



CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING PRESIDES OVER PBSC MEETING ON JANUARY 4

Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over the Politburo Standing Committee meeting on January 3 held to hear a series of work reports. The reports were from leading Party members groups of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the State Council, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the Supreme People's Court, and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, as well as from the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee. It was the first time that the Politburo Standing Committee heard such work reports since the Party's 20th National Congress.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: QIU SHI PUBLISHES FOR FIRST TIME CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S SPEECH ON ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

The latest issue of the Party theoretical fortnightly Qiu Shi (Seeking Truth; 2024/01 dated December 31) published Xi Jinping's speech on the environment and climate, originally delivered at the National Ecological Environmental Protection Conference on July 17, 2023, and titled 'Comprehensively promote the modernization of harmonious coexistence between man and nature with the construction of Beautiful China'. A key point was: "a high-quality ecological environment underpins high-quality development" and rejuvenation. Briefly, Xi Jinping urged: "promote the clean and efficient use of coal, ensuring it plays a role in providing basic energy security", "vigorously develop wind and solar power, balance hydropower with conservation,...develop nuclear power". Xi Jinping also said: "Promote self-reliance and self-improvement in green and low-carbon technology, making climate change mitigation and new pollutant control key areas of national basic research and technological innovation. Focus on key core technology breakthroughs". An important point made by Xi Jinping was: "implement

the overall national security concept, actively and effectively address various risks and challenges to ensure that the natural environment and conditions upon which our survival and development depend are not threatened or harmed."

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING PRESIDED OVER ANNUAL 'DEMOCRATIC LIFE' MEETING OF POLITBURO

Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over and delivered an important speech at the CCP CC Politburo held its annual special meeting on 'democratic life' on December 28 and 29, 2023. Xinhua described the purpose of this meeting as "criticism and self-criticism" with the focus on the "theoretical study program on the study and implementation of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era". It said: "The meeting followed the specific objectives of strengthening cohesion and forging the Party's soul as the fundamental, tempering personal character and loyalty, promoting development through hard work and fulfilling duties, acting on the Party's purpose to work for the well-being of the people, and establishing a clean and upright work style. Following the important requirements of using learning to strengthen political awareness, increase intellect, rectify conduct, and promote implementation, the meeting was meant to sum up achievements, find out deficiencies and carry out criticism and self-criticism on the work of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, on whether the bureau has taken the lead in being politically conscious, in understanding and implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, in carrying out the decisions and arrangements of the CPC Central Committee, in acting on the Party's purpose to work for the well-being of the people, and in fulfilling its duties when it comes to full and rigorous Party self-governance."

Prior to the meeting, Politburo members "had discussions with leading officials of relevant departments, listened to their opinions and suggestions and thereby prepared speeches." Xinhua said they presented reports on how the eight-point decision on conduct has been implemented and spoke on "conducting serious self-examination and profound analysis in accordance with the Regulations of the Political Bureau on Strengthening and Upholding the Centralized and Unified Leadership of the CPC Central Committee and the Detailed Rules of the Political Bureau for Enforcing the CPC Central Committee's Eight-Point Decision on Conduct. The meeting's atmosphere was serious and lively, the discussions were open and frank, and it has achieved the expected results."

The Politburo members focussed on 6 aspects:

- “First, they have become more conscious and firm in studying and implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.
- Second, they have become more conscious and firm in upholding the CPC Central Committee’s authority and centralized, unified leadership.
- Third, they have become more conscious and firm in acting on the Party’s purpose to serve the people.
- Fourth, they have become more conscious and firm in being pragmatic and ensuring effective implementation of the Thought.
- Fifth, they have become more conscious and firm in playing an exemplary role in maintaining integrity and self-discipline, and firmly opposing privilege-seeking mindset and phenomena, keeping themselves clean, upright and corruption-free.
- Sixth, they have become more conscious and firm in performing political duties for exercising full and rigorous self-governance of the Party, maintaining constant vigilance and determination in addressing the unique challenges faced by our large Party, and persistently advancing the Party’s self-revolution.”

