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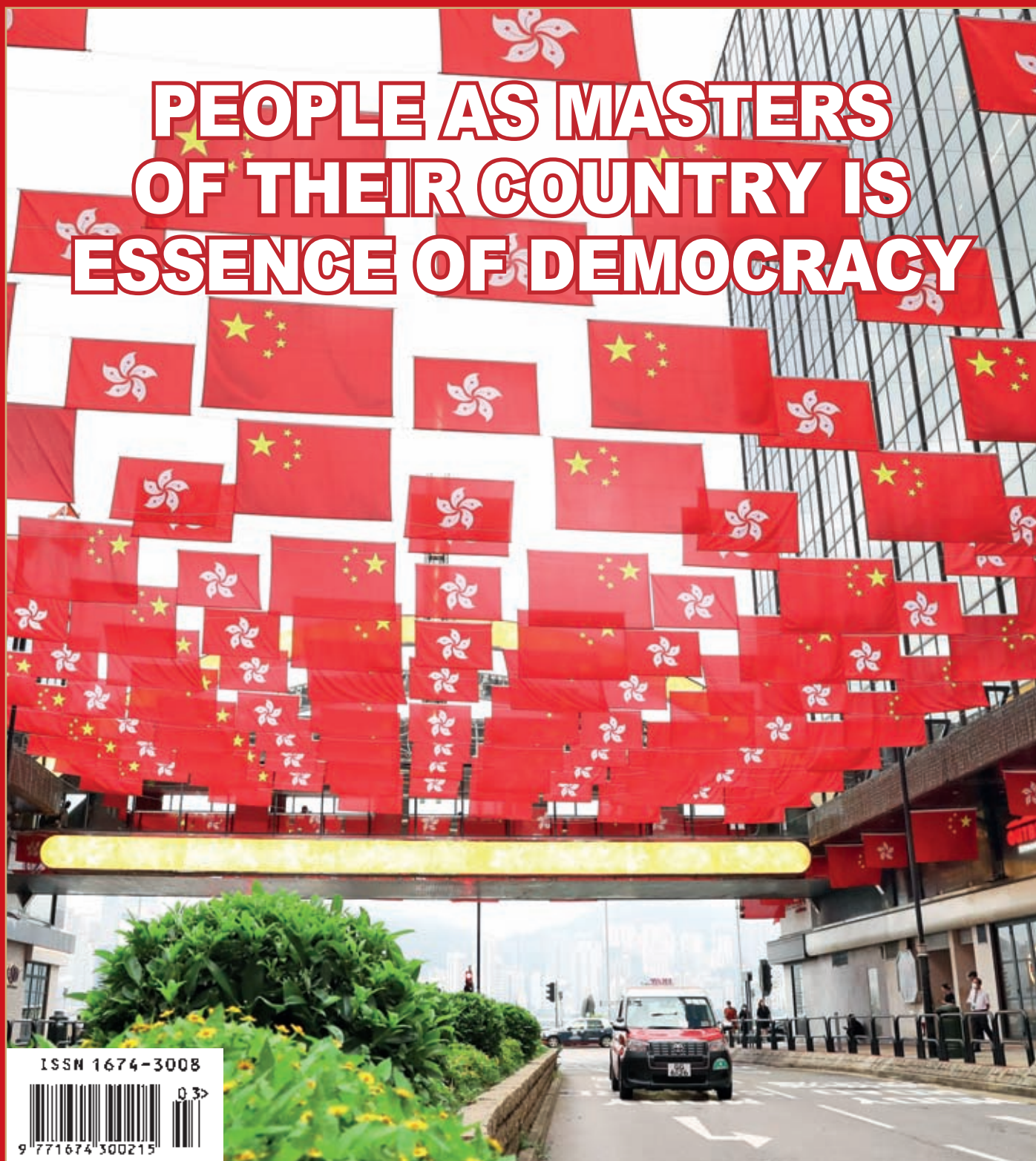


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National People's Congress of China

PEOPLE AS MASTERS OF THEIR COUNTRY IS ESSENCE OF DEMOCRACY



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People display the national flag in Golden Bauhinia Square in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in south China. *Li Gang*

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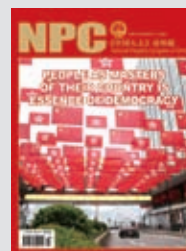
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COVER: China's national flags and flags of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) on a street in south China's Hong Kong. *Li Gang*



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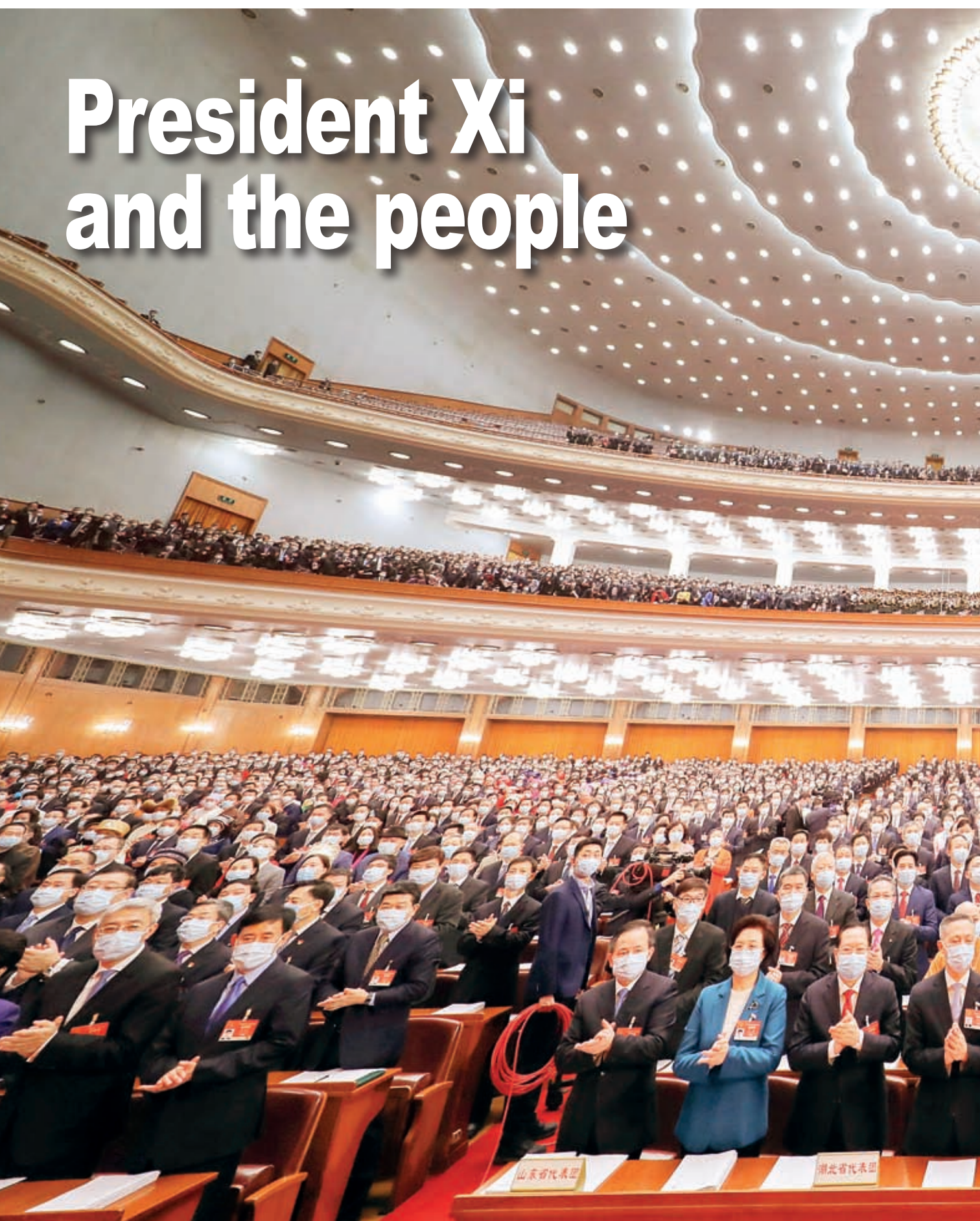
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President Xi and the people





The Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress opens at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5. *Ding Lin*

President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, takes part in deliberations with his fellow deputies from the delegation of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing on March 5. *Ju Peng*



New development philosophy, ethnic unity stressed

President Xi Jinping on March 5 stressed full and faithful comprehension and implementation of the new development philosophy when joining a deliberation during the annual session of the National People's Congress, the top legislature.

Joining discussions with fellow lawmakers from North China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Xi, also gener-

al secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called on the region to serve and integrate into the country's new development paradigm.

Urging Inner Mongolia to cherish and uphold its fine tradition of ethnic unity, Xi stressed cementing the sense of community for the Chinese nation.

Xi, an NPC deputy himself, exchanged views with other deputies on a wide range of topics including modern agriculture and rural vitalization.

Xi called for efforts to build Inner Mongolia into a national base for key energy and strategic resources, a production base for agriculture and animal husbandry, and a gateway for northward opening up.

Xi said Inner Mongolia should find its role in the country's establishment of the new development paradigm of "dual circulation," in which the domestic and overseas markets reinforce each other, with the domestic market as the mainstay.

He urged efforts to promote the smart and green development of related sectors toward the higher end.

Xi called on the region to continuously enhance sci-tech capabilities, deepen reform and opening up, improve its business environment and actively participate in the joint building of the Belt and Road.

Congratulating Inner Mongolia on accomplishing the poverty elimination target as scheduled, Xi said there are still arduous tasks ahead in the pursuit of common prosperity, adding that resolute efforts must be made to prevent any large-scale relapse into poverty.

Xi also underlined the development of distinctive industries with competitive edges and appropriately scaled agricultural and animal husbandry operations as part of efforts to increase the incomes of farmers and herdsmen.

Efforts should be made to step up green transformation of key industries and areas, foster cleaner production and accel-

Efforts should be made to step up green transformation of key industries and areas, foster cleaner production and accelerate green and low-carbon development.

erate green and low-carbon development, he said.

As the first ethnic minority autonomous region in China, Inner Mongolia should make solid and meticulous efforts in promoting ethnic unity, Xi said.

He also called for promoting standard spoken and written Chinese language and the use of state-compiled textbooks.

Efforts should be made to facilitate more comprehensive understanding of the Party's policies concerning ethnic groups, especially among young people, Xi said.

Xi highlighted a Party-wide campaign on CPC history learning and education, urging Inner Mongolia to make good use of its rich revolutionary legacy in the campaign.

Party members of the region should continuously improve themselves both in their thinking and work on major issues such as ethnic unity, he said. (Xinhua) ■



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, takes part in deliberations with his fellow deputies from the delegation of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing on March 5. *Li Xueren*

Safeguarding people's health, building quality basic public education stressed



President Xi Jinping on March 6 stressed giving “strategic priority” to safeguarding people’s health and building a high-quality and balanced basic public education service system.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks when he joined national political advisors from education, medical and health sectors in a joint group meeting.

