



CCAS CHINA NEWS
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CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING CALLS ON HUNAN TO 'WRITE ITS OWN CHAPTER IN ADVANCING CHINESE MODERNISATION'

Chinese President Xi Jinping inspected Hunan Province from March 18-21, 2024. He was accompanied by Hunan Provincial Party Committee Secretary Shen Xiaoming and Provincial Governor Mao Weiming. During the visit he called on Hunan Province to stay committed to reform and innovation and follow a realistic and pragmatic approach to write its own chapter in advancing Chinese modernization. On March 18, he first inspected Hunan First Normal University in Changsha City, where he visited an exhibition featuring Mao Zedong in his youth and chatted with students and faculty members. Later, Xi inspected a Chinese-German battery materials joint venture.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING VISITS GANGZHONGPING VILLAGE IN CHENGDE, HUNAN AND STRESSES THAT BURDENS AT PRIMARY LEVEL MUST BE REDUCED

The People's Daily (March 20) disclosed that Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Gangzhongping Village of Xiejiapu Town, Dingcheng District, Changde, Hunan Province, on March 19, 2024, to learn about the improvement of grassroots governance efficiency. It said Xi Jinping heard a report from village officials on local efforts to ease the burdens of those working at the primary level in rural areas in recent years. Xi Jinping said the CCP Central Committee has made it clear that efforts must be made to reduce burdens at the primary level and resolutely address pointless formalities and bureaucratism, stressing that efforts must be continued in this regard.

CHINA-CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING CHAIRS SYMPOSIUM IN HUNAN ON 'PROMOTING THE RISE OF THE CENTRAL REGION IN THE NEW ERA'

CCTV news (March 20) reported that Chinese President Xi Jinping chaired a symposium on promoting the rise of the central region in the new era on March 20. He delivered an "important" speech and said that the rise of the central region should be solidly promoted from a higher starting point. He emphasized that the central region is an important grain production base, energy raw material base, modern equipment manufacturing and high-tech industrial base and comprehensive transportation hub in China, and plays a decisive role in the country. Xi Jinping finally emphasized that the central leading group for coordinated regional development should strengthen overall coordination, supervision and guidance, and relevant central departments should increase support and study and propose policy measures to promote the rise of the central region in the new era. Local party committees and governments must shoulder their main responsibilities. Director of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Zheng Shanjie, Shanxi Provincial Party Committee Secretary Tang Dengjie, Anhui Provincial Party Committee Secretary Han Jun, Jiangxi Provincial Party Committee Secretary Yin Hong, Henan Provincial Party Committee Secretary Lou Yangsheng, Hubei Provincial Party Committee Secretary Wang Menghui, and Hunan Provincial Party Committee Party Secretary Shen Xiaoming also spoke at the symposium. Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) member and Director of the CCP CC General Office Cai Qi and PBSC member and Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang attended the symposium. Li Qiang and Ding Xuexiang also spoke. Li Ganjie, He Lifeng, Wu Zhenglong, and Mu Hong attended the symposium, as well as responsible officials from relevant departments of central and state agencies, relevant localities, and relevant enterprises.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PREMIER LI QIANG TO BREAK WITH NORMAL PRACTICE AND NOT ATTEND CHINA DEVELOPMENT FORUM BUT XI JINPING TO MEET VISITING CEOS

i) The Chinese Premier has for years met with a group of high-level CEOs at the China Development Forum, organized by the China Development Research Foundation at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing since 2000, the nominally private foundation under the State Council's Development Research Center, but will not be meeting them at the event next week. The event is attended by global CEOs and Chinese policymakers to meet and discuss

foreign investment. Regular attendees include Apple CEO Tim Cook and Ray Dalio, founder of Bridgewater Associates. Reuters (March 12) said while Premier Li Qiang still plans to attend the March 24-25 forum this year, he will not be holding that meeting.

