is very necessary and important in countering the "long-arm jurisdiction" of some countries that harms China's national interests, experts said.

Xu Tianqi, an associate researcher at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, said that in the face of the frequent distortion, smearing and provocation by external forces against China, the foreign relations law is timely and useful.

The law also expounds on China's major principles, policy positions, and institutional frameworks for foreign affairs. It is considered a significant milestone in China building a rule of law system in relation to foreign affairs.

The law makes clear the objectives of China's development of foreign relations, its concept of global governance and its active engagement in various fields of foreign exchanges and cooperation.

It also states that China adheres to the path of peaceful development, the basic national policy of opening-up, the strategy of mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation and the correct direction of economic globalization.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on June 29 that the law reflects China's diplomatic policy of maintaining world peace and promoting common development. It also represents China's strong expectations for peaceful development and win-win cooperation.

It embodies China's commitment to creating a community with a shared future for mankind, promoting the building of a new type of international relations and upholding common values for all humanity, Mao said at a news conference. (China Daily) ■

China's foreign relations law to take effect, significance explained

China's milestone Law on Foreign Relations, adopted by the country's top legislature on June 28, will take effect on July 1.

An official of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee answered key questions about the law in an interview.

The following is an excerpt from the interview.

Why did China formulate this law?

Of the 297 laws currently in effect in China, there are 52 foreign-affairs laws and more than 150 laws containing foreign-affairs clauses.

But the legal system concerning foreign affairs still has some shortcomings. In particular, gaps exist in laws concerning safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests.

Speeding up the building of the legal system concerning foreign affairs will help China more effectively deal with risks and challenges.

The law expounds China's stance on international exchanges, improves the institutions related to the country's foreign relations and presents China's image as a responsible major country that champions peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit via a law-based approach.

The law will help the rest of the world further know about, learn about, understand and trust China. It will provide a better legal instrument to guide China's efforts in developing foreign relations and facilitating international cooperation.

What are the main features?

The mainstay of the law is facilitating friendly exchanges and enhancing communication and cooperation. This is embodied in many stipulations of the law.

For example, it says China calls for putting into action the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

It says China plays an active part in global environmental and climate governance, providing foreign aid and carrying out international humanitarian cooperation and assistance.

Adhering to the policy of opening-up is an important principle of the law. In its general principles, the law stipulates that China adheres to the fundamental policy of opening up to the outside world and a strategy of opening up for mutual benefit.

In addition, in terms of the goals and mission of conducting foreign relations, the law emphasizes that China is committed to advancing high-standard opening-up.

According to the law, China develops foreign trade; actively promotes and protects, in accordance with the law, inbound foreign investment; encourages external economic cooperation including outbound investment; and promotes the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative. It is also mentioned that China is committed to

upholding the multilateral trading system, opposes unilateralism and protectionism, and works to build an open global economy.

The law focuses on safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests. It stipulates that China has the right to, as called for, take measures to counter or take restrictive measures against acts that endanger its sovereignty, national security and development interests in violation of international law or fundamental norms governing international relations.

It also stipulates that the state shall take measures as necessary in accordance with the law to protect the safety, security and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens and organizations overseas, and safeguard China's overseas interests against any threat or infringement.

How does the law embody the spirit of the Constitution?

In areas such as the basic principles of foreign relations, functions and powers and the State's respect for and protection of human rights, the law further enriches and develops the institutional substance of the Constitution's provisions on foreign relations.

By stipulating that "treaties and agreements that the State concludes or accedes to shall not contravene the Constitution," it sets clear the relationship between treaties and the Constitution with a legislative approach for the first time, which is of vital importance for upholding the authority, advancing the enforcement and enhancing the oversight of the Constitution.

The law also sets "building China into a great modern socialist country, realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, promoting world peace and development, and building a community with a shared future for humanity" as a significant part of the legislation's purpose.

As for human rights, the law makes it clear that China will unremittably stick to its human rights path and make Chinese contributions and provide a Chinese approach to

advancing the international cause of human rights.