The meeting was held during the fourth session of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body.

Xi called for focusing on tackling major diseases and problems that affect people’s health.

The country’s public health protection network should be fortified and efforts should be made to promote the high-quality development of public hospitals, he said, demanding comprehensive health care for the people at all



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Military Commission and chairman of the Central Military Commission, meets with national political advisors from the education, medical and health sectors, and attends a joint group meeting at the Fourth Session of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing on March 6. Huang Jingwen

stages of life.

Noting that China had scored hard-won achievements over the past year, Xi commended health workers for “putting up an iron wall” against COVID-19 at a critical time.

The fight against COVID-19 has once again proved that prevention is the most economical and effective health strategy, Xi said, calling for reforming and improving the disease prevention and control system.

He urged efforts to strengthen the capabilities for initial

He urged efforts to strengthen the capabilities for initial monitoring and early warning, rapid testing, emergency response and comprehensive treatment.

monitoring and early warning, rapid testing, emergency response and comprehensive treatment.

Stressing the “main force” role of public hospitals in fighting COVID-19, Xi called for strengthening construction of public medical and health institutions.

Health infrastructure at the grassroots level should be improved and support policies for rural doctors should be implemented in an effort to enhance the grassroots capacity of disease prevention and treatment, he said, calling for efforts to deepen the reform of the medical and healthcare system.

Xi also urged the preservation and development of traditional Chinese medicine and breakthroughs in core technologies in key areas, as well as more protection, care and support for health workers.

On education, Xi said China must strive to build a high-quality and balanced basic public education service system.

He emphasized the socialist orientation in running schools, the non-profit nature of education and developing education that people are satisfied with.

Education is essential to the country and the Party, Xi stressed.

To build a high-quality education system, the reform of the evaluation system should be in the lead, so as to push forward reforms in other aspects of education, said Xi.

He called for efforts to train more talents who can contribute to the country's high-quality development and high-level self-reliance.

Teachers are the central pillar of education, and strengthening the professional ethics of teachers must be a top priority, Xi said.

He praised education workers for their contributions to fighting the epidemic. He also demanded more support for teachers in rural areas.

Ahead of the International Women's Day, which falls on March 8, Xi extended festive greetings and best wishes to the country's women of all ethnic groups and from all walks of life. He applauded the contributions made by Chinese women to the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

The joint efforts of the whole Chinese nation, including Chinese women, are needed in realizing the development goals of the Party and the state, Xi said.

Party committees and governments at all levels should fully understand the great significance of women's cause and protect women's rights and interests in accordance with the law, he said. (Xinhua) ■

Xi stresses high-quality development, improving people's well-being

President Xi Jinping on March 7 stressed efforts to unswervingly pursue high-quality development and improve the people's well-being when joining a deliberation during the annual session of the National People's Congress.

Joining discussions with fellow lawmakers from northwest China's Qinghai Province, Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, noted that high-quality development is the general requirement for all aspects of economic and social development.

It will not only be the requirement for developed regions, but will also be the requirement that entails implementation by all regions, Xi said, urging each region to pursue high-quality development based on local conditions.

He urged efforts to integrate high-quality development with action in meeting people's aspiration for a better life.

Xi expressed his full acknowledgment of Qinghai's work over the past year and its development during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) period, urging the province to fully and faithfully implement the new development philosophy, stick to the people-centered approach and continue to deepen reform and opening up.

Efforts should also be made to strive for new achievements in the protection of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau ecology and sustainable development, Xi said.

Based on its advantages and resources, Qinghai should implement the innovation-driven development strategy and accelerate the building of a world-class industrial base on salt lake, he said.

The province should also work to build itself into a highland of clean energies, a destination of international eco-tourism and a source of green and organic farm and livestock products, said Xi, stressing efforts on fostering a green, low-carbon and circular economic system.



He stressed efforts to strengthen areas of weakness in people's well-being, unfailingly meet the basic living needs of the people and improve the availability and equality of basic public services.

As Qinghai bears great responsibility for ensuring the country's ecological security and the sustainable development of the nation, the province must undertake the important missions of maintaining ecological security and protecting



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, takes part in deliberations with lawmakers from Qinghai Province at the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing on March 7. Huang Jingwen

the Sanjiangyuan (Three-River-Source) area and “the water tower of China,” Xi said.

Qinghai should strike a balance between developing tourism industry and protecting the environment in a bid to make lucid waters and lush mountains always the advantage and pride of Qinghai, Xi said.

He stressed efforts to strengthen areas of weakness in people's well-being, unfailingly meet the basic living needs of the people and improve the availability and equality of basic public services.

Xi asked local authorities to promote coordinated development between rural and urban areas, advance rural vitalization on all fronts, improve people's well-being and build

a new socialist countryside that is beautiful, prosperous and harmonious.

Stressing full implementation of the Party's ethnic and religious policies, Xi called for efforts to promote common prosperity and unity among people of all ethnic groups.

Highlighting a Party-wide campaign on CPC history learning and education, Xi said an important task of the campaign is to reinforce all Party members' ideals and convictions and to ensure that they remain true to their original aspiration and mission.

The campaign should help guide the people to unswervingly follow the Party's lead in fully building a modern socialist country, he said. (Xinhua) ■



Premier Li Keqiang, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, joins the Guangxi delegation in deliberation at the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing on March 6. *Pang Xinglei*

Senior leaders attend deliberations at annual legislative session

Senior leaders on March 5 and 7 attended deliberations at the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC).

On March 5, Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji, and Han Zheng – members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee – all gave their full support for the government work report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang at the session.

When joining NPC deputies from Jiangxi Province in a group deliberation, Li Zhanshu, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said that out of the 100-year history of the

CPC, the time since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012 is one of the most remarkable periods in Chinese history.

It is the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core that has played a decisive role in leading the country forward when storms struck, Li said.

Wang Yang, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee, told deputies from Sichuan Province that over the past year, China's strategic achievements in the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic and the country's complete victory in poverty eradication are fundamentally attributed to Xi's leadership.

These achievements have displayed the political advantage

es of the CPC's leadership and the institutional strengths of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Wang said.

Speaking to the deputies from Hebei Province, Wang Huning, a member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, underscored efforts to promote the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, boost the planning and construction of the Xiong'an New Area and make sound preparations for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

He also urged efforts to promote rural vitalization while consolidating poverty eradication results and strengthen the protection and improvement of people's livelihood.

While deliberating with Heilongjiang Province deputies, Zhao Leji, secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, stressed full and faithful implementation of the new development philosophy, urging the province to foster competitive strengths by leveraging the advantages in policy, resources, and ecology to make new progress in revitalizing the province.

Zhao also called on commissions for discipline inspection and supervisory agencies at all levels to focus on the big picture of the country's modernization drive to perform their supervisory duties.

Deliberating with Shaanxi Province deputies, Vice Premier Han Zheng stressed that macro policies should be implemented scientifically and precisely to promote sustained economic recovery and high-quality development while ensuring social harmony and stability.

Han also called for efforts to deepen institutional reform on science and technology, give more fiscal support to the grass-roots level, and continue real-estate market regulation.

On March 7 Premier Li Keqiang joined the Jiangsu delegation in deliberation. Noting that the country will still face risks and challenges in its development this year, he expressed the hope for Jiangsu to better play its role as a province with strong economic performance in cementing the foundation for national economic stability and recovery and in promoting high-quality development.

While joining the Gansu delegation for deliberation, Li Zhanshu, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, called for efforts to consolidate the achievements made in eradicating poverty and advance the rural vitalization strategy.

Wang Yang, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, urged efforts to resolutely deter any attempt seeking "Taiwan independence" and interference by external forces and stressed advancing the peaceful development of cross-strait relations when at-

Li Keqiang expressed the hope for Jiangsu to better play its role as a province with strong economic performance.

tending deliberation with lawmakers from Taiwan.

While participating in the deliberation of the Yunnan delegation, Wang Huning, a member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, underscored the importance of deepening the education on ethnic unity and progress, enhancing the capacity of ethnic minority areas to achieve self-development, and building robust, stable and prosperous border areas.

Zhao Leji, secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, demanded continuous efforts to improve the conduct and guide Party members to pass on the glorious traditions and fine conduct of the Party when joining in the deliberation with deputies from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

Vice Premier Han Zheng called on the lawmakers from Hong Kong and Macao to fully support the legislative exercises of the NPC and its standing committee to improve the electoral system of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and resolutely support chief executives and governments of the SARs in administering the regions in accordance with the law, making new contributions to the sound and sustained implementation of "one country, two systems." (Xinhua) ■



Li Zhanshu, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, joins deputies from Jiangxi Province in group deliberations at the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC in Beijing on March 5. Zhai Jianlan

People as masters of their country is essence of democracy

By Zhao Zhouyang

The core of democracy is people exercising power in order to be the masters of a country. A sound and healthy democracy must strike the right balance between free individual development and the overall interests of the people as a whole, meaning democracy must balance individual freedom with national integration.

Western democracy is focused on individuals and individuals' freedom, the product of Western society and the foundation of the Western "liberty and democracy" theory.

By contrast, China's people's democracy emphasizes that State power comes from the people and is held by the people as a whole. It also emphasizes that the inherent mission of people's democracy is to promote the free and all-around development of the people, as well as to safeguard and respect individual rights.

After a long period of exploration and practice, people's democracy in China has developed relatively complete value, institutional and organizational systems. Since the goal of people's democracy is to guarantee individual freedom, people's empowerment and the comprehensive modernization of the country, its political development is of great significance to the rest of the world.

For a country like China that practices people's democracy, it must realize people's integration, which means uniting different regions, social groups and individuals into a whole so they can exercise power and become the masters of the country in its modernization process.

In contrast to the principles of "separation of powers" and "checks and balances" in representative democracy practiced by Western countries, China's democratic centralism as practiced in its people's congress system starts from democracy, while centralism is just an institutional arrangement to realize the goals of people's democracy.

Democratic centralism makes people's democracy a system of unity characterized by an efficient political system. The people's congress system is based on the institutional arrangement of democratic centralism, which, on the basis



共和国第十三届全国人民代表大会第四次会议



The Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress opens at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5. Li Xiang

of effectively guaranteeing people's status as the masters of the country, lays the institutional foundation for the development of society.

According to this arrangement, deputies to people's congresses are elected by the people, the people as a whole hold and exercise power through people's congresses and the people's exercise of power reflects the common will of the people, which mean the realization of the common will of the people is a prerequisite for centralism.

In turn, centralism prevents anarchy and ensures the realization of the common will of the people and is also more conducive to realizing people's democracy.

Since Western countries regard competitive elections as a criterion for judging whether a country has democracy, they regard the people's representative organs of socialist countries as "rubber stamps." However, competitive democracy cannot lay claim to being the only form of democracy, as its failure on multiple fronts proves.

