



**CCAS CHINA NEWS**  
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**CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT MEETS REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE OF KMT AND REPRESENTATIVES TO NPC FROM S&T, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SECTOR**

On March 7, Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is a Deputy to the NPC representing Jiangsu province, met the Jiangsu delegation during their deliberations and discussed ensuring self-reliance in science and technology, pursuing high-quality development, better preserving cultural heritage, advancing the common prosperity drive and amplifying craftsmanship. He highlighted the important role of Jiangsu, an economic powerhouse that accounted for about one tenth of the national GDP, as the nation forges ahead in the Chinese path to modernization.

On March 6, Chinese President Xi Jinping joined the discussion of political advisors from the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the sector of science and technology, and the sector of environment and resources. The same day, according to CCTV (March 6), Chinese President Xi Jinping met members of the CPPCC National Committee.

**CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING ATTENDS CPPCC AND NPC OPENING SESSIONS IN BEIJING ON MARCH 5 & NPC SESSIONS ON MARCH 7 AND 8**

Chinese President Xi Jinping followed by the other 6 members of the Politburo Standing Committee (Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi and Han Zheng) filed into the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for the opening of the CPPCC and NPC sessions on March 5. 1956-born Lou Qinqian has been appointed the speaker of the conference. Lou Qinqian is currently the Chairman of the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee. Nearly 3000 NPC Deputies attended the session.

(Comment: There were 2977 Deputies to the 14th NPC last year, but some have been 'removed' or died.)

ii) Chinese President Xi Jinping met PLA and PAPF Deputies on March 7 when he listened to thoughts and suggestions shared by six military deputies. 271 Deputies from the armed forces are attending the second session of the 14th National People's Congress, which opened in Beijing on March 5.

iii) The People's Daily (March 8) disclosed that the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) held its second plenary meeting on March 8 and Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders attended the meeting. The meeting started deliberating a work report of the Supreme People's Court (SPC) and heard the work report delivered by SPC President Zhang Jun. In his report he said in 2023, the Supreme People's Court accepted 21,081 cases and closed 17,855 cases, a year-on-year increase of 54.6% and 29.5% respectively. Courts at all levels across the country accepted 45.574 million cases and closed 45.268 million cases, a year-on-year increase of 15.6% and 13.4% respectively.

iv) The People's Daily (March 8) also reported that the CPPCC held its second plenary meeting of the annual session on March 7 and CPPCC Chairman and PBSC member Wang Huning attended the meeting. It said during the meeting, 14 members of the CPPCC National Committee shared their views.

## **CHINA-'BIG TWO': HIGHLIGHTS OF CHINESE PREMIER LI QIANG'S GOVERNMENT WORK REPORT**

China's 'Big Two' sessions started in Beijing on March 5. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's top political advisory body, commenced on March 4 afternoon and the National People's Congress (NPC) -- China's version of a parliament -- commenced its plenary session on March 5. Over 3000 Deputies to the NPC and Delegates to the CPPCC gathered in Beijing for the sessions.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang took over 50 minutes to read out the 40-page 'Report on the Work of the Government' to the Second Session of the 14th National People's Congress on March

5. He mentioned Xi Jinping 16 times in the Report, the most since Xi Jinping took office in 2012, underscoring the Chinese leader's preeminent status. The main points in Li Qiang's Work Report are:

- i) Beijing's economic expectations are mainly in line with last year's, with the GDP growth target still set at 5%
- ii) Industrial policy is still the No. 1 priority. Although Premier Li incorporated the new quality of productivity (新质生产力) proposed by Xi Jinping last year into his government report, this did not show any changes in China's industrial direction.
- iii) Expanding domestic demand now seems to be more important than supply-side reform. Li Qiang elevated expanding domestic demand to the third most important issue in the government report and gave a whole chapter to talk about how to stimulate consumption, while supply-side reform was only briefly mentioned twice without detailed explanation. It is not just in this year's government report, as Li Qiang has not mentioned supply-side reform much since becoming Premier last year.
- iv) Beijing has further tightened its constraints on local governments in this report. Not only does it suggest that it will tighten controls on wasteful local fiscal spending, but it will also clamp down on local protectionism.
- vi) Amidst the persistently sluggish real estate market, Premier Li Qiang omitted the phrase "houses are for living, not for speculation" for the first time. Ex-Premier Li Keqiang actually used this phrase in his 2023 report. It was first articulated by Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- vii) There is good news for foreign investment. Beijing will fully abolish restrictive measures on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector and liberalize market access in services such as telecommunications and medical care.
- viii) The National Defence budget has increased by 7.2 percent, or 1.67 trillion yuan (US\$ 231.4 billion) making 2024 the ninth straight year to see a single-digit hike in the country's defense budget. The National Defence budget has doubled since 2013 when Xi Jinping took over.
- ix) Security is still Beijing's top concern. Last year, it was mentioned 25 times in the government work report, and this year it was mentioned 3 more times this year i.e. 28 times.
- x) Beijing did not announce any major economic adjustments or stimulus measures during the two-session. The establishment of crucial economic directions and personnel changes might be postponed until the Third Plenum.

Talking of stability and security, Li Qiang said "We should adhere to the principles of pursuing progress while ensuring stability, promoting stability through progress, and establishing the new before abolishing the old." "Stability is of overall importance, as it is the basis for everything we do. All localities and government departments should adopt more policies that are conducive to keeping expectations, economic growth, and employment stable".

The main targets for development this year are projected as follows:

- i) GDP growth of around 5 percent;
- ii) over 12 million new urban jobs;
- iii) surveyed urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent (same as last year);
- iv) CPI increase of around 3 percent;
- v) Deficit Ratio: 3 percent (same as last year);
- vi) Government debt ratio: -- (last year was 50 percent);
- vii) Special Government Bond Issue- Yuan 3.9 trillion;
- viii) The government will issue Yuan 1 trillion yuan (US\$139 billion) in ultra long-term special bonds in this year and coming years to support "major national strategies and build "security capacity" in key industries.
- ix) Yuan 10.4 billion (US\$1.4 billion) will go to upgrading industries and modernizing manufacturing.
- x) growth in personal income in step with economic growth;
- xi) Urban employment increases: 12 million (same as last year);
- xii) a basic equilibrium in the balance of payments;
- xiii) grain output of over 650 million metric tons;
- xiv) a drop of around 2.5 percent in energy consumption per unit of GDP; and
- xv) continued improvements in the environment.

Zhang Xiaoming, who has only just been 'removed' from his position as Deputy Secretary General took his seat on the rostrum at the CPPCC opening ceremony. China's official media still refers to him as "comrade".

There will be no press conference by the Chinese Premier after the NPC session this year. This is the first time since the press conference was instituted in 1993. The announcement said, "unless there are special circumstances there will be no press conferences by the Premier for the next few years".

There has been no report on former Defence Minister Li Shangfu giving up his position as Deputy to NPC, but NPC spokesman Lou Qinjian said (March 5) that China's former Defense Minister Li Shangfu (still missing) is no longer an NPC representative.

