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National People's Congress of China

XI'S TWO SESSIONS MESSAGES HIGHLIGHT HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT IN CRUCIAL YEAR



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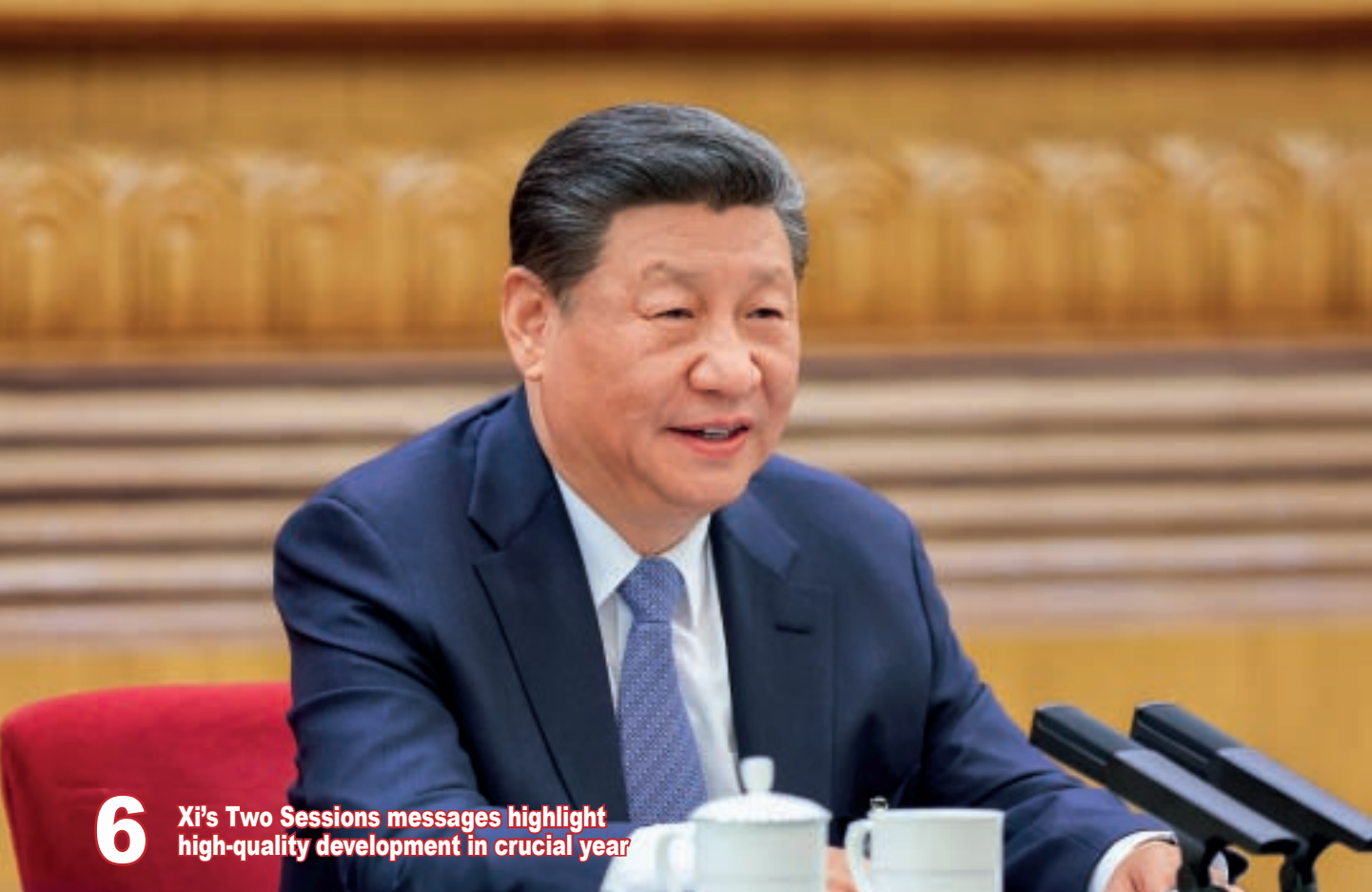


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The closing meeting of the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on March 11, 2024. *Huang Jingwen*



6 Xi's Two Sessions messages highlight high-quality development in crucial year

Contents

Special Report

6 Xi's Two Sessions messages highlight high-quality development in crucial year

12 Xi stresses deepening reform to comprehensively enhance strategic capabilities in emerging areas

Focus

14 China unveils 2024 growth targets with focus on high-quality development

18 Legislators eye growth boost

20 Deputies urged to help advance modernization

22 China vows to be staunch force for peace, stability, progress



International Exchange

24 China calls for solidarity, cooperation to create better future for Asia and the world

26 Zhao Leji meets Boao forum officials, global entrepreneurs

Legislation

28 Better governance, better serving the people

30 Top legislature applauds passage of safeguarding national security bill in HKSAR



18

Legislators eye growth boost



24

China calls for solidarity, cooperation to create better future for Asia, world



44

From serfdom to freedom, new life arising from old Xizang manor

ISSUE 1 · 2024

70 years on

31

70 years on, success story of people's congresses continues in China

34

China: Democracy that works

Deputies

37

NPC deputy urges promotion of science education in schools

38

Hunan farmer represents peers

40

Deputy keeps pianos, workers' rights in tune

41

Deputy hopes digitization can drive interest in ancient relics

42

Health services in remote areas need reinforcement

Xizang

44

From serfdom to freedom, new life arising from old Xizang manor

COVER: President Xi Jinping takes part in a deliberation with his fellow deputies from the delegation of Jiangsu Province at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing, capital of China, March 5, 2024. Ju Peng



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Xi's Two Sessions messages highlight high-quality development in crucial year



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, takes part in a deliberation with his fellow deputies from the delegation of Jiangsu Province at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, capital of China, March 5, 2024. *Ju Peng*

President Xi Jinping has shone more light on the country's source of confidence for high-quality development by expounding on a wide range of topics at this year's Two Sessions, a key political event which closed on March 11.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, joined national legislators in deliberations and participated in discussions with national political advisors at the event, making a raft of remarks on issues including new quality productive forces, environmental protection, overall reform and coordinated regional development.

In this crucial year for fulfilling the objectives and tasks set out in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), Xi stressed that efforts must be made to sustain and reinforce the positive momentum of economic recovery, and boost confidence in development across society. Some key messages provided insight into the trajectory of the world's second-largest economy.

New quality productive forces

Xi stressed developing new quality productive forces amid the country's accelerated efforts to foster new growth drivers and promote high-quality development.

First put forward by Xi in 2023, the concept was highlighted at a key meeting on economic work last December, and became the subject of a CPC leadership group study session this year.

With innovation playing the leading role, new quality productive forces refer to advanced productivity that is freed from the traditional economic growth mode and productivity development paths, features hi-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and comes in line with the new development philosophy.

Joining his fellow deputies from the delegation of east China's Jiangsu province in a deliberation on March 5, Xi underscored the importance of developing new quality productive forces based on local conditions.

Developing new quality productive forces does not mean neglecting or abandoning traditional industries, Xi said, noting that it is necessary to prevent a headlong rush into projects and the formation of industry bubbles, and avoid adopting a single model of development.

Xi stressed the need to strengthen basic research along with basic research in applied sciences, achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields and foster new drivers for developing new quality productive forces, while participating in a joint group meeting attended by national political advisors on March 6.

Citing achievements in transportation as an example, he said that China is a global leader in automobile production and sales, excels in new energy vehicles, boasts the longest expressway network and has successfully introduced high-speed railways and urban rail transit systems internationally, alongside the development of large aircraft.

Craftsmen are important for these accomplishments, he stressed, calling for enhancing vocational education, fostering a culture of meticulous craftsmanship and nurturing generations of master craftsmen at the forefront of production.

"The master craftsmen are the backbone. Without a dia-

mond, you can't handle porcelain," Xi said.

Attending a plenary meeting of the delegation of the People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police Force on March 7, he said the drive to accelerate the development of new quality productive forces has provided rare opportunities for the development of strategic capabilities in emerging areas. He called for enabling new quality productive forces and new quality combat capabilities to effectively integrate with and boost each other.

Deepening overall reform

Reform has been a key word in China over the years. At the deliberation on March 5, Xi stressed the necessity of planning major measures to further deepen reform on all fronts, so as to continuously inject strong impetus into the endeavor to promote high-quality development and advance Chinese modernization.

To build a high-level socialist market economy, it is imperative to accelerate the improvement of basic systems underpinning the market economy, such as those for property rights protection, market access, fair competition and social credit, Xi said.

He stressed that it is essential to improve and implement the institutions and mechanisms to unswervingly consolidate

"The master craftsmen are the backbone. Without a diamond, you can't handle porcelain," Xi said.

and develop the public sector and unswervingly encourage, support and guide the development of the non-public sector, and facilitate the growth of the private sector and private enterprises.

The reform of systems involving science and technology, education and professional personnel should be deepened, and barriers obstructing the development of new quality productive forces should be removed, Xi said, stressing creating a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized to foster new strengths for a higher-level open economy.

Environmental protection

"The CPC Central Committee always attaches great importance to environmental protection," Xi told national political advisors, including those from the environment and resources sector, on March 6.

He emphasized the need to guard red lines in the development and protection of territorial space and improve the region-specific environmental management system, so as to further consolidate the ecological foundations of high-quality development.

According to the government work report, China has set a target of reducing its energy consumption per unit of gross domestic product by approximately 2.5 percent this year.

Xi considers pursuing common prosperity for all to be an essential feature of Chinese modernization.

Xi said efforts must be made to carry out targeted, science-based and lawful pollution control; promote green and low-carbon transition in economic and social development; strengthen conservation, efficient use and recycling of resources; explore more ways to realize the market value of ecological products; and work toward peaking carbon emissions and achieving carbon neutrality.

On the country's plan to control new pollutants following its treatment of smog and black and malodorous water bodies, Xi said that both newfound and persistent environmental problems need to be addressed.