Western parliamentarians are generally elected directly through competitive elections. But in order to win elections, political party candidates use various strategies and means to court voters and garner their support. And to seek re-election, legislators usually spend more money and time on wooing voters than an ordinary person can ever dream of, which means the common people don't have enough wealth or time to run in elections.

The form of democracy a country follows cannot be divorced from its real economic and social conditions, otherwise it can be counterproductive.

People's democracy is the soul of the people's congress system, while the Communist Party of China's leadership is necessary to realize the goal of people's democracy.

China amends laws to highlight "whole-process democracy"

The National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, adopted amendments to two laws regarding its organizational and working procedures on March 11, with "whole-process democracy" written into law for the first time in the country's legislative history.

"The NPC and its Standing Committee shall uphold 'whole-process democracy,' maintain close ties with the people, solicit people's advice and suggestions, fully express the will of the people and safeguard people's rights and interests," reads a provision in the amendment to the NPC Organic Law.

Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao (right) is interviewed via video after the Second Plenary of the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 8. Jin Liwang





↑ Premier Li Keqiang meets the press via video after the closing of the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 11. Jin Liwang

“Whole-process democracy” is described by Wang Chen, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, as “a hallmark of socialist democracy that distinguishes it from various capitalist democratic systems.”

Socialist democracy runs through all processes including elections, decision-making, administration and supervision. All major legislative decision-making is procedure-based and follows democratic deliberations, according to experts.

The amendments, drafted under the instruction of Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law, fully embody “whole-process democracy” based on existing effective practices in legislative processes.

The amendment to the NPC Rules of Procedure stipulates that the NPC Standing Committee shall make legislative bills and their explanations public to seek opinions for no less than 30 days before submitting them to NPC sessions for deliberation.

For decades, the NPC Standing Committee has made legislative bills available for public comments. The codification of the practice has further cemented democracy in the process of legislative decision-making, according to experts.

In recent years, legislative outreach offices at the local lev-

el have been established across the country, making it more convenient for the public to reach lawmakers both at the national and local level.

Lawmakers also elevated into law several procedures that make NPC sessions more open to the public for better democratic supervision.

For example, spokespeople will be arranged for meetings during NPC sessions, and delegations of NPC deputies shall appoint their own spokespeople if necessary, says the amendment to the NPC Rules of Procedure.

Plenary meetings of NPC annual sessions shall also be broadcast via radio, television and the internet, it says, making the event more accessible to the public.

Explaining the draft amendments to fellow lawmakers on the first day of the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC, Wang said amending the two laws is an institutional guarantee for upholding “whole-process democracy” and safeguarding the people’s role as masters of the country. ■



↑ "Her" voice at the two sessions.
Women in China have taken an active part in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, playing an important role as "half the sky" with their heroism and hard work. At this year's NPC sessions, women deputies and members performed their duties conscientiously and made suggestions and suggestions, fully demonstrating the style of women in the new era. Yue Yuewei, Ding Lin





← Deputies to the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) walk toward the Great Hall of the People for the opening meeting of the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC in Beijing on March 5. *Li Xin*

↑ The Second Plenary of the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 8. *Zhang Ling*

↓ The closing meeting of the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 11. The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 adopted. *Zhang Yuwei*



Working for the people

By Lu Yan



Li Zhanshu, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, delivers the work report of the NPC Standing Committee at the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC in Beijing on March 8. *Liu Bin*

The Yangtze River Protection Law officially went into effect on March 1, with the aim of protecting China's longest river, strengthening the ecological protection and restoration of the Yangtze River Basin, promoting the rational and efficient use of resources, ensuring ecological safety and realizing the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

Stretching over 6,300 km, the Yangtze River boasts rich biodiversity, as well as mineral and water resources. But overfishing and pollution have long threatened its aquatic life and depleted its fish stock.

The law features new requirements for the river's biological protection, sewage treatment, flood control and disaster relief, and ecological restoration. It establishes a national coordination mechanism for protection efforts, bans the construction of chemical plants within 1 km of the river and restricts sand mining along the riverbank.

As China's first legislation on a specific river basin, which strengthens oversight as well as the prevention and control of water pollution in the basin, the law is a significant benefit for the contemporary era and future generations, said Liu Huaiping, a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC) from Jiangsu Province in east China and chairman of Cohen Environmental Protection Ltd., Co.

The law was adopted on December 26, 2020, by the Standing Committee of the NPC. It is an example of how the NPC Standing Committee strengthens legislation and legal oversight for the country's development and people's benefits. On March 8, Li Zhanshu, Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, delivered the Report on the Work of the Standing Committee of the NPC since the Third Session of the 13th NPC held in May 2020, which was approved at the closing meeting of the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC.

Past endeavors

The NPC Standing Committee is the permanent body of the NPC and the current committee has 169 members. The NPC and its Standing Committee jointly exercise the power to enact laws in China. The NPC Standing Committee has the power to oversee the enforcement of the Constitution. It also has the power to decide upon major state issues, and appoint and remove members of state organs.

The committee normally meets once every two months, but it may hold interim meetings when a special need arises.

According to the Report on the Work of the NPC Standing Committee, in the past 10 months since the Third Session of

the 13th NPC, the committee formulated 9 new laws, revised 13 existing laws and made 8 decisions on legal issues and major issues last year, while it is currently deliberating on 23 draft laws.

In addition, Li said the standing committee heard and deliberated on 35 reports, inspected the implementation of 1 decision and 6 laws, conducted 2 special inquiries and 6 research projects, and passed 1 resolution.

"We've reviewed and passed 39 bills covering 259 appointments or removals of state department employees," Li said.

"The most prominent feature of the standing committee's work is our focus on major Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee's decisions and plans, the people's expectations for the rule of law in their pursuit of a better life and the legal requisites for modernizing China's system and capacity for governance in an effort to strengthen legislation and legal oversight to ensure that all aspects of our work concentrate more on the central task of economic development and overall national interests and serve our country and people better," Li said.

For example, the committee strengthened the legal framework for wildlife protection and issued a prompt decision to completely ban the illegal trade and consumption of wild animals, followed by inspections on the implementation of this decision and the Wildlife Protection Law, before making revisions to the same law.

A total of 9,180 suggestions made by NPC deputies were referred to 194 organizations for handling, with feedback given to deputies.

In the face of the COVID-19 epidemic, the NPC and its standing committee prioritized legislation on public health and targeted the legal weaknesses exposed in the fight against the epidemic. It also focused on developing a better coordinated and interconnected legal system and sped up the enactment and revision of laws to strengthen the rule of law regarding public health.

To date, the revision of the Animal Epidemic Prevention Law, along with 5 other pieces of legislation, has been completed. By the end of 2021, a further 11 objectives, including revising the Wildlife Protection Law, the Practicing Physicians Law, and the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Law, will be completed.

"These prompt series of legislative amendments effectively protect people's lives and health, and provide timely and effective legal support for winning the fight against the epidemic," said Sha Feng, a deputy to the NPC from Qinghai Province in northwest China.

The report also noted that the NPC Standing Committee had ratified 7 treaties with foreign countries, including amendments to the annexes to the Basel Convention, as well as extradition treaties with Cyprus and Belgium.

The NPC Standing Committee addressed all 506 bills that

were referred by the presidium of the Third Session of the 13th NPC. Among these, 22 legislative items proposed by 118 bills were deliberated and adopted, or are currently under deliberation, and 58 legislative items proposed by 168 bills have been included in the five-year legislative program or annual legislative plan, Li noted.

"A total of 9,180 suggestions made by NPC deputies were referred to 194 organizations for handling, with feedback given to deputies. Approximately 71.28 percent of the issues raised in these suggestions were either solved or addressed with plans to resolve them over time," the chairman added.

"The handling of the suggestions that I submitted in 2020 is a testimony of the efficient and attentive services of the standing committee and relevant departments," Feng Fan, a deputy from Jiangxi Province in east China and vice president of the Jiangxi Lawyers Association, said, adding that her suggestion on the government's purchasing of public legal services has been promoted by relevant departments into a working system.

"The deputies are the bridge between the people and the organs of state power. They must not only be able to hear and understand the voices of the people, but also have appropriate channels to convey these voices and opinions. The standing committee provides a solid foundation for this," she said.

Future work

This year, legislative work will proceed in key areas such as national security, scientific and technological innovation, public health and biosafety, according to Chairman Li.

To strengthen the legal safeguards for public health, Li said that a law on responding to public health emergencies will be formulated. Meanwhile, laws like the Wildlife Protection Law, the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Law will be revised.

The legal system for national security will also be strengthened, Li said, referring to an anti-organized crime law, a land border law, a food security law, among others.

Regarding the development of a modern economic system, more laws will be formulated, such as a Hainan Free Trade Port law, a futures law and a stamp duty law.

In a bid to make the urgently needed improvements to the legal system for people's well-being, Li said that the committee passed the Antifood waste law, and is working on a law to promote the cultural industry and a family education law among others.

During the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC, held from March 5 to 11, deputies also raised their suggestions on the future work of the NPC Standing Committee. Xu Chuazhi, a deputy from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China, said during the deliberation of the work report that further improvements should be made in the timeliness and pertinence of legislation, as well as the timely tracking and evaluation of legislative results to ensure high-quality legislative work.

Miao Xiu, a deputy from Heilongjiang Province in northeast China, suggested organizing more deputy inspection and field studies which will enable deputies to gain first-hand knowledge of what the people need most urgently and to better carry out their duties. ■

An imperative step for long-term stability in Hong Kong





People display the Chinese national flag in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in Golden Bauhinia Square in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in south China on September 17, 2019. Li Gang

The National People's Congress (NPC) adopted a decision on improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) on March 11.

On March 5, the NPC started deliberating on the draft decision, which was submitted to the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC. Wang Chen, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, delivered an explanatory speech on the draft at the opening meeting of the session.

The decision was passed by an overwhelming majority vote at the Fourth Session.

Important step forward

As an important part of its political structure, the HKSAR electoral system should conform to "one country, two systems," meet the realities in the HKSAR and serve to ensure "patriots are administering Hong Kong," Wang said.

However, in recent years, especially after the tumult over the 2019 Amendment Bill, anti-China, destabilizing forces and radical locals in Hong Kong have openly advocated for so-called "Hong Kong independence." They have used the HKSAR electoral platform, the Legislative Council's (LegCo) deliberation platform, the District Councils and their positions as public servants to blatantly carry out anti-China and destabilizing activities, he said.

Necessary measures must be taken to improve the electoral system and remove existing institutional risks to ensure the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body.

The riots and turbulence that occurred in Hong Kong reveal that its existing electoral system has loopholes and deficiencies, which the anti-China, destabilizing elements took advantage of to take power into their hands to administer the HKSAR, he added.

Necessary measures must be taken to improve the electoral system and remove existing institutional risks to ensure the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body, Wang noted.