(Comment: No reasons have been given, but it has triggered speculation that Chinese President Xi Jinping does not want any other Chinese leader to share the spotlight.)

ii) The Wall Street Journal (March 19) said that Chief executives including Tim Cook of Apple, Cristiano Amon of Qualcomm, Albert Bourla of Pfizer and Stephen Schwarzman of Blackstone, as well as Bridgewater Associates founder Ray Dalio, are expected to attend the annual government-sponsored China Development Forum in Beijing. Insurer Chubb's CEO, Evan Greenberg, will co-chair the event. On March 21 the Wall Street Journal said Chinese President Xi Jinping plans to meet a group of U.S. business leaders after a government-sponsored forum as Beijing steps up efforts to woo American firms amid an exodus of foreign capital.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PREMIER LI QIANG INSPECTED (MARCH 18-20) FUJIAN AND JIANGXI PROVINCES

Chinese Premier Li Qiang inspected the Fujian and Jiangxi provinces from March 18-20. He was accompanied by State Councillor Wu Zhenglong. During the inspection, Premier Li Qiang stressed the people's expectations for high-quality life and improving their well-being while promoting high-quality development. Visiting Fuzhou, Fujian Province, Li Qiang spoke of the importance of a sound eco-environment and underlined the importance of providing better care for the elderly and children, and improving a housing system that meets the needs of different groups and encourages both renting and buying of properties. He also urged efforts to promote scientific and technological innovation through institutional innovation, and improve the business environment. Inspecting a career center in Nanchang, capital city of Jiangxi Province, Li Qiang said employment is crucial to the people's well-being and called for full support for jobseekers facing difficulties in securing employment. In Jiangxi, he visited a vocational college, a community health service center, and an agricultural firm.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: SHI TAI FENG, POLITBURO MEMBER AND HEAD OF CCP CC UFWD MINISTER INSPECTS FUJIAN PROVINCE AND URGES RELIGIONS IN CHINA TO BE CHINESE IN ORIENTATION

People's Daily (March 22) reported that Politburo member and Head of the CCP CC United Front Work Department (UFWD) Shi Taifeng, during an inspection of Fujian, issued instructions on improving united front work. He visited enterprises, religious venues, residential communities and several museums in the cities of Xiamen and Quanzhou. Stressing that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation, Shi Taifeng underlined the need to cultivate religious professionals and facilitate international exchanges in the field of religion. He also highlighted the role of overseas Chinese in China's national rejuvenation, adding that more effort should be made on enhancing theoretical and political guidance, so as to better unite overseas Chinese.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: POLITBURO MEMBER AND VICE PREMIER LIU GUOZHONG STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE WHILE INSPECTING (MARCH 19-21) SHAANXI PROVINCE

Politburo member and Vice Premier Liu Guozhong stressed the importance of accelerating scientific and technological innovation in agriculture, improving farmland irrigation and water conservancy, and increasing grain yields to ensure food security during his inspection of Shaanxi Province from March 19-21. He also visited a high-tech agricultural industry demonstration zone and Northwest A&F University.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: POLITBURO MEMBER AND NPC VICE CHAIRMAN LI HONGZHONG INSPECTED (MARCH 18-20) XINJIANG-UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION AND EMPHASISED ETHNIC UNITY

People's Daily (March 21) disclosed that Politburo member and NPC Vice Chairman Li Hongzhong emphasised the importance of handling ethnic-group affairs in accordance with the law, and the importance of forging a strong sense of community in the Chinese nation, during an inspection tour of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region from March 18-20. Visiting residential communities, rural areas, and meeting business owners, he "analysed the region's experience in promoting ethnic unity, ensuring social stability, and facilitating employment

and business cooperation for people of different ethnicities". Li Hongzhong also visited Kashi University and a rural primary school, and exchanged views with religious personages on the advancement of religious harmony. Attending a meeting in Urumqi, Li Hongzhong called for concrete efforts to establish a legal system for ethnic-group affairs and emphasised "that forging a strong sense of community in the Chinese nation must be given the utmost attention, and that the will of the state and of all Chinese people to safeguard ethnic unity must be showcased fully".