(Comment: (i)The most the late Premier Li Keqiang ever mentioned Xi Jinping's name was 14 times.

(ii) The "around 5%" growth target announced by Premier Li Qiang on March 5 is the same as that for 2023. But unlike last year, when Beijing's abrupt exit from Covid Zero provided a boost to economic activities in the first half, there is no powerful tailwind in China's favor this time. The government also continues to see inflation at around 3%, even as the National Statistics Bureau reports the economy is slipping into deflation. Both estimates remain unchanged since last year indicating the government's reluctance to set a figure it cannot reach or a realistically low figure which could further undermine confidence.)

### **CHINA-NPC: SENIOR CENTRAL LEADERS ATTEND DELIBERATIONS OF PROVINCIAL DELEGATIONS TO NPC**

Senior CCP leaders joined provincial and other delegations in their deliberations during the ongoing NPC session in Beijing on March 5.

i) Chinese Premier Li Qiang joined NPC deputies from Yunnan Province in a group deliberation and stressed that Yunnan should give full play to its advantages and characteristics to better integrate into the national strategy of regional coordinated development. He said Yunnan should play an active role in opening up, and better transform its location advantage into a new edge for opening up.

ii) Politburo Standing Committee member and NPC Chairman Zhao Leji joined the deliberations with his fellow deputies from Sichuan Province and asked the province to implement the decisions and arrangements made by the CCP CC in light of its actual conditions, and promote Chinese modernization. He said Sichuan should rely on scientific and technological innovation to create new drivers and advantages for development, in a bid to build itself into an innovation highland and a key driving force for high-quality development in the western region.

iii) Politburo Standing Committee member and CPPCC Chairman Wang Huning joined deputies from Guizhou Province and called on them to comprehensively implement the decisions and arrangements made by the CPC Central Committee, and work hard to advance Chinese modernization. He asked Guizhou to promote rural revitalization in an all-round manner and consolidate and expand the achievements in poverty alleviation.

iv) Politburo Standing Committee member and Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang joined his fellow legislators from Liaoning Province and stressed the importance of closely focusing on the Party's central task in the new era on the new journey and promoting high-quality development to yield concrete results. He urged Liaoning to consolidate and boost the momentum of economic recovery and improvement, accelerate the development of new quality productive forces, transform and upgrade traditional industries, and construct a modernized industrial system featuring the province's characteristics and strengths.

v) Politburo Standing Committee member and CDIC Secretary Li Xi joined fellow lawmakers from Fujian Province and stressed efforts to advance the high-quality development of discipline inspection and supervision, so as to provide a strong guarantee for building China into a great country and realizing its national rejuvenation. He urged discipline inspection and supervision organs to foster a good environment with both order and vitality, constantly eradicate the soil for corruption, address pressing problems of keen concern to the people, and improve the people's well-being. Li Xi also called on the coastal province to continue exploring a new way of integrated development on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and better build it into a demonstration zone for cross-Strait integrated development.

vi) Vice President Han Zheng called on deputies from Shandong Province to thoroughly implement the CCP CC's decisions and arrangements, and make all efforts to make sure that all areas of work are carried out.

vii) Politburo member and Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing with Lobsang Gyaltsen, Vice Chairman of the 14th NPC, attended a review meeting presided over by TAR Party Secretary and Leader of the TAR delegation to the NPC, Wang Junzheng. During the meeting, Yan Jinhai, Chairman of the TAR People's Government and Deputy Head of the TAR delegation spoke. NPC Deputies from TAR, including Wang Junzheng, Yan Jinhai, Tashi Gyaltsen, Bata, Laqiong, Lobsang Gyaltsen, Zhang Guoqing, and others voiced their support for Premier Li

Qiang's government work report and praised its adherence to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

viii) Politburo member and Foreign Minister Wang Yi participated in the deliberations of the Guangxi delegation on March 5 and expressed complete agreement with Premier Li Qiang's Work Report. He also said the diplomatic and foreign affairs front will firmly support the "two establishments" and resolutely achieve the "two safeguards" to create a more favorable international environment and provide more solid strategic support for the great cause of building a strong country and national rejuvenation.

ix) Politburo member and Director of the CCP CC Propaganda Department Li Shulei attended the deliberations of the Jiangxi delegation.

x) Politburo member and NPC Vice Chairman Li Hongzhong attended the deliberations of the Gansu province delegation.

xi) Politburo member and Vice Premier He Lifeng attended the deliberations of the delegation from Inner Mongolia.

#### **CHINA-NPC: SELECTED STATEMENTS/PROPOSALS BY NPC DEPUTIES**

a) Yuan Huazhi, Political Commissar of the PLA Navy and NPC Deputy, according to the Hong Kong Commercial Daily said on March 5 on the sidelines of the NPC session that China will unveil its fourth aircraft carrier soon. Yuan Huazhi added there is no bottleneck in China's aircraft carrier technologies, and the development is progressing smoothly. Asked whether China can deal with US aircraft carriers that have been intensively deployed in the West Pacific, Yuan Huazhi said "Trust us, we can. We don't just deal with aircraft carriers. We also deal with [potential threats] comprehensively."

b) Zhang Yuzhuo, Chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) of the State Council, said (March 5) on the sidelines of the ongoing "two sessions" that investment by central SOEs in strategic emerging industries increased 32.1 percent year on year in 2023. He said the SASAC's goal envisaged income derived from strategic emerging industries by central SOEs as accounting for 35 percent of their total income

by 2025. He said it is important to increase the layout of industries "especially in brain-like intelligence, quantum information and controlled nuclear fusion."

c) Yao Jinbo, a NPC Deputy and founder of [58.com](http://58.com), has brought four bills this time, focusing on halving social security payments during the buffer period for first-time insured persons but treating them as full payments, regulating monopolistic behavior in the real estate brokerage industry, promoting the "door-to-door economy" through the digital economy and brand development and promoting high-quality development of China's motor vehicle driver training industry. He said in an interview that well-developed new first-tier cities also deserve the attention of graduates, especially new first-tier cities such as Changsha, Chongqing, Chengdu and other cities where there are still many opportunities.

d) Liu Jiang, Deputy to the NPC and Party Secretary and Chairman of Changhong Holding Group, put forward three proposals, involving the fields of industrial Internet, home service robots, and AI large models, during the two sessions in 2024. Liu Jiang said, "Home service robots integrate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, high-end manufacturing, and new materials. They are a new engine for economic growth and an important industrial direction for cultivating new productivity." He also said in 2023, China's home service robot market will reach 95.92 billion yuan, a year-on-year growth of 32.8% and it is expected that by 2027, the size of its home service robot market will be close to 300 billion yuan. He believed that accelerating the application of home service robots is of great significance to China's economic and social development in the context of the shortage of domestic service supply, the rising number of elderly people, rising labor costs, and increasingly mature robot technology.