“Members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee unanimously believe that the practice over the past year has once again verified that the affirmation of Xi Jinping's core position on the CPC Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and the affirmation of the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era have been of decisive significance to our response to various risks and challenges and to advancing Chinese modernization. The whole Party, the entire military, and the people must deeply understand the decisive significance of the Two Affirmations, become more conscious of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership, strengthen confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and uphold General Secretary Xi Jinping's core position on the CPC Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, uphold the CPC Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership, and resolutely implement the policies and work arrangements of the CPC Central Committee.” – (Basically, this is reaffirming the Two Establishments, two safeguards, four self-confidences and four consciousnesses)

“Next year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and is a critical year for achieving the goals and tasks of the 14th Five-Year Plan. It is imperative to follow the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" and it is "also essential to boost economic vitality, prevent and mitigate risks, improve social expectations, consolidate and promote the momentum of economic recovery, and make further progress in building China into a strong country and realizing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through a path to Chinese modernization.”

Xi Jinping made the following points:

- “This criticism and self-criticism meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee has produced expected results, achieving the purpose of undergoing a political check-up, sweeping away political dust, and purifying political souls.”
- The Politburo “must take the lead in consolidating and expanding the achievements of the (Xi Thought study and implementation) program, establish a long-term mechanism, intensify self-improvement, and play a leading and exemplary role in this regard throughout the entire Party.”
- Politburo members “should play an exemplary and leading role in studying and implementing the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, make a thorough understanding of its scientific system, core essence, and practical requirements, and enhance their political capacity and leadership through improving their ideological and theoretical level. Upholding the centralized and unified leadership of the Party Central Committee is concrete rather than abstract, and it must first materialize in firmly upholding the authority of the Party Central Committee, and in action through enhancing the consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership, staying confident in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and upholding Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and upholding the Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership.”
- Politburo members should “take the lead in implementing democratic centralism, think carefully and express their opinions fully when participating in the Party Central Committee's deliberations on major decisions. They must tell the real situation learned in the work in a timely, objective and comprehensive manner, instead of reporting only what is positive while concealing what is negative. They should attach importance to promoting democracy in the sectors or localities under their charge, and encourage others to express opinions freely. They should be good at summarizing correctly and able to identify the correct opinions that comply

with the laws governing things' development and represent the fundamental interests of the people so as to ensure sound decision-making. They should also discover in a timely manner wrong acts that violate democratic centralism, and resolutely rectify them.”

- He said that China was facing a “complex international and domestic situation” and added that Politburo members “should have high degree of political acumen that enables them to be sharp-sighted and see what is coming from a small clue. They should be good at analyzing the changes and trends of development of situations from a political perspective and seeing the essence through the phenomenon to grasp the internal rule governing development. They should also be able to accurately identify time and momentum, crisis and opportunity as well as advantages and disadvantages, proactively identify, respond to and steer changes, accurately grasp opportunities, effectively respond to risks, and never act hastily before decisions are made. Whether it is planning major strategies, making major decisions or arranging major tasks, it is imperative to maintain correct political orientation and meet political requirements. When resolving disputes and problems, it is essential to pay attention to preventing and defusing political risks with a sharp sight and quick actions, and identify risks as early as possible, so as to remove all kinds of hidden political dangers in a timely manner. It is imperative to attach great importance to and cut the channels where risks from different sectors could transform so as to prevent non-political risks from becoming political ones.”

- Politburo members “should take the lead in adhering to a people-centered development philosophy, pushing ahead with high-quality development, and refraining from pursuing excessive scale, blindly following foreign examples as well as taking reckless actions. They should pay attention to taking concrete measures for solid outcomes, and guard against flashy and impractical approaches and falsification of statistics. They should focus on laying a solid foundation for delivering long-term benefits while opposing short-sighted practices that harm the interest of the people and drain our resources. With high-quality development as the top priority in building China into a modern socialist country in all respects, adherence to high-quality development should serve as a significant component of leading officials' understanding of what it means to perform well. It is imperative to improve the performance assessment methods for promoting high-quality development, and thereby effectively guide and encourage leaderships at all levels to earnestly put into practice the correct understanding of what it means to perform well and follow a correct orientation in conducting their work.”