What does it say about laws and regulations in foreign-related fields?

The law says the implementation of the laws and regulations in foreign-related fields should be strengthened, but it is completely different from certain countries' "long-arm jurisdiction" of their domestic laws.

Such "long-arm jurisdiction" is a showcase of hegemony, which China is a victim of and strongly opposes.

To resolutely fight against these practices, China has thus enacted laws and regulations such as the Law on Countering Foreign Sanctions, rules on counteracting the unjustified extraterritorial application of foreign legislation and regulations on unreliable entity list, while also taking countermeasures against entities or individuals from certain countries in accordance with the law.

How was the law formulated?

A draft of the law went through the first reading by the top legislature in October 2022.

After that, the top legislature solicited opinions on the draft law from regional authorities, relevant central government departments, legislative outreach offices at primary levels, as well as certain higher education institutions and institutes of legislative affairs studies.

From December 30, 2022 to January 28, 2023, the full text of the draft law was made public online to solicit public opinion.

In addition, relevant legislative departments held meetings to collect suggestions from members of central government departments, experts and scholars. The results showed that all parties approved the draft law and called for its early formulation.

On May 26, 2023, the NPC Constitution and Law Committee deliberated each and every article of the draft law.

On June 28, 2023, the law was adopted at a meeting of the NPC Standing Committee. (Xinhua)



Zhao Leji, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, presides over the closing meeting of the third session of the 14th NPC Standing Committee at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on June 28, 2023. At this meeting, lawmakers voted to adopt the law on foreign relations. *Li Tao*



VCG

China revises Counter-Espionage Law

Chinese lawmakers voted to adopt a revised Counter-Espionage Law on April 26, which will take effect on July 1, 2023.

The revised law was passed at a session of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee on April 24-26.

Adopted by lawmakers in November 2014, the current Counter-Espionage Law is a special law that regulates and safeguards the fight against espionage, which plays an important role in safeguarding national security, said Wang Aili, with the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee.

The revised law refines the definition of espionage, spec-

ifying acts such as cyberattacks against state organs, confidential organs or crucial information infrastructure as acts of espionage, according to Wang.

It also properly expands the scope of targets of espionage, with all documents, data, materials and articles concerning national security and interests included for protection, Wang said.

The revised law improves provisions on the protection of national security and requires efforts to strengthen people's awareness of counter-espionage and national security, Wang added.

It also enhances supervision over the personnel of national security organs. (Xinhua) ■

Landmark legislation removes barriers for disabled, elderly

A new law on building a barrier-free living environment was adopted by Chinese lawmakers on June 28 during the third session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress.

The law, which will take effect on September 1, 2023, consists of eight chapters and makes provisions regarding the construction of accessible facilities, accessible information exchanges and social services, guarantee measures, supervision and management, and liability.

It is the first time that China has enacted a specific law on the construction of a barrier-free living environment, which aims to improve the daily lives of both disabled and elderly people.

Expanding the beneficiary group

Compared to the previous regulations in the field, which mainly responded to the needs of disabled people, the new law expands the beneficiary group with the legislative purpose of “ensuring equal, full and convenient participation and integration of persons with disabilities and the elderly into social life.”

In 2021, there were 267 million people aged 60 and above in China. According to data from the National Health Commission, the number is expected to exceed 300 million during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025) and surpass 400 million by 2035, accounting for over 30 percent of the total population.

The huge number of elderly people makes it one of the key beneficiary groups of a barrier-free living environment.

Liao Juan, an associate professor at the School of Management of Capital Normal University in Beijing, said the new law addresses the needs and expectations of people with disabilities and the elderly in terms of system design, standard establishment and construction requirements, responding to practical needs.

Addressing pressing issues

The new law makes targeted provisions on enhancing barrier-free services in public transportation, education and examinations, medical and health care, and other scenarios closely related to social life.

The law stipulates that institutions providing relevant services for people with disabilities or the elderly should be equipped with barrier-free amenities, while their services should include barrier-free daily care and rehabilitation care, among other services.