e) Qin Yinglin, Chairman of Muyuan Shares and Deputy to the NPC, put forward suggestions on the high-quality development of the pig industry at this year's two sessions, involving five aspects. During the 'two sessions' in the past six years, Qin Yinglin has put forward 58 suggestions relating to the pig industry.

f) Ling Yu-shih, a Deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), told the Global Times (March 4) "I am an ordinary Taiwan-born scholar who later went to Hong Kong and had the opportunity to serve the country and the people. I'm so excited to participate in the two sessions." Ling Yu-shih, who previously



served as a senior research director in the Central Policy Unit in the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, said that China has maintained good cooperation with Arab countries for a long time and there is potential for investment in the Greater Bay Area from Middle Eastern Arab countries adding that Middle Eastern funds could become a new growth investment driver for the Greater Bay Area. She has proposed at the NPC session that the successful experience of Hong Kong and Macao under the principle of One Country, Two Systems should be better demonstrated to the island of Taiwan. Hong Kong universities could try to promote its attraction to Taiwan students, and more cross-Straits civic activities could be held.

g) Wong Kam-leung, NPC Deputy of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region and Chairman of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers (HKFEW) told Global Times (March 4) he hoped that Hong Kong will establish a permanent national security education and training base.

h) NPC Deputy Geng Funeng (耿福能) has proposed that China's online influencers, whether they are celebrities or e-commerce stars, should face harsher penalties for involvement in illegal activities. Saying they have set a wrong example in recent years and to deter others, those engaging in illegal acts, from tax evasion to slander, should be severely punished. However, a comment on the Weibo account of The Paper (澎湃新闻) said "They should increase the punishment for civil servants engaging in illegal behavior instead".

i) NPC Deputy and Prof of Material Science at Chongqing University, Pan Fusheng (潘复生) said there is excessive emphasis placed on the very first college educational background of applicants and in cases where their first diploma was obtained in non-prestigious universities or colleges, they are often disqualified. He suggested getting rid of the graduate degree assessment as a primary criterion in the admission and employment processes for applicants, which also means that graduates from certain prestigious schools, such as Tsinghua or Peking University, should not be favored over others.

j) Hong Kong businessman and CPPCC member Kenneth Fok (霍启刚) suggested that paid time off should be increased as a way to boost domestic tourism and consumption and "increase people's sense of happiness." Fok advocates that there should be an increase in entitled leave

days for employees, but also that these policies should be enforced more strictly. He suggested gradually extending paid annual leave days according to the duration of employment. Employees who have worked at a Chinese company for more than 1 year but less than 10 years would get 5 days off for the first two years, then an extra day each year, up to a maximum of 10 days. In the current system, employees with 1-10 years' tenure get 5 days off. Only after 10 years, it is increased and becomes 10 days.

### **CHINA-NPC: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER GIVES 2-HOUR LONG PRESS CONFERENCE ON SIDELINES OF NPC**

Chinese Politburo member and Foreign Minister Wang Yi gave a 2-hour long press conference on March 7, where he spoke about China's foreign policy and China-US relations. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said "We facilitated the historic reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, brokered a ceasefire agreement in northern Myanmar, and insisted on political settlement of all hot-spot issues. We resolutely oppose all acts of power bullying and vigorously safeguard national sovereignty, security, development interests and the common interests of developing countries. We will never stop adhering to diplomacy for the people and vigorously serve the overall development and stability of the country". Referring to the Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference held at the end of last year and President Xi Jinping's comprehensive plan for the current and future foreign work, he said: "We will thoroughly study and implement the spirit of the conference, take Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy as the guide, promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind as the main line, and create a new situation in which major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics will be more promising with a more proactive historical responsibility and a more dynamic creative spirit. We will become more confident and self-reliant and forge the character of China's diplomacy. We should always put the development and revitalization of the country on the basis of our own strength, and hold the future and destiny of the Chinese people in our own hands. We must firmly pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and national dignity". Stating that "China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era has maintained high-level operations. Political mutual trust between the two sides continues to deepen, mutually beneficial cooperation complements each other's advantages, and people-to-people exchanges are enthusiastic", he said the bilateral trade volume in 2023 reached a record high of 240 billion U.S. dollars. Russian natural gas has entered thousands of households in China, and Chinese cars are driving in the streets of Russia,

which fully demonstrates the strong resilience and broad prospects of mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries". He added that "Maintaining and developing China-Russia relations is a strategic choice made by both sides based on the fundamental interests of the two peoples. It is also an inevitable requirement in line with the general trend of world development". He said "Building a community with a shared future for mankind is the core concept of Xi Jinping's diplomatic thought. It is China's plan for what kind of world to build and how to build it" and "has become the glorious banner leading the progress of the current era and the lofty goal pursued by major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era". Referring to China's ties with the US, Wang Yi urged the US to view China's development objectively and rationally, and act to fulfil its commitments. He said 'if the US says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major country? If it gets jittery whenever it hears the word "China," where is its confidence as a major country? If it only wants itself to prosper but denies other countries' legitimate development, where is international fairness? If it persistently monopolizes the high end of value chains and keeps China at the low end, where is fairness in competition?' Responding to a question about China-US relations, he said 'no matter how the international situation changes, China has always maintained the stability and continuity of its policy toward the US, and that China has always handled China-US relations with an attitude of responsibility toward history, the people, and the world'. He cautioned that the "small yard, high fence" strategy adopted by Washington to restrict China's access to certain technologies to restrict China's development of AI will "result in mistakes with historic consequences." Wang Yi also referred to the situation in Gaza and called for an immediate ceasefire and agreement to a two-state solution. On Taiwan, Wang Yi described "The Taiwan regional election is just a local election in China. The election results will not change the basic fact that Taiwan is part of China, nor will it change the historical trend that Taiwan will return to the motherland". He said, "If there are still people who condone and support "Taiwan independence", they are challenging China's sovereignty. If a certain country insists on maintaining official relations with the Taiwan region, it is interfering in China's internal affairs". He added that "The separatist behaviour of "Taiwan independence" is the most destructive factor for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. To truly safeguard peace across the Taiwan Strait, we must unequivocally oppose "Taiwan independence." The stronger we uphold the one-China principle, the more secure peace across the Taiwan Strait will be. Our policy is very clear, which is to continue to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification with the utmost sincerity. Our bottom line is also very clear, that is, Taiwan will never be allowed to split from the motherland. Anyone in Taiwan who wants to pursue "Taiwan

independence" will be liquidated by history. Anyone in the international community who condones and supports "Taiwan independence" will surely get burned and suffer the consequences". He reiterated that "The two sides of the Taiwan Strait are closely connected by flesh and blood, and their national roots are inseparable. All descendants of Yan and Huang, and all descendants of the dragon, should uphold national justice, jointly oppose "Taiwan independence" and support peaceful reunification".

### **CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING AND PREMIER LI QIANG CONGRATULATE SHAHBAZ KHAN ON HIS ELECTION AS PAKISTAN'S PRIME MINISTER**

The state-owned CCTV (March 3) reported that Chinese President Xi Jinping called Shahbaz Khan to congratulate him on his election as Prime Minister of Pakistan. Chinese Premier Li Qiang called Shahbaz Khan later the same day.