Common prosperity

Xi stressed that pursuing common prosperity for all is an essential feature of Chinese modernization. The tale of Yonglian Village in Jiangsu, a legendary example of developing township enterprises during China's reform and opening up, caught his attention in the deliberation on March 5.

Once a tidal flat area along the Yangtze River, this village boldly established a steel enterprise about 40 years ago and

emerged as a nationally renowned prosperous community.

Last year, with total industrial and agricultural revenues reaching 161.6 billion yuan (22.78 billion U.S. dollars) and a collective operating revenue of 335 million yuan (47.24 million U.S. dollars), village residents enjoyed an average per capita net income of 73,000 yuan (10,294 U.S. dollars).

Listening to a national legislator from the village recounting these achievements, Xi praised the village as a pioneer on the path to rural revitalization and common prosperity, urging the villagers to continue their efforts to promote common prosperity.

Coordinated regional development

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, a series of coordinated regional development strategies have been implemented, including the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta and the integration and coordinated development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. They are playing an important supporting role in fostering a new development paradigm and promoting high-quality development.

During the deliberation on March 5, Xi said that it is imperative for Jiangsu to fully integrate into and contribute to the development of the Yangtze Economic Belt and the strategy for integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta, urging the major economically developed province to better leverage its strength to drive the development of the whole region and the whole country. (Xinhua) ■



The opening meeting of the second session of the 14th National People's Congress is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on March 5, 2024. *Ding Haitao*

Xi stresses developing new quality productive forces



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, takes part in a deliberation with his fellow deputies from the delegation of Jiangsu Province at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, capital of China, March 5, 2024. *Xie Huanchi*

President Xi Jinping stressed developing new quality productive forces in accordance with local conditions during the second session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's national legislature on March 5.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks as he participated in a deliberation with fellow lawmakers from east China's Jiangsu province.

Xi called for focusing on high-quality development as the top priority, urging efforts to step up innovation, foster emerging industries, adopt forward-thinking plans for developing future-oriented industries and improve the modernized industrial system.

Developing new quality productive forces does not mean neglecting or abandoning traditional industries, Xi said. It is necessary to prevent a headlong rush into

projects and the formation of industry bubbles, and avoid adopting a single model of development, he noted.

Localities should take into account their own resource endowment, industrial foundation and scientific research conditions in promoting the development of new industries, models and growth drivers in a selective manner, and use new technologies to transform and upgrade traditional sectors into high-end, intelligent and green industries, he said.

Xi expressed approval of the government work report and praised the new progress Jiangsu has made in economic and social development, encouraging the province to firm up confidence and go all out to make greater contributions to overall national development.

To develop new quality productive forces, Jiangsu must focus on the development of a modernized indus-

trial system, with advanced manufacturing as the backbone, and speed up efforts to forge clusters of strategic emerging industries with international competitiveness, Xi said.

He urged turning the province into an important front for the development of new quality productive forces.

Xi also called for planning major moves to further comprehensively deepen reform to inject strong impetus into promoting high-quality development and Chinese modernization.

He noted that it is necessary to accelerate the improvement of underlying institutions in areas such as property rights protection, market access, fair competition and social credit to build a high-standard socialist market economy system.

Work must be done to support the growth of the private sector and private enterprises, and spur the intrinsic impetus and innovative vigor of various business entities, Xi added.

He also stressed deepening reforms in sci-tech, education and talent management systems to remove the bottlenecks and obstacles to the development of new quality productive forces.

It is also important, Xi said, to foster a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized, and create new strengths for a higher-standard open economy.

Xi called on Jiangsu to fully integrate into and contribute to the development of the Yangtze Economic Belt and the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta, and strengthen synergy with other regional development strategies and major regional strategies.

Urging Jiangsu to build larger-scale innovation chains, industrial chains and supply chains, Xi instructed Jiangsu to leverage its status as an economically developed province to drive and influence both regional and national development.

Xi also called for continued efforts to consolidate and strengthen the momentum of economic recovery to boost confidence in development across society.

He urged resolute measures to rectify pointless formalities and bureaucratic practices. Practical steps should be taken to ease the burdens on those working on the ground and stimulate creativity within the entire Party and society.

Xi also emphasized steady efforts to enhance people's wellbeing amid development and ensure workplace safety.

Cai Qi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, participated in the deliberation. (Xinhua)



Xi calls on political advisors to build consensus for Chinese modernization



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, visits national political advisors from the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the sector of science and technology, and the sector of environment and resources, who are attending the second session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing, capital of China, March 6, 2024. Xi participated in their joint group meeting, and heard their comments and suggestions. *Zhai Jianlan*

President Xi Jinping on March 6 called on Chinese political advisors to build broad consensus to contribute to Chinese modernization, while he participated in a joint group meeting during the second session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, urged political advisors from different political parties, organizations, ethnic groups, sectors and all walks of life to conduct in-depth

research and actively offer suggestions based on the major strategic tasks laid out by the 20th CPC National Congress and the arrangements made by the Central Economic Work Conference.

The meeting was attended by political advisors from the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang (RCCK), the science and technology sector and the environment and resources sector.

Xi extended festive greetings and best wishes to the country's women of all ethnic groups and from all walks of life ahead of International Women's Day on March 8.

Wang Huning, chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, and Cai Qi, director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, joined the discussion. Wang and Cai are both members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee.

At the joint group meeting, six national political advisors spoke on topics ranging from cross-Strait cooperation in industrial and supply chains to internet core technologies and environmental protection.

After attentively listening to the political advisors, Xi made an important speech. He said the CPC Central Committee united and led the whole Party and Chinese people of all ethnic groups to fulfill major economic and social development goals in 2023, adding that political advisors contributed their efforts and wisdom to this hard-earned achievement.

On the work related to Taiwan, Xi urged the RCKK to unite all patriots from home and abroad, in and out of Taiwan to step up opposition against “Taiwan independence” forces, expand support for national reunification and jointly advance the peaceful reunification of China.

He called for active efforts to promote exchanges and cooperation in fields such as sci-tech development, agriculture, culture and youth development across the Taiwan Strait and deepen cross-Strait integrated development.

Xi called on political advisors and all people in the science and technology sector to strengthen basic research and applied basic research, strive to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields and create new drivers for developing new quality productive forces.

Xi urged political advisors from the environment and resources sector to make new contributions to ecological and environmental protection and the sustainment of high-quality development with high-level protection.

He called for fully and accurately implementing the guidelines of targeted, science-based and lawful pollution control; advancing green and low-carbon social and economic development; and promoting carbon emissions peaking and carbon neutrality in an active and prudent manner.

Noting this year marks the 75th anniversary of the CPPCC’s establishment, Xi emphasized the need for it to promote the specialized consultative body’s institutional development and urged political advisors to enhance their ability to perform duties for new advances in the work of the CPPCC and multi-party cooperation. (Xinhua)

Xi stresses deepening reform to comprehensively enhance strategic capabilities in emerging areas

President Xi Jinping called on the armed forces to forge a stronger sense of mission, deepen reform and promote innovation on March 7, so as to comprehensively enhance strategic capabilities in emerging areas.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while attending a plenary meeting of the delegation of the People’s Liberation Army and the People’s Armed Police Force at the second session of the 14th National People’s Congress, China’s national legislature.

Xi said strategic capabilities in emerging areas are an important part of national strategies and strategic capabilities, and are of great significance to building a great country and advancing national rejuvenation on all fronts through Chinese modernization.

Six lawmakers from the military spoke at the meeting on topics ranging from defense capabilities in cyberspace and the application of artificial intelligence to the development and utilization of unmanned combat capabilities.

Xi said China’s drive to accelerate the development of new quality productive forces has provided rare opportunities for the development of strategic capabilities in emerging areas.

He called for enabling new quality productive forces and new quality combat capabilities to effectively integrate with and boost each other.

Xi urged efforts to coordinate maritime military preparedness, maritime rights and interests protection and marine economy development.

He called for optimizing aerospace layout to promote China’s aerospace system development and building a cyberspace defense system to enhance the ability to safeguard national cybersecurity.



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, attends a plenary meeting of the delegation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police Force at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, capital of China, March 7, 2024. Xi delivered an important speech at the meeting. *Li Gang*

Xi noted that it is necessary to step up independent and original innovation, in order to foster growth drivers for new quality productive forces and new quality combat capabilities.

He stressed the need to highlight reform in emerging areas as a priority for further comprehensively deepening reform, calling for an innovative ecosystem characterized by self-reliance, openness, integration and vitality.

It is necessary to deepen the structural reform of defense-related science and technology industries by accelerating the supply of new quality combat capabilities, Xi said.

He also urged efforts to build innovation chains, industrial chains and value chains tailored to the development of emerging areas, along with innovating and exploring the development and utilization of new types of combat forces. (Xinhua) ■

China unveils 2024 growth targets with focus on high-quality development



The opening meeting of the second session of the 14th National People's Congress is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on March 5, 2024. Zhang Ling

China seeks to achieve a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of about 5 percent for 2024, the latest signal that the world's second-largest economy is committed to high-quality development despite uncertainties at home and abroad.

The projected goal, which remains unchanged from the previous year's growth target, is one of the key development objectives unveiled in the government work report delivered by Premier Li Qiang to the National People's Congress, which began its annual session on March 5.

In 2024, China aims to create over 12 million jobs in urban areas, and keep the surveyed urban unemployment rate at about 5.5 percent, said the report. The country also plans to spend 1.67 trillion yuan (234.5 billion U.S. dollars) on defense, up 7.2 percent, and has set an inflation target of about 3 percent.

A reasonable goal

The GDP growth target of about 5 percent for this year was set after the Chinese economy showed solidity and resilience in 2023 by recording year-on-year growth of 5.2 percent.

"In setting the growth rate at about 5 percent, we have taken into account the need to boost employment and incomes, and prevent and defuse risks," Li said.