It also adds new mandatory regulations on the provision of barrier-free services in emergency shelters and relevant reg-

ulations on improving the use of service dogs for people with disabilities.

To address the issue of small print on user manuals, especially for medicines, the law prescribes that pharmaceutical manufacturers and operators to provide audio, large-print, electronic and other barrier-free versions of labeling and manuals.

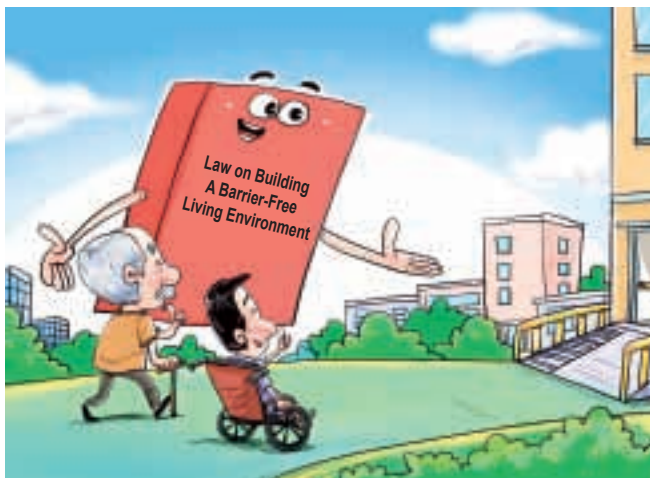
It stipulates that the State encourages the compiling and publishing of Braille and large-print editions of textbooks for different educational stages to meet the needs of the blind and visually-challenged students.

“The move will make a big difference for the future development of visually-impaired children,” said Lu Shiming, head of the China Association of Volunteers for Persons with Disabilities.

Fine-tuning supervision

Regarding oversight and management, the law underscores that organizations such as disabled people's federations and aging population committees have the discretion to employ representatives of people with disabilities or the elderly, as well as professionals in the field, to oversee the construction of a barrier-free environment.

Wuhan University researcher Ding Peng said that inviting these groups to engage in processes such as design and evaluation is instrumental to improving the quality of barrier-free facilities. (Xinhua) ■



The law on building a barrier-free living environment, adopted by the third session of the 14th NPC Standing Committee on June 28, will take effect on September 1, 2023. Wang Peng



The 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China (Xizang is the name of Tibet in Chinese) takes place in Beijing, capital of China, on May 23, 2023. *Li Xin*

Whole-process people's democracy delivers improved livelihoods in Xizang, China

The 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China, took place in Beijing on May 23, shedding light on the new chapter of high-quality development and human rights protection in the south-western autonomous region of China.

In a congratulatory letter to the forum, President Xi Jinping noted, "People's happiness is the ultimate human right, while development holds the key to delivering better lives to the people."

To this end, Xizang has implemented whole-process people's democracy to give full expression to the will of local

residents of all ethnic groups and protect their rights and interests, significantly enhancing the quality of life for local people.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012, people in Xizang, with the strong support of the central government and people throughout the country, have worked with fortitude and brought about a resolution to the problem of extreme poverty that had plagued the region for centuries, Xi's letter explained.

Whole-process people's democracy is the defining feature of socialist democracy; it is democracy in its broadest, most

Whole-process people's democracy is the defining feature of socialist democracy; it is democracy in its broadest, most genuine, and most effective form.

genuine and most effective form.

During a sub-forum on whole-process people's democracy, Roland Boer, a distinguished professor at the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China, highlighted the need for a socialist, or more specifically, Marxist, approach to justice and rights. He stressed that the stunning economic development of Xizang could be understood within the context of a Marxist and socialist approach to human rights.

On a field trip to Xizang before the forum, Boer observed newly built and upgraded roads, railway lines, modern buildings and readily available water, electricity and communications networks. "My phone could even receive a signal at about 5,000 meters above sea level," Boer remarked.