### **CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING CONVEYS IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUNG AND MIDDLE AGED CADRES TRAINING AT CENTRAL PARTY SCHOOL**

Xinhua (March 3) reported that the Central Party School held an opening ceremony on March 1 for the training program for young and middle-aged officials for the Spring semester of 2024. Chinese President Xi Jinping conveyed important instructions on the occasion when he "emphasized that young officials are a new force in the development of the Party's and the country's cause, and successors to the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics" He exhorted them to "keep firmly in mind the Party's original aspiration and mission, strive hard to make progress and do a good job in taking on their historical mission". Xi Jinping stressed that they should consciously and firmly believe in, and implement the Party's new theories, and keep enhancing cohesion and forging their souls with the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. He urged them to keep strengthening and cementing their faith and ideal, have a strong political standing, and effectively improve their understanding of the Marxist theory and their ability to apply it. He said young officials must "be conscious role models in practicing loyalty and honesty toward the Party, take a clear-cut stance in maintaining political integrity, and greatly improve their capacities for political judgment, thinking, and implementation. They should strictly abide by the Party's political discipline and

rules, speak their minds, do solid work, be honest, and always keep aligned with the CPC Central Committee. They should also commit themselves to selfless dedication, striving to bring more benefits to the people. This requires them to put the people in the paramount position and cultivate a correct understanding of what it means to perform well. They should carry out the Party's mass line for the new era, improve their capacities for working with the people, and put their hearts and souls into addressing the pressing concerns of the people, so as to constantly increase people's sense of fulfilment, happiness, and security". Xi Jinping said Party organizations at all levels must "work with a strong sense of political responsibility and historical mission, doing a good job in the fundamental work of cultivating more qualified successors to carry forward the cause of the Party and the country. They should optimize the mechanism of training and selecting excellent young officials on a regular basis, strictly educate, manage and supervise young officials, and continuously train and bring up reliable successors capable of taking on the great task of building China into a strong country and realizing national rejuvenation". Politburo Standing Committee member and member of the CCP CC Secretariat Cai Qi attended the opening ceremony and delivered a speech. Cai Qi said that "General Secretary Xi's important instructions are profound and insightful and of great political, ideological, guiding and pertinent significance" and should function as a handbook for the young and middle aged cadres. He said they "must remain loyal and honest to the Party, lay a solid political foundation, forever uphold the Party's guideline, follow the Party's will and stay committed to the Party's mission. Young officials must gain a deep understanding of the decisive significance of establishing Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and establishing the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, uphold Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and uphold the Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership". Secretary of the CCP CC Secretariat Li Ganjie presided over the opening ceremony. CPPCC Vice Chairman Jiang Xinzhi and President of the Central Party School Chen Xi were present together with leading officials from relevant central Party departments.

### **CHINA-STATE COUNCIL: DIRECTOR OF STATE POST BUREAU SAYS THEY WILL CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL CHARGES FOR RURAL EXPRESS DELIVERY**

At the State Council Information Office's press conference in Beijing on February 28, Zhao Chongjiu, Director of the State Post Bureau, said that in recent years rural areas have basically

achieved full coverage of express delivery services, and a number of postal express delivery projects have been built to serve modern agriculture, effectively supporting the development of rural e-commerce. But at the same time, express delivery development in rural areas still faces problems such as unstable service quality and insufficient accessibility. He said that in 2024, the State Post Bureau will focus on the following four aspects: (i) further improve the three-level delivery logistics and distribution system in counties and villages. (ii) improve the ability of express delivery to reach villages and households. Urge express delivery companies to strictly fulfil their service commitments in rural areas, integrate multiple resources to improve end-of-line service levels, promote upstream and downstream factor resources to invest more in rural areas, give full play to the advantages of the delivery network covering urban and rural areas, effectively smooth the "last mile" in rural areas, and continuously improve Express delivery service levels in rural areas. (iii) resolutely rectify illegal charging of rural express delivery services; and (iv) Deeply promote the demonstration and creation of collaborative development of rural e-commerce and express delivery, continue to build a modern agricultural brand project for postal express service, improve the transportation timeliness of agricultural products, actively develop cold chain delivery logistics, and provide professional delivery services for the upward sales of agricultural products.

**CHINA-UNREST: DEBT-RIDDEN LIUPANSHUI CITY**  
**ARRESTS ENTREPRENEUR FOR DEMANDING OUTSTANDING PAYMENTS AS**  
**PROTESTS INCREASE**

The South China Morning Post (February 29) disclosed that fervent backlash had reverberated through social media after it was revealed that Liupanshui city authorities had arrested entrepreneur Ma Yijiayi for trying to recoup millions in back payments from the government. Since 2016, her construction firm had been contracted by Liupanshui city in Guizhou province to build 10 local projects, including kindergartens, primary schools, museums, resorts and hotels, according to a report (February 26) by the Beijing-based China Business Journal, which has since removed the story. The local government was alleged to have owed Ma Yijiayi 220 million yuan (US\$30.6 million) and had previously tried to settle all of the debt for 12 million yuan – merely 5.4 per cent of what her firm was said to be owed. She refused their low offer and continued pressing for payment, taking the government to court. The arrears remained unpaid, so she persisted, but in November, 46-year-old Ma Yijiayi was accused of “picking

quarrels and provoking trouble” and Liupanshui police arrested her. They also arrested some of her defence lawyers on the same charge three months later.

ii) Separately, according to Bloomberg (March 1) the China Dissent Monitor said economic demonstrations have remained elevated since August, with many focused on labor disputes and a real estate crisis that’s cutting into household wealth.

### **CHINA-CCP: CCP CC ISSUES DIRECTIVE TO ALL PARTY MEMBERS DETAILING COMPULSORY LEARNING OF CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S THOUGHTS**

South China Morning Post (February 29) disclosed that on February 28, the CCP CC issued a notice to all party organs across China detailing compulsory learning activities to be conducted regularly in the latest bid to embed the Chinese leader’s doctrine into the minds of more than 98 million party members and cadres. The document came less than a month after the party convened a top-level meeting to conclude a sweeping and intense ideological campaign – known as the “thematic education” programme on Xi’s latest political thought – which lasted 10 months.