This growth rate is well aligned with the objectives of the 14th Five-Year Plan and the goal of basically realizing modernization by 2035. It takes into account of the potential for growth and the conditions supporting growth and reflects the requirement to pursue progress and strive to deliver, according to Li.

Han Baojiang, a professor with the Party School of the Communist Party of China Central Committee (National Academy of Governance) and a national political advisor, said the GDP growth objective is both "down-to-earth and uplifting," and shows that the government continues to emphasize the quality of growth.

Tian Xuan, vice dean with Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance and a national lawmaker, said the projected growth rate is in line with the availability of policy tools and the sustainability of economic development, leaving ample room for promoting the shift of growth drivers and coping with external uncertainties.

Ample policy tools

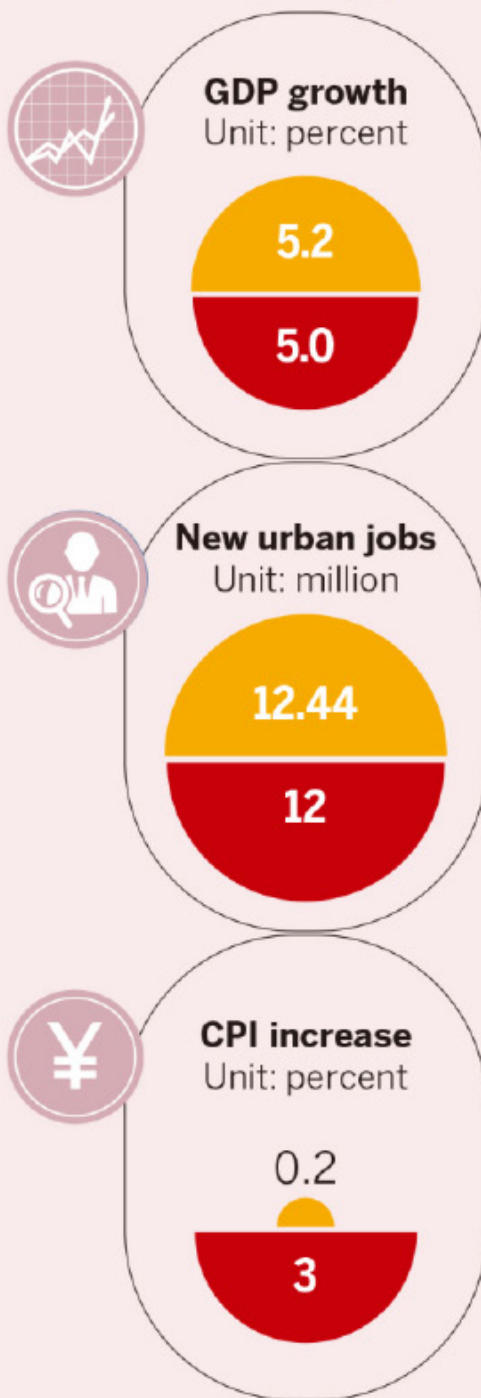
The report also noted multiple difficulties and challenges that the country is facing, such as an insufficiently solid foundation for sustained economic recovery and growth, and a lack of effective demand.

"Achieving this year's targets will not be easy, so we need to maintain policy focus, work harder and mobilize the concerted efforts of all sides," Li said.

A proactive fiscal policy and a prudent monetary policy will be continued in 2024, according to the report. An array of measures to boost growth this year have also been disclosed, including 3.9 trillion yuan (549.9 billion U.S. dollars) of special-purpose bonds for local governments and the issuing of ultra-long special treasury bonds.

ACHIEVEMENTS & GOALS

■ 2023
■ 2024



Source: Government Work Report

CHINA DAILY



Robots weld bodysells of cars at a workshop of Chinese electric vehicle (EV) maker Li Auto Inc. in Changzhou, east China's Jiangsu Province, January 10, 2024. *Ji Chunpeng*

Meanwhile, the country will address both the symptoms and root causes to defuse risks in real estate, local government debt and small and medium-sized financial institutions to safeguard overall economic and financial stability, the report said.

“China has a rather plentiful and flexible set of policy tools to maintain stable economic growth and cope with external headwinds,” said Zhuang Yumin, dean of the School of Finance at Renmin University of China and a national lawmaker, citing the country’s introduction of structural monetary and fiscal tools to offer targeted support for specific fields as an example.

The consistency of the macro policy orientation should be enhanced, the report stressed.

Growth drivers in place

To underpin the country’s high-quality development,

China has a rather plentiful and flexible set of policy tools to maintain stable economic growth and cope with external headwinds.

the report outlined major pro-growth steps to drive the economy.

China will launch a year-long program to stimulate consumption and policies to promote digital, environmentally-friendly and health-related consumption, the report said.

It also revealed that China will increase effective investment. This year, 700 billion yuan (98.7 billion U.S. dollars)



will be earmarked in the central government budget for investment.

A series of tasks to modernize the industrial system and develop new quality productive forces at a faster pace are outlined in the report, including industrial and supply chain improvement and upgrade; and the cultivation of emerging industries and future-oriented industries such as hydrogen power, new materials, biomanufacturing, commercial spaceflight, quantum technology and life sciences.

China also plans to implement measures to ensure the national treatment for foreign-funded enterprises, vowing more efforts to attract foreign investment.

Jiang Ying, Deloitte China chair and a national political advisor, said China has a huge market and the country remains open-minded in seeking to continuously improve its business environment. “The Chinese economy offers plentiful opportunities, creating development space for all kinds of market players.” (Xinhua) ■



Highlights of Chinese government work report

The following are the highlights of the Chinese government work report submitted on March 5 to the National People's Congress for deliberation.

- 2024 GDP growth target: around 5 percent
- Creating over 12 million jobs in urban areas
- Ratio of deficit to GDP: 3 percent
- Special-purpose bonds for local governments: 3.9 trillion yuan
- Issuing ultra-long special treasury bonds
- Launching AI Plus initiative
- Enhancing disruptive and frontier technology research
- Launching year-long program to stimulate consumption
- Investment from central government budget: 700 billion yuan
- Expanding domestic demand
- Ensuring national treatment for foreign-funded enterprises
- Working toward joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
- Pursuing higher-standard opening up
- Defusing risks in property, local debt, small and medium-sized financial institutions
- Ensuring both development and security
- Advancing energy revolution
- Opposing “Taiwan independence” and external interference
- Upholding international fairness and justice (Xinhua)

Legislators eye growth boost

Planned laws aim to help foster new development pattern, deepen reform

By Cao Yin



The second meeting of the second session of the 14th National People's Congress is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on March 8, 2024. Xie Huanchi

China is planning to strengthen legislation concerning the economy this year to accelerate the creation of a new pattern of development and deepen reform across the board, an annual work report said.

The report on the work of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the country's top legislature, was submitted for review to the ongoing second session of the 14th NPC on March 8.

To reach the goal, Chinese legislators will formulate a private sector promotion law, and work on drawing up a law on financial stability, a law on rural collective economic organizations and a value-added tax law, according to the report.

Several other legislative items, including the Mineral

"In following the principle that laws are made for the people and by the people, we'll make constant efforts to legislate in a more scientific, democratic and law-based manner," Zhao Leji added.

Resources Law, the Enterprise Bankruptcy Law and the Unfair Competition Law, are also expected to be revised, it added.

Zhao Leji, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said, as he delivered the report to national lawmakers, that



these moves are to improve the socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics.

“In following the principle that laws are made for the people and by the people, we’ll make constant efforts to legislate in a more scientific, democratic and law-based manner,” he added.

Chen Jie, a deputy to the 14th NPC from Jiangsu province, welcomed the formulation of a private sector promotion law, noting that this is necessary and urgent to help China advance high-quality economic development.

“Stronger legal support is conducive to the healthy growth of the private economy and the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of private entrepreneurs,” she said.

Chen added that this law would also contribute to reg-

ulating administrative behavior, promote the building of a sound business environment and stimulate the market.

Lu Qingguo, another NPC deputy and also chairman of Chenguang Biotech Group, said he suggested that the NPC Standing Committee formulate a specialized law on the private sector, so he was glad to see such an item in this year’s legislative plan.

He highlighted the importance of clarifying the position of private enterprises in the formulation of the law, calling for stronger protection of private property.

Zhang Jijiao, a national political adviser, said that passing such a law will be good news for small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those that have been affected by COVID-19 in recent years, adding that “they need the law to assist their future development.”

In addition, the report added that a number of laws to ensure people’s wellbeing, such as those on public health emergency response and social assistance, are also about to be drawn up. (China Daily) ■



Staff members work at the secretariat of the second session of the 14th National People’s Congress (NPC) in Beijing, capital of China, March 9, 2024. National lawmakers submitted 298 proposals to the country’s annual legislative session as of the noon of March 8, the deadline for proposal submission at the ongoing second session of the 14th NPC. *Liu Xu*

Lawmakers submit 298 proposals to annual legislative session

National lawmakers submitted 298 proposals to the country’s annual legislative session as of March 8 at noon, the deadline for submissions of proposals at the ongoing second session of the 14th National People’s Congress (NPC).

The secretariat of the session said on March 9 it had received over 7,000 suggestions, criticisms and comments from NPC deputies.

While the majority of the proposals are legislative bills, lawmakers’ suggestions mainly focus on developing new quality productive forces, fostering emerging and future industries, and expanding effective investment, among others. (Xinhua)

Deputies urged to help advance modernization

By Cao Yin



A staff member watches operation of the production machine at Jinghanglinchan Furniture Co., Ltd. in Rizhao, east China's Shandong Province, on March 29, 2024. *Guo Xulei*



Deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) attend the second plenary meeting of the second session of the 14th NPC at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on March 8, 2024. *Liu Weibin*

Stressing the importance of developing whole-process people's democracy, Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), called on national lawmakers to unite and gather strength to continuously promote Chinese modernization and realize people's aspirations for a better life.

"With a people-centered development concept, we'll fully respect the will expressed by the people, the experience they have created, the rights they have and the role they play to stimulate the enthusiasm and vitality of the whole of society and build up a powerful force of unity," Zhao said as the top legislature wrapped up its annual session on March 11.