- Politburo members “must inherit and carry forward the Party's fine traditions, find ways to inspire, motivate, and appeal to the people with the Party's goals, mobilize all possible

positive factors, unite all available forces, and make it possible for Party members, officials and the masses to be of one mind in pursuing our cause...”

- In the last two points, he talked about maintaining close ties with the people and addressing their concerns, along with the need to maintain “personal integrity and self-discipline.” He added: Politburo members “must set strict rules for their family members, relatives, and staff workers around them when it comes to the efforts against corruption.”

(Comment: The "democratic life" meetings are an important institution of the CCP and used often to engage in "criticism" and "self-criticism". Such detailed reporting on a CCP democratic life meeting is unusual and reflects that Party discipline is being accorded high priority. Interesting are Xi Jinping's specific references to China "facing a “complex international and domestic situation” and "it is essential to pay attention to preventing and defusing political risks with a sharp sight and quick actions, and identify risks as early as possible, so as to remove all kinds of hidden political dangers in a timely manner where risks from different sectors could transform so as to prevent non-political risks from becoming political ones.”)

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: PBSC MEMBER CAI QI DELIVERS SPEECH AT PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE

PBSC member and Director of the CCP CC General Office Cai Qi, at a meeting of China's Propaganda officials on January 3 called for the thorough study and full implementation of Xi Jinping Thought on Culture. He called on the officials to focus on the foremost political task of equipping Party members and educating the people with the Party's new theories. He said that related efforts should be made to provide solid ideological guarantees, powerful inspiration and favourable cultural conditions for building China into a stronger country and rejuvenating the Chinese nation on all fronts. Cai Qi underlined the importance of consolidating and building on the achievements of the Party's theoretical study program, and of focusing on confidence-boosting and consensus-building to create new momentum in mainstream public opinion. He also called for efforts to apply China's core socialist values. Politburo member and Head of the CCP CC Propaganda Department Li Shulei presided over the meeting and delivered work plans.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINA'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS WORK CONFERENCE (DECEMBER 27-28) ASSERTS COMMITMENT TO REJUVENATION ETC.

China's Foreign Affairs Work Conference held in Beijing on December 27 and 28 was presided over by Chinese President Xi Jinping. He delivered an "important" speech which "highlighted the unwavering commitment to the centralization of foreign affairs authority within the CCP Central Committee and emphasized the need to strengthen the system and mechanisms for the Party's leadership over foreign affairs". It said Foreign affairs work "must be guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, especially Xi Jinping Diplomatic Thought" and it is "essential to strengthen ideological and theoretical education...promote development of diplomatic workforce".

CHINA-PERSONNEL: SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST ARTICLE APPEARS TO HINT AT ILD CHIEF LIU JIANCHAO TAKING OVER AS FOREIGN MINISTER

An article in the South China Morning Post (January 3) by Shi Jiangtao, identified as a former MFA diplomat, appeared to praise CCP CC ILD's 59-year old Chief Liu Jianchao as having been very active in bolstering the country's image abroad. It said since he took charge in June last year, Liu Jianchao has toured Asia, Europe and Africa. He has also met more than 200 foreign dignitaries and diplomats in Beijing, including two meetings this year with Nicholas Burns, the US ambassador to China. It said observers described Liu Jianchao as a trusted aide to Xi Jinping and generally spoke positively of his high-profile engagement and activities. Liu Jianchao chaired a "Track 1.5 dialogue" – talks that typically involve governmental officials, speaking in a non-official capacity, and non-government figures – with the Asia Society, an American think tank in October, shortly before President Xi Jinping met his US counterpart Joe Biden in San Francisco last November.