### **CHINA-CCP: RED FLAG PUBLISHED IMPORTANT ARTICLE BY CAI JINGFENG, DEPUTY MINISTER OF HUBEI PROVINCE PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT**

Cai Jingfeng, Deputy Minister of the Propaganda Department of the Hubei Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, published an important article in the Red Flag (2024/4 dated February 28) under the caption 'Conscientiously study and implement General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important expositions on ideological work'. The lengthy article included 11 references to Xi Jinping and said " ideological work is an extremely important task for the party. Whether it can do ideological work well is related to the future and destiny of the party, the long-term stability of the country, and national cohesion and centripetal force. This is an important conclusion reached by General Secretary Xi Jinping, who has learned from the past and learned from the future, and profoundly summarized historical experience and lessons." Citing the example of the Soviet Union it warned: "The disintegration of a regime often begins in the ideological realm. Political turmoil and regime change may occur overnight, but ideological evolution is a long-term process. Once the ideological defense line is breached, it

will be difficult to hold other lines of defense." It said "Currently, major changes in the world that have not been seen in a century are accelerating, hostile forces are penetrating and destroying our ideological and cultural fields more violently, and various plots of "Westernization and differentiation", "peaceful evolution" and "color revolutions" are intensifying. Building Chinese-style modernization and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation cannot be achieved easily and with the beating of gongs and drums. We must be prepared to withstand major tests of high winds, waves and even stormy seas, and overcome all difficulties and obstacles, including in the ideological field." Emphasising that a vast country like China "with many ethnic groups and diverse cultures must have a common pursuit of values and spiritual roots to shape, maintain, and strengthen its identity. Otherwise, it will be scattered, falling apart, brothers fighting against each other, and endless chaos", it said "the situation in the ideological field is still grim and complex, and "black swan" and "grey rhino" events may occur at any time." Asserting that "Marxism's guiding position in the ideological field has been further consolidated", it however, admitted that "in the field of social public opinion, mainstream and non-mainstream coexist at the same time, and the positive and negative are intertwined. Some non-Marxist or even anti-Marxist views appear from time to time, such as Western "constitutional democracy", neoliberalism, and historical nihilism" It said "Decaying and backward culture still has influence within a certain scope and among some members of society. In the face of the mutual agitation, integration and confrontation of various ideologies and cultures, ideological work must be dominated by pluralism and neutrality, and the mainstream must be strengthened in the confrontation". It said "the trend of "rising in the east and falling in the west" has become increasingly prominent. Some Western countries have become more panicked and anxious about China's development momentum. Some politicians have repeatedly hyped anti-China issues. Factors such as public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and cognitive warfare in the game of great powers have become more prominent. , the struggle in the ideological field has become more complex and acute. We must dare to fight". The article called "the study and implementation of Xi Jinping's cultural thoughts as an important political task".

**CHINA-CCP: RED FLAG ARTICLE STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF CHINESE FINANCIAL SECTOR AND ITS CULTURE OF JUSTICE, HONESTY AND CONFIDENCE**



The Red Flag (2024/4 dated February 28) published an article titled 'Actively cultivate a financial culture with Chinese characteristics' by Huang Jin and Tang Liu, academics in the Economics Department at the Fujian Normal University. The article said China's financial culture has a history of confidence, justice and honesty which must be upheld.

**CHINA-CCP: ARTICLE IN RED FLAG STRESSES DANGERS FROM THE U.S. AND WEST AND NEED FOR CHINA TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION WORK**

The Red Flag (2024/4 dated February 28) published an article titled 'Open up a new situation in international communication work under the guidance of Xi Jinping's cultural thoughts' by Chen Cheng, Researcher at the Journalism and Social Development Research Center of Renmin University of China. The article asserts that "International communication work is an important external window for promoting ideological and cultural undertakings in the new era. It is the frontier of cultural soft power and international public opinion. It is also the core practical field of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. General Secretary Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the building of international communication capabilities". It states that "The international pattern of "rising in the east and falling in the west" is obvious, but the international public opinion pattern of "the west is strong, and the other is weak" has not yet been fundamentally reversed. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that the current problems of "being beaten" and "starving" have been basically solved, but the problem of "being scolded" has not yet been fundamentally solved. The international public opinion conflict is sharp and complex, especially when various hostile forces, out of ideological prejudice, concoct the "China threat theory", "China toughness theory", "China arrogance theory", "China plunder theory", "China irresponsibility theory" and "China free-riding theory" A series of political rumors about my country's development, such as "China's failure theory", "China's collapse theory" and "China's total loss theory", have had a serious negative impact on my country's international public opinion environment and national image." It adds: "China's strategic rise has also been regarded as a challenge by Western countries led by the United States". "It must be clearly understood that the "public opinion siege" of China by the United States and other Western countries is essentially a means of maintaining hegemonic order that complements "economic blockade", "technological containment" and "political suppression". It is a manifestation of "hegemonic" behaviour in the international community". It pointed out that "General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: "Various hostile forces will never

allow us to smoothly realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This is one reason why we must solemnly remind the entire party that we must prepare for a great struggle with many new historical characteristics." It quoted Xi Jinping as saying, "we must comprehensively strengthen and improve international communication work, deepen exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, and form a comprehensive national strength with our country and international."

### **CHINA-CCP: PBSC MEMBER AND CDIC SECRETARY LI XI SAYS 'RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN' OF CDIC CADRES IS COMPLETED**

Politburo Standing Committee member and CDIC Secretary Li Xi concluded the rectification campaign of discipline and inspection cadres on March 1. He said last year CDIC cadres underwent "spiritual baptism and revolutionary transformation" and emphasized that building "absolute loyalty" through "self-revolution" is an "eternal task".

### **CHINA-CCP: PB MEMBER AND SECRETARY OF POLITICAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION CHEN WENQING INSPECTS HEILONGJIANG**

Politburo member and Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission, Chen Wenqing while visiting (March 1) a local police station in Heilongjiang's capital, Harbin, emphasised comprehensive governance centre, people's court, and procuratorate as "concerns of the people". He mentioned that last year 51,000 people in China were charged with telecommunications fraud.

### **CHINA-ANTI-CORRUPTION: BANK OFFICIALS EXPELLED FROM CCP FOR INCURRING ECONOMIC LOSSES**

i) The CDIC announced that Zhang Zulin, former Deputy Governor of Yunnan province (August 2014-March 2018), and a centrally managed cadre is under investigation.

(ii) The CDIC and Ministry of National Supervision announced (February 29) that Li Chengzhu, former Deputy General Manager of the Chongqing Branch of China People's Property Insurance Co., Ltd has been expelled from the CCP. The political verdict states he "expanded operational risks, causing economic losses".

(iii) On March 1, the CDIC and Ministry of National Supervision announced the expulsion from the CCP of Qiu Shijie, former Deputy General Manager of the Hubei branch of ICBC. The verdict stated he was expelled, among other things, because he "caused significant credit risks, and his perception of power was distorted" ... "resulting in enormous losses of state assets".

(iv) The CDIC and Ministry of National Supervision announced (February 29) the expulsion from the CCP of Shang Liguang, former Deputy Secretary of the Shanxi Provincial Committee, and said he had been handed over to prosecutors. The verdict stated he had been expelled for, among other things, being "morally corrupt, audacious, and greedy [conduct], treating public power as a means to seek private interests".

