



CCAS CHINA NEWS
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CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING CONGRATULATES CONGOLESE PRESIDENT ON 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND SAYS HE IS READY FOR STRONGER STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo on the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, and said he is ready to join Sassou in promoting the strategic partnership of the two sides. The People's Daily (February 23) quoted Xi Jinping as saying the friendship between them has stood the test of time.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING PRESIDES OVER 4TH MEETING OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR COMPREHENSIVE DEEPENING REFORMS

On February 19, Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over the fourth meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensive Deepening Reforms, emphasizing the enhancement of land factors to ensure the high-quality development of advantageous areas and further improving grassroots emergency management capabilities. Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Politburo Standing Committee members Wang Huning and Cai Qi attended. The meeting pointed out that it is necessary to coordinate the regional economic layout and land space utilization, refine the land management policy units based on the functional positioning and resource endowments of each region, improve the level of resource development and utilization, and better play the demonstration and leading role of advantageous areas. It is necessary to strictly implement the boundaries of land and space control, strictly observe the three control lines of cultivated land and permanent basic farmland, ecological protection red lines, and urban development boundaries, and strengthen supervision during and after the event. Some

exploratory but very urgent reform measures must be studied in depth and advanced steadily. It also emphasized the need to promote the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development; strengthen the party's leadership over grassroots emergency management work; and accelerate the formation of a basic system to support comprehensive innovation is an important measure to deepen the reform of the science and technology system and promote the realization of high-level science and technology self-reliance and self-reliance. The Xinhua (February 19) report said Members of the Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms attended the meeting, and responsible comrades from relevant departments of the central government and state agencies attended the meeting. The Meeting approved the "About Reform" Opinions on enhancing the land management system's ability to guarantee high-quality development in advantageous areas", "Opinions on promoting the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development", "Opinions on further improving grassroots emergency management capabilities", "Opinions on accelerating the formation of a foundation to support comprehensive innovation" "Opinions on the System", "Summary Report on the Work of the Central Commission for Comprehensive Deepening Reforms in 2023", and "Key Points of Work of the Central Commission for Comprehensive Deepening Reforms in 2024".

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE PREMIER LI QIANG CHAIRS THIRD PLENARY MEETING OF STATE COUNCIL ON FEBRUARY 18

The state-owned CCTV (February 18) telecast a report on Chinese Premier Li Qiang chairing the third plenary meeting of the State Council on February 18 to discuss the government work report to be submitted to the second session of the 14th National People's Congress for review, and to mobilize for the start of the new year. Li Qiang asked all departments of the State Council to "quickly get into work in accordance with the deployment of the Central Economic Work Conference, pay close attention to various tasks, and strive to promote high-quality development to achieve new results". Members of the plenary session of the State Council attended the meeting, and heads of relevant departments and units attended the meeting.

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: NPC CHAIRMAN ZHAO LEJI DELIVERS SPEECH VIA VIDEO TO 'GROUP OF FRIENDS OF NEUTRALITY'

Beijing Daily (February 16) reported that Zhao Leji, Chairman of China's National People's Congress (NPC), delivered a video speech at the meeting of parliamentary leaders of member countries of the "Group of Friends of Neutrality" on February 16, 2024. In his speech, Zhao Leji pointed out that to address the deficit in development, tackle security challenges, and enhance mutual learning among civilizations, Chinese President Xi Jinping has proposed the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative for promoting the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

(Comment: The "Group of Friends of Neutrality" was established in August 2020 at the initiative of Turkmenistan, with China being one of the 18 founding countries.)

CHINA-LEADERSHIP: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI CALLS SCO "STABILISING ANCHOR" AMID TURBULENCE

Speaking at a reception in Beijing on February 22 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the SCO Secretariat, Chinese Politburo member and Foreign Minister Wang Yi called on all members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to jointly pursue the organization's sound development and make it a stabilizing anchor amid the changes of the world. The People's Daily (February 23) said he noted "that changes unseen in a century are unfolding at a faster pace and the world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, and there is a greater need for carrying forward the Shanghai Spirit and such a cooperation platform as the SCO". Asserting that China is ready to work with all partners, Zhang Ming, Secretary General of the SCO, said "over the past 20 years, the SCO has grown from six member states to a big family of 26 member states, observers and dialogue partners, creating a new cooperation model featuring solidarity and coordination, openness, win-win results, inclusiveness and mutual learning among countries with different social systems and development paths". The People's Daily (February 23) noted that more than 200 people, including diplomatic envoys of SCO countries and representatives of international organizations in China, attended the reception.

CHINA-NPC: NPC PREPARES FOR 'BIG TWO' SESSIONS IN MARCH 2024

Xinhua (February 21) said that all 271 proposals submitted by Chinese lawmakers during the annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2023, have been deliberated by nine special committees of the NPC. In addition, a total of 8,314 suggestions made by national lawmakers during the same period were referred to and handled by 204 organizations, with deputies receiving feedback. Out of these suggestions, 19 were selected as key recommendations and processed under the supervision of NPC special committees.