Hendy Yuniarto, a lecturer from the School of Asian Studies of Beijing Foreign Studies University, discussed the role of sustainable tourism in alleviating poverty in Xizang based on his visit to Nyingchi. He emphasized that sustainable tourism in Xizang has struck a balance between local economic development, improved livelihood and the protection of natural scenery and unique cultural resources.

Sergio Cabrera, Colombian ambassador to China, pointed out that Colombia could learn from Xizang's experiences in poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, ecological conservation and cultural preservation.

Giuseppe Yoffreda, Venezuela's ambassador to China, underscored the significant investments China has made to improve education, healthcare, housing, culture, employment and social security in Xizang, leading to improved living conditions for locals. He expressed his hope that China and Venezuela could collaborate on developing democracy and contribute to the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Han Yuanlin, executive deputy secretary general of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Xizang, applauded the continually improving election system in the autonomous region. He noted that of the 42,000 deputies to the people's congresses at five levels (national, regional, municipal, county-level and township-level) in Xizang, 89.24 percent are from Tibetan and other ethnic minorities.

He added that as of May 2021, the central government had provided financial aid totaling 1.63 trillion yuan (231.5 billion U.S. dollars) to aid Xizang's development. This has led people of all ethnic groups to feel a deep-rooted connection between Xizang and the rest of the nation.

Wang Qingxian, vice president of the Party School of the CPC Committee in Xizang, observed that in today's Xizang, whole-process people's democracy is evident across all spheres of economic and social development. From shaping the legislation of the autonomous region to overseeing financial budgeting and implementation to participating in local

tasks such as household waste sorting and property management, residents actively contribute to all these activities, with their individual needs and suggestions duly considered and incorporated.

Qin Yongzhang, researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, explained the practice of whole-process people's democracy in Xizang through the lens of freedom of religious belief.

Qin noted that there are more than 1,700 sites dedicated to Tibetan Buddhist practices, accommodating over 46,000 monks and nuns, all of whom have been included in the social security system. This coverage extends to pensions, medical insurance and subsistence allowance schemes. (China.org.cn) ■



An attendee views an exhibition outside the venue of the 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China in Beijing, capital of China, on May 23, 2023. *Li Xin*



Attendees listen to guests' speeches at the opening ceremony of the 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China, in Beijing, capital of China, on May 23, 2023. *Li Xin*

How people in Tibet Autonomous Region practice whole-process people's democracy

By Li Nan

A red ribbon-shaped hand holding a cup of tea greets visitors of the Dangqun Teahouse in Thangoche Village, Qiongjie County in Tibet Autonomous Region. The logo represents the establishment's dual functions—serving tea and connecting villagers by engaging them in the governance of local affairs. In other words, it's a teahouse as well as an informal villager assembly hall.

Multifunctional constructions

The teahouse began to welcome patrons on January 7, 2022, becoming the first assembly hall-style teahouse in Qiongjie, which falls under the jurisdiction of Shannan City. Last year, the county invested 3 million yuan (\$425,387) in the building of six Dangqun teahouses in different villages.

Upon completion of construction, they were then handed to the villagers to manage them. Any villager can invest in this type of establishment.

Take the teahouse in Thangoche for example. Sixty households pooled their funds to decorate it and bring in dining tables, billiard tables, massage chairs and books. It has be-

Tibet has put in place a system of community-level democracy with distinct characteristics, covering both farming and herding areas, since the region's democratic reform in 1959.



The photo taken on March 28, 2023, shows visitors at a museum commemorating Tibet's democratic reform in Khesum, Shannan City, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. *Sun Fei*

come a popular place for villagers to come have a cup of tea or a bowl of noodles and catch up with friends. And it's doing well. Fifty-nine-year-old stakeholder Dawa Yangzom has seen her investment generate positive returns every month.

It's also an ideal place for villagers to share and comment on the latest news, solve disputes and manage local affairs. Before the teahouses were built, villagers used to discuss things happening in town inside the meeting rooms of the villagers' committee, a self-governing organization consisting of elected members. Now, the teahouse offers a new choice, a more relaxed venue, for coming together.