### **CHINA-ECONOMY: TECH SHARES OF CHINESE COMPANIES DROP IMMEDIATELY AFTER PRESENTATION OF GOVERNMENT WORK REPORT**

Promptly after Chinese Premier Li Qiang read out the Government Work Report at the NPC session on March 5, Chinese markets which have languished in recent months reacted. Shares in Hong Kong fell on heavy selling of technology stocks on March 5, with the benchmark Hang Seng index sinking 2.6%. E-commerce giant Alibaba lost 3.3%, Baidu fell 5.7% and JD.com, another major e-commerce company, lost 7.5%.

### **CHINA-ECONOMY: NDRC DIRECTR ZHENG SHANJIE ACKNOWLEDGES THERE ARE 170 MILLION MIGRANT WORKERS WHO HAVE NOT YET SETTLED IN CITIES AND TOWNS**

At an economy-themed press conference during the 14th National People's Congress on March 6, Zheng Shanjie, Director of the National Development and Reform Commission, said that there are currently 170 million migrant workers and their accompanying family members who have not yet settled in cities and towns, and will be promoted in an orderly manner. He added "We will deepen the reform of the household registration system, focus on solving the problems of children's education, housing security, social insurance and other issues for the agricultural migrant population, and promote the modernization of basic services for the urban permanent population".

## **CHINA-ECONOMY: CHINESE INVESTMENT IN ASIA-PACIFIC TOTALLED US\$ 20 BILLION LAST YEAR, AN INCREASE OF 37 PERCENT**

An article in Nikkei Asia (March 7) quoting Brisbane's Griffith University and Shanghai's Fudan University shows that Chinese investment across the Asia-Pacific last year totaled nearly US\$20 billion, up 37%. It also logged about US\$17 billion in construction contracts, partly financed by Chinese loans, marking a roughly 14% increase from 2022.

## **CHINA-S&T: HEAD OF RUSSIA'S SPACE AGENCY SAYS RUSSIA AND CHINA ARE WORKING TO INSTAL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ON THE MOON BY 2035**

Yury Borisov, General Director of Russia's space agency Roscosmos said during a Tuesday lecture to students on March 5 that it is working on plans with China to deliver and install a nuclear power plant on the Moon by 2035. He said the power plant would need to be built by robots. In 2021, Russia and China presented a road map for building a scientific station on the Moon by the end of 2035.

## **CHINA-S&T: PLA WESTERN THEATRE COMMAND DEMONSTRATES ROBOTIC DOGS IN LIVE FIRE MILITARY EXERCISES**

The South China Morning Post (March 1) reported that China is rapidly advancing its production of armed robotic dogs, as evidenced by recent footage from the Chinese military showcasing their deployment in live military exercises in the Western Theater Command. These robot dogs, equipped with features like street fighting capabilities, rocket launchers, and anti-tank weaponry, have sparked debates about the transformation of warfare.

## **CHINA-PLA: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING MEETS NPC DEPUTIES OF PLA/PAPF ON MARCH 7**

Chinese President Xi Jinping, while meeting PLA and PAPF Deputies on March 7, said that China's military should improve its strategic capabilities in emerging spheres, during a meeting with lawmakers from the nation's armed forces. According to People's Daily (March 8) he told the Deputies that strategic capabilities in emerging spheres — new frontiers originating from innovation and applications of science and technology — are closely related to the country's

socioeconomic development, national security and military power, and are of great significance to modernization efforts and national rejuvenation. He asked the armed forces to integrate the new quality productive forces and new-type combat power and strengthen their mutual development and stressed that the military must prioritize key projects and fully implement related plans. He called for the integrated planning of naval operations, maritime rights protection and the marine economy in order to boost the nation's sea power. He also called for the improvement of the nation's space capabilities and the formation of a cyberspace defense system, which can help to safeguard the country's internet security. Xi Jinping said research of intelligent technologies will be given more attention, and such technologies will be further promoted. He said members of the armed forces should be confident in their creative capacities and strive to bolster independent innovation and give momentum to new quality productive forces and new-type combat power. He also noted that the defense technology sector should be further reformed to suit the needs of and developments in emerging spheres. Xi Jinping earlier listened to thoughts and suggestions shared by six military deputies. 271 Deputies from the armed forces are attending the second session of the 14th National People's Congress, which opened in Beijing on March 5.

### **CHINA-PLA: THE GOVERNMENT WORK REPORT PRESENTED TO THE NPC STRESSED MILITARY TRAINING AND COMBAT READINESS OF THE PLA AND CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION**

On National Defence, the Government Work Report said "This year, we will continue to implement Xi Jinping's thinking on strengthening the military and the military strategy for the new era. We will remain committed to the Party's absolute leadership over the people's armed forces, thoroughly implement the system of ultimate responsibility resting with the chairman of the Central Military Commission, and take critical steps to meet the centenary goal of the People's Liberation Army. The armed forces will strengthen all-around military training and combat readiness, make well-coordinated efforts to improve military preparedness, and devote great energy to training under combat conditions, so as to firmly safeguard China's national sovereignty, security, and development interests. We will modernize the military governance system, advance military development as outlined in the 14th Five-Year Plan, and speed up the implementation of major defense-related projects. We will consolidate and enhance integration of national strategies and strategic capabilities, refine the system and layout of defense-related science, technology, and industries, raise public awareness concerning national defense, and

strengthen national defense mobilization and readiness of reserve forces. We in governments at all levels will provide strong support to the development of national defense and the armed forces and strengthen mutual support between civilian sectors and the military, so as to consolidate the unity between the military and the government and between the military and the people".

(Comment: On the increase in China's defence budget proposed in the Government Work Report in 2020, the Global Times (October 31, 2020) had observed "With the centennial goal of building a modern military by 2027, China aims to develop the military with the capability to defend national sovereignty, safeguard against security threats posed by the hegemonism in western pacific region and protect overseas development interests as China's overseas economic presence grows, Li Jie, a Beijing-based naval expert, was quoted saying "by 2027, the Chinese military will have the ability to effectively deal with threats brought by the hegemonism and power politics in western pacific region, including issues relating to Taiwan question and South China Sea, as well as border tensions between China and India".)

### **CHINA-PLA: PLA AND PAP DELEGATION TO NPC HOLD REVIEW MEETING ON MARCH 5**

The panel meetings of the PLA and PAPF delegation to the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) were held in Beijing on the afternoon of March 5. General Zhang Youxia, NPC deputy, Politburo member and Vice Chairman of the CMC, emphasized that the people's armed forces have successfully fulfilled their missions and tasks over the past year, and achieved new accomplishments and progress in national defense and military development. He stressed that the whole military should intensify combat readiness, overcome training difficulties, strengthen the overall planning of major tasks, expedite the development and utilization of network information system, and enhance the strategic capability to better safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests. General He Weidong, NPC deputy, Politburo member and Vice Chairman of the CMC, emphasized that in the past year, the people's armed forces have accomplished major tasks such as military training, emergency rescue and disaster relief, peacekeeping and evacuation missions. He added that the military has effectively defended national sovereignty, security and development interests. He also stressed that the whole military should persistently improve Party conduct and enforce

Party discipline, fight corruption, rectify formalities and bureaucratism, and purify the atmosphere within the troops.