CHINA-SENIOR APPOINTMENTS: LI LIANSHENG APPOINTED DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES

The official website of the Ministry of Water Resources announced the appointment of Li Liangsheng as Deputy Minister and member of the Party Leadership Group of the Ministry of Water Resources.

(Comment: He was born in January 1968 from Fucheng, Hebei Province. He started working in July 1990 and joined the Communist Party of China in April 1988. He has a university degree and a master's degree in public administration.)

CHINA-SENIOR APPOINTMENTS: ZHANG ZHEN APPOINTED DEPUTY MINISTER OF MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM AND DEPUTY PARTY SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY

Beijing Daily (February 22) reported that the official website of China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism showed that 1966-born Zhang Zheng has been appointed Deputy Secretary of the Party Leadership Group and Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

(Comment: Zhang Zhen is currently an alternate member of the 20th CCP CC. He was previously member of the Standing Committee of the Hebei Provincial Committee and Minister of the Hebei Propaganda Department.)

CHINA-SENIOR APPOINTMENTS: CAO PING APPOINTED PARTY SECRETARY OF UNIVERSITY OF ELECTRONIC SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF CHINA

The Personnel Department of the Ministry of Education announced (February 22) the appointment Ms. Cao Ping as the Secretary of the Party Committee of the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, and Hu Jun as the President and Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China.

(Comment: Cao Ping was born in December 1967. She is a graduate and a PhD in Economics and Professor. She is a member of the Communist Party of China. Prior to this appointment she served as the Executive Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee of Sichuan University. Hu Jun was born in October 1973. He is a graduate, Doctor of Engineering and a Professor. He is a member of the Communist Party of China and has worked in the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China for long.)

CHINA-G-20: CHINESE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER MA ZHAOXU TO ATTEND G-20 FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING

According to CCTV News (February 21) the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said at the regular press conference that as Foreign Minister Wang Yi was unable to attend the G-20 meeting due to schedule reasons, Vice Minister Ma Zhaoxu to attend on behalf of China.

CHINA-CCP: CCP CC ISSUES REVISED REGULATIONS ON CCP'S INSPECTION WORK

Xinhua (February 21) said that the CCP Central Committee recently issued the revised "Regulations on Inspection Work of the Communist Party of China" and issued a notice requiring all regions and departments to conscientiously comply with them. The notice required that party committees at all levels should regard the study and implementation of the "Regulations" as "an important political task, do a good job in publicity, interpretation, supervision and inspection, and ensure that all provisions of the "Regulations" are implemented". It stressed that is necessary to regard "two safeguards" as the fundamental task. The Regulations contain 53 Articles.

CHINA-CCP: NEW REGULATIONS ON PARTY HISTORY AND EDUCATION **ISSUED ON FEBRUARY 19**

New "Regulations on Party History Study and Education" 《党史学习教育工作条例》 approved by a previously unpublicised Politburo Standing Committee meeting on January 18, though they were not mentioned at or approved by the Politburo meeting on January 31, were issued on February 19. The notice says "The formulation and implementation of the "Regulations" will have a long-term effect on promoting the normalization of party history study and education". The Regulations, comprising 34 Articles, "establish the correct view of Party history" including of party events, key figures, and CCP's development, and "provide spiritual strength for national rejuvenation" while opposing nihilism. It says people must "oppose historical nihilism and other erroneous trends and views, consciously fight against behaviours and remarks that denigrate the image of the Party and the state, vilify Party and state leaders, smear heroes and models, and distort party history." Party history should be studied in party schools, and also in the Party cell/branch level through party classes, theoretical study groups, and thematic party days. Party history should be integrated with mass cultural activities, including in new era civilization practice centres, integrated media centres, etc.

(Comment: The Politburo meeting on January 31 probably reaffirmed it, and included it in the "meeting also considered other matters". It also expands the Party's 2021 internal campaign to society by "encouraging the entire Party and society to study and use Party history well".)

CHINA-ANTI-CORRUPTION: HU QIANG, FORMER VICE CHAIRMAN OF **JIANGXI CPPCC UNDER INVESTIGATION**

The website of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission and the National Supervisory Commission announced on February 21, that Hu Qiang, a former member of the Party Leadership Group and Vice Chairman of the Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 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. Beijing Daily (February 21) captioned the news as "The first tiger in the Year of the Dragon! "

CHINA-CYBER SECURITY: APPARENT LEAK IN SOCIAL MEDIA REVEALS THAT CHINESE COMPANY SHANGHAI ANXUN PROVIDES SPYWARE TO CHINA'S MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY

Human Rights in China (HRIC) on February 20 disclosed an apparent leak, posted on GitHub, that shows how Chinese company Shanghai Anxun provides spyware to China's Ministry of Public Security. Among other things, the tech enables hacking into social media accounts, keylogging, and uncovering personal information such as a user's real name and address. Meanwhile, ChatGPT's creator, OpenAI, says it has "disrupted five state-affiliated actors that sought to use AI services in support of malicious cyber activities," including at least one from China.