"We freely air our views here," Baima Samzhub, a resident of Thangoche, told Lhasa-based news portal Xzxw.com. He added that villagers love sharing their opinions on the latest village news, serving up suggestions for local management and seeking advice on how to solve their own problems.

"The teahouse is a good way to engage Tibetans in the governance of their own matters as these establishments play an important role in their daily life. It agrees with the local culture and conditions," Xu Wenhua, deputy dean of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told Beijing Review on May 23, when he attended the 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China, in Beijing. In the Chinese phonetic system, Tibet is romanized as Xizang.

The one-day forum, themed on Tibet's high-quality development and human rights protection, featured sub-forums respectively on topics such as whole-process people's democracy, high-quality development, as well as culture and ecological progress in the region. Over 150 scholars from 36 countries and regions took part in the discussions. Xu was one of them.

He worked in Tibet between 2015 and 2022 and visited 73 of the region's 74 counties and districts, which enabled him to closely observe the development of community-level democracy on the plateau. "I talked to many residents. They engage in local public affairs through community-level self-governance mechanisms including villagers' committees and the meetings of the representatives of urban community residents. They are truly the masters of their own affairs," he said.

Tibet has put in place a system of community-level democracy with distinct characteristics, covering both farming and herding areas, since the region's democratic reform in 1959. On July 5 of that year, 443 peasants from Khesum Village in the Shannan region founded the first Tibetan farmer association, marking the beginning of community-level democracy in the region. In 1980, direct elections at the township level took place all over Tibet; they were expanded to the county level starting in 1984.

As of 2013, over 95 percent of the villages in Tibet had established a system of villagers' representative meetings. "Community-level democracy is an important part of whole-process people's democracy," Xu said.

Multi-tier mechanisms

China's whole-process people's democracy is a full-fledged system with supporting mechanisms and procedures and wide participation. Its system of state power consists of



The Potala Palace in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region VCG

people's congresses and its basic political systems include multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), regional ethnic autonomy and community-level self-governance, according to the fourth volume of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China, a compilation of Chinese President Xi's spoken and written works from February 3, 2020 to May 10, 2022.

The system of people's congresses is the fundamental political system of China and there are such congresses at national, provincial, city, county and township levels. These congresses are formed through democratic elections.

Before Tibet's democratic reform in 1959, the region was ruled by feudal serfdom under theocracy for centuries. With their absolute control of land, the three major types of estate-holders, including government officials, nobles and upper-ranking lamas in monasteries, held the power of life, death and marriage over their serfs. Serfs were subjected to exploitation and oppression and were denied all human rights, not to mention democracy and the right to participate in social governance.

"The 'rule of a person' was the system in Tibet before its

democratic reform,” Roland Boer, distinguished professor at the School of Philosophy under Renmin University of China, said at the forum.

The turning point came in 1959. On March 28 of that year, the State Council announced that the local government of Tibet had been dissolved and through democratic reform, feudal serfdom under theocracy was abolished from that moment on, bringing fundamental changes to the region’s social system. The democratic reform led to the emancipation of about 1 million serfs. They gained personal freedom and became masters of their new society. “Since 1959, as the rule of law has developed in China, Tibet, too, has experienced the development of the rule of law and an associated legal system,” Boer said.

On December 20, 1959, the first session of the first Tibet regional committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) took place in Lhasa, marking the establishment of the system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the CPC’s leadership in Tibet. This system helps ensure that all Tibetans can voice their opinions and play roles in political life. Some religious workers have also become members of CPPCC committees at different levels. “Monks and nuns also hold the right to participate in the governance of society. Their participation is a microcosm of whole-process people’s democracy,” Xu said.

In September 1965, the first session of the First People’s Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region convened in Lhasa, marking the formal establishment of this system in the region. Tibet’s administrative, supervisory, judicial and procuratorial organs are all created by the regional people’s congress to which they are responsible and by which they are supervised.