(Comment: China observer Neil Thomas described Liu Jianchao as "a tactful diplomat who speaks sophisticated English made him well-suited to play a supporting role in Xi's attempt over recent months to ease diplomatic tensions with the West". He added "Liu appears to be a trusted diplomatic lieutenant of the Xi era, having previously spearheaded Xi's campaign to track down corrupt officials abroad, then working in Xi's old power base of Zhejiang province, and now holding a seat on the [Communist Party] Central Committee".)

CHINA-CCP: CAIXIN EDITORIAL DELETED BY CCP CC PROPAGANDA AUTHORITIES

On December 25, Caixin Weekly published an editorial titled "Revisiting the Ideological Line of Seeking Truth from Facts," reviewing the ideological line of "seeking truth from facts" put forward by Deng Xiaoping, the former leader of the Communist Party of China (chief architect of reform and opening up). It also quoted Xi Jinping's original words - "History has repeatedly proved that if we insist on seeking truth from facts, we can rejuvenate the party and the country; if we violate the principle of seeking truth from facts, we will harm the party and the country." It also uses some historical examples to explain, but by the end of day on December 25 the editorial, which sparked widespread discussion on platforms both inside and outside the wall, had been censored and the next Weibo post posted by [@caixin.com](https://weibo.com/caixin) had also been deleted.

CHINA-CCP: PEOPLE'S DAILY EXPLAINS CCP'S REVISED REGULATIONS ON DISCIPLINARY PUNISHMENTS

The People's Daily (December 29) publicised the CCP's revised Regulations on Party Disciplinary Punishments, which were approved by the Politburo on December 8. It explained the current revision "is an inevitable requirement for the whole party to profoundly understand the decisive significance of the 'two establishments' and resolutely achieve the 'two safeguards'. It is a concrete/tangible step taken to implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, a practical need to adhere to problem orientation, and a realistic requirement to govern the entire party with strict discipline. It also summarizes the experience of strict Party governance and meets the practical requirements of keeping pace with the times." The revised Regulations have a total of 158 articles. Compared with the 2018 Regulations, there are 16 new ones and 76 revised ones. "In the section on political discipline, there is an improvement in disciplinary provisions to ensure the smooth implementation of the directives from the Central Committee. Additional disciplinary measures have been introduced for actions that disregard the overall interests of the Party and the country, as well as behaviours promoting departmental or local protectionism". "Disciplinary provisions regarding disloyalty and dishonesty to the Party, as well as actions that undermine the unity of the Party, have been enriched. Additional disciplinary measures have been introduced for behaviours such as engaging in political opportunism/clinging (政治攀附, i.e., essentially this is associating with

factions or creating patron-client relations) and associating with political fraudsters/swindlers (政治骗子). In response to issues identified in disciplinary supervision, new provisions have been added to address actions involving reading, browsing, or listening to publications, books, audio-visual materials, electronic publications, and online information with serious political problems without prior permission. Disciplinary provisions for behaviours with severe implications have been further refined, aiming to enhance the measures for handling the conduct of Party members involving religious beliefs and engaging in superstitious activities at a personal level.” It calls for "strengthened all-round management and regular supervision of Party members and cadres, put forward strict requirements for them after leaving their posts and while in office", and says that the regulations “improve the punishment provisions for behaviours that violate the eight-point central regulations, and additional provisions have been added to address actions involving disguised gift-giving in the form of lecture fees, research project fees, consulting fees, etc. The regulations have been enriched to cover disciplinary measures for violations such as improper receptions, indiscriminate distribution of benefits, unauthorised leasing or borrowing of office space, and unauthorised organisation of demonstration activities, in violation of the regulations on the management of conference activities.”

CHINA-ANTI-CORRUPTION: CCP ENLARGES SCOPE OF DISCIPLINE AND ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN TO INCLUDE "UNDESIRABLE" READING MATERIALS

The website of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission and the National Supervisory Commission on November 16, 2023 posted a notice announcing that it had launched a case review and investigation into Zhou Qingyu, former Party Committee Member and Vice President of the China Development Bank, for serious violations of the party's political discipline, organizational discipline, integrity and law. In addition to charging hm with corruption, it said he had been found to be "engaged in superstitious activities, privately collected and read books and periodicals with serious political issues, and ignored the eight regulations of the Central Committee" etc. .