Only when the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" is observed can the central authorities' overall jurisdiction of the HKSAR be effectively implemented, the constitutional order as established by the Constitution and the Basic Law be effectively maintained and various deep-seated problems be effectively resolved. Only in this way can Hong Kong achieve durable stability and make its due contributions to realizing national rejuvenation, according to the senior lawmaker.

The HKSAR electoral system, including the selection of the

The LegCo of the HKSAR shall be composed of 90 members in each term.

chief executive and the formation of the LegCo, must strictly follow and fully reflect the political principle and criterion of the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body, and provide institutional safeguards for this purpose, he said.

Overarching approach

Wang indicated that the overall design of the electoral system will be centered around the reform and greater empowerment of the HKSAR Election Committee.

The size, composition and formation of the Election Committee will be adjusted and improved, while the chief executive will continue to be elected by the committee. The committee will also be entrusted with the new function of electing a relatively large share of LegCo members and directly participating in the nomination of all LegCo candidates, he said.

Through the Election Committee, balanced and orderly political participation will be expanded and broader representation ensured. Relevant election elements will be adjusted appropriately and a qualification review mechanism will be established throughout the entire process, he added.

This design is aimed to create a new democratic electoral system suited to Hong Kong's realities and with Hong Kong characteristics, Wang commented.

In order to maintain the continuity and stability of relevant HKSAR systems, revisions to improve the electoral system this time will be limited to Annex I and II of the Basic Law, without revisions to the Basic Law's main body.

Decision plus amendment

After serious consideration of various factors and discussions with relevant parties, central and state authorities proposed a two-step approach called "decision plus amendment," Wang said.

In the first step, the NPC, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Basic Law and the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the HKSAR, made the decision to improve the HKSAR electoral system, laying out the basic principles for revising and improving the system, as well as the core elements of revision and improvement. Meanwhile, the NPC authorized its Standing Committee to amend Annex I and II of the Basic Law in accordance with the decision, Wang said.

In the second step, the NPC Standing Committee will amend Annex I and II of the Basic Law of the HKSAR, he said.

The amended Annex I and II will contain specific and express provisions on the HKSAR new democratic electoral system. After the amendment of Annex I and II at the state level is completed, the HKSAR will amend its relevant local laws accordingly, Wang explained. (Xinhua) ■



↑ Aerial photo on left taken on September 20, 2019 shows the Hong Kong Science Park in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in south China. *Chu Xiong*

Decision to improve Hong Kong electoral system adopted

The decision has nine articles:

– Improving the electoral system of the HKSAR must fully and faithfully implement the policy of “one country, two systems” under which the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong with a high degree of autonomy, uphold the constitutional order in the HKSAR as established by the Constitution and the Basic Law, ensure the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body, effectively improve the governance efficacy of the HKSAR, and safeguard the right to vote and the right to stand for election of permanent residents of the HKSAR.

– The HKSAR shall establish an Election Committee which is broadly representative, suited to the HKSAR's realities, and representative of the overall interests of its society. The Election Committee shall be responsible for electing the



Dr. Jonathan K.S. Choi (right), member of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, states that he believes that Hong Kong, with its world-standard research and development capabilities and producer service industries, can make greater contribution to the national science and technology advancement. Yue Yuewei

Chief Executive designate and part of the members of the LegCo. The Election Committee shall also be responsible for nominating candidates for the Chief Executive and LegCo members, as well as for other matters. The Election Committee shall be composed of 1,500 members from the following five sectors: industrial, commercial and financial sectors; the professions; grassroots, labour, religious and other sectors; LegCo members and representatives of district organizations; Hong Kong deputies to the NPC, Hong Kong members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and representatives of Hong Kong members of related national organizations.

- The Chief Executive shall be elected by the Election Committee and appointed by the Central People's Government. Candidates for the office of the Chief Executive shall be nominated jointly by not less than 188 members of the Election Committee, among whom the number of members of each sector should be not less than 15. The Election Committee shall elect the Chief Executive designate by secret ballot on a one-person-one-vote basis. The election of the Chief Executive designate shall require a simple majority vote of all the members of the Election Committee.

- The LegCo of the HKSAR shall be composed of 90 members in each term. Members of the LegCo shall include members returned by the Election Committee, those returned by functional constituencies, and those by geographical constituencies through direct elections.

- A candidate qualification review committee of the HKSAR shall be established. The committee shall be responsible

for reviewing and confirming the qualifications of candidates for the Election Committee members, the Chief Executive, and the LegCo members. The HKSAR shall improve the system and mechanisms related to qualification review, to ensure that the qualifications of candidates are in conformity with the Basic Law, the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the HKSAR, the NPC Standing Committee's interpretation of Article 104 of the Basic Law, the NPC Standing Committee's decision on the qualification of HKSAR LegCo members, and provisions of relevant local laws of the HKSAR.

- The NPC Standing Committee is authorized to, in accordance with the decision on improving the electoral system of the HKSAR, amend Annex I: Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Annex II: Method for the Formation of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Its Voting Procedures, to the Basic Law.

- In accordance with the decision and the Basic Law's Annex I and Annex II amended by the NPC Standing Committee, the HKSAR shall amend relevant local laws, and organize and regulate election activities accordingly.

- The Chief Executive of the HKSAR shall submit in a timely manner reports to the Central People's Government on relevant important situations including the institutional arrangements for elections of the HKSAR and the organization of the elections.

- The decision shall go into effect as of the date of promulgation. ■

Explanations on the Draft Decision of the National People's Congress On Improving the Electoral System of The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Presented by Wang Chen
Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of
The National People's Congress
At the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress

5 March 2021



A view of Victoria Harbor in
Hong Kong SAR. Li Gang

Deputies,

Entrusted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), I hereby make the following explanations about the Draft Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR).

I. The imperative and importance of improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR

The return of Hong Kong to the motherland put the region once again under the overall governance system of the country. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China jointly form the constitutional basis of the Hong Kong SAR. The electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR, which includes the methods for the selection of the Chief Executive and for the formation of the Legislative Council, is an important part of the political structure of the Hong Kong SAR. The electoral system should conform to the policy of One Country, Two Systems, meet the realities in the Hong Kong SAR and serve to ensure "patriots administering Hong Kong". It should be conducive to safeguarding China's national sovereignty, security and development interests and help maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. Since Hong Kong's return, the State has all along fully and faithfully implemented the policy of One Country, Two Systems under which the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong with a high degree of autonomy, and has run Hong Kong affairs according to law, upheld the constitutional order in the Hong Kong SAR as established by the Constitution and the Basic Law, supported the development of democracy in the SAR and guaranteed the exercise of democratic rights by residents of the SAR in accordance with the law. However, it must be noted that in recent years, especially after the turbulence over the amendment bill in 2019, anti-China, destabilizing forces and radical localists in Hong Kong have openly called for "Hong Kong independence". They used the electoral platforms of the Hong Kong SAR and the deliberation platforms of the Legislative Council and the District Councils or their position as public servants to blatantly carry out anti-China and destabilizing activities. They resorted to every possible means to paralyze the functioning of the Legislative Council and obstruct the law-based administration of the SAR government. They masterminded and perpetrated the so-called "primary election", in an attempt to obtain a majority in the Legislative Council so that they could step further to grab the power to administer Hong Kong. Some foreign countries and external forces, by way of their own legislative bills or administrative means and through their consular agencies and NGOs in the Hong Kong SAR and other channels, blatantly meddled with Hong Kong affairs. They also grossly imposed so-called "sanctions" on the relevant Chinese personnel and flagrantly emboldened and covered those anti-China, destabilizing forces in Hong Kong. These activities seriously jeopardized the constitutional order and the order of rule of law in the Hong Kong SAR. They posed a grave challenge to the authority of the Constitution, the Basic Law and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR. Such activities put China's national sov-



Witman Hung (left), deputy to the 13th National People's Congress from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), states that he believes Hong Kong can play a unique role in many aspects during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025). *Shen Hong*

It must be required that patriots form the main body of administrators.

ereignty, security and development interests into serious jeopardy and severely disrupted social stability of the Hong Kong SAR. They must be resolutely opposed, and forceful measures must be taken to prevent and defuse risks arising therefrom.

The rioting and turbulence that occurred in the Hong Kong society reveals that the existing electoral system in the Hong Kong SAR has clear loopholes and deficiencies, which the anti-China, destabilizing elements jumped on to take into their hands the power to administer the SAR. To remedy the situation, it is important to take necessary steps to improve the electoral system and remove existing institutional deficiencies and risks to ensure the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body. This in turn will ensure effective and law-based administration in the SAR and keep the implementation of One Country, Two Systems always on the right track.

Back in June 1984, Mr. Deng Xiaoping pointed out that there must be "some requirements or qualifications with regard to the administration of Hong Kong affairs by the people of Hong Kong. It must be required that patriots

form the main body of administrators”. According to him, “A patriot is one who respects the Chinese nation, sincerely supports the motherland’s resumption of exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, and wishes not to impair Hong Kong’s prosperity and stability.” Hong Kong has been a Chinese territory since ancient times. The Hong Kong SAR is an inalienable part of the People’s Republic of China, a local administrative region with a high degree of autonomy that directly comes under the Central People’s Government. “Patriots administering Hong Kong” is a necessary requirement of the One Country, Two Systems policy. All provisions in the Basic Law regarding Hong Kong’s Chief Executive and those working in the executive authorities, the legislature and the judiciary reflect the principle of Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong with patriots as the main body. It is stipulated that the Chief Executive, principal officials, members of the Executive Council and of the Legislative Council, judges of the courts at all levels and other members of the judiciary in the Hong Kong SAR must uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR and swear allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR of the People’s Republic of China. In a decision released in October 2019, the fourth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee called for upholding and improving the system and institutions of One Country, Two Systems, improving the SAR’s institutions and mechanisms related to the implementation of the Constitution and the Basic Law, and upholding the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body. On 27 January 2021, when listening to a 2020 work report from Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR, President Xi Jinping noted that Hong Kong’s major shift from chaos to stability once again testifies to the unfailing truth that to ensure the steady practice of One Country, Two Systems in Hong Kong in the long run, we must always uphold the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”. This is a fundamental principle crucial to the sovereignty, security and development interests of our country and crucial to the sustained prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. Only when the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong” is observed can the Central Authorities’ overall jurisdiction over the SAR be effectively implemented, the constitutional order as established by the Constitution and the Basic Law be effectively maintained, and the various deep-seated problems be effectively resolved. Only in this way can Hong Kong achieve durable stability and make its due contributions to realizing national rejuvenation. The electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR, including the methods for the selection of the Chief Executive and for the formation of the Legislative Council, must strictly follow and fully reflect the political principle and criterion of the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body and provide institutional safeguards for this purpose.