CHINA-CCP: POLITBURO MEMBER AND HEAD OF CCP CC PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT LI SHULEI SPEAKS AT INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON DEMOCRACY IN BEIJING

Politburo member and Head of the CCP CC Publicity Department Li Shulei addressed the third "International Forum on Democracy: The Shared Human Values" held on March 20 in Beijing. The forum was jointly hosted by the CCP CC Publicity Department and the State Council Information Office, and co-organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the China Media Group and the China International Communications Group. Over 200 guests from various countries, regions and international organizations attended.

CHINA-CCP: LATEST EDITION OF PARTY THEORETICAL FORTNIGHTLY 'QIUSHI' RELEASED ON MARCH 16

The latest edition of Party theoretical fortnightly Qiushi ('Seeking Truth') Journal became available on March 16. Highlights include Xi Jinping's commentary on Party self-reform titled "Always maintain the sobriety and determination to solve the unique problems of the big party and carry out the party's great self-revolution to the end", several Op-Eds on the Party's self-revolution, Chinese-style modernization, and Jing-Jin-Ji's development strategy. It also includes articles by Li Zhiyong, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Personnel; Liu Jianchao, current Head of the CCP CC International Department since June 2022; an article by the Tibet Autonomous Region Committee of the Communist Party of China; Wabng Menghui, the current Communist Party Secretary of Hubei and previously Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development Ministry; and Finance Minister Lan Fo'an.

CHINA-CCP: PEOPLE'S DAILY PUBLISHED ARTICLE EXTOLLING HARD WORK, DILIGENCE AND FRUGALITY

The People's Daily (March 21) published an article captioned 'Vigorously promote the spirit of hard work, diligence and frugality (in-depth study and implementation of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)' by Jiang Zexun, Vice President in charge of daily work of China Yan'an Cadre College. Marked as "core reading" the article said "Hard work, diligence and frugality are the fine traditions of the Chinese nation and the heirloom of our party. In the new era and new journey, in the face of new situations and new tasks, we must vigorously promote the spirit of hard work, diligence and frugality, put it into practice, see it in action, and become a common practice in the whole society". The article contained 11 mentions of Xi Jinping.

CHINA-CCP: GUANGMING DAILY PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE ON NATIONAL REJUVENATION

The Guangming Daily (March 21) published an article by Liu Ailing, researcher at the Research Center for Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Director of the Ideological and Political Education Research Office of the Institute of Marxism, captioned 'Concentrate on the great cause of national rejuvenation'.

CHINA-CCP: PEOPLE'S DAILY ARTICLE ANNOUNCES SPECIAL SUPPORT POLICIES FOR XIONGAN NEW AREA

The People's Daily (March 21) published an article captioned 'A package of special support policies from the central government has been implemented in Xiongan New Area'. It said that a package of special support policies from the central government has been continuously implemented in Xiongan New Area, involving education, medical care, social security, housing and other aspects. Xiongan New Area continues to increase resources Investment has been made to refine and implement policies and measures, and personnel redeployment guarantees have been comprehensively strengthened.

CHINA-ANTI-CORRUPTION: CHINA'S SUPREME PEOPLE'S PROCURATORATE ARRESTS AND PROSECUTES OVER 1.688 MILLION PERSONS IN 2023

China's Supreme People's Procuratorate arrested 726,000 suspects and prosecuted 1.688 million "hostile forces" last year, an increase of 47.1% and 17.3% respectively, in a "hard crackdown" against "enemy, sabotage, subversion, and separatist hostile forces."

CHINA-ANTI-CORRUPTION: FORMER PRESIDENT OF SHANGHAI INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION ZHOU JUN EXPELLED FROM CCP

i) The official website of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC) and the National Supervisory Commission on March 15 announced that the former President of the Shanghai Industrial Corporation, Zhou Jun, has been expelled from the Party. The announcement said he "has never established a correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, violated political disciplines and rules, was obsessed with superstitious activities, had impure motives for joining the Party, and regarded joining the Communist Party of China as capital for career development; Violating the spirit of the eight central regulations", "failed to establish correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values" and "joined the CCP for personal gain" and was "risking loss of state-owned assets".

ii) The official website of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC) and the National Supervisory Commission on March 15 announced that Beijing Sport University's Party Secretary Cao Weidong is currently under investigation.

iii) The Sichuan Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision announced on March 20, that He Xiaochun, the former Party Secretary and Chairman of Sichuan Port and Shipping Investment Group Co., Ltd., is suspected of serious violations of discipline and law and is currently undergoing disciplinary review and supervisory investigation by the Sichuan Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision.