(Comment: The political verdict stating that among his (many) issues, one was the "private possession and reading of publications with serious political issues" points to the CCP leadership monitoring members reading "western liberal" literature.)

CHINA-CCP: PLA DAILY EDITORIAL STRESSES INTENSIFICATION OF CAMPAIGN AGAINST CORRUPTION

Bloomberg (January 2 published a report which said the People's Liberation Army Daily mentioned "corruption" three times in its January 1 editorial, more than in any other years since President Xi Jinping began his crusade against graft in 2012. The word was mentioned only once in each of the annual articles from 2017 to 2023, and twice in 2015 and 2016. The newspaper declared the PLA will continue fighting the "difficult and protracted war on graft". In the past year, "we have deepened the cleanup of the management of key industries and fields, and persevered to correct conduct, tighten discipline and fight corruption," the PLA Daily wrote.

CHINA-ECONOMY: CCP FIRES OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR PLACING LIMITS ON CHINESE GAMING COMPANIES AND CAUSING STOCKS TO COLLAPSE

A report revealed that in the week prior to January 3, 2024, Feng Shixin, Head of the CCP CC Propaganda Department's Publishing Department, which oversees China's gaming regulatory body (NPPA), was fired for causing panic in the gaming industry. On December 22, the NPPA issued a draft regulation threatening to set a user spending cap for in-game purchases – which would place a cap on game companies' revenues. Reuters said five sources said Feng Shixin's removal was linked to rules the NPPA announced last month that sent stocks in the world's largest video games sector, including industry giant Tencent, plunging."

CHINA-ECONOMY: CHINA CONTINUES PAY CUTS OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN PROVINCES

Provincial reports (December 28) revealed that salary reductions for civil servants is spreading including in Beijing, Hubei, the Yangtze River Delta, and the Pearl River Delta. It quoted a civil servant from a Beijing municipal agency as saying that salaries have already been

"indirectly" reduced by 10% this year. Although the basic salary hasn't changed, subsidies have decreased, and they say the previous benefits were "unreasonable". An article on the WeChat public account of Hubei said the salary reduction wave quietly began in 2023 before the year ends, and mentions a town-level civil servant in Xiantao, Hubei, who joined in 2018, experiencing a reduction of about 280 yuan in monthly salary this month and a halving of the year-end performance bonus of over 10,000 yuan, resulting in an overall salary reduction of around 15%. The annual income in Shenzhen has dropped from over 360,000 yuan to just over 250,000 yuan, and in Zhuhai, it has decreased from 280,000 to about 200,000 yuan. After the reduction, the annual income for provincial (government) employees in Guangdong is over 220,000 yuan, in Foshan and Dongguan, it's 200,000 yuan, and in Zhongshan, it ranges from 150,000 to 200,000 yuan, with Huizhou and Jiangmen at 140,000 yuan. Reports also suggest that civil servants in various regions are undergoing structural adjustments in their salary, which is a "disguised" pay cut. A netizen on Xiaohongshu claimed that Shandong Province has issued a document taking out the basic performance bonuses but leaving room for discretionary distribution. A civil servant in a Beijing municipal agency admitted that although the basic salary has not changed this year, various subsidies and bonuses have been reduced by tens of thousands of yuan. For this reason, it had established a Salary Reduction Office to eliminate the "unreasonable" benefits provided earlier. The National Financial Work Conference held in Beijing on December 21-22 emphasized the need to vigorously promote financial management reform next year. It stressed the importance of practicing frugality to instill the concept of tightening belts and establishing a system of living within tight financial constraints. A notice on "strengthening budget management and adhering to the concept of living within tight financial constraints" issued by the Xiamen Municipal Government in Fujian Province has widely circulated online. It strictly prohibits the unauthorized construction of buildings and facilities and forbids projects solely for political achievements or image-building.