II. Overall requirements, important principles, basic approach, and the way to proceed for improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR

The overall requirements for improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR are: following the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era; fully implementing the guiding principles of the CPC’s 19th National Congress and the second, third, fourth and fifth

It is imperative to unite all that can be united, and build extensive, positive energy in the Hong Kong society.

plenary sessions of its 19th Central Committee; upholding and improving the system and institutions of One Country, Two Systems; fully implementing, reflecting and carrying out the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong” with proper mechanisms and institutions; keeping the power to administer firmly in the hands of those who love the country and love Hong Kong; and ensuring Hong Kong’s long-term stability and prosperity.

In implementing these overall requirements, it is imperative to observe the following important principles. First, fully and accurately implementing the policy of One Country, Two Systems under which the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong with a high degree of autonomy. It is imperative to uphold and improve the system and institutions of One Country, Two Systems, and ensure the administration of Hong Kong by Hong Kong people with patriots as the main body. It is imperative to integrate adherence to the principle of One Country with respect for the differences of Two Systems, and combine upholding the Central Authorities’ overall jurisdiction over the SAR with safeguarding a high degree of autonomy in the SAR, so as to provide well-established systemic guarantee for “patriots administering Hong Kong”. Second, firmly upholding sovereignty, security and development interests of the State. It is imperative to ensure that the State takes firm control over the improvement of the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR, fully implement the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR, maintain overall social stability of the Hong Kong SAR, and resolutely prevent, stop and punish interference in Hong Kong affairs by foreign countries and external forces and their use of Hong Kong to conduct acts of secession, subversion, infiltration and sabotage. Third, administering Hong Kong in accordance with the law. It is imperative to maintain the constitutional order of the Hong Kong SAR enshrined in the Constitution and the Basic Law, improve the relevant electoral system and related mechanisms on the track of the Constitution and the Basic Law, and organize relevant elections in strict compliance with the Basic Law, the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR, relevant decisions of the National People’s Congress and its Standing Committee as well as local laws of Hong Kong, so as to improve the ability and competence of governance in accordance with the law. Fourth, acting in line with the actual circumstances of Hong Kong. It is imperative to develop a system of democratic elections that fits Hong Kong’s actual conditions and reflects the overall interests of the society. It is imperative to guarantee in accordance with the law the extensive and balanced political participation of the Hong Kong compatriots, and guarantee in accordance with the law the right to vote and the right



Residents in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) sign a petition on March 11 in support of the Chinese Central Government's decision to improve the HKSAR electoral system. *Lu Binghui*

to be elected which are lawfully enjoyed by Hong Kong's permanent residents. It is imperative to unite all that can be united, and build extensive, positive energy in the Hong Kong society. Fifth, improving the governance efficacy of the Hong Kong SAR. It is imperative to improve the system under which the Chief Executive is responsible to the Central People's Government, and maintain the executive-led governance structure and operational system of the Hong Kong SAR. It is imperative to support the Chief Executive, the executive authorities, the legislature and the judiciary in exercising power and performing duty in accordance with the law, so as to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the political and governance systems and mechanisms of the Hong Kong SAR.

The overarching approach for improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR is as follows: The overall design of the system will be centered around the reformation and greater empowerment of the Election Committee of the Hong Kong SAR. The size, composition and formation method of the Election Committee will be adjusted and improved. The Chief Executive will continue to be elected by the Election Committee. The Election Committee will be entrusted with the new function of electing a relatively large

share of Legislative Council members and directly participating in the nomination of all candidates for the Legislative Council. Through the Election Committee, the balanced and orderly political participation will be expanded and broader representation ensured in the Hong Kong society. Relevant elements of the election will be adjusted as appropriate, and a mechanism of qualification review will be established throughout the entire process. This design is aimed to form a new democratic electoral system suited to Hong Kong's realities and with Hong Kong characteristics.

The existing electoral system in the Hong Kong SAR was established in accordance with relevant provisions of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR, interpretations and decisions of the NPC Standing Committee, and relevant provisions of local laws in Hong Kong. Provisions of the Basic Law, including Articles 45 and 68, lay out the principles concerning the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR, and Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law as well as relevant amendments make specific and express stipulations. Based on comprehensive analysis and assessment, central and state authorities deem it necessary to revise and improve the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR at the State level, and mainly to revise the method for the selection of the



Tam Yiu Chung, a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and secretary general of the Hong Kong Coalition receives an interview with China News Service. Tan said that improving the electoral system resonates with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. It is constitutional, legal, reasonable, and for the good of Hong Kong. *Fan Siyi*

Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR and the method for the formation of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong SAR. At the same time, in order to maintain continuity and stability of relevant systems of the Hong Kong SAR, the revisions to be made this time in improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR may be limited to Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law, without revising the main body of the Basic Law. After serious consideration of various factors and discussions with relevant parties, central and state authorities propose a two-step approach, namely, “decision plus amendment”. In the first step, the NPC, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Basic Law, and the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR, makes the decision on improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR, which lays out the basic principles for revising and improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR as well as the core elements of such revision and improvement. Meanwhile, the NPC authorizes its Standing Committee to amend Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law in accordance with the decision. In the second step, in accordance with the Constitution, the Basic Law, the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR, and the NPC decision, the NPC Standing Committee amends Annex I: Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Annex II: Method for the Formation of the Legislative

The main body of the draft decision lays out the basic principles for revising and improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR as well as the core elements of such revision and improvement.

Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Its Voting Procedures of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR. The amended Annex I and Annex II will contain specific and express provisions on the new democratic electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR. After the amendment of Annex I and Annex II at the State level is completed, the Hong Kong SAR will amend relevant local laws accordingly.

At its 26th session on 27-28 February 2021, the Standing Committee of the 13th NPC heard and deliberated on the Report of the State Council on Revising and Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Relevant Recommendations. It endorsed the

Report's recommendations on revising and improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR. On this basis, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR, and the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR as well as relevant decisions of the NPC and its Standing Committee, and in light of the actual conditions in the Hong Kong SAR, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee drew up the Draft Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, which, after deliberation by the NPC Standing Committee, has been submitted to the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC for deliberation.

III. Overview of the draft decision

The Draft Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region consists of an introduction and the main body. The introduction briefly explains the purposes and legal basis of the decision. The relevant decision to be taken by the NPC is based on Article 31 and sub-paragraphs 2, 14 and 16 of Article 62 of the Constitution and relevant provisions of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR and the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR. It takes into full consideration the practical need for improving the relevant electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR and of the reality in the Hong Kong SAR. It will make a new constitutional arrangement for a set of institutions to improve the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR and advance the democratic political system that fits Hong Kong's actual conditions. Such an institutional arrangement is in line with the stipulations and principles of the Constitution and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR, and holds solid political and legal ground. It will help ensure that patriots form the main body of administrators in Hong Kong, and guarantee the sound and sustained implementation of One Country, Two Systems in Hong Kong.

The main body of the draft decision lays out the basic principles for revising and improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR as well as the core elements of such revision and improvement. At the same time, it authorizes the NPC Standing Committee to amend Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law in accordance with this decision. During deliberations on revising and improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR, central and state authorities have thought through issues related to making this decision and then amending Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law, and have made arrangements accordingly. After the adoption of this decision by the NPC, the NPC Standing Committee will work, pursuant to this decision and in coordination with other competent authorities, to promptly launch the procedure of amending Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law. Upon the promulgation and entry into force of the amended Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law, the previous Annex I, Annex II and their amendments will be repealed simultaneously.

The Draft Decision of the National People's Congress on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the above Explanations are now submitted for deliberation. ■



The closing meeting of the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 11. Zhang Yuwei

HKSAR gov't to work with central authorities to improve electoral system: Carrie Lam

Carrie Lam, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), said on March 8 that the "decision plus amendment" approach to improving the HKSAR electoral system is legal and constitutional, and that the HKSAR government will cooperate with central authorities to carry out the work in three aspects. Lam elaborated on the aspects at a press briefing.

Firstly, the HKSAR government will push forward the explanation work. Secondly, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and the Department of Justice of the HKSAR government will undertake the work of amending local electoral legislation.

Thirdly, through the amendment of the local electoral legislation and the full and accurate implementation of the selection of the HKSAR chief executive and the formation of the HKSAR Legislative Council in Annex I and II of the Basic Law, amended by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the HKSAR government will properly arrange elections in the next 12 months.

Lam also expressed respect for the central authorities' leading role and decision-making in this regard. She stressed that there is an urgent need to plug the loopholes and improve the HKSAR electoral system so that it can return to the original aspirations, channels and frameworks of the principle of "one country, two systems." (Xinhua)

China projects confidence with over 6% GDP growth target

By Wang Cong, Shen Weiduo, Liu Xuanzun and Cao Siqi



Premier Li Keqiang delivers a government work report at the opening meeting of the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing on March 5. *Ding Lin*

While the world was still mostly under the thick cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 5, China convened its annual legislative session, one of the biggest in the world, and released a flurry of sweeping plans and goals, including a GDP growth target of more than 6 percent for 2021 and a 6.8 percent increase in its military spending, demonstrating its resilience and confidence in advancing in all areas, including the economy, people's livelihood and national defense.

China's return to its decades-old tradition of setting an economic growth target, after skipping it for the first time in 2020, its ability to balance various priorities to ensure robust economic development and national security, as well as its ambitious and specific long-term development plans are projecting steadiness and a sense of certainty to a world rattled by the pandemic, analysts noted.

Notwithstanding, a relatively conservative growth target for 2021 and a slight increase in the defense budget also underscored the lingering formidable tasks ahead, including eliminating the novel coronavirus, improving the economy's quality and sustainability, and wellbeing of the Chinese people.

Show of confidence

In the Government Work Report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang at the opening of the annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's GDP growth target was set at over 6 percent for 2021, defying market expectations that a specific numeric target could not be set after China decided to forego it for the first time in decades last year due to COVID-19.

Under the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan 2021–2025 for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035.

“In setting this target, we have taken into account the recovery of economic activity. A target of over 6 percent will enable all of us to devote full energy to promoting reform, innovation and high-quality development,” Li told 2,900 NPC deputies from across the country who gathered inside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

The NPC session is normally held almost simultaneously with the annual meeting of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference National Committee, the country’s top political advisory body, which has over 2,100 members. Collectively known as the “two sessions,” the annual gathering is a key event in the country’s political calendar and a window into China’s policy priorities.

“The 2021 Government Work Report is realistic, pragmatic, focused and inspiring. Against the backdrop of uncertainty around the world, the report conveys certainty and boosts confidence and morale,” said Zhang Jindong, an NPC deputy and chairman of e-commerce giant Suning Holdings Group after listening to the report.

Even the bottom end of the target means that growth will rebound sharply from last year’s 2.3 percent and return to pre-pandemic levels of about 6.1 percent. It would also put China in the leading position among major economies in the world regarding the recovery process.

The International Monetary Fund projects the global economy will grow by 5.5 percent in 2021, with developed economies expected to grow by 4.3 percent.

Also underscoring China’s confidence was a decision to increase its 2021 defense budget by 6.8 percent to 1.35 trillion yuan (\$209 billion), a faster pace than the 6.6 percent in 2020 and largely in line with the targeted growth rate of the economy given the role China plays to maintain world peace.