(Comment: In September 2019, Sichuan Port and Shipping Investment Group Co., Ltd. was unveiled and established. He Xiaochun became the first Party Committee Secretary and Chairman. The Sichuan Port and Shipping Investment Group Co., Ltd. is a first-level state-owned capital investment company under the supervision of Sichuan Province, with a

registered capital of 9.37 billion yuan, total assets of approximately 73 billion yuan, more than 140 holding companies, and approximately 4,000 employees.)

iv) The official website of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission and the National Supervisory Commission announced on March 20, that Dou Wangui, a member of the CPPCC Party Group and Vice Chairman of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, is suspected of serious violations of discipline and law and is currently undergoing disciplinary review and supervisory investigation by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission.

(Comment: The Beijing Daily (March 20) observed that the central government has continued its anti-corruption campaign after the 'Two Sessions' and five central management cadres, including Dou Wangui, have been investigated. The other four are: Li Jiping, former member of the Party Committee and Vice President of the National Development Bank; Li Yong, former deputy secretary of the Party Committee and general manager of China National Offshore Oil Corporation; Li Xiangang, member of the Party Committee and Deputy Director of the Standing Committee of the Heilongjiang Provincial People's Congress; Liu Yuejin, member of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Deputy Minister level).)

vi) Caixin (March 20) disclosed that anti-corruption authorities in Guizhou province have launched probes into two officials linked to a contractor who was arrested after trying to recover unpaid fees from a district government. Wang Erbin, former Governor of Liupanshui city's Shuicheng county, which changed to Shuicheng district in 2020, and ex-Director of the Management Committee of a local tourist resort, is suspected of "serious violations of the law," according to a statement published on March 20 by the city's Discipline Inspection Commission.

CHINA-LABOUR UNREST: 20,000 PEOPLE PROTEST VIOLENTLY IN CHONGQING ON MARCH 20

A fierce protest against the government erupted in Chongqing on March 21 evening. More than 20,000 persons took part in the unrest which was finally quelled by armed police.

CHINA-ECONOMY: QU GANG NAMED TO HEAD HUA XIA BANK CO. LTD

Hua Xia Bank Co. Ltd. has named Qu Gang, current General Manager of Beijing International Trust Co. Ltd., as the candidate to be President of the bank, subject to regulatory approval. Caixin (March 20) said this will be the second leadership change at the Beijing-based bank in two years. Qu Gang will succeed Guan Wenjie, who held the reins there for only nine months before being appointed chairman of Beijing Rural Commercial Bank Co. Ltd. in January.

CHINA-ECONOMY: CHINA AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION CLAIMS CHINA'S TOP TEN CR MANUFACTURERS SOLD 995,000 VEHICLES IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2024

The Beijing Daily (March 20) quoted the China Automobile Association as saying China's top ten car manufacturers sold a total of 995,000 vehicles from January to February 2024.

CHINA-ECONOMY: CHINA'S NATIONAL STATISTICS BUREAU REPORTS 75 YEAR ON YEAR GROWTH IN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2024

The Financial Times (March 18) quoted China's National Statistics Bureau as saying that China's industrial production leapt 7% year on year in January and February. It is the fastest rate of growth in almost 2 years and above an anticipated 5% rise from economists. Retail sales added 5.5% in line with expectations. It said official figures showed (March 18) that the real estate sector remained under pressure in January and February. Property investment fell 9 per cent year on year in January and February, although at an improved rate of decline than December, when it fell 24 per cent. New construction starts plummeted 30 per cent, the worst fall in more than a year.