CHINA-ECONOMY: CHINESE SOES DECIDE ON MAJOR PROJECTS FOR CURRENT YEAR

i) China's central state-owned assets regulator published a list of mega-projects completed or under construction by the country's central state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in 2023. Super engineering projects include the Shenzhou-17 spacecraft, China's HL-3, and the Hualong. One nuclear power unit exemplifies advanced technology and high-confinement operations. The list also consists of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, a cross-sea underwater tunnel

connecting Shenzhen and Zhongshan, a key project in enhancing the greater Bay Area's power supply. Projects like the intelligent computing centre and ethylene project have also made it into the top ten. The intelligent computing centre, an ethylene project, an eco-friendly offshore oil field, and a commercial service supporting 5G terminals and satellites made it into the top ten as well. The selection was made based on public opinion and expertise.

ii) According to Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), amid increasing tensions in its neighbourhood and deteriorating security environment, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has significantly increased the warplane production. China is enhancing its military equipment and the state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation (AVIC) as well as Chengdu Aircraft Industrial (Group) Co Ltd (CAC), Xi'an Aircraft Industry Group Company Ltd (XAC) and Shenyang Aircraft Company Limited (SAC). All these companies have exceeded their targets in their annual production. The CAC delivered its last aircraft on December 27, XAC finished its final test flight 2023 on December 20, and SAC completed its annual batch production and did testing flight missions on November 25. These companies have also completed their annual scientific research and production missions. China's increased production capacity is likely due to new technologies such as pulse assembly, which is faster and ensures better quality. This enabled China to use more advanced tools to deal with defence emergencies.

CHINA-DISSIDENCE/PROTESTS: NUMBER OF PROTESTS IN CHINA REGISTER INCREASE

Radio Free Asia (January 4) reported that amidst the waves of layoffs across China, Beijing bus companies are hiring security guards so that each bus has at least two to "prevent emergencies". Meanwhile, China's state-backed Zhengzhou Public Transport Group is seeking internal opinions on its plan to encourage employees to start their own businesses.

ii) The Hongkong-based China Labour Bureau reported that there were 1104 strikes in China in the last 6 months and 976 calls for help by workers striking for wage arrears etc in the last 6 months with the latest incident occurring in Guangdong Province.

CHINA-DISSIDENCE: PROTESTS REPORTED IN HENAN AND SICHUAN

Human Rights in China (HRIC) reported that on December 27 and 28, thousands gathered in Henan to protest the death and possible gruesome murder of a 14-year-old student, as well as the government's apparent complicity in helping the school cover it up. The demonstrations drew crowds of over ten thousand, becoming the largest Chinese protest of 2023. The authorities quickly cracked down, with police and blockades shutting down the whole city. Separately, in Sichuan, doctors perched on windowsills to protest unpaid wages, in the latest of a series of protests over wage arrears.

CHINA-PLA: DISMISSAL OF SENIOR OFFICERS IN PLA CONTINUED IN DECEMBER

On December 27, 2023, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) revoked the political titles of three aerospace-defense executives: Wu Yansheng, Liu Shiquan, and Wang Changqing. Two days later, on December 29, the NPC removed nine senior PLA officers from their posts. Five of those removed were past or current commanders of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF). In June 2023, Rocket Force Commander Li Yuchao, who had earlier overseen exercises for launching a nuclear counter-strike after coming under nuclear attack, Rocket Force Commissar Xu Zhongbo, and his deputies Liu Guangbin and Zhang Zhenzhong were all removed from their positions. While no official cause was given, speculative rumours have pointed to embezzlement and espionage and leakage by Li Yuchao's son of government secrets to the United States while studying abroad. In July, a former deputy of the Rocket Force and head of the secretive Third Department Wu Guohua died under mysterious circumstances. In July 2023, Ju Qiansheng, Commander of the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) and member of the Third Department, went missing amid investigations of misconduct. In September, there was a major shakeup as Cheng Dongfang, head of the PLA Military Court and Li Shangfu, the Defense Minister, were removed from their positions. Former PLARF Commander Zhou Yaning, Head of the PLARF Armaments Department Lu Hong, and former PLARF deputy Li Chuanguang were all discharged. Commander of the Southern Theater Navy Ju Xinchun and former PLAAF Commander Ding Laihang, who has pushed for pilots to get more realistic training, were also removed from their positions. Interesting was the dismissal of Equipment Development Department officials Zhang Yulin, and Rao Wenmin.