In another move that few countries have been able to achieve during such uncertain times, China also released an ambitious plan for the next 5 to 15 years, when it expects to become a modern socialist power with a green, sustainable and innovation-driven economy.

Under the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan 2021–2025 for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035, GDP growth will be maintained at a “reasonable range,” which some analysts say could mean an average annual growth of between 4.7 and 5 percent in the next 15 years. In keeping with the green and innovation-driven growth target, China will aim for a 7-percent annual growth in research and development spending during the period, as well as a 13.5 percent drop in energy consumption per GDP unit and an 18 percent cut in carbon dioxide emissions per GDP unit.

Given China’s role as the main global growth driver, the target “also boosts global confidence and offers very concrete reassurance for post-pandemic global economic recovery,” said Wei Jianguo, former vice minister of Commerce and Executive Deputy Director of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, adding that a robust and rapidly-opening Chinese economy will contribute more to the global economy.

Wei noted that the 30-page report was very concise but also highly detailed in terms of policy plans, with a heavy focus on high-quality growth as well as people’s livelihood.

The report set a slew of other targets that are directly

China will continue to face many development risks and challenges, but the economic fundamentals that will sustain long-term growth remain unchanged.

linked to people’s livelihood, including creating 11 million new urban jobs in 2021 compared to 9 million in 2020 and keeping consumer price increases at 3 percent this year, compared to 3.5 percent last year.

The report also aimed to cut energy consumption per GDP unit by about 3 percent this year and reach a grain output of over 650 million metric tons to ensure good living conditions and adequate food supply.

Formidable tasks ahead

Although expectations and confidence are running high, Li said there are formidable tasks ahead for China in a wide range of areas, including defusing risks in the financial sector and other areas, protecting the environment and addressing weaknesses in areas important to people’s needs.

This view was also reflected in the setting of various targets, particularly the growth target for 2021, which is well below a widely-accepted forecast of over 8 percent for the year.

“The target is very moderate compared to high market expectations,” said Tian Yun, vice director of the Beijing Economic Operation Association and former economist at the state economic planning agency, noting that the lower target may be aimed at leaving sufficient room in fiscal and monetary policies to address debt and financial risks.

In line with that view, the report said that China has set its deficit-to-GDP ratio at about 3.2 percent compared to 3.6 percent in 2020 and there will be no special bonds for COVID-19 issued this year, it said.

The report also said prudent monetary policy will be flexible and the quality, efficiency and sustainability of proactive fiscal policy will be enhanced.

Sun Guojun, an official with the State Council Research Office and member of the report’s drafting team, said at a press briefing on March 5 that the target of over 6 percent is based on many factors, including the current economic recovery process, low base numbers and the need to maintain “sustained and sound development,” while avoiding abruptly high or low annual goals.

In addition to economic risks, there are other challenges, including the need to maintain anti-epidemic measures against COVID-19.

“China will continue to face many development risks and challenges, but the economic fundamentals that will sustain long-term growth remain unchanged. We should stay confident, meet challenges head-on, and consolidate the foundation for economic recovery to ensure sustained and healthy economic and social development,” Li said. ■



An aerial photo shows the Yellow River Three Gorges scenic area located upstream of the Xiaolangdi Dam in Jiyuan of central China's Henan Province on September 12, 2020. *Xinhua*

China unveils action plan for modernization

China's lawmakers on March 5 began reviewing a national blueprint featuring high-quality development, technological innovation and a greener future for a country that has long been seeking modernity and national rejuvenation.

The draft outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035, which specifies the main goals and tasks for the world's second-largest economy in its march toward modernization, was submitted to the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC).

The long-range objectives were unveiled as China embarks on the journey toward its second centenary goal of "building a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious."

"China will achieve basic socialist modernization by 2035," according to the draft outline, which is seen as an action plan for the entire nation.

The blueprint provides a glimpse of a future life where a scaled-up 5G network and high-speed railways closely knit the world's most populous country, and scientists explore new frontiers in areas such as next-generation artificial intelligence, quantum information, gene technology and integrated circuits.

In a "smart, shared and harmonious new digital life," robot waiters and highly-automated parking lots will be familiar to the Chinese people, according to the draft outline.

With its GDP exceeding the 100 trillion yuan (\$15.33 trillion) mark in 2020, China's future development path becomes clearer amid major changes not seen in a century.

The key document includes an array of benchmark eco-

conomic indicators, including an economy running within an appropriate range, an annual 7-percent growth in research and development spending, a surveyed urban unemployment rate kept below 5.5 percent, and drastically-slashed carbon dioxide emissions per GDP unit in the next five years.

“The major benchmark indicators set in the draft outline are just like peaches on a tree that can only be picked if one jumps high,” said He Lifeng, head of the National Development and Reform Commission. “And we must jump high.”

The development plan, a crucial tool for the macroeconomic governance in a country that gives a decisive role to the market in the allocation of resources, highlights China’s new development paradigm of “dual circulation,” where domestic and overseas markets reinforce each other with the domestic market as the mainstay.

Principally focusing on domestic issues, the draft outline stresses building a “complete domestic demand system” and a strong domestic market, while sending reassuring messages to the world by pledging “higher-level opening up” and reduced import tariffs.

China will put its development focus on the real economy,

accelerate the building of its manufacturing strength and develop strategic emerging industries like information technology and new energy, according to the draft.

In the next five years, technological self-sufficiency and self-improvement will serve as a strategic cornerstone for national development, the outline says.

It also targets the advancement of people’s wellbeing by improving childcare, boosting employment, actively responding to an aging population and raising average life expectancy by a year.

The outline, which will be reviewed by lawmakers at the NPC session, signals that socialist modernization, in contrast to its Western counterparts, is tangibly in reach for the Chinese people.

“Modernity has always been pluralistic, and there is no unified plan for modernization,” said Chen Shuguang, a professor at the Party School of the Communist Party of China Central Committee. “It is increasingly clear that the modernization China seeks will not be a mere replica of the Western one.” ■

China adheres to high-quality growth on its journey to modernization

China has set a modest economic growth target for 2021, as it experiences fundamental changes with its development focus shifting from quantity to quality.

“A target of over 6 percent will enable all of us to devote full energy to promoting reform, innovation and high-quality development,” Premier Li Keqiang said on March 5 when he delivered this year’s Government Work Report to the National People’s Congress (NPC).

The annual target was significantly below the consensus of analysts, who estimated growth could climb to 8 percent this year.

The lower-than-expected target showed China is undergoing gradual moderation in growth and will give provinces more room to pursue high-quality development that is more efficient, equitable, sustainable and secure, said Bai Yongxiu, a professor at Northwest University.

“Sticking to the new development concept and the high-quality growth model is a must to secure a good start for fully building a modern socialist country by 2050,” said Zhang Yansheng, chief researcher of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

Since the 1960s, only a dozen of over 100 middle-income countries and regions have become high-income economies by shifting their development models from quantitative expansion to qualitative improvement. By contrast, the countries and regions that stagnated or regressed at the middle-income level all failed to realize this fundamental change.

“China must pursue high-quality development in order to

escape the middle-income trap,” said Zhang, referring to the world’s second-largest economy.

People-centered approach

One significant feature of China’s modernization is to improve people’s wellbeing, as evidenced by the country’s herculean efforts to eradicate poverty over the past years.

China is committed to the people-centered philosophy of development and strives to further improve people’s livelihood through pursuing high-quality development.

“The principal contradiction in Chinese society has evolved into people’s ever-growing need for a better life and the imbalance and inadequacy of development. High-quality development is absolutely key to resolving this contradiction,” Bai said.

A series of measures will be implemented over the next five years, including increasing people’s incomes, boosting employment, building a high-quality education system and improving the multi-level social security system, according to a draft outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035.

“Chinese people will receive greater and more equitable benefits from reform and development, while enjoying more substantial, assured and lasting feelings of fulfillment, happiness and security, as China makes constant strides toward the goal of common prosperity,” Bai added.

Strengthening innovation

In pursuit of stellar scientific and technological breakthroughs, China is upholding innovation as the centerpiece of its modernization drive, while at the same time, making itself a country of innovators.

China should step up efforts to strengthen innovation capacity, with a greater emphasis on basic research and original creation, said Lei Jun, a deputy to the 13th NPC and founder

and CEO of Xiaomi, a leading smartphone manufacturer.

"I believe the country's science and technology industries will show greater vitality with the implementation of the measures mentioned in the draft," Lei said.

Li Daokui, a national political advisor and economist with Tsinghua University, said technological innovation is key to expediting industrial upgrading, since China still faces bottlenecks in some core technologies in critical fields.

"Years of entrepreneurial experiences made us realize that science and technology constitute a primary productive force," said Xu Guanju, an NPC deputy and president of Transfar Group, a chemical company in east China's Zhejiang Province.

Xu said his company's continuous investment in innovation has paid off. "Through a slew of innovative technologies, our labor productivity rose by 25 percent, while production management costs fell by the same amount."

China pledged more efforts to enhance enterprises' innovation capacity, stimulate the vitality of talent for innovation and make institutional improvements in sci-tech innovation during its 14th Five-Year Plan period.

China's research and development spending will increase by more than 7 percent per year over the next five years, accounting for a higher percentage of GDP compared to the past five years, according to the draft outline.

Green growth

Despite increasing downward pressure over the years, China has been steadfast in resisting the old ways of economic expansion, which severely affected the environment, as leadership repeatedly underscored that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets."

Pursuing an eco-friendly growth pattern, China has taken stringent measures to promote the wider use of renewable energy, cut the production capacity of resource-intensive sectors and wage a battle against pollution.

Faced with unprecedented headwinds from COVID-19 last year, the country did not lessen its efforts toward green development as it initiated a total ban on importing solid waste and a 10-year fishing ban along the Yangtze River.

"This year, China will continue to intensify efforts to improve the environment," Premier Li said in the work report.

The ban on the importation of solid waste will remain in place, urban household waste sorting will be promoted in a well-planned manner, the use of eco-friendly express delivery packaging will be encouraged and the collection and treatment of hazardous waste and medical waste will be improved, according to the report.

In addition, the government will draw up an action plan for peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and make efforts to improve its industrial structure and energy mix.

This shows that the government is walking a fine line between economic development and environmental protection, said Zhu Ning, a professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Green development will be elevated to a higher position in the country's modernization drive, according to Cui Zhenhai, a research fellow with Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China. (Xinhua)



The National People's Congress adopted amendment to the NPC Rules of Procedure. Zhang Yuwei

A look at China's democracy, rule of law at "two sessions"

China's "two sessions", the annual sessions of the top legislature and top political advisory body, are a key event on the country's political calendar.

As major issues are discussed, the event offers outsiders a good opportunity to see democracy and the rule of law at work in the country's political system.

"One of the great misunderstandings about China is that it is not a democracy," said Mario Cavolo, an Italian-American writer and commentator. But there are many democratic aspects and processes in the Constitution, laws and the way the legislature operates, he added.