CHINA-ECONOMY: CHINA DISCOVERS NEW OIL FIELD IN BOHAI SEA WITH ESTIMATED RESERVES OF 104 MILLION TONS

Xinhua (March 18) said that CNOOC announced on March 18 that it had made another 100-million-ton discovery in the central and northern Bohai Sea, namely the Qinhuangdao 27-3 oil

field, with proven oil geological reserves of 104 million tons. It said this is the first major oil and gas discovery in this area in 10 years, which is of great significance to further consolidating China's offshore oil and gas resource reserves. Qinhuangdao 27-3 Oilfield is located in the central and northern waters of the Bohai Sea, about 200 kilometres west of Tianjin City, with an average water depth of about 25 meters.

CHINA-ECONOMY: FOUNDER OF CHINA EVERGRANDE GROUP BARRED FROM SECURITIES MARKET FOR LIFE AND FINED 47 MILLION YUAN (US \$ 6.53 MILLION)

Reuters (March 18) disclosed that the China Evergrande Group founder Hui Ka Yan will be barred from the securities market for life and fined 47 million yuan (US\$ 6.53 million) after the regulator accused the group's flagship unit of inflating results, securities fraud and failing to make timely disclosures. Hengda Real Estate said in an exchange filing that the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), China's securities watchdog, also penalised the company and several of its former senior executives after an investigation. The penalty represents the latest challenge for Evergrande, the world's most indebted property developer, which defaulted on its offshore debt in late 2021 and was ordered by the Hong Kong High Court to liquidate in January. Earlier the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) had vowed to crack down on securities fraud, and protect small investors with "teeth and horns". Hui Ka Yan was accused of fraudulently boosting sales. The CSRC blamed the founder Hui Ka Yan, once China's richest man, for allegedly instructing staff to "falsely inflate" Hengda's annual results in 2019 and 2020.

CHINA-S&T: USAF THINK-TANK CASI REVEALS THAT PLA IS PREPARING ITS SATELLITE OPERATORS FOR ON-ORBIT SATELLITE REFUELLING

The USAF's China Aerospace Studies Institute (March 18) said that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is preparing its satellite operators to perform on-orbit satellite refuelling, for peacetime and wartime space logistics. They are also already integrating lessons learned into corresponding military doctrine and training tools. To further ready a PLA in-space logistics force, a Chinese defense contractor has indicated, for the last six years, that it has a mission ready satellite refueler for geosynchronous Earth orbit (GEO). With more clarity on the PLA's requirements for satellite logistics, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has approved new

commercial players to enter the field to provide, not only technology, but also frameworks to shape international norms. It revealed that the Eighth Institute of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), known as the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology (SAST), at the 2018 Zhuhai Air Show displayed its “on orbit gas station.” The report additionally said that two Strategic Support Force (SSF) Space Systems Department (SSD) on-orbit servicing experts, Liu Bingyan of Unit 32032 in Beijing “plans and researches on-orbit servicing” at AMS’s War Research Institute and Gao Yong of Unit 32027 in Henan province who has a PhD from Tsinghua University, worked with the SSF SSD and the AMS Joint Operations Experimental Center in writing a dedicated textbook on scheduling satellite servicing and related mission planning.

CHINA-S&T: US ADMINISTRATION LIKELY TO BLACKLIST A NUMBER OF CHINESE SEMICONDUCTOR FIRMS

Bloomberg reported (March 20) that the US Administration is considering blacklisting a number of Chinese semiconductor firms linked to Huawei Technologies Co. It said among the companies that could be blacklisted are chipmakers Qingdao Si'En, SwaySure, and Shenzhen Pensun Technology Co, or PST. It said Biden officials are also weighing sanctions on China's leading memory chipmaker, ChangXin Memory Technologies Inc.

(Comment: Despite US technology sanctions, Chinese companies are known to have procured chips and semiconductors from firms like Nvidia and made rapid advances in development of chips. The US is probably trying to stop this 'leakage'.)