“The development of both electoral and consultative democracy in Tibet is a huge step forward,” Boer said. Tibet stepped out of the dark times of “the rule of a person” and marched into the era of the “rule of law.” “For Tibet, this is a complete contrast to its earlier system, in which one person and his coterie were masters over Tibet. Now, the people are the masters of the house,” Boer added.

Boer believes the socialist rule of law entails the development of virtuous, apt laws. These good laws have been a feature of the significant development of the socialist rule of law in the last 30 years, seeking to express the core socialist values and developing laws that meet the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life.

“In a region like Tibet, the last item has been particularly important in the significant achievement of abolishing absolute poverty by late 2019,” Boer said. By that time, all 628,000 registered impoverished residents in the 74 counties and districts in Tibet had risen out of extreme poverty—a first in their history.

Tibet’s economy is also making great strides. The region’s GDP amounted to 57.587 billion yuan (\$8.168 billion) in the first quarter of this year, a year-on-year increase of 8.2 percent and 3.7 percentage points higher than the national average, ranking first in the country.

“All these achievements demonstrate the strength of democracy in Tibet Autonomous Region which has ultimately enabled it to achieve the full welfare of its people through their direct participation,” Giuseppe Yoffreda, Ambassador of Venezuela to China, said at the forum. (Beijing Review) ■



Getting a comprehensive look at China’s whole-process people’s democracy

A group of young leaders from various countries attended the second edition of the international youth salon, “A Closer Look at Whole-process People’s Democracy through Beijing’s Practice,” on May 31. They visited the Standing Committee of the Beijing Municipal People’s Congress in Tongzhou District and had roundtable talks with the representatives of the committee to get to know the working mechanisms of people’s congresses in China.



GYLD members listen to the introduction of the online budgetary supervision service system of Beijing Municipal People's Congress on May 31, 2023. (Courtesy of GYLD)

Liu Jun, deputy director of the Research Office of the Standing Committee of the Beijing Municipal People's Congress, introduced the concept of whole-process people's democracy and Beijing's practices, which aroused a warm response among the foreign youth representatives.

Elsbeth van Paridon, a sinologist and journalist from the Netherlands, showed great interest in the age composition of deputies to the Beijing Municipal People's Congress.

"It is important to have ordinary people in the room and I think China did a good job in its whole-process people's democracy," Elsbeth said.

"I realize that many parts come together to create a space where genuine feedback and long-term perspectives are valued to create a society that is really leading globally," noted Zoon Ahmed Khan, a Pakistani researcher at Tsinghua University who has lived in Beijing for eight years.

Zoon, who was quite impressed by how fast China has developed, said, "Good governance is about critical thinking and engaging and empowering people. I wish more and more people would come together to understand China's journey and tell China's stories in a more panoramic way."

Miao Lu, co-founder of the Global Young Leaders Dialogue program and secretary-general of Center for China and Globalization, noted, "I think this is the first time that a local congress has brought international young generations together to get a comprehensive view at how China's whole-process



A group picture taken in the office building of the Standing Committee of Beijing Municipal People's Congress on May 31, 2023 (Courtesy of Beijing Municipal People's Congress)



GYLD members do role playing as deputies to Beijing Municipal People's Congress on May 31, 2023. (Courtesy of GYLD)

people's democracy works at different levels, which is a quite valuable and motivated exploration."

The event not only focused on introducing the system of people's congresses but also on helping attendees understand the working mechanisms at the community level to show a true and comprehensive image of China.

Bai Guangji, Communist Party of China secretary of Zaoyingbeili community, and his co-workers showed their daily work procedures and dozens of working WeChat groups to the international visitors, elaborating on how to use social media applications to implement the instructions and policies from their superiors and collect public opinions to form new proposals.

Through the concrete practice of whole-process people's democracy at the community level, all participants at the event got a comprehensive look at China's democracy.

Itunu Grace Ishola, a Nigerian student at Peking University, said that the activity really provided a lively example of China's whole-process people's democracy and helped her learn about China's democracy from the Chinese perspective.