Whole-process democracy

At this year's session, the National People's Congress (NPC), mulled amendments to two laws on its organizational and working procedures: the Organic Law of the NPC and the Rules of Procedure for the NPC.

Explaining the draft amendments to fellow lawmakers, Wang Chen, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said amending the two laws is an institutional guarantee for upholding whole-process democracy.

This means all major legislative decision-making is procedure-based and follows democratic deliberations. Democracy is not complete if people only have the right to vote without the right of broad participation.

Socialist democracy runs through all processes including elections, decision-making, administration and supervision.

"Whole-process democracy is a hallmark of socialist democracy that distinguishes it from various capitalist democratic systems," Wang said.

Tong Weidong, a legislative official with the NPC Standing Committee, said a fine example of whole-process democracy is the establishment of local legislative outreach offices, where over 1,300 opinions were collected last year, contributing to 16 pieces of legislation.

Compared to the West, Cavolo said, China is doing a much better job of taking care of the whole society and listening to its people, instead of serving the wealthy class.

People's wisdom in blueprint

Democracy is in full swing as China formulates a blueprint

for the country's social and economic development over the next 5 to 15 years.

The draft outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035, reviewed and passed by the legislative session, is a good mix of top-level design and people's wisdom.

The National Development and Reform Commission, tasked with drafting the outline, received over 37,000 comments through online solicitation, along with more than 4,000 questionnaires physically handed out to specific groups.

A number of symposiums with national lawmakers and political advisors enabled the commission to collect more than 300 constructive suggestions.

Before the draft outline was put on the table for legislators and political advisors, the document was discussed at meetings of the central leadership of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, as well as symposiums and seminars with professionals across the board.

Laurence J. Brahm, a senior international fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, said Chinese democracy is different from that in the West.

"It is a system of consensus-building. It is quiet, and in many ways, like Tai Chi," said Brahm. In Western countries, a lot of energy is spent on elections, while the agendas are influenced by Wall Street and other business interests, he added.

Socialist rule of law

On March 8, top legislator Li Zhanshu delivered the work report of the NPC Standing Committee, saying that efforts must be accelerated to improve the Chinese socialist system of laws.

According to the legislative plan unveiled in Li's report, legislative work in key and emerging areas will be strengthened in 2021.

The legislature will move promptly to conduct research on laws and regulations related to new technologies and applications such as the digital economy, internet finance, artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing, according to the report.

Last year, the NPC adopted the Civil Code, the first in the history of the People's Republic of China. This year's report added that work should be conducted to formulate codes for "sectors where conditions are ripe."

China aims to develop a system of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics, which will take shape over the next five years, said Hu Jianmiao, a law professor at the National Academy of Governance.

In the work report of the Supreme People's Court, Chief Justice Zhou Qiang said the work of the top court is centered on the goal of "letting the people feel justice is served in every judicial case."

He also said China emphasizes the protection of people's legitimate rights and interests as well as the prevention and punishment of crimes.

"We work to ensure the innocent are protected and the guilty do not escape punishment," Zhou said. (Xinhua) ■

Voices of NPC deputies

By Zhang Meijuan

The Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), opened in Beijing on March 5, as about 3,000 NPC deputies gathered from all over the country to raise suggestions and motions regarding the jobs of the Communist Party of China and the State, along with the enactment and modification of major laws.

Elected by the people to represent their interests, NPC deputies from all walks of life remain true to the people's aspiration and work in concert with the people. They seize every opportunity to conduct surveys and research, and listen to the people's opinions, suggestions and voices. At the NPC annual session exemplifying democracy and the rule of law, deputies put forward motions and suggestions based on their findings and provide advice about the Work Report of the Government, the Work Report of the NPC Standing Committee and law modification motions, among others in line with the people's interests. Through them, the voices of the 1.4 billion Chinese people are heard in the Great Hall of the People. With opinions and suggestions proposed by deputies from various fields and industries, the reports and draft laws are constantly polished, refined and improved. They eventually become laws that protect the people's interest and reflect their concerns.

We interviewed some NPC deputies and compiled the following messages about their motions and suggestions.

NPC deputies suggest to alter drunk driving punishment

At the 2021 "two sessions," multiple National People's Congress (NPC) deputies proposed the modification of the punishment standard for drunk drivers.

Drunk driving has ranked No. 1 in all criminal cases concluded since 2019. The Criminal Law was amended in 2011 to penalize drunk drivers due to the rising public pressure, said NPC deputy Han Deyun, and it has effectively curbed the dangerous crime that jeopardizes people's safety and property. But it has also gone a bit too far, with many drunk drivers who did not cause direct public harm receiving criminal punishment.

Discussions concerning the punishment standard revision focused on increasing the limit of blood alcohol levels and adding more lenient punishment for drivers who plead guilty and accept penalties.

Suggestions on tackling coronavirus variants submitted

Zhang Boli, a deputy to the NPC and president of the Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, submitted suggestions to the NPC on the containment of COVID-19 variants, calling for the establishment of a national coronavirus strain bank. So far, at least eight new virus strains have been identified in 77 countries, with China detecting variants in multiple imported cases. Zhang noted that China has substantially curbed the spread of the virus, but with the change of temperature, the pressure rises for preventing the coronavirus from re-entering the country and causing a new epidemic. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a virus strain bank to better understand and fight COVID-19 variants.

HK deputies voice support for improving the HKSAR's electoral system

NPC deputies from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Chen Yong, Chen Xiaofeng and Chen Manqi voiced full support for improving the electoral system in the HKSAR. Chen Yong noted that legal means should be employed to ensure safe and proper future development of the Chinese people, including the 7.5 million Hong Kong residents. The electoral system should be changed to ensure that Hong Kong is administered by people who love the country, and the system should be conducive to protecting China's national sovereignty and security, according to Chen Xiaofeng and Chen Manqi.



NPC deputies advocate modifications to China's sports law

NPC deputies Wang Shiling and Gao Mingqin proposed the acceleration of the process of modification to the Law on Physical Culture and Sports at the NPC's annual session. The modifications aim to promote the national fitness campaign and physical education in school, as well as provisions about the sports industry and sports arbitration, according to the deputies. Enacted in 1995, the sports law has been revised twice before its latest proposed revision was incorporated into the top legislature's plan for legislation in 2018. The significant development of China's sports in recent years creates a solid foundation for the modification, which seeks to revamp the country's sports management system, Wang added.

Ren Xianliang calls for enhancement of cyberspace governance

The vice chairman of the NPC Social Development Affairs Committee, Ren Xianliang stressed the importance of promptly improving cyberspace governance and solving bottleneck problems. According to Ren, the former vice minister of the Cyberspace Administration of China, with nearly 1 billion netizens, China sees countless information generated and spread on the internet every day. Therefore cyberspace governance must be enhanced to prevent the internet from being fraught with rumors, fraud and traps. We should upgrade legislation on internet security, content management and digitalization, among other things, as well as speed up the introduction of laws and regulations on new technologies and clamp down on harmful information pursuant to the laws, Ren added.

NPC deputy advances establishment of Yangtze River ecological court

You Quanrong, an NPC deputy and president of the Hubei Provincial Higher People's Court, suggested an ecological court be set up for the Yangtze River in central China's Wuhan of Hubei Province at the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC. The proposed ecological court seeks to ensure that the Yangtze River Protection Law will be enforced uniformly throughout the basin and to provide legal guidance for the conservation of the river, according to You. The NPC Standing Committee passed the landmark law in December 2020 as the country's first legislation on a specific river basin.

NPC deputy proposes mandatory security checks at hospitals

Ding Lieming, an NPC deputy and chairman of a pharmaceutical company, submitted his suggestions on setting up mandatory security checks at hospitals to the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC. The suggestions come as China has seen a string of violent acts against doctors in recent years, which have fueled public anger. Ding explained that in most cases, the crime was premeditated, with instrument of crime prepared in advance. Therefore, security checks at the entrance of hospitals or key areas can help intercept dangerous objects that could cause harm in hospitals.

Weng Guoxing makes suggestions on medical development

Weng Guoxing, a deputy to the NPC, urged the combination of medicine and engineering to advance medical development at the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC in Beijing. The cardiologist suggested that medicine will evolve as other disciplines advance and that platforms for such a combination should be set up in hospitals or universities. Weng explained that there are three major steps for the interdisciplinary development platform, namely increasing the investment in basic research, training talent and determining the specific direction of research.

Deputy submits suggestions on development of smart city

NPC deputy Zhao Wanping submitted suggestions on the development of new smart cities to the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC. Since the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, health QR codes and online supervision have served as a strong defense against the pandemic, demonstrating China's achievements in smart city construction. However, information isolated island, insufficient and unbalanced digitization development, along with other issues, were exposed in China's response to the pandemic. Zhao underlined the importance of accelerating commercialization of key technology findings like big data and artificial intelligence to tackle the problems of developing smart cities.

(Compiled by Zhang Meijuan)

Xi's messages point way for China at historic development juncture



The Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress opens at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5. Li Xiang

President Xi Jinping pointed the way for China, which is at a historic development juncture, by expounding on a wide range of topics at this year's Two Sessions, a key political event which closed on March 11.

Two sessions refer to the country's annual meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Xi, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, participated in deliberations with national legislators and joined discussions with political advisors.

He took part in deliberations with lawmakers from Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province, and attended a plenary meeting of the delegation of the People's Liberation Army and People's Armed Police Force. He also joined national political advisors from the education, medical and health sectors in a joint group meeting.

This year marks a historic juncture for China, as it embarks on a new quest for fully building a modern socialist country. Here are some key takeaways from Xi's speeches that may provide insights into China's development trajectory.

Green GDP

Xi has always stressed adopting a holistic approach to conserving mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes and grasslands. This year, he added "deserts" to the picture.

Top-level design and comprehensive measures are needed to protect the eco-systems in mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands and deserts, said Xi.

Highlighting the concept of a "green GDP," Xi said that maintaining a good ecological environment is of enormous value.

Ethnic Unity

Xi stressed cementing the sense of community within the Chinese nation.

He called for promoting the standard spoken and written Chinese language and the use of state-compiled textbooks.

Efforts should be made to facilitate more comprehensive understanding of the Party's policies concerning ethnic groups, especially among young people, Xi said.

People's Health as "Strategic Priority"

Xi stressed giving "strategic priority" to safeguarding

people's health and focusing on tackling major diseases and problems that affect people's health.

The country's public health protection network should be fortified, and efforts should be made to promote the high-quality development of public hospitals, he said, calling for comprehensive healthcare for people at all stages of life.

The fight against COVID-19 has once again proved that prevention is the most economical and effective health strategy, Xi said, calling for reforming and improving the disease prevention and control system.

Xi also urged the preservation and development of traditional Chinese medicine and breakthroughs in core technologies in key areas, as well as more protection, care and support for health workers.