CHINA-PLA: PLA MILITARY EXERCISES IN XINJIANG AND TIBET MILITARY REGIONS

i) The state-owned CCTV (March 21) telecast a report that a mixed helicopter group hailing from a specific army and aviation brigade within the Xinjiang Military Region engaged in a rigorous open-air battle deep within the heart of the Taklimakan Desert. From their base at the northern foot of the Tianshan mtns, these helicopters undertook intensive training exercises across diverse terrains.

ii) Huaxia (March 18) disclosed that soldiers of the Simhana Border Defense company conducted a challenging patrol and **and border demarcation mission** along the rugged **southern foothills of Tianshan Mountains** in the Xinjiang Military Region. It said the troops carried out the patrol on horseback till boundary Monument 72-1 in harsh conditions of weather and terrain.

CHINA-GUANGDONG: GUANGDONG PROVINCIAL PARTY COMMITTEE DELEGATION LED BY PARTY SECRETARY HUANG KUNMING INSPECTS ZHUHAI

The Standing Committee of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee visited Zhuhai for investigation on March 20 and held a meeting to "comprehensively implement the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Second Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Central Economic Work Conference, and the National Two Sessions, and thoroughly study and implement the spirit of Xi Jinping, General Secretary's important instructions during his inspection of Guangdong and the important instructions for the work in Zhuhai and Hengqin focused on the implementation of the provincial party committee's specific deployment for promoting the modernization of Zhuhai". Guangdong Party Secretary Huang Kunming presided over the meeting and delivered a speech. Deputy Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee and Governor Wang Weizhong, Director of the Standing Committee of the Provincial People's Congress Huang Chuping, Chairman of the Provincial Political Consultative Conference Lin Keqing, Deputy Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee and Secretary of the Shenzhen Municipal Party Committee Meng Fanli attended. To hold this Provincial Party Committee Standing Committee meeting, Huang Kunming, Wang Weizhong, Huang Chuping, Lin Keqing and other members of the Provincial Party Committee Standing Committee went to Zhuhai Xiangzhou District, High-tech Zone and Hengqin Guangdong-Macao Deep Cooperation Zone to conduct on-site research. They visited the Southern Marine Science and Engineering Guangdong Provincial Laboratory (Zhuhai), Ninestar Co., Ltd., Zhuhai Gree Electric Co., Ltd., Hengqin Cross-border E-commerce and Live Broadcast Base (Huafa) Innovation Industrial Park and "second-line" Hengqin Bridge Channel. After the investigation, the Standing Committee of the Provincial Party Committee held a meeting at the Zhuhai International Convention and Exhibition Center to listen to the work reports of the Hengqin Working Committee of the Zhuhai Municipal and Provincial Party Committee.

**CHINA-LIAONING: LIAONING PROVINCE PARTY STANDING COMMITTEE
MET ON MARCH 21**

The Liaoning Daily (March 22) reported that the Standing Committee of the 14th Provincial People's Congress held its 25th meeting on March 21. Chen Xiangqun, Deputy Director of the Standing Committee of the Provincial People's Congress, presided over the meeting. The meeting agreed in principle to the Provincial People's Congress Agricultural Committee's report on the abolition of the "Liaoning Province Agricultural Resources Comprehensive Management and Protection Regulations" and the "Liaoning Province Veterinary Management Regulations", and the Environmental Resources and Urban Construction Committee's report on amending the "Liaoning Province Mineral Resources Management Regulations" and abolition Report on the status of the "Liaoning Province Petroleum Exploration and Development Environmental Protection Regulations" and the preparations for the Standing Committee to hear and review the provincial government's 2023 annual environmental status report and conduct special inquiries on water environment protection.

**CHINA-TIBET: PEOPLE'S DAILY PUBLICISES IMPROVEMENTS IN LIVING
CONDITIONS OF FORMER SERFS IN TIBET**

The People's Daily (March 22) published a feature article titled 'From serfdom to freedom, new life arising from old Xizang manor', which claimed that "last year, the county government invested 4 million yuan (563,841 U.S. dollars) in renovating" a manor based on its original appearance and to turn it into a tented camp, where visitors can get a glimpse of the miserable lives endured by serfs before they were set free". The article noted the improvements in the life of Tseten, "born into the lowest rank of serfs" and who "lived in a livestock shed at the manor, sharing space with sheep and their manure". It said, "Xizang is the first provincial-level region in China to provide 15 years of publicly funded education from kindergarten to senior high school, a stark contrast to the situation seven decades ago when access to education was limited to the nobility".