At the closing meeting of the second session of the 14th NPC, deputies voted to approve resolutions on the government work report, the national economic and social development plan for 2024, and the central budget for 2024.

They also passed resolutions on the work reports of the NPC Standing Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the revised Organic Law of the State Council.

Taking a people-centered approach to law enforcement, the amended law optimizes the workflow and functions of the central government, clarifying that all those working for the State Council must exercise power by the rule of law to build a law-based government that the people are satisfied with.

Zhao called on all NPC deputies to work hard and concentrate their efforts to achieve the annual economic and social development goals, and unwaveringly promote Chinese modernization.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of

the People's Republic of China and is also a crucial year for achieving the goals of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), he said, urging NPC deputies to do their best to overcome difficulties in order to meet the people's aspiration for a better life.

Qin Baohua, an NPC deputy and a teacher from the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, said that she has long paid close attention to issues regarding education, especially in the middle school stage.

"In the process of performing my duties, I have implemented whole-process people's democracy, solicited suggestions and opinions on the balanced development of education from people at the grassroots, and brought their voices to the NPC session," she said.

"I will take the people-centered approach by increasing my visits and research, and expand my focus to other issues involving people's livelihoods, such as social insurance and nursing care services," she added.

At the second session of the 14th NPC, 298 motions put forward by NPC deputies had been submitted as of March 8 at noon. Of these, 292 concentrated on legislative items, with major themes including enhancing high-quality development and promoting new quality productive forces.

Many motions were made based on surveys and opinions collected from the public, showing the implementation of whole-process people's democracy, according to the session's secretariat.

In addition, the secretariat had also received more than 7,000 suggestions from NPC deputies as of March 8, mainly covering the digital economy, education, emerging businesses and opening up. (China Daily) ■



Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, attends a press conference on China's foreign policy and foreign relations on the sidelines of the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, capital of China, March 7, 2024. *Liu Xu*

China vows to be staunch force for peace, stability, progress

Foreign Minister Wang Yi on March 7 expressed the country's resolve to unswervingly promote peace, stability and progress in a world which is overshadowed by protracted conflicts and lukewarm economic recovery.

All countries rise and fall together in today's world and the sure path to meeting challenges is mutual assistance and win-win cooperation, said Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

The vision of building a community with a shared future

China is ready to work with all countries to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity.

for humanity, put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping, goes beyond the obsolete zero-sum game mentality and points the right direction for humanity, Wang said at a press conference held on the sidelines of the annual session of the National People's Congress.

"China is ready to work with all countries to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity. The road ahead may be tortuous, but the future is bright," the top diplomat stated.

Solutions to hotspot issues

During the hour and a half press conference, Wang expounded on China's approaches to resolving global hotspot issues and achieving lasting peace and common security.

On the turbulent Middle East, Wang highlighted that China supports Palestine's full membership in the United Nations and calls for a more broad-based, more authoritative and more effective international peace conference to work out a timetable and road map for a two-state solution.

"Restoring justice to the Palestinian people and fully implementing the two-state solution is the only way to break the vicious circle of Palestinian-Israeli conflicts," Wang said.

Turning to the Ukraine crisis, the foreign minister renewed calls for early talks as all conflicts have to end at the negotiating table.

China supports the holding in due course of an international peace conference that is recognized by both Russia and Ukraine and ensures the equal participation of all parties and fair discussions on all peace plans, he said.

In the face of multiple global challenges, Wang praised the UN's role as the core mechanism to realize peace and development on the planet, stressing that the role of the UN should be strengthened, not weakened, and the status of the UN must be upheld, not replaced.

Refuting "table or menu" mindset

It shouldn't be the case that those with the bigger fists have the final say and it is definitely unacceptable that certain countries must be "at the table" while some others can only be "on the menu," Wang told reporters.

On China-U.S. relations, the senior official urged the United States to take an objective and rational view of China's development and match its words with actions to honor its commitments on bilateral ties.

"In today's world, hegemonism finds no support and division leads nowhere. Major countries should not seek confrontation and the Cold War should not be allowed to return," Wang stressed.

China is always willing to strengthen dialogue and communication with the United States and believes that the two sides can certainly find a proper way to get along in this world, he said.

Wang lauded China-Russia relations for their great value in maintaining global strategic stability, promoting positive interaction among major countries and strengthening cooperation among major emerging countries.

Such functions are part of the significance of China-Russia ties, which have "forged a new paradigm of major-country relations that differs entirely from the obsolete Cold War ap-

proach," as he put it.

Wang also expressed hope for smoother ties and closer partnership between China and the European Union (EU) because "as long as China and the EU engage in mutually beneficial cooperation, no attempt to create bloc confrontation will succeed; as long as China and Europe stay committed to openness and win-win, deglobalization will not prevail."

The China opportunities

Looking forward, Wang said China will continue to uphold justice and advance win-win cooperation. China will maintain stable relations with major countries, work with its neighbors for progress and strive for revitalization with the Global South, according to Wang.

This year will be a year of harvest for Global South cooperation and a new starting point for unity among Asian, African and Latin American countries, Wang said, adding that a new meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation will be held in the fall in Beijing.

To usher in a second golden decade of Belt and Road cooperation, China will promote the upgrading of physical connectivity, the strengthening of institutional connectivity and the deepening of people-to-people connectivity.

Underlining China's role as a strong engine for growth, Wang noted that China's economy grew 5.2 percent last year, contributing one third of world growth, while China's super large market with over 1.4 billion people is opening wider to the world.

At the press conference, Wang announced a trial visa-free policy for Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg starting March 14.

He stated China's readiness to develop further international cooperation platforms, including the China International Import Expo and the China International Fair for Trade in Services, while optimizing its business environment.

"Spreading pessimistic views on China will end up harming oneself, and misjudging China will result in missed opportunities," Wang said. (Xinhua) ■



Foreign Minister Wang Yi attends a press conference on China's foreign policy and foreign relations on the sidelines of the second session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing, capital of China, March 7, 2024. This photo shows the scene at the press conference. Liu Xu

China calls for solidarity, cooperation to create better future for Asia and the world



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, delivers a keynote speech while attending the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024 in Boao, south China's Hainan Province, on March 28, 2024. *Pang Xinglei*



This photo taken on March 22, 2024 shows a rest area in the Boao zero-carbon demonstration zone in Boao, south China's Hainan Province. *Zhang Liyun*

Top legislator Zhao Leji on March 28 called for solidarity and cooperation to meet challenges and work together to create a better future for Asia and the world.

Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, made the remarks during a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024, which drew more than 1,500 people from political and business circles, and think tanks from over 60 countries and regions.

The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, and global peace and development face grave challenges, Zhao said, adding that confronting the question of the times regarding the direction the world should take, China's answer is to work together to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

China advocates an equal and orderly multipolar world, and inclusive economic globalization. It calls on all countries to transcend the old mentality of bloc confrontation and zero-sum games, and practice genuine multilateralism to jointly build an open world economy, he said.

Zhao noted that people in Asia have endured both hot and cold wars, as well as hardships and tribulations, leading them to deeply cherish peace and understand that developmental achievements are hard-won.

"We should hold high the banner of a community with a shared future for humanity, work together to build an Asian community with a shared future, and build an Asian homeland of peace, security, prosperity, beauty and friendly coexistence," he said.

Today, Asia is the most dynamic region with the biggest potential for economic growth in the entire world, with its economic aggregate accounting for 40 percent of the glob-

"We should work together to build an Asian community with a shared future, and build an Asian homeland of peace, tranquility, prosperity, beauty and friendly coexistence," Zhao Leji said.

al GDP and the region contributing more than 70 percent to global economic growth, Zhao added.

He called on Asian nations to stay united; jointly stand against unilateralism and extreme self-serving practices; oppose confrontation between different camps; and prevent the region and the world from becoming a hotbed for geopolitical competition, as well as oppose trade protectionism, the erection of walls and barriers, and decoupling in all forms.

According to the top legislator, China is advancing Chinese-style modernization on all fronts through high-quality development, which will inject a strong impetus into global economic recovery and provide more opportunities for the development of all countries, especially neighboring Asian countries.

China will adhere to innovation-driven, open, green and shared development, Zhao said, adding that China sincerely welcomes all countries to board its express train of development and join hands to achieve global modernization featuring peaceful development, mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity. (Xinhua) ■



Zhao Leji meets Boao forum officials, global entrepreneurs

Top legislator Zhao Leji met with members of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) board of directors and some representatives of the BFA council of advisors, as well as strategic partners in Boao in south China's Hainan province on March 27.

The theme of this year's BFA annual conference, "Asia and the World: Common Challenges, Shared Responsibilities," addresses the common concerns of the international community and has strong practical significance, said Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee.

In today's world, numerous challenges and crises are intertwined, Zhao said, noting that the tougher the circum-

stances, the greater the imperative to foster consensus, solidarity and cooperation.

"China will provide the world with more new opportunities through its own new development and continue to support the development of the BFA," he said, expressing the hope that the forum will make a greater contribution to peace and development in Asia and the world at large.

BFA chairman Ban Ki-moon and other representatives attending the meeting spoke highly of the concept of building a community with a shared future for humanity and a series of global initiatives proposed by China, expressing their willingness to contribute to the development of the forum, and the

博鳌2024年年会 ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024

March 26-29, 2024



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, meets with members of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) board of directors and some representatives of the BFA council of advisors as well as strategic partners in Boao, south China's Hainan Province, on March 27, 2024. Yin Bogu

unity and cooperation of all parties.

During the discussion with representatives of Chinese and foreign enterprises, Zhao said China has the advantages of a vast market scale, a robust industrial system, and talent and innovation, as well as obvious institutional advantages. He added that the fundamentals of China's long-term economic improvement have not changed.

China advocates inclusive economic globalization, opposes various forms of unilateralism and protectionism, and is willing to closely link its own development with that of other countries, Zhao said.

He noted that China is taking a series of new measures

to expand its high-level opening up and sincerely welcomes partners from all over the world.