Quality Basic Public Education

On education, Xi said China must strive to build a high-quality and balanced basic public education service system.

He emphasized the socialist orientation in the running of schools, the non-profit nature of education and the development of education that meets the needs of the people.

Education is essential to the country and the Party, Xi stressed.

He called for efforts to train more talent that can contribute to the country's high-quality development and high-level self-reliance.

Teachers are the central pillar of education, and strengthening the professional ethics of teachers must be given priority, Xi said.

High-quality Development People's Wellbeing

Xi noted that high-quality development is the general requirement for all aspects of economic and social development.

It will not only be the requirement for developed regions, but will also be the requirement for implementation by all regions, Xi said, urging each region to pursue high-quality development based on local conditions.

He called for efforts to integrate high-quality development with concrete actions in meeting people's aspirations for a better life.

Xi stressed efforts to strengthen areas of weakness in improving people's wellbeing, unfailingly meet the basic living needs of the people and improve the availability and equality of basic public services.

He asked local authorities to promote coordinated development between rural and urban areas, advance rural vitalization on all fronts, improve people's wellbeing and build a new socialist countryside that is beautiful, prosperous and harmonious.

Combat Readiness

Xi emphasized achieving a good start in strengthening national defense and the armed forces during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025).

Development of the armed forces must focus on combat

readiness, he said.

Xi pressed for efforts to step up building high-caliber strategic deterrence and joint operation systems.

He called for an intensified push and more concrete measures in the pursuit of independent innovation in science and technology in order to fully leverage its role as the strategic support for military development.

Highlighting the instabilities and uncertainties in China's current security situation, Xi said all of the armed forces must always be ready to respond to all kinds of complex and difficult situations, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as provide strong support for fully building a modern socialist country. ■

Chinese lawmakers raise 473 bills to annual legislative session

Deputies to the Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), China's national legislature, have submitted 473 bills as of 12 p.m. March 8 (Beijing Time), according to the secretariat of the session.

The secretariat said it has also received around 9,000 pieces of suggestions, criticisms and comments from NPC deputies.

Among the bills, 465 of them covered legislative items, focusing on topics including improving people's wellbeing and social governance, developing a modernized economic system, protecting the environment and promoting green development, the secretariat said.

The suggestions put forward by NPC deputies focus on topics such as consolidating and expanding the achievements of poverty eradication, enhancing the comprehensive protection of intellectual property rights, reinforcing national strategic strength in science and technology, among others, it added. (Xinhua)



NPC Standing Committee strongly condemns US sanctions on Chinese officials over HK electoral reform

A spokesperson of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee strongly condemned US sanctions on 14 Chinese senior officials, saying the US using Hong Kong Special Administrative Region as an excuse to recklessly interfere in China's domestic affairs is "unreasonable" and "vicious."

The spokesperson pointed out that Hong Kong's electoral system is an important part of the city's political system, and it is the central government's authority of what electoral system to run in Hong Kong.

In recent years, especially in 2019 during the riots, Hong Kong's legal and social order has been severely damaged, and the "one country, two systems" principle was seriously challenged, the spokesperson pointed out. The NPC, as China's top legislature, which has the authority empowered by the Constitution, has the right and obligation to make decisions on and

improve Hong Kong's electoral system, the spokesperson said.

The response came after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on March 17 new sanctions on officials from the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region over the Hong Kong electoral reform.

According to the spokesperson, this reform is to eliminate existing risks of Hong Kong's current mechanism, and provide guarantees for "one country, two systems," as well as implementing "patriots governing Hong Kong."

Hong Kong's affairs are China's domestic affairs and allow no foreign interference, said the spokesperson, noting that the NPC will continue to carry out its duty and safeguard national sovereignty, security and interests, as well as to provide legal guarantees for cracking down on "Hong Kong secessionism," making sure "patriots governing Hong Kong" and long-term stability and prosperity of the city. (Global Times)





Wu Xianyan (left) and college student Liang Qiongying promote local tourism via live streaming at Jiache Village, Jiabang Township in Congjiang County in Guizhou Province. *Yang Wenbin*

China's historic poverty campaign champions human rights

By Liu Huawen

At the historical moment of the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), an important declaration was made: China's battle against poverty had achieved an ultimate triumph.

This was the bottom-line task set by the CPC Central Committee to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society. China's poverty-alleviation battle has realized the dream of the nation to shake off crippling poverty since the beginning of Chinese history. This has created a miracle in the history of human poverty alleviation.

The historic achievement of China's poverty alleviation is an important milestone in the well-rounded development of China's human-rights causes under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

China's achievement in poverty alleviation demonstrates the success of the development concept that puts people first. Reform is for the people. Reform relies on the people. And the fruits of reform are shared by the people. In the process

of development, China has effectively safeguarded the fundamental interests of the greatest possible majority of its people, respected the value and dignity of humans, and promoted well-rounded human development.

The Constitution of the CPC clearly states that the Party, "represents... the fundamental interests of the greatest possible majority of the Chinese people." It is also stated that, "the Party must... gradually eliminate poverty, achieve common prosperity." According to Xi's report delivered at the 19th National Congress of the CPC, the principal contradiction facing Chinese society in the new era is that between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life. The CPC must therefore continue the commitment to its people-centered philosophy of development. It must work to promote well-rounded human development and common prosperity for everyone.

Both the CPC and the Chinese government work for the happiness of their people. They think what the people think. They sense the urgency of the people. They always keep the needs of the people in mind. People, including ethnic minori-



People head for a tree planting activity in the Kubuqi Desert in Dalad Qi of Ordos, Inner Mongolia. *Yang Jianrong*

ties, women, children, the elderly and the disabled, are given special attention and protection in the planning of China's national economic and social development.

The founding of the CPC has become a major turning point in the history of the development of the Chinese nation. After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), especially since the reform and opening-up era, China has continued to declare war on poverty. Now, it has historically eliminated absolute poverty and overall regional poverty. The country has truly put into practice the principle and spirit of, "no one will be left behind [on the path of development]," as proposed in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Moreover, China's achievement in poverty alleviation shows the success of the socialist human rights concept with Chinese characteristics. This regards the rights to survival and development as primary human rights. Before the PRC was founded in 1949, China used to be poor and weak. The founding of the PRC has made Chinese people rise onto their own feet. Reform and opening-up and the building of a moderately prosperous society have allowed Chinese people to gradually become wealthy.

As a developing country with a large population, China regards the rights to survival and development as primary human rights. This is China's scientific judgment based on specific national conditions. It is the essential requirement of socialism to eliminate poverty, focus on people's livelihood, and achieve common prosperity. The CPC has led Chinese people through arduous efforts, achieving breakthroughs in the protection of rights to survival and development, and further promoting these rights.

China's achievement in poverty alleviation is a success in comprehensively promoting the development of human rights. It is not only a result concerning people's livelihood, but also a social process with rich connotations. China's poverty alleviation work is a systematic project combining policy and law. It mobilizes the whole society to focus on capacity building and long-term development. The success of poverty alleviation is a process of consolidating the foundation of grassroots governance and achieving good governance. In

urban and rural areas, there is the popularization of education and technological achievements, the advancement of democracy at grassroots, and the public participation in social policies. The success of poverty alleviation was not achieved overnight. It took long-term efforts to promote economic development, social progress and milestone achievements in human rights.

China's achievements in poverty alleviation demonstrate that the nation's human rights cause is advancing in a pragmatic way. China includes the line "respecting and protecting human rights" into its Constitution and the Constitution of the CPC. The CPC and the Chinese government focus to provide economic and social pillars. China's culture highlights a collective spirit. China does not talk about human rights in an abstract way, but instead places the concept into particular historical phases. It bases the development and practices of human rights on actual national conditions. China's poverty alleviation efforts are based on economic development and social progress. They take the people's happy lives and satisfaction as measurements in a bid to lift people's sense of happiness and deliver them tangible gains and security.

China's achievements in poverty reduction have lessons for the world. The international community has been calling for the promotion and protection of human rights through poverty reduction plans. China's poverty reduction is an important contribution to the world's poverty alleviation cause. China's experience is inspirational to developing countries. Our success has Chinese characteristics. In essence, China's poverty alleviation drives have had the same objective and roadmap with the UN's Sustainable Development Agenda.

Therefore, the experience China has gained is not only China's but also the world's. Compared with certain Western countries which politicize human rights issues and launch political confrontations, China instead advocates cooperation in the human rights sector based on equality and mutual respect. China's advocacy and actions are more welcomed by the international community, especially by developing countries. China's success with poverty alleviation is a model for human rights around the world. ■

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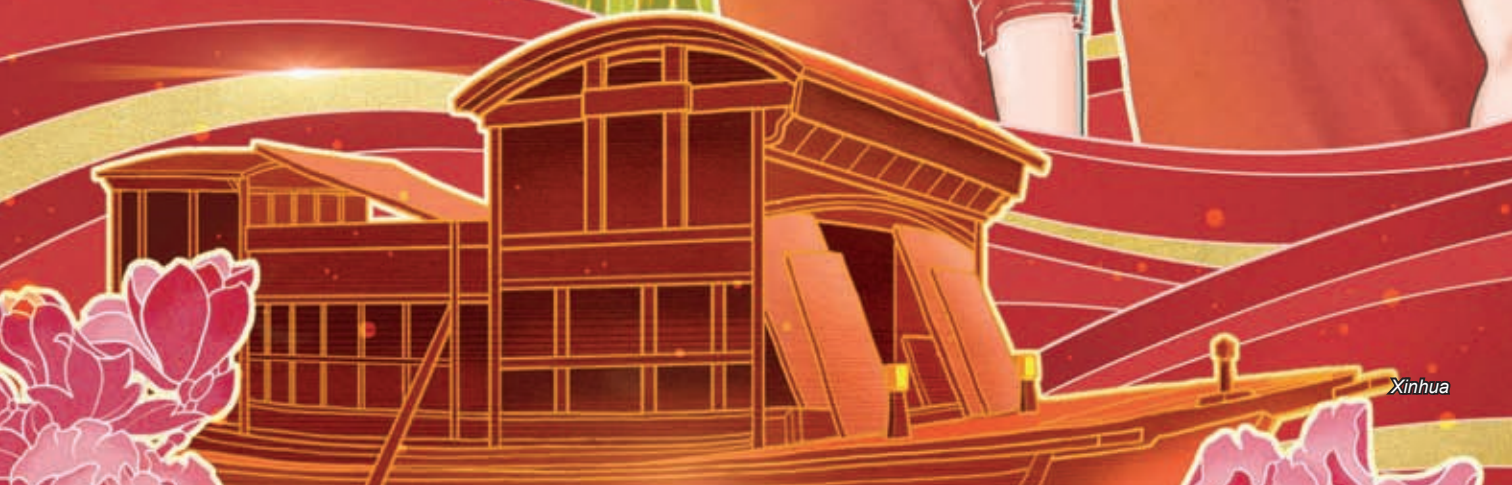
庆祝中国共产党成立100周年
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