CHINA-TIBET: TAR AUTHORITIES PROPOSE ALLOWING STUDENTS FROM ELSEWHERE TO APPEAR FOR COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS PROVIDED THEU INVEST US\$ 400,000

Reuters (March 21) reported that Tibet is luring investors from elsewhere in China with a promise to let their children take university entrance exams there in return for an investment of at least US\$400,000 to exploit an easier scoring system. With a population that is 90% ethnic Tibetan, the region has one of China's lowest college entry barriers. The plan has sparked debate on Chinese social media, however, with some posters arguing it would be unfair to students from the mountainous region, while others supported it. "What about the enrolment rate of kids born in Tibet?" asked one user on the popular Weibo platform. Meanwhile, China's Education Ministry issued a notice on March 20 vowing to crack down on "gaokao migrants". Reuters telephone calls to the Tibet government to seek comment went unanswered.

CHINA-HONGKONG: DIRECTOR OF HONGKONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE XIA BAOLONG MET HONGKONG CE LI JIACHAO

Hongkong's Wen Wei Bo (March 21) reported that Xia Baolong, Director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office since 2020, met Li Jiachao, the fifth and current Chief Executive of Hong Kong and his delegation in Shenzhen to listen to their work reports.

CHINA-HONGKONG: HONGKONG'S LEGCO UNANIMOUSLY PASSES NATIONAL SECURITY BILL AS PART OF ART 23 OF BASIC LAW OF HKSAR

Xinhua (March 19) reported that the Legislative Council (Legco) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) on March 19 unanimously adopted a safeguarding national security bill, completing the legislation of Article 23 of the Basic Law of the HKSAR. It said the move represents a significant step forward in fulfilling the HKSAR's constitutional responsibility to safeguard national security, addressing the loopholes and shortcomings in the system and mechanisms designed for this purpose. Safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests stands as the top priority of the "one country, two systems" policy. The new bill enables the HKSAR to comprehensively and effectively prevent, deter and punish acts and activities endangering national security. The legislation will effectively mitigate the

risk of external hostile forces attempting to disrupt Hong Kong, and the risk of anti-China elements causing chaos within the territory.

CHINA-INDIA: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON RESPONDS O U.S. STATEMENT ON ARUNACHAL PRADESH AND SAYS, "SOUTHERN TIBET HAS ALWAYS BEEN CHINESE TERRITORY" AND THE "BORDER ISSUE IS A MATTER BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA AND HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH"THE U.S.

Hongkong's Wen Wei Bo (March 21) reported that on March 20, a US State Department spokesperson "stated that the United States recognizes "Arunachal Pradesh" (our southern Tibetan region) as Indian territory and strongly opposes any unilateral actions that break through the actual control line through military or civilian means and advance territorial claims by encroachment". It said in response to this Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said "at the regular press conference of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 21, that China expressed strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to this. The China-India border has never been demarcated. Southern Tibet has always been Chinese territory, and this basic fact cannot be denied. The border issue between China and India is a matter between China and India and has nothing to do with the United States. As we all know, the United States has always used unscrupulous means to provoke and exploit disputes in other countries to serve its geopolitical selfish interests."

CHINA-PAKISTAN: PAKISTAN CONVEYS UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT TO CHINA FOR ELECTION FOR CEDAW IN JUNE

In a written Note dated March 11, 2024, to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Pakistan's Foreign Ministry assured "unconditional support" to China's candidature for the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for 2025-2028 at the elections to be held in June in New York.

CHINA-PHILIPPINES: CHINA COAST GUARD REASSERTS CLAIM ON TIEXIAN REEF AND NANSHA ISLANDS

Beijing Daily (March 21), quoting the official WeChat public account of the "China Coast Guard" WeChat public account, asserted that China Coast Guard spokesperson Gan Yu said that on March 21, "34 Filipino personnel ignored China's warnings and dissuasion and illegally boarded the Tiexian Reef for activities. Chinese Coast Guard law enforcement officers boarded the reef in accordance with the law and investigated and dealt with it. China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands, including Iron Line Reef, and its adjacent waters. This has sufficient historical and legal basis."