The international youth salon is an exchange activity carried out under the framework of the Global Young Leaders Dialogue program, which aims to create opportunities for international youth to fully understand whole-process people's democracy in China. (China.org.cn) ■

NPC deputy integrates lawyering with duty



Gao Zicheng, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress
(Courtesy of Gao Zicheng)

Close contact with society and a profound understanding of the profession help lawyers develop the advantages of being good at supervision and expressing public opinion, and give them an important role in assisting legislative and supervisory work of the National People's Congress (NPC), said Gao Zicheng, a deputy to the 14th NPC and president of the All China Lawyers Association (ACLA).

"Lawyers are playing an increasingly important role in the process of building the rule of law in China. I will keep in mind the new expectations and aspirations of the people for fairness and justice and fulfill my duties wholeheartedly," said Gao, who has been a practicing lawyer for 35 years.

During this year's NPC annual session in March, Gao submitted more than 20 suggestions, focusing on legislations to ensure the healthy development of the digital economy, the improvement of the elderly care and service system, stimulating the vitality of private enterprises, promoting the sound growth of the platform economy and improving the supervision of trademark agencies.

In daily work, Gao has actively performed his duties to provide insightful and effective opinions and suggestions.

Gao proposed and established a public welfare legal service team to help promote the implementation of the rules on handling of public complaints upon receipt in Beijing. With lawyers from the team classifying public appeals and concerns, and assisting law enforcement agencies in pre-litigation governance and post-litigation resolution in a timely

'Lawyers are playing an increasingly important role in the process of building the rule of law in China. I will keep in mind the new expectations and aspirations of the people for fairness and justice and fulfill my duties wholeheartedly,' said Gao Zicheng.

manner, the move reflects a people-centered philosophy and has been regarded as a vivid practice of whole-process people's democracy, he said.

To diversify the dispute resolution mechanism, Gao proposed a procedure of "guided arbitration" between case mediation and hearing, which guides plaintiffs and defendants who fail to reach settlement in the mediation stage to resolve disputes through an arbitration institution, which can alleviate pressure on the courts.

In a proposal submitted to this year's annual session, the NPC deputy called for financial institutions to vigorously support private enterprises, and to adjust lending standards and mechanisms to ensure that state-owned and private enterprises enjoy the same loan and repayment conditions.

Gao said that the digital economy is a new driving force for high-quality development. Great efforts are necessary to accelerate the coordination and connection between Chinese laws and international rules, protect intellectual property rights, ensure data security, protect personal privacy, and provide sound legal protection for the healthy development of the platform economy.

He noted that it is urgent to enhance the foreign-related legal service capacity of law firms in China, to cater to the development of the country's high-level opening-up. He suggested that universities, legal service institutions, foreign-related institutions and bar associations increase efforts to cultivate and train more lawyers with moral integrity and professional talent. More practitioners familiar with Chinese laws, proficient in international rules, and with an international perspective will help enhance the competitiveness of Chinese lawyers in the international legal service market, he said. (NPC) ■



Mo Fuyuan is on the way to deliver mails in Longshan Town of Anlong County, Qiannan Bouyei-Miao Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Guizhou Province, on February 14, 2023. *Liu Xu*

Guizhou deputy reflects on long life as postman

By Yang Jun in Guiyang and Zhang Xiaomin

Urbanization has made deliveries easier for Mo Fuyuan, who has been hauling mails, to residents in mountains since 1995.

Postal routes wind deep into the mountains in some rural parts of Longli county, which is in the Qiannan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture in Guizhou province. Mo Fuyuan has been delivering letters and parcels there since 1995, connecting villagers to the outside world.

"I like seeing the smiles on faces when people get their mails," said the 44-year-old postman, who works for the China Post branch in Longli.

'I like seeing the smiles on faces when people get their mails,' said the 44-year-old postman Mo Fuyuan.

"I barely notice that 28 years have passed," he said.

Mo, who has had four bicycles and six motorcycles broken driving along the area's muddy roads over the years, has also seen the area develop.