The NPC will continue to promote mutually beneficial cooperation between China and foreign countries at the legal system level, safeguard the lawful rights and interests of enterprises, and promote a higher level of opening up to the outside world, he said.

Entrepreneurs present at the meeting voiced their support for economic globalization and free trade, expressed confidence in China's economic development prospects and showed willingness to actively expand their business to achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. (Xinhua) ■

Better governance, better serving the people

Revised Organic Law of the State Council provides a solid organizational guarantee for the construction of a people-centered service government

By Lu Yan

On March 11, Chinese national lawmakers passed a revised Organic Law of the State Council at the Closing Meeting of the Second Session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature.

The law has played a significant role in ensuring that the State Council performs its duties in accordance with the Constitution and other laws, Li Hongzhong, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said, when explaining the bill at the opening meeting of the second session of the 14th NPC on March 5.

The State Council, namely, the central people's government, is the executive organ of the highest state organ of power, and the highest state administrative organ, as stipulated by the Constitution.

Revising the law is a necessary step for the State Council to uphold the Party's overall leadership and strengthen the all-around improvement of the government, the explanation said, adding that it provides an institutional guarantee for the State Council to adhere to its people-centered principle and its fundamental purpose of wholeheartedly serving the people.

It marks the first revision of the law, which was adopted in December 1982 when the country's current Constitution was formulated. The revised law took effect on March 11.

Service-oriented government

The revision, which contains 20 articles, adds provisions concerning the nature and position of the State Council per the Constitution. It explicitly outlines the State Council's commitment to building a law-based, innovation-driven and service-oriented government of integrity.

It also refines the expressions regarding the functions and powers of the State Council and adds a provision that the State Council exercises unified leadership over the work of local state administrative organs at all levels nationwide.

The law revises provisions on the members of the State Council, further clarifying the duties of vice premiers and state councilors. It adds the governor of the People's Bank of China, the central bank, as a member of the State Council.

It also modifies provisions on the State Council's departments and their duties and powers, and improves the meeting system of the State Council.

In addition, the revision introduces systems and measures to see that the State Council exercises its functions in full and in accordance with the law.

The revision is an important part of efforts to fully implement and enforce the Constitution and establish law-based governance, as well as being an effective measure to reform Party and state institutions and modernize the country's systems and capacity for governance.

An important step

This is a significant change aimed at ensuring smooth implementation of the policies, or in other word, the important policy deployment of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee can be carried out through the state administrative organs, according to Zhuang Deshui, deputy director of the Research Center for Government Integrity-Building at Peking University.

"At the same time, it modified the decision-making mechanism of the State Council, especially by incorporating central bank into the State Council, which increased the country's decision-making power," Zhuang said, adding it allows heads of more of the departments related to major national decisions to enter the decision-making body, which is beneficial for ensuring the implementation of decisions.

Ma Huaide, president of the China University of Political Science and Law, said that the revised Organic Law of the State Council marks the first time that building a law-based government has been clarified in law. It also provides an institutional guarantee for the State Council to insist on serving the people wholeheartedly.

"Making new achievements in the building of a law-based government means that government behavior will be more standardized, the level of administration according to law will be improved, and the people's sense of satisfaction, happiness and gain will also increase," Ma said.

The revision is the result of the achievements of institutional innovation and valuable practical experience gained in the reform of the Party and state institutions.

Meng Tianguang, deputy dean of the School of Social Sciences of Tsinghua University, echoed Ma. "Since the reform and opening up [first began in 1978], China has carried out nine institutional reforms of the State Council, and has accu-

Revising the law provides an institutional guarantee for the State Council to adhere to its people-centered principle and its fundamental purpose of wholeheartedly serving the people.

mulated rich reform experience and significant reform outcomes.”

Meng said since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council have made arrangements for administrative institutions in accordance with new missions, new strategic arrangements and new work requirements, and adjusted and optimized various institutions of the State Council, effectively improving national governance capabilities, saving administrative costs and enhancing administrative efficiency.

For example, according to Meng, in terms of streamlining administration and delegating power, more power have been delegated to the grassroots level and the market by reducing unnecessary administrative procedures, leading to market and social vitality. Also, in terms of increasing administrative efficiency, the coordination and cooperation between various departments have been strengthened, further improving the efficiency of government operation and the effect of policy implementation.

Regarding the revision of the Organic Law of the State Council, Meng pointed out that it clarifies the principles, functions and nature of the establishment of constituent departments, subordinate bodies and administrative organizations of the State Council, serves as a basis for comprehensively strengthening government building, and provides a solid organizational guarantee for the construction of a people-centered service-oriented government.

“In addition, these contents are also an important institutional guarantee for pursuing the Chinese path to modernization, a major development in the construction of a socialist democratic political system with Chinese characteristics, and a major achievement in the modernization of China’s national governance system and capabilities,” Meng added.

After the draft revision of the law was introduced in early March, it garnered wide attention from international media. Unfortunately, many of them misinterpreted it, portraying it as a move toward greater centralization of power. These misunderstandings, according to observers, are rooted in a fundamental bias against China’s unique political system.

“The goal was always to improve the Party’s leadership mechanism and methods in order to better lead the government’s work,” Zhuang said. “The Party is responsible for overall coordination and decision-making, with a division of labor and coordination between the Party and government.”

The revision of this significant and longstanding law is a response to the evolving demands of the times and aligns better with the functions of the current State Council, Zhuang emphasized. “It is a result of our practice over the past few decades, and responds to the practical needs of the operation of the State Council,” he remarked. Zhuang further noted that the true impact of the revision will become more apparent after a few years of implementation. ■



The Constitution and Law Committee of the 14th National People's Congress convenes a plenary session to review the draft revision of the Organic Law of the State Council based on suggestions raised during deliberations of delegations on March 7, 2024. Mu Yu



This photo taken on November 18, 2023 shows a panoramic view of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China. *Chen Duo*

Top legislature applauds passage of safeguarding national security bill in HKSAR

The Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) on March 19 applauded the passage of the safeguarding national security bill by the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

The passage of the bill stands as a significant move and substantial progress by the HKSAR in fulfilling its constitutional duty and legal obligation to safeguard national security, said a leading official of the commission.

The move further improves the HKSAR's legal framework and enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security and provides a strong legal guarantee for preventing, restraining and punishing activities that undermine national security, the official said.

It contributes to the full, accurate and unswerving imple-

mentation of "one country, two systems," the law-based protection of people's legitimate rights and freedom, and the long-term prosperity and stability of the HKSAR, the official added.

The official also said the commission had noted the broad social recognition of the bill, as it was unanimously adopted.

"We believe that the administrative, legislative and judicial organs of the HKSAR will follow the principle of the rule of law and conscientiously carry out the implementation work," the official said.

According to the Basic Law of the HKSAR, laws enacted by the HKSAR legislature must be reported to the NPC Standing Committee for the record. After the new bill is received by the NPC Standing Committee, it will be reviewed by relevant agencies following due procedure, the official said, adding that the NPC Standing Committee will be briefed on the progress. (Xinhua) ■

70 years on, success story of people's congresses continues in China

Ning Fenfang, a 34-year-old farmer, spent a lot of time visiting fellow villagers in central China's Hunan province to gather their opinions and requests ahead of her trip to Beijing for this year's legislative session that opened on March 5.

Such efforts were among her duties as a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), China's national legislature. Her role has also seen her devote considerable time to checking the construction of agricultural infrastructure and visiting relevant government departments to inquire about agriculture policies.



Officials of Dongbaihu Town as well as officials and villagers of Loudong Village in Zhuji City, east China's Zhejiang Province, hold a democratic discussion to exchange views on livelihood projects and solicit opinions and suggestions from the villagers, on July 26, 2023. Xu Yu

Ning has registered a cooperative specializing in large-scale planting, creating about 200 jobs for villagers. At this year's NPC session, she submitted a suggestion on allowing agricultural insurance to cover greenhouses in southern China.

There are nearly 3,000 NPC deputies like Ning in the country. Working in a part-time capacity, they come from various backgrounds and cover a diverse spectrum of society.

70th anniversary

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the NPC. Sitting at the pinnacle of the people's congress system, a great creation of the Chinese people in the history of political systems, the NPC is the supreme organ of state power in China.

Since September 15, 1954, when about 1,200 deputies gathered in Beijing to attend the first session of the first NPC, the people's congress system has provided an important institutional guarantee that has allowed the Communist Party of China (CPC) to lead the people in creating miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability.

The people's congress system is the fundamental political system in China, serving as an important institutional vehicle for realizing whole-process people's democracy in China.

The people's congress system is the fundamental political system in China, serving as an important institutional vehicle for realizing whole-process people's democracy.

The Constitution, passed at the inaugural session of the NPC in 1954, states that all power in the People's Republic of China belongs to the people and that the NPC and the local people's congresses at various levels are the organs through which the people exercise state power.

Over the past 70 years, the people's congress system has seen constant improvements, including the establishment

of a commission on work related to NPC deputies under the NPC Standing Committee to improve the quality of deputies' work, and setting up and expanding primary-level legislative outreach offices nationwide to make it more convenient for the public to reach lawmakers.

Law-based governance

As an important constituent of China's governance system, the people's congress system bears great significance in pushing forward the rule of law and modernizing China's system and capacity for governance.

China's legislation has made considerable advances over the years. On July 1, 1979, seven laws were adopted at the second session of the fifth NPC, including the criminal law and the law on Chinese-foreign equity joint ventures, signifying that China's legislation had been put back on the right track in the new period of reform, opening up and socialist modernization.

In 2023, the NPC Standing Committee, a permanent body of the NPC, formulated or revised a raft of laws, including the law on ecological conservation of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau and the law on building a barrier-free environment. Currently, the country has 300 laws in effect.

An important principle of the people's congress system and a basic requirement of its institutional design is that the power of all state organs and their staff are subject to oversights and checks.