**CHINA-PLA: RECCE UNIT OF BRIGADE UNDER TIBET MILITARY REGION CONDUCTS TRAINING EXERCISE AT 3,500 METRES ALTITUDE**

A report (March 4) disclosed that a Reconnaissance unit belonging to a brigade in the Tibet Military Region conducted field training at an altitude above 3,500 meters. The unit executed comprehensive assessments on various subjects including reconnaissance and penetration, coordination operations, and infiltrating into enemy lines.

**CHINA-PLA: CAB UNDER TIBET MILITARY REGION CONDUCTS DAY AND NIGHT COMBAT EXERCISE**

A report (March 4) disclosed that a Combined Arms Brigade from the Tibet Military Region orchestrated a comprehensive day-and-night exercise evaluating the unit's rapid response and coordinated combat capabilities. The exercise started with battalions responding to simulated enemy threats, with the armoured units efficiently dispersing and concealing in response to enemy reconnaissance, and by attack and elimination of enemy paratroopers. The exercise concluded with infantry, protected by armoured vehicles, dismounting for combat.

**CHINA-PLA: CHINA'S AIRCRAFT CARRIER LIAONING LEAVES DALIAN PORT AFTER A YEAR-LONG UPGRADE**

China's Liaoning aircraft carrier has commenced a sea trial after a year-long refurbishment since February 28, 2023, a full year ago indicating it had gone through upgrades. When it departed from the Dalian Shipyard, the Liaoning carried mock-ups of J-35 and J-15 fighter jets on its flight deck, signalling advancements in its aircraft fleet. A Chinese media report said the carrier is expected to shift its role from being a training carrier to a combat carrier.

### **CHINA-HAINAN: HAINAN DELEGATION TO NPC HOLDS REVIEW MEETING ON MARCH 5**

On March 5, the Hainan delegation held a plenary meeting to review the government work report presented at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress. Hainan Party Secretary Feng Fei and others including Liu Xiaoming, Zhong Shan, Wang Hong, Chen Guomeng, Ni Qiang, Li Jun, Fu Caixiang, Wang Xiaoyun, Cao Xiankun, Ding Hui, He Qiongmei, Cai Qiang, Li Feng, Zhou Junping, Lu Yan, Lin Hao, Wei Xiaoli, Chen Fan, Lin Huan, Jing Zhu, Huang Haiwen, Lei Yafei, Su Shaohong, Wu Shaoyu and other representatives attended the meeting. Minister of Transport Li Xiaopeng and officials from the General Office of the State Council, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Finance, and the Briefing Team of the Conference Secretariat attended the meeting to listen to opinions.

### **CHINA-SHANXI: SHANXI DELEGATION TO NPC HOLDS REVIEW MEETING ON MARCH 5**

The Shanxi Daily (March 6) reported that during the two sessions in Beijing, the Shanxi delegation reviewed the government work report. Wang Dongming, Chairman of the ACFTU and representative of the Shanxi Youth League participated and Tang Dengjie, head of the delegation presided over and spoke and Jin Xiangjun, Deputy Head of the delegation made a speech. They emphasised the need to improve people's lives and that it is necessary to coordinate development and security, effectively prevent and resolve hidden risks, and effectively safeguard national security and social stability. The Shanxi delegation expressed firm support for the "two establishments", to resolutely achieve the "two safeguards".

### **CHINA-HEILONGJIANG: HEILONGJIANG DELEGATION TO NPC HOLDS REVIEW MEETING ON MARCH 5**

i) The Heilongjiang Daily (March 6) said that the Heilongjiang delegation attending the second session of the 14th National People's Congress held its third plenary meeting to review the government work report on March 5 in Beijing. Politburo member and Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission Chen Wenqing and State Councillor and Secretary-General of the State Council Wu Zhenglong reviewed the Report together with the delegates. Xu Qin, head of the Heilongjiang delegation, presided over the meeting. Deputy heads of the



delegation Liang Huiling, Yu Hongtao, Jia Yumei and Wang Hesheng participated in the review. Tang Renjian, Secretary of the Party Leadership Group and Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, attended the meeting to listen to opinions and suggestions. Chen Wenqing said that he "fully agreed with the government work report. In the past year, under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping, we have written a new chapter in the "two miracles" of rapid economic development and long-term social stability". "China has become one of the safest countries in the world".

ii) The Harbin Daily (March 3) said that on March 2, the Heilongjiang delegation to the NPC meeting in Beijing, held a group meeting in Harbin. Xu Qin, Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee and Director of the Standing Committee of the Provincial People's Congress, attended the meeting and delivered a speech, 'emphasizing the need to thoroughly implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Party and the Second Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee, and fully implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's inspection of our country Heilongjiang will carry out the important instructions of the important speeches during the provincial period, further unify ideological understanding, improve political stance, keep in mind the duties and missions of representatives, live up to the trust of the people of Longjiang, perform duties in accordance with the law with full political enthusiasm and high spirit, and make contributions to the successful convening of the conference in Heilongjiang'. Deputy Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee and Governor Liang Huiling presided over the meeting. The meeting elected Xu Qin as the first convener of the delegation, and Liang Huiling, Yu Hongtao, Jia Yumei, and Wang Hesheng as the conveners of the delegation.

### **CHINA-ZHEJIANG: ZHEJIANG PARTY SECRETARY YI LIANHONG MET TAIWAN'S KMT VICE CHAIRMAN XIA LIYAN IN HANGZHOU ON MARCH 2**

Zhejiang Daily (March 3) disclosed that Zhejiang Party Secretary Yi Lianhong met Xia Liyan, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang and his delegation in Hangzhou on March 2. Welcoming Xia Liyan and his party, Yi Lianhong said that when General Secretary Xi Jinping was working in Zhejiang, he formulated the "Eight- Eight Strategy", a comprehensive plan and top-level design for provincial development. He said Zhejiang has undergone comprehensive changes and that Zhejiang and Taiwan have a long-standing and profound relationship. He said Zhejiang strives to create conditions, create an environment and provide guarantees for Taiwan

compatriots and Taiwanese businessmen to start businesses in Zhejiang. The majority of Taiwan compatriots and Taiwanese businessmen in Zhejiang have made positive contributions to Zhejiang's economic and social development. We will conscientiously implement the Party's overall strategy for resolving the Taiwan issue in the new era, uphold the concept of "two sides of the Taiwan Strait and one family", further deepen exchanges and cooperation between Zhejiang and Taiwan in key areas such as economy, trade, culture, and youth, deepen mutual understanding, enhance consensus between the two sides, and promote exchanges and cooperation. Xia Liyan spoke highly of Zhejiang's business environment, saying that on the basis of adhering to the "1992 Consensus" and opposing "Taiwan independence" on the common political basis, we will continue to strengthen cooperation and exchanges in all aspects between Taiwan and Zhejiang, and play a greater role in promoting the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.