ii) The names of 15 PLA RF officers removed from their posts is given below:

Name	Title	Date of Public Removal
Zhang Yulin	Former deputy director of General Armament Department, predecessor of EDD	Dec. 29, 2023
Rao Wenmin	Member of EDD	Dec. 29, 2023
Zhou Yaning	Former commander of Rocket Force	Dec. 29, 2023
Zhang Zhenzhong	Former commander of Rocket Force; deputy chief of joint staff department of Central Military Commission since at least 2022	Dec. 29, 2023
Li Chuanguang	Deputy commander of Rocket Force since at least 2018	Dec. 29, 2023
Lyu Hong	Member of Rocket Force	Dec. 29, 2023
Ju Xinchun	Worked as Li Shangfu's deputy in China's manned space program; navy commander of Southern Theater Command since February	Dec. 29, 2023
Ding Laihang	Former commander of Air Force	Dec. 29, 2023
Wu Yansheng	Chairman of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp	Dec. 27, 2023
Liu Shiquan	Former executive at China Aerospace Science & Industry Corp; chairman of China North Industries Group Corp	Dec. 27, 2023
Wang Changqing	Executive at China Aerospace Science & Industry Corp	Dec. 27, 2023
Li Tongjian	Major-general of Rocket Force	Nov. 24, 2023
Li Shangfu	Former director of EDD; former defense minister; CMC member	Oct. 24, 2023
Li Yuchao	Former commander of Rocket Force	Jul. 31, 2023
Xu Zhongbo		

(Comment: The list has been compiled by Bloomberg on January 4.)

CHINA-PLA: PLA TROOPS CONDUCT EXERCISES IN HIGH PLATEAU AT HIGH ALTITUDES

i) China Youth Daily (January 4) reported that officers and soldiers from the Shannan Military Division in Tibet had recently conducted a rigorous air-ground integrated fire strike drill in an unfamiliar plateau area at an altitude of 4,700 meters. Aimed at testing the plateau border defence forces' capabilities under extreme conditions, the exercise included multi-dimensional penetration of "enemy" positions by dividing troops into three groups. The drill, covering more than 300 kms, emphasized collaborative combing capabilities, command communication links, and showcased advances in offensive combat techniques, including close range shooting, bombing, and precision strikes carried out by unmanned attack attack groups.

ii) The state-owned CCTV (December 19) disclosed that a recruit battalion of the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLA SSF) organized more than 500 officers and soldiers to conduct comprehensive field training as part of a comprehensive winter field exercise began. It said the field training is not only a concentrated test of the new training results, but also an important test of the will and quality of the officers and soldiers. This training closely followed the actual combat background. Each soldier carried 15 kilograms of equipment, carried out a 30-kilometer motorized march, and a 30-kilometer mountain march. It said all officers and soldiers acted according to the orders and overcame the cold weather and other difficulties and comprehensively sharpened their excellent combat style and practical capabilities.

CHINA-TIBET: WORLD'S LARGEST WIND POWER FARM OPERATIONALISED IN NAQU, TAR

The state-owned CCTV (January 1) disclosed that on January 1, 2024, the Naqu Omatingga 100 MW wind power project, the world's largest wind power plant in ultra-high altitude areas, officially commenced operations. The project, featuring 25 wind turbines with a single capacity of 4 MW each, has a total installed capacity of 100 MW and covers an area of 140,000 square meters. With an annual output of 200 mn kilowatt hours, the wind farm meets the electricity needs of approximately 230,000 people in Nagqu City, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by

200,000 tons and contributing to sustainable energy devp on the plateau. It added that currently there are more than 50 new energy projects under construction or about to be started on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