According to the Constitution, all administrative, supervisory, adjudicatory and procuratorial organs of the state shall be created by the people's congresses and shall be responsible to them and subject to their oversight.

On October 22, 2023, a special "examination" took place at the Great Hall of the People. For the first time, a session of the NPC Standing Committee made special inquiries regarding three reports on the same topic from the State Council, the Supreme People's Court (SPC) and the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP).

At the meeting, the leading officials of the State Council, the SPC and the SPP took multiple questions on law enforcement and judicial work in the fields of environmental protection and resource conservation.

Last year, the 14th NPC and its Standing Committee also launched law enforcement inspections on the implementation of five laws, including the Work Safety Law, the Wetlands Conservation Law and the Seed Law.

With these efforts, they facilitated improvements in production activities, environmental protection and building up the country's agricultural strength.

Pooling wisdom

One day in late 2023, members of the Zhongxinwan residential community, along with local cadres and law experts, met to discuss a range of legal topics of common concern. Among the questions raised were, "Are women entitled to the same kind of inheritance rights as men?" and "What should women do when confronted with sexual harassment in the workplace?"

Zhongxinwan is one of the residential communities under the jurisdiction of Shapingba district of Chongqing munic-

pality. As a primary-level legislative outreach office, the local people's congress standing committee of Shapingba had contributed more than 1,000 suggestions on law drafts, with 86 items incorporated into a total of eight national laws as of November 2023.

This was in the same vein as the broad-based drafting process of the 1954 Constitution seven decades ago. In the course of about three months, approximately 150 million people across the country participated in the discussion of the draft, bringing nearly 1.2 million suggestions to the drafting committee.

Ever since then, releasing draft laws to the public to solicit their opinions has become an important channel for the NPC Standing Committee to boost people's participation in law-making and the quality of legislation.

Another prominent example is the compilation of the Civil Code. The five-year codification work saw 10 rounds of deliberation by the NPC Standing Committee, 10 rounds of public opinion solicitation, three rounds of reading and discussion by NPC deputies, plus a series of symposiums on heated issues.

Since taking office last year, the 14th NPC and its Standing Committee have solicited suggestions on draft laws 17 times, garnering over 180,000 items from the public. So far, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee has established 45 primary-level legislative outreach offices nationwide, further improving the channel for people at the grassroots to participate in the country's legislative work.

Connecting the CPC and the government with the general public, NPC deputies have always played an important role in reflecting public opinion and the public will.

"It is the duty of us deputies to always bear the people in mind, talk with them and solve problems for them in our capacity," Ning said. (Xinhua) ■



Li Ruifang, a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), speaks at the plenary meeting of the Yunnan delegation during the second session of the 14th NPC, on March 5, 2024. Liu Weibing

China: Democracy that works

Seated in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Chinese national lawmaker Wang Yongcheng ran his fingers along raised dots of the Braille government work report as he listened to the document being delivered by the Chinese premier.

Wang, who is visually impaired, was reviewing the report during the annual session of China's National People's Congress (NPC), which along with the political advisory body meeting is known as the Two sessions. For this year's session, he submitted suggestions regarding retirement services for people with disabilities.

The Two Sessions offers the world an important window to observe China's democracy. Thousands of deputies to the NPC and members of the National Committee of the

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) gather in Beijing to discuss and plan for future development.

In a country with about one-fifth of the world's population, people are actively participating in democratic practice-

"Whole-process people's democracy is the defining feature of socialist democracy," Xi said. "It is democracy in its broadest, most genuine and most effective form."



Wang Yongcheng, a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), reads the government work report in Braille while attending the opening meeting of the second session of the 14th NPC at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on March 5, 2024. *Wang Yuguo*

es, ranging from state legislation to local matters.

Democracy manifests itself in diverse ways. In tea lounges in east China's Fujian province, people engage with lawmakers, expressing their opinions and contributing to decision-making processes. In another instance, thanks to a political advisor's diligent investigation, more than 230,000 ancient trees in central China's Hunan province were granted legal protection.

"Whole-process people's democracy is the defining feature of socialist democracy," said Chinese President Xi Jinping. "It is democracy in its broadest, most genuine and most effective form."

The thoughts and aspirations of over 1.4 billion people have been incorporated into the top-level design of national development through China's unique and distinctive whole-process people's democracy.

Broadest representation

Wang Yongcheng, 57, is the first visually impaired deputy to the NPC since the establishment of the People's Republic of China 75 years ago. Fulfilling his duties as a national lawmaker since last year, Wang has been approached by many visually impaired people requesting him voice their concerns.

Last year, Wang submitted four suggestions, one of which was publishing textbooks with large font sizes for low-vision students attending regular classes. He received Braille responses to the suggestions from relevant government departments. "The blind community is 'seen' by more people," Wang said.

Mandated with state power by the Constitution, NPC deputies include Chinese leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists and university presidents, as well as couriers, farmers and welders, among others.

As the fundamental political system in China, the people's congress system stipulates that individuals can be elected as NPC deputies regardless of ethnic group, occupation, gender or financial status. At no point has "democracy for the few," as seen in some countries, or "democracy of the 1 percent by the 1 percent for the 1 percent," been seen in China.

In 1954, the people's congress system was officially established in China. Over the past 70 years, democracy in China has become even more vigorous.

By last year, China had over 2.77 million deputies to people's congresses at all levels nationwide. Every ethnic group in the country has its own deputies to the NPC and members of the CPPCC National Committee.

Liu Lei, a 40-year-old NPC deputy, has been championing the cause of the Hezhe ethnic group, which boasts a population of about 5,000 in China and mostly resides in the northernmost province of Heilongjiang.

This ethnic group previously relied on fishing and hunting but has now transitioned to selling traditional Hezhe fish-skin paintings on e-commerce platforms. During this year's Two Sessions, Liu called for increasing support for industries in remote regions to provide better development opportunities for the group.

In Western countries such as the United States, it is rare to see a high representation of rural people, blue-collar



Li Li, a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), attends the plenary meeting of the Guizhou delegation during the second session of the 14th NPC, on March 6, 2024. Liu Xu

workers and ethnic minorities at the highest level of state power, said columnist Iara Vidal of the Brazilian magazine Revista Forum, adding that diverse voices are heard and respected in China's annual Two Sessions.

Chinese democracy not a show

In the ancient town of Wufu, Liu Jizhang, a deputy to the municipal people's congress of Nanping in Fujian province, regularly collects suggestions from neighborhood residents. Following suggestions to improve the local landscape, flowers were promptly planted along footpaths.

"I push for immediate action on matters I can address. For those requiring further coordination, I direct them to relevant authorities and follow through," Liu said.

The town is well-acquainted with China's ancient people-centered philosophy. Confucian scholar Zhu Xi, from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), lived and studied in Wufu for many years. He championed the philosophy that a nation is based on its people and society is established for the benefit of its people.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has elevated the people-oriented philosophy to the core principle of "putting

the people at the center” of national governance.

Liu Ting, an NPC deputy, has been focusing on issues related to an aging society over the past years. He has traveled to over 20 cities in China to explore how to use intelligent services to serve the elderly population.

The environment and resource sector of the CPPCC National Committee, established last year, put forth over 160 proposals in 2023. Huang Miansong, a political advisor from this sector, surveyed multiple places focusing on rural development and suggested orderly construction of rural environmental facilities during this year’s session.

China has fostered a democratic framework that ensures the orderly and effective participation of its people in political affairs.

Venues and channels for consultation and discussion are available in various forms within neighborhoods. Online platforms ranging from forums to polls and surveys empower the people to contribute to policy discussions and the decision-making process.

At a legislation outreach site in Shanghai’s Hongqiao sub-district, boards are used to display the number of legislative discussions, but numbers are marked with magnets so they can be replaced easily, said Sheng Hong, an NPC deputy and a local Party official. Over the past six months, nearly 100 suggestions submitted from the outreach have been adopted in national legislation including China’s Charity Law and the Barrier-free Environment Creation Law.

Across the nation, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee has established 45 such grassroots outreach centers. Provincial and municipal legislative commissions have set up over 6,500 grassroots outreach posts across China, ensuring that the voice of the people is heard.

Simon Lichtenberg, a Danish entrepreneur who has lived in Shanghai for over three decades, has participated in multiple legislative consultations. He said that improving the laws by making suggestions gives people a sense of fulfillment and achievement.

Chinese democracy is not a formality, nor a “one-time” show. Deputies to people’s congresses at various levels are accountable to the public.

When taking a barrage of questions from voters several months ago, Wang Lihong, a deputy to a district congress in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, was sweating even in a winter chill.

In response to the problem of chaotic parking in the community, he promised to run it by the property management and seek solutions. That day, among the 100 voters who participated in the evaluation, 99 expressed satisfaction with his performance.

Carlos Martinez, a British author and political commentator, said that in the Chinese system, the people always enjoy democratic rights at all stages, not just during elections.

Driving modernization

During a trip to the countryside in Hunan province, Lai Mingyong, a member of the CPPCC National Committee, found an ancient tree pummeled with nails serving as hangers for various items. Feeling the need to protect such aged trees, Lai promptly submitted a proposal through the

Chinese democracy is not a formality, nor a “one-time” show. Deputies to people’s congresses at various levels are accountable to the public.

CPPCC Hunan provincial committee online platform.

Not long after, relevant trial schemes, followed by regulations for ancient and renowned tree protection, were implemented. Damaging these trees could now incur fines of up to 5,000 yuan (705 U.S. dollars).

“Chinese democracy has never been a decoration,” Lai said.

Chinese people believe that the efficacy of democracy holds greater significance than its form. In China, democracy aims at the pooling of people’s wisdom to promote growth and prosperity.

At the Two Sessions in 2019, Dong Caiyun, an NPC deputy from the rural area of Jishishan county, highlighted the need for a local highway linking surrounding areas. Her voice was well heard.

Construction of a highway began later that year after the discussions. When a 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck Jishishan last December, the road that had just opened to traffic emerged as a lifeline linking the affected regions and facilitating the transportation of rescue forces and supplies.