#### **CHINA-SHAANXI: 1983-BORN GE TAN APPOINTED NEW DEPUTY SECRETARY OF URUMQI MUNICIPAL PARTY COMMITTEE**

According to the official WeChat account of Shaanxi Province (March 1 and 2), Fang Hongwei, member of the Standing Committee of the Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee and Secretary of the Xi'an Municipal Party Committee, went to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to coordinate and promote the operation of the China-Europe Railway Express (Xi'an). The report mentioned 1983-born Ge Tan as Deputy Secretary of the Urumqi Municipal Party Committee, indicating his new appointment.

#### **CHINA-TIBET: CHAIRMAN OF TAR GOVERNMENT YAN JINHAI REVEALS PLANS FOR 298,000 SQ KMS NATIONAL PARK BY 2025**

Yan Jinhai, Chairman of the TAR Government, said during the deliberations of the Tibetan delegation to the 14th NPC on March 6, that the TAR 'plans to build the highest and largest national park in the world by 2025'. To be called the Chang Tang National Park it will cover an area of 298,000 square kilometres (about 37 times the size of the famous Yellow Stone National Park in the US). He added that Tibet is one of the regions that have kept the best eco-environment in the world, with the region attaching great importance to the protection of its

environment and biodiversity. About 36 percent of the region's land has been listed as natural reserves.

**CHINA-TAIWAN: GOVERNMENT WORK REPORT ASSERTS RESOLUTENESS ON RESOLVING TAIWAN QUESTION BUT ALSO SAYS WILL "PROMOTE PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT" OF CROSS STRAIT TIES**

On Taiwan, the Government Work Report said "We will implement our Party's overall policy for the new era on resolving the Taiwan question, stay committed to the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, and resolutely oppose separatist activities aimed at "Taiwan independence" and external interference. We will promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, be firm in advancing the cause of China's reunification, and uphold the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation. By advancing integrated cross-strait development, we will improve the wellbeing of Chinese people on both sides so that together, we can realize the glorious cause of national rejuvenation.'

**CHINA-INDIA: GLOBAL TIMES ARTICLE CRITICISES INDIA FOR VIEWING INDIAN OCEAN AS ITS BACKYARD AND ITS BIG BROTHER MENTALITY**

The Global Times (March 4) cited Indian media reports of the Indian Navy stepping up its presence in the Indian Ocean and opening a new base on March 6 on the "strategically important" islands near the Maldives, and said "India has long viewed the Indian Ocean as its backyard. This hegemonic mentality is the basis on which India engages with smaller South Asian neighbouring countries. Since last year, India had been told its troops "cannot stay" in the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Maldives, which shows the resentment of South Asian countries toward India's hegemonic mentality and its hypocritical "Neighbourhood First" strategy". Xie Chao, an Associate Professor at the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University, told the Global Times, that the new base India is going to set up can be seen as punishment to the Maldives. However, it is also a means to check China's influence in the region. He added "This move is very typical of India, and expected." Long Xingchun, Professor at the School of International Relations, Sichuan International Studies University and President of Chengdu Institute of World Affairs, believes that the new base is more of a political gesture rather than having real military significance: "As India loses its foothold in the Maldives, it wants to send a message that it is still the regional hegemon." The paper recalled "Nepal

experienced India's carrot-and-stick approach much earlier. In 2015, India provided significant assistance to Nepal after a deadly earthquake in the country. But in the same year, India reportedly imposed a blockade at a crucial crossing on the border with Nepal due to India's dissatisfaction with Nepal's passing of a new constitution and enhanced cooperation with China. This caused an economic and humanitarian crisis that severely affected Nepal and its economy". It said "India's so-called aid to its neighbours does not alleviate, but rather exacerbates their sense of insecurity due to India's bullying and tightened control. The carrot-and-stick approach only serves to maintain India's supremacy in the region. Xie Chao said "in reality, India has drifted further from its neighbours. As a result, India's neighbours are becoming more wary and distancing themselves from India's aggressive behaviour and "big brother" mentality".

**CHINA-INDIA: CHINESE DEFENCE MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON SAYS BOTH SIDES ARE IN COMMUNICATION ON THE BORDER ISSUE AND ANT TO REACH A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION EARLY**

The PLA Daily (February 29) reported the comments by a spokesperson of China's Ministry of National Defence. Replying to a question on February 29, about the 21st round of China-India Corps Commander-level talks, which asked whether “the Chinese military’s stance has become tougher and continues to reject India’s request to withdraw from Depsang along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh and the Demchok Plain”, the spokesperson and Deputy Director of the Information Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang said: "The above remarks are inconsistent with the facts. The current situation on the China-India border is generally stable, and the two sides maintain effective communication through diplomatic and military channels. On February 19, the Chinese and Indian militaries held the 21st round of military commander-level talks on the Chinese side of the Moldo/Chushul meeting point. The two sides conducted active, in-depth and constructive discussions on resolving on-site border issues of mutual concern. Communicate and agree to reach a mutually acceptable solution as early as possible. China attaches great importance to the military-to-military relations between China and India, and hopes that India and China will meet each other halfway, enhance mutual trust, properly handle differences, and jointly maintain peace and tranquillity in border areas".

(Comment: The statement made no reference to "turning a page".)

## **CHINA-MALDIVES: SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST ARTICLE SAYS MALDIVES HAS SHIFTED TO CHINA'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**

The South China Morning Post (March 5) published an article on Maldives signing a “military assistance” deal with China after ordering Indian troops deployed in the small but strategically-placed archipelago to leave. It said the Maldivian defence ministry said it signed an “agreement on China’s provision of military assistance” with Beijing late on March 4, saying the agreement was “gratis”, or without payment or charge, but giving no further details. The newspaper added that India is suspicious of China’s growing presence in the Indian Ocean and its influence in the Maldives, a chain of 1,192 tiny coral islands stretching around 800km (500 miles) across the equator, as well as in neighbouring Sri Lanka. Both South Asian Island nations are strategically placed halfway along key east-west international shipping routes. It said relations between Male and New Delhi have chilled since Muizzu won elections in September and Delhi considers the Indian Ocean archipelago to be within its sphere of influence, but the Maldives has shifted into the orbit of China – its largest external creditor.

## **CHINA-PHILIPPINES: CHINESE COAST GUARD VESSEL FIRES WATER CANNON AT PHILIPPINES VESSEL NEART SECOND THOMAS SHOAL ON MARCH 5**

China's coast guard fired a water cannon at a Philippine boat in the disputed territory of the South China Sea near the Second Thomas Shoal to the point that the vessel suffered “minor structural damage”.

(Comment: Videos disseminated after the event showed the two vessels drawing near each other and the Chinese Coast Guard ship firing a water cannon.)

## **CHINA-EUROPE: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER ANNOUNCES VISA FREE REGIME FOR 6 MORE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

Chinese Politburo member and Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced (March 7) that China has expanded its visa-free policy to six more European countries on a trial basis, namely Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg. He said from March 14 to

November 30, ordinary passport holders from these countries will be able to enter China without a visa and stay for up to 15 days.