CHINA-TIBET: TIBETAN AUTHORITIES CELEBRATE 130TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MAO

Chinese authorities in Tibet forced locals to celebrate the 130th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth on January 2, crediting him with "the peaceful liberation of Tibet" in 1950. Radio Free Asia (RFA) claimed a young Tibetan in Lhasa said officials used Mao's birthday "to spread false information and distort facts about Tibet's past history, in the hope of making the Tibetan people believe this disinformation." He said, "Chinese authorities use and disseminate pictures of poor, underprivileged Tibetan families from the 1940s and 1950s at these events to make it seem like the whole of Tibet at the time was poverty-stricken and in the same condition." He also told RFA that Chinese authorities were again promoting the idea that the Dalai Lama in 1951 signed the "17-Point Agreement" with Beijing and had promised Mao in a telegram he would abide by it. Tibet Policy Institute director Dawa Tsering said the forced celebrations for Mao seemed particularly twisted given many Tibetans know some of the worst atrocities against their forebears occurred under his rule. Nyima Woesser, a researcher at the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, which is based in Dharamsala, India, added that more than 1 million Tibetans are estimated to have been killed at the hands of Chinese "oppressive policies" in Tibet since Mao's 1950 invasion.

CHINA-TIBET: US COMPANY THOMAS FISHER SCIENTIFIC STATES IT NO LONGER SELLS DNA-BASED HUMAN IDENTIFICATION PRODUCTS IN TIBET

The Wall Street Journal and International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) on January 3, 2024, quoted the Waltham, Mass.-based Thermo Fisher Scientific as saying it no longer sells certain DNA-based human-identification products in Tibet, building on a similar halt of sales to China's Xinjiang region of technology that human-rights groups allege can be misused by local police forces. The company didn't say whether either regional action will affect its business in other parts of China. Human-rights groups have long alleged that products from Thermo Fisher have been used for such purposes by police in the country.

(Comment: China maintains the world's biggest DNA database as a feature of its high-technology monitoring of a population of 1.4 billion people.)

CHINA-PAKISTAN: 629 PAKISTANI WOMEN AND GIRLS SOLD TO CHINESE MEN

Al Jazeera (January 3) quoted an AP report that 629 Pakistani women and girls had been sold to Chinese men in the past 2 years.

CHINA-MYANMAR: MYANMAR'S NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT (NUG) RELEASED 10-POINT 'POSITION ON CHINA' WHICH SUPPORTS TAIWAN AS INALIENABLE PART OF CHINA

Nikkei Asia (January 3) reported that Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government (NUG), released a 10-point "Position on China" on January 2 indicating that it is ready to work with China on a range of issues, such as promoting direct investment in Myanmar and combatting cross-border crime. The document included support for the "One China" principle, which states that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. Up to this point, the NUG has not publicly made any gestures toward the Chinese government. This move appears to seek to apply pressure on Myanmar's military government, which has drawn closer to Beijing.

CHINA-RUSSIA: RUSSIAN IMPORTS OF HIGH-PRECISION CNC TOOLS HAVE RISEN BY 57 PER CENT SINCE START OF THE UKRAINE WAR

The Financial Times (January 2) reported that Chinese shipments to Russia of an important class of advanced machine tools have increased tenfold since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, with the country's producers now dominating trade in high-precision "computer numerical control" devices vital to Moscow's military industries. It said the rise in shipments of CNC units, which permit extremely precise metal milling, have become a major concern to Ukraine's allies as they seek to crack down on Russia's access to the equipment. Russian customs returns show Chinese producers shipped \$68mn worth of CNC tools in July, the latest verifiable figure available, up from just \$6.5mn in February 2022 when Moscow launched the full-scale invasion. The customs returns show Chinese-origin CNC devices made up 57 per cent of Russian imports by value in July, up from just 12 per cent before the war. They suggest

Moscow also continued to import substantial amounts of CNC tools made in Taiwan and South Korea. It identified Wuhan Huazhong Numerical Control, which was the main contractor in a “Brain Switch Project” and has worked with Chinese jet fighter maker Shenyang Aircraft Corporation in 2017 as one of the suppliers.