During the Two Sessions last year, all proposals and suggestions submitted by NPC deputies were later reviewed, processed and given feedback.

Every year, the government work report undergoes thorough deliberation by deputies before approval at the NPC annual session. Subsequently, the State Council will specify key tasks based on the report, assign responsibilities and establish deadlines for implementation.

Jose Luis Centella, president of the Communist Party of Spain, said that China has always fostered a democracy that sees wide participation from the people, involving them in national governance.

Democracy serves as a solid foundation for China’s governance. A survey report released last year by the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies revealed that respondents from 23 countries expressed an average approval rating of nearly 90 percent on China’s governance capabilities.

The report to the 20th CPC National Congress emphasized that developing a whole-process people’s democracy is one of the essential requirements of Chinese modernization.

“When Chinese modernization offers a new option for human modernization, its unique perspective on democracy also becomes a new form of democracy,” said Zhou Hanmin, a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the CPPCC and president of the Shanghai Public Diplomacy Association. “This is a significant contribution by China to the political civilization of humanity.” (Xinhua) ■



Students of the 76th elementary school in Urumqi, capital city of northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, engage in activities at a science popularization event, on March 26, 2024. *Wang Fei*

NPC deputy urges promotion of science education in schools

By Zhao Yimeng

It's crucial for primary and secondary schools to embrace scientific and technological innovation, as young students are key talent for the nation's long-term innovative development, said a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature.

Xu Weilin, an NPC deputy and the rector of Wuhan Textile University in Hubei province, suggested selecting lecturers from higher education institutes to serve as science instructors in primary and secondary schools.

"Educators in higher learning institutes gradually realize

that it's not enough to emphasize innovation only in universities," Xu said. "We should nurture students' interests in science and technology starting in primary schools."

Exploring students' interests and knowledge will help cultivate talents with innovative thoughts and strong minds, he said.

"For instance, inventors such as Isaac Newton, Thomas Edison and Alfred Nobel all showed their interests and strong desire for innovation and practical operation early in their lives," he said.

Since making a suggestion to the NPC during last year's Two Sessions, the largest annual political event in China, Xu has found that more efforts have been made to bring scientific knowledge and practices into schools and cultivate younger students' interests in innovation.

"The national and provincial authorities for science and technology have ramped up efforts to popularize science and technology among young students," Xu said.

A campaign aiming to invite 100 academicians to popularize science and technology in 100 schools nationwide was launched last October during the Donghu Forum held in Wuhan, Hubei's provincial capital.

"As the mechanism has been set up, academicians truly become the science guides of primary and secondary school students, sowing the dream of building a technologically powerful nation in the hearts of more children," Huang Fengchao, the principal of a junior middle school in Wuhan, said at the launch ceremony.

During the campaign's first seminar in Wuhan in February, Sun Heping, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, delivered a lecture on the magic gravitational field to about 2,000 teacher and student representatives.

Academicians and experts in Hubei will visit schools and give science lectures to students, discussing cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and hot topics including the control of new infectious diseases, officials from the provincial science and technology department said at the seminar.

Xu said a number of science workshops named after academicians and experts have been established.

Xu's workshop, funded by Wuhan's Jiangxia district government, has been given annual targets for the number of lectures to be delivered in schools and the number of publications to be issued.

Universities are also building science and technology museums to give young students more access to scientific knowledge, Xu said, adding that a textile museum covering 2,000 square meters has been built at Wuhan Textile University.

Xu went to several schools last year to give lectures on traditional and modern textiles, ranging from topics closely related to people's daily lives to a material's application in aerospace.

"I noticed that China has been strengthening science popularization in recent years," he said. "Students have shown interest in science and learned about related majors in colleges."

More efforts should be made to popularize science with appropriate methods rather than regarding exam scores as final goals, he said. Teaching methods were key, as students' scientific curiosity varied, which posed more challenges to educators.

Given the tight schedules of top academicians and experts, Xu said more trained personnel need to engage in the mission, especially high-level researchers in universities and scientific institutions, because "it only takes simple training in lecturing methods to help them become competent in popularization work."

Xu said he hoped scholars recognized as national-level talent could volunteer to deliver three to five lectures a year and establish bases with individual schools to institutionalize cooperation. (China Daily) ■



Hunan farmer represents peers

By Zou Shuo

Unlike most of her peers who left their rural hometowns for jobs in big cities, 34-year-old Ning Fenfang left her job in Hangzhou of Zhejiang province in 2017 and now farms more than 66.7 hectares of land.

Ning, a member of the Tujia ethnic group, is from a mountainous village in Cili county in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province. She rents farmland and hires villagers to work on it. More than 300 housewives have worked part-time on her land,



Members of a blueberry planting cooperative in Liutiangezhuang Town, Lulong County, north China's Hebei Province, harvest organic blueberries in the greenhouse, on March 25, 2024. *Yang Shiyao*

making more than 10,000 yuan (1,389 U.S. dollars) per year.

Ning was elected as a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) last year, which has motivated her to continue her farm work.

The central authorities have often stressed the importance of "holding the rice bowl firmly in our own hands," meaning that farmers should work harder to make sure their farmland is not wasted, she said. "NPC deputies from the grassroots need to consider rural farmers' needs and bring their voices

"NPC deputies from the grassroots need to consider rural farmers' needs and bring their voices to the two sessions," Ning Fenfang said.

to the Two Sessions," she said.

During this year's annual gatherings of the NPC and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Ning suggested including greenhouses in agricultural insurance plans, as recent freezing rains battering her hometown have destroyed many of the structures.

Although her daily life is centered around farming and agriculture nowadays, Ning said it is very rare for young people to become farmers in rural areas.

In 2012, Ning left her hometown to take a sales job in Hangzhou. She returned in 2017 to look after her mother and grandmother, both of whom were ill, and started working as a village official a year later.

While working in the village, she found that with many young people leaving to work in cities, much of the farmland had been deserted.

In 2020, Ning decided to resign from her post in the village and become a full-time farmer, growing rice and rapeseed. However, as she knew little about farming, it was much more difficult than she imagined.

"The heat and scorching sun were the first things I had to deal with. I could not open my eyes because I was sweating so much and although I was covered in ultraviolet lightproof clothing, my skin started to peel due to sunburn," she said. Ning also experienced tremendous pain in her neck and back due to the intensive labor.

At first, she didn't farm much and her investment was low, so she didn't feel the pressure to succeed. But in 2021, she spent 79,000 yuan (11,140 U.S. dollars) on a plowing machine and decided to expand the scale of her farmland. "I did not tell my husband about buying the machine, as I knew he would not agree," Ning said. "He refused to talk to me for several months."

Ning's husband was running a small business in Zhangjiajie at the time. Eventually, he returned to the village to help her with the farm work, saying that he would only stay for a few months before returning to his business in the city.

However, as Ning increased investment in the farmland, he ultimately decided to give up his business and remain in the village to work with her.

Ning later bought more agricultural machinery and even an unmanned aerial vehicle to help with the farming as she continues to rent more land. "I have invested millions of yuan in farming, and most of the money is borrowed from banks, families and relatives, so there is no turning back," she said.

She also founded a center for housewives in the village to work on her farmland during busy hours. She pays the villagers every day. She also plans to explore the agricultural tourism resources in Zhangjiajie so that children living in cities can experience farming. (China Daily) ■

Deputy keeps pianos, workers' rights in tune

By Cheng Si



Contestants take part in the competition for wood artifact restoration specialists during the national cultural relics industry vocational skills competition held in Taiyuan, north China's Shanxi Province, on March 25, 2024. Liu Jinhai

Senior piano technician Lei Chunhua has promoted pianos made in China around the world and as a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), has served as an advocate for flexibly employed workers, helping to seek benefits for them.

Born in Nan'an in Fujian province, Lei has long ties with music, as her mother was a trumpeter. She began devoting herself to learning piano tuning in 1998 and got a job at the Yichang Jinbao Instrument Manufacturing Co. in Hubei province in 2001.

At the company, she started working as a piano technician, a job that involves tuning, repairing, replacing and regulating piano parts.

"It's not easy to become a senior technician in the industry. It requires painstaking efforts, practice and lengthy concentration," the 41-year-old said.

Lei traveled to many countries, including Japan, Austria and Germany, to hone her piano technical skills over the past 20 years.

A piano has over 9,000 components, more than 200

"I have a responsibility to learn about other people's lives and speak for them," Lei Chunhua said.

strings and 88 keys, each of which has its own tonality. Lei said she has strict standards for her work, as ensuring a piano is properly tuned and voiced—meaning that it has good tonal quality—is the final and most important step in crafting the instrument.

"I've been involved in the industry for over 20 years and I'm very pleased to see our homemade pianos have been gaining greater recognition from the world in recent years," she said.

"I will never forget that our national piano brand Yangtze River was used at the International Tchaikovsky Competition—one of the world's highest-level music competitions—for the first time in 2019. That was a great honor to us piano technicians."

As a senior technician at the company, Lei is responsible for training apprentices and organizing lectures. Beyond her work duties, she also endeavors to ensure that the rights of flexibly employed workers are protected, striving to obtain benefits for them since her election last year as a deputy to the NPC, China's top legislature.

"I have a responsibility to learn about other people's lives and speak for them," she said. "Unlike us full-time employees who have sound social security coverage and labor contracts, flexibly employed workers such as food deliverymen and ride-hailing drivers may have working rights disputes with their platforms or companies due to incomplete labor contracts and vague labor relations."

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China had about 200 million people engaged in flexible jobs by the end of 2021. A recent report by Jinan University in the southern province of Guangdong said flexible employment now encompasses about 20 percent of China's workforce.

Last year, Lei suggested that companies offer more flexible jobs to job seekers to help reduce the burdens of people in poorer financial shape.