CHINA-MIDDLE EAST: CHINESE ENVOY WANG KEJIAN MEETS HAMAS CHIEF IN QATAR ON MARCH 17 AND MEETS PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI AUTHORITIES

Wang Kejian, China's Ambassador and Envoy visited Hamas Chief Ismail Haniyeh in Qatar on March 17. They exchanged views regarding the Gaza issue and other related aspects with a hope to see an end to the Gaza-crisis. In addition to Qatar, Wang Kejian also visited both the Palestinian and Israeli authorities last week. Apart from organising a discussion with Israeli foreign ministry's Asia Pacific Bureau Head, Hagai Shagir and the Head of Ministry's policy research centre, Rachel Fein Messer, Wang Kejian also visited the West Bank to meet the Palestinian Authority's Foreign Minister, Riyadh-al-Malik.

CHINA-AUSTRALIA: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI VISITS (MARCH 20-21) AUSTRALIA AND MEETS AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND PRIME MINISTER

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi landed in Australia on March 20, becoming the most senior Chinese official to visit the country since 2017, when he last visited. He is scheduled to meet Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on March 21. According to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong that bilateral ties are back "on the right track" and "[We must] uphold mutual respect...seek common ground while shelving differences...pursue mutual benefit and win-win...[and] maintain independence." The

Australian Foreign Minister's Office said Ms Penny Wong called for a "mature and productive relationship" and said Australia will seek to manage its differences with China wisely. Penny Wong also revealed that Chinese Premier Li Qiang will visit Australia at some stage this year. Wang Yi also met former Australian Labour Party Prime Minister 80-year old Paul Keating on March 20.

CHINA-NEW ZEALAND: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS NEW ZEALAND ON MARCH 19

On March 19, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in New Zealand where he met with: Prime Minister Christopher Luxon; Foreign Minister Winston Peters; and Trade Minister Todd McClay. Wang Yi said the two countries should focus on the positive. Xinhua reported that Wang Yi said "China-New Zealand relations maintain a leading position among China's relations with developed countries" and "China's...door to New Zealand will always be open." He also invited Luxon to visit China. In his meeting with Wang Yi, Trade Minister Peters highlighted "areas of cooperation" while acknowledging "areas of difference such as human rights," and expressing New Zealand's "Concerns over increased tensions in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait."

(Comment: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi would have tried to get their upgraded FTA implemented and starting negotiations on a negative list for the service trade.)

CHINA-U.S.: PEOPLE'S DAILY PUBLISHES SHARPLY-WORDED XINHUA COMMENTARY CRITICAL OF U.S.

On March 21, the People's Daily published a sharply worded Xinhua Commentary of March 18, titled 'Washington's stubborn pursuit of camp confrontation in a multi-polar world', which said while since the past three decades the majority of the world has supported multilateralism and advocated for a multi-polar world order, Washington "has been stubbornly pursuing dominance in disregard of this evolving landscape. The hegemonic influence of the United States spans economic, political, military, and cultural spheres. One of its most significant manifestations lies in monopolizing the concept of "democracy." With a binary mindset of "either friend or foe," it again attempts to forcefully divide the world into two camps". It said, "This dangerously simplistic worldview, reminiscent of the Cold War-era mentality,

perpetuates a zero-sum game where cooperation is forsaken in favor of confrontation". The commentary added that Washington has for decades pursued the establishment of a global order that prioritizes American interests and adheres strictly to American rules. However, the majority of the world has long concluded that the United States falls far short of being a "beacon of democracy," with its democratic credentials being so lacklustre".

CHINA-INDONESIA: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING CONGRATULATES INDONESIA'S PRABOWO SUBIJANDO ON HIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT

CCTV (March 21) reported that on March 20, Chinese President Xi Jinping called Prabowo Subijando to congratulate him on his election as President of the Republic of Indonesia.