“In recent years, China has been putting a new urbanization strategy in place and has accelerated the region’s integration with the development of the provincial capital Guiyang. Rural areas are improving day by day,” he said.

Thanks to the expanding network of concrete and asphalt roads, as well as expressways, he can deliver mail by car, and the farthest villages are now less than two hours away.

Back when there were no highways, he would have to go

‘As a grassroots representative, it’s my wish that rural areas get better, more convenient postal services to facilitate rural vitalization,’ Mo Fuyuan said.



Mo Fuyuan drives a mail delivery van in Longli County of Qiannan Bouyei-Miao Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China’s Guizhou Province, on February 14, 2023. Liu Xu

on foot along trails through the mountains. Sometimes, Mo would walk an entire day just to deliver a single letter.

On other days, it would take him six or seven hours by bike to reach a village 100 kilometers from the county town.

“The villagers also looked forward to my visits,” he said. “I brought them letters, telegrams and money orders and took their letters, handmade shoes and local specialties to families and friends who had left the mountains.”

When he received college admission letters in the summer, Mo always made sure to deliver them first, regardless of the weather.

“I was just as happy that they would have the chance to study at universities and experience life outside of the mountains,” he said. “But I was even happier when I’d hear some of them say that they would like to come back after finishing their studies to make their hometowns more prosperous.”

Since local authorities have been consolidating the achievements of poverty alleviation and now endeavor to achieve rural revitalization, great changes have taken place in the mountains of Longli.

There are now more job opportunities and more ways for villagers to make a living.

“Since smart phones are widely used, people seldom send letters. Most of the items I deliver are daily necessities and things people have bought online,” Mo said.

During the season when local produce such as honey, kiwi fruit and purple yam is harvested, specialty products are sent to places all over the country by mail.

Nowadays, Mo mainly works in an urban part of the county town with a route that covers hundreds of buildings, delivering around 2,000 items every day. He has always been willing to work hard.

In May 2003, he had a letter from Taiwan to deliver. The recipient’s name was written in pinyin, and the address was given as “Xiguanpo,” with no specific street or house number. Mo knocked on doors until he finally found the intended recipient, an elderly woman in her 80s.

“The old woman cried when she saw the letter. It was from her long-lost brother, who she thought she’d never find again,” Mo said, adding that he had delivered other improperly addressed items to 100 recipients.

“Behind each letter, there is a family or a relationship. I’m happy to be the link that connects thousands of families,” he said.

Over the years, Mo’s hard work has won him many honors. He has been nominated as an “excellent postman” and as an outstanding member of the Communist Party of China in Qiannan prefecture, as well as a national model worker.

This year, Mo was elected a deputy to the National People’s Congress.

During the recently concluded two sessions—the annual sessions of the 14th National People’s Congress and the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference—Mo proposed the creation of better postal services for the countryside based on the county, township and village logistics level, and proposed detailed measures for the creation of comprehensive postal service stations in each village.

“As a grassroots representative, it’s my wish that rural areas get better, more convenient postal services as part of rural revitalization achievements,” he said. (China Daily) ■

Commission formed to handle NPC deputies' affairs

By Cao Yin

A new commission has been established to handle work related to deputies to National People's Congress, China's top legislature, according to a decision adopted by the NPC Standing Committee at its latest session's closing ceremony on June 28.

The establishment of the commission was underlined in a plan focused on reforming the Party and state institutions that was passed in February at the second plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee. The commission is seen as an effort to strengthen the institutional reform of the NPC.

The commission will be responsible for allocating quotas for the deputies, maintaining contact with them, reviewing their qualifications and providing them with services.

It will also be tasked with forming regulations concerning deputies' group inspection tours, providing guidance and coordinating related affairs.

In addition, the commission is charged with handling deputies' motions and suggestions, supervising their work and providing them with training.

Previously, five working bodies under the NPC Standing Committee were responsible for handling deputies' affairs, including the General Office, the Legislative Affairs Commission and the Budgetary Affairs Commission. (China Daily)



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