She said she will continue to speak for flexible workers at the coming Two Sessions—the annual gatherings of the NPC and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference—and stay focused on fighting benefits for them. (China Daily) ■



Painted clay figurines are showcased at the exhibition of fine historical relics from Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region at the National Museum of China, on June 16, 2023. *Jin Liangkuai*

Deputy hopes digitization can drive interest in ancient relics

By Chen Meiling and Mao Weihua

Zoya Bahit, an archaeologist from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), said she has developed an emotional attachment to ancient relics and will spend a lifetime exploring the mysteries behind them.

Zoya said she was thrilled the first time she excavated ancient stone tools at the Tongtian Cave site in Xinjiang in 2016 and that she felt like she was “witnessing and experiencing history.”

“Ancient people may have used the stone knives to cut the skin off animals to make clothes and to eat their meat,” said

“We expect to bring the relics in the display cases to life, allowing them to speak,” Zoya Bahit said.

the archaeologist, who worked with a shovel and brush at the site for three months as an intern while studying for her master's degree at Xinjiang University in Urumqi, the regional

capital. “Through gradual excavation, we discovered traces of ancient life. It’s so exciting.”

Tongtian, located in Jeminay county of Altay prefecture in Xinjiang, is a granite cave site where it is believed humans lived from the Paleolithic period 50,000 years ago to the Shang Dynasty (c.16th to 11th century BC). It was later designated as a key state-level cultural relics site.

Zoya, who was 27 years old when she interned at the site, said the experience further ignited her passion for archaeology. In 2021, she participated in the construction of the Altay Museum, using her knowledge to ensure the protection of the artifacts, and arranging and writing introductions for the exhibits.

She inspires visitors’ interest in archaeology with her commentary as they peruse the displays and promotes the use of digital tools so that tourists can interact with the relics. The museum has 544 relics in a 2,300-square-meter exhibition area, including a gold-leaf horse with wings believed to be a decoration sown on clothes from the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) and 19 grassland stone men memorializing the dead, dating as far back as 4,000 years ago.

In the exhibition area, the production process, origin and function of the relics are shown in animated displays. Tourists can play a trivia game testing their basic knowledge of archaeology and use virtual shovels to dig at the Tongtian Cave site depicted on a screen.

“We expect to bring the relics in the display cases to life, allowing them to speak,” Zoya said, adding that the digital programs are very popular among young visitors. The museum had 130,000 visits last year.

While offering commentary at exhibitions, she likes to share the story called, “When Millet Meets Wheat.” Carbonized wheat, barley and millet remains dating back over 5,200 years were discovered at Tongtian. The findings were the oldest wheat and barley samples found in China and the oldest millet samples found in Xinjiang.

Archaeologists believe that millet was transported to Xinjiang from inland China, while wheat and barley were brought from the West to China about 5,000 years ago.

The findings indicate that people living in the area around the cave had exchanges with people from inland China and the West.

Zoya included the story in an archaeological course she designed for primary and middle school students in Altay, using software to educate them about the history and culture of their hometowns and to teach them that food should be cherished since it is not easy to come by.

During this year’s Two Sessions, the annual gatherings of the NPC and the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, she has proposed making more digital copies of rock paintings and other stone artifacts that can be used for scientific research and exhibitions.

“As the natural erosion of such relics is an irreversible process, we have to race against time to record their current conditions, as their information will play a key role in future studies,” she said.

Zoya also suggested using more digital tools to preserve immovable relics in nature. Altay has 651 of these relics, 75 percent of which are ancient tombs. (China Daily) ■



Health services in remote areas need reinforcement

By Wang Xiaoyu

Since Ma Fuchang, a public health expert in Qinghai province, became a deputy to the National People’s Congress (NPC) in 2018, he has maintained a simple credo: “You go deep into the grassroots, obtain firsthand information and seek truths from facts.”

Over the past year, Ma, head of the nutrition and health department at the Qinghai Center for Disease Prevention and Control, has visited more than 20 county-level regions across the vast, sparsely-populated province in northwestern China.

He examined local hospitals, disease control facilities,



An asian scientist holds a test tube. VCG

primary and middle schools, and other education institutes, as well as temporary settlements for residents affected by a powerful earthquake in December.

“Through onsite investigations, discussions with local people and officials, as well as reading materials, I strive to obtain a thorough understanding of the people’s medical demands,” he said.

Ma, who conducts surveillance of chronic disease and nutrition, as well as teenagers’ health monitoring and education at the provincial CDC, said that he has also made use of his professional background to lay out proposals and bolster them with evidence and facts.

During the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Ma said that capabilities and infrastructure at various levels of CDC centers improved significantly.

However, problems such as a lack of disease control professionals and weaknesses in their occupational skills still exist. Some staff members have to juggle surveys of infectious diseases as well as prevention work on chronic diseases at the same time.

Ma said that in Qinghai, where residents are scattered across remote, high-altitude outposts, the health service radius per capita stands at about six to eight times the national average.

For example, Sangrima township in Guoluo Tibetan au-



Li Honghao, a medical specialist from Shandong Province, conducts a health check for a girl named La Shengting at the resettlement site in La-jia Village, Guanting Township, Haidong City, northwest China’s Qinghai Province, on December 23, 2023. Zhang Hongxiang

tonomous prefecture is more than 600 km from the provincial capital of Xining, where Ma is based.

“Due to weak capacities of primary-level public health staff and insufficient information systems, the costs of providing standard public health services for local residents are very high,” he said.

Ma added that this year he will propose strengthening and retaining disease control and prevention teams, especially in large but thinly populated places like Qinghai.

“Authorities should consider factors such as natural and geological conditions, disease profiles and health service radius per capita, and assign more staff slots for the four provincial-level regions with an area of over 500,000 square kilometers,” he said.

Those four regions are Qinghai and the Xizang, Xinjiang Uygur and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions.

Since 2018, Ma has put forward over 30 proposals using his on-the-ground findings and professional knowledge. While emphasizing the importance of delving into the grassroots, Ma said that it is also important to keep learning.

“I should not only be familiar with my own area of expertise, but also expand my knowledge and abilities in various aspects of economic and social development and law so as to enhance my ability to make suggestions as an NPC deputy,” he said. (China Daily) ■

From serfdom to freedom, new life arising from old Xizang manor



Had it not been for democratic reform 65 years ago, Tseten from southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region would have been sold by his master and separated from his parents.

At 13, an age when serf children were traded among manors, the Tibetan boy was about to be brought to the market for trading when democratic reform abolished the feudal serfdom system in the region in March 1959, freeing some 1 million people.

"Compared with those who were sold and even tortured to death, I was rather fortunate," said Tseten, now 78, who lives in a villa near the former manor his family used to serve

Thanks to the reform, Tseten was able to go to school at the age of 15 and, after graduating from high school, he returned home to farm.



The national flag of China is seen on the square in front of the Potala Palace on the Serfs' Emancipation Day in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on March 28, 2024. *Jigme Dorje*

in Qonggyai county in the city of Shannan.

Last year, the county government invested 4 million yuan (563,841 U.S. dollars) in renovating the manor based on its original appearance and is planning to turn it into a tented camp, where visitors can get a glimpse of the miserable lives endured by serfs before they were set free.

Born into the lowest rank of serfs, Tseten lived in a livestock shed at the manor, sharing space with sheep and their manure. At night, he was often awakened due to a sheep stepping on him.

He said that leftovers from the masters' dining table were for the maids to eat, while all the serfs had to eat was soup

made of barley flour, which was as plain as water.

"I had to eat after my parents because they had heavy labor to do," Tseten recalled, with memories of hunger still haunting him.

Back then, Tseten's parents were muleteers at the manor, using mules to transport farm yields like barley flour and yak butter to the city of Lhasa. Sometimes, robbers would steal their goods on the way.

"I remember my father being tied to the stairs and whipped after being robbed," he said.

Following democratic reform in 1959, Tseten and his family, together with another household, moved from the sheep



Tseten (L) and his family members enjoy some snacks at home in Qonggyai County in Shannan, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, February 22, 2024. *Tenzing Nima Qadhup*

pen to the manor owner's rooms on the second floor of the manor.

His family was allocated farmland, one head of cattle, a donkey and seven sheep. Thanks to the reform, Tseten was able to go to school at the age of 15 and, after graduating from high school, returned home to farm.

Now, Xizang is the first provincial-level region in China to provide 15 years of publicly-funded education from kindergarten to senior high school, a stark contrast to the situation seven decades ago when access to education was limited to the nobility.

In 2003, Tseten's family moved to a hill opposite the old manor and built a 90-square-meter house. Three years later, with a subsidy of 10,000 yuan (1,410 U.S. dollars) provided by Shannan's housing project, the house was expanded into a villa of about 230 square meters.

Tseten lives on the second floor with one of his daughters, while his son-in-law, a migrant worker employed outside the county, earns more than 30,000 yuan (4,230 U.S. dollars) a year. One of Tseten's sons became a doctor and works in a hospital in Shannan after graduating from college.

Despite his age, Tseten is in good health. He likes taking care of the plants on his balcony, watching almost every cul-

tural performance organized in his village and traveling to the regional capital Lhasa to visit his relatives and explore.

"I am lucky to witness this new era in this region," said Tseten, adding that he receives a monthly pension of 260 yuan (37 U.S. dollars), while his hospital bills for minor eye and stomach problems are mostly covered by public health-care.

According to a white paper issued in 2023, a total of 3.43 million people were covered by basic medical insurance in this region, more than 95 percent of the total population.

Nyidron, Tseten's granddaughter, is a freshman at Fujian Normal University in the coastal province of Fujian in east China, a place her family had never visited before. Nyidron returns home during winter and summer vacations.

She said she used to go to the old manor in summer to escape the heat, stargazing on the rooftop and marveling at the twinkling lights of villages in the distance. She can still recall her deep sorrow when she first saw the dark walls, stairs and pillars of the old manor.

"The manor reminded me of the suffering of my grandfather in the past. Those miserable days are now gone, but I will always keep them in mind," Nyidron said. (Xinhua) ■

This photo taken on March 25, 2024 shows the International Conference Center of the Boao Forum for Asia. Yang Guanyu





FRIENDLY SHANDONG
REMARKABLE SHANDONG