CHINA-SECURITY: MOSS WARNS OF GROWING THREAT TO CHINA FROM FOREIGN CYBER SPIES

The Global Times (February 16) reported that China's Ministry of State Security (MoSS) has issued a stark warning about the growing threat of foreign cyber spies, revealing continuous attacks on crucial departments and enterprises within the country. It said exploiting inadequate security measures and negligence, these spies establish covert channels to pilfer sensitive data, posing a substantial risk to China's data security and cybersecurity. The Ministry highlighted instances targeting military-civilian integration enterprises and software supply chain companies, underscoring the exploitation of network system vulnerabilities. A specific case involved a network attack on an email system manufacturer's personnel, resulting in the theft of critical data from key institutions.

CHINA-SECURITY: OVERSEAS CHINESE COMMUNITY CONCLUDES AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN YANG HENGJUN WAS AWARDED SUSPENDED DEATH SENTENCE WITH 5 YEARS IMPRISONMENT BECAUSE HE WAS A 'DOUBLE AGENT'

The overseas Chinese community, which has been discussing the case of Australian academic Yang Hengjun, who was arrested in 2019 at Guangzhou airport on charges of spying for an undisclosed foreign country and recently given a suspended death sentence by a Chinese court, concluded that the punishment awarded to Yang Hengjun was excessively harsh. They

concluded it was because he was a double if not a triple agent. They assess it is a warning from Xi Jinping to western powers and from the Ministry of State Security that people who have worked for it will not be permitted to just leave. Information from overseas Chinese sources reveals Yang Hengjun's wife, who is a Chinese citizen, and daughter have not been allowed to leave China and all his personal properties have been confiscated. Their information reveals that Yang Hengjun studied International politics at Fudan University in Shanghai and after graduating in 1989 he worked for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing even though the Ministry denied it. He was said to have entered the State security system soon after that. Some say he entered the State security system immediately after graduation and some say he started his spy career two years after that so he was transferred from Beijing to Hainan province in 1989 and worked for the Hainan government in the State Security Bureau. At the end of 1992 he was transferred to Hong Kong. In 1997 he was transferred to Washington DC and served as a senior researcher at the Atlantic Council. In 2000 he moved to Australia and became an Australian citizen. In 2002 he obtained a PhD in China studies from the University of Technology Sydney in 2009. In a 2011 letter he sent to his thesis advisor professor he admitted that he had worked for the Chinese State security ministry as a spy since 1989, including assignments in Hong Kong and Washington DC until he immigrated to Australia in 2000. Now Yang Hengjun's status as a Chinese spy is confirmed by the official indictment by the Beijing Municipal prosecutor's office. According to the indictment, Beijing accuses him of being a spy for Taiwan while he was working for the State Security Department in Hainan. From April 1994 to 2002 he accepted tasks assigned by Taiwanese Military Intelligence Bureau. The indictment further states that Yang Hengjun took advantage of his position in the bureau and obtained documents related to State secrets and provided more than 40 sets of such top secret documents to Taiwan in exchange for US\$ 220,000 and over 2.7 million Hong Kong dollars. The overseas Chinese community has questioned why Beijing would punish Yang for a crime that he allegedly committed almost 30 years ago and that at the time he was a very low-level staff and couldn't have access to Top Secret documents as the indictment claimed. Also, that Yang Hengjun was appointed Chairman of the International New Media Corporation organization, established on December 24, 2014, by Chief Editors of 35 overseas Chinese media obviously with the approval of the CCP CC Propaganda Department.

CHINA-ECONOMY: ARTICLE IN BEIJING REVIEW URGES U.S. BUSINESSES TO OVERCOME "PROTECTIONIST MENTALITY IMPOSED BY THEIR GOVERNMENT" AND INVEST MORE IN CHINA

Zhou Mi, a research fellow with the Institute of American and Oceanian Studies of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce, published an article titled 'Tapping into more' in the English-language Beijing Review (No.7-8 February 15, 2024), in which he said "China has attracted investment from a wide range of transnational corporations by lowering market access thresholds and providing investment facilitation through the country's commitment to further opening up and measures to continuously improve its business environment. U.S. businesses have not only been deeply involved in China's economic and social development over the past decades, but are also expected to play a more active role in China's pursuit of modernization, a major undertaking that not only shapes the future of the nation but also has the potential to become a global game-changer by opening doors to international opportunities". He urged U.S. enterprises to "overcome the protectionist mentality imposed by their government and seek to establish more equitable and mutually beneficial economic and trade relations" and added that in the current geopolitical climate "Chinese and U.S. companies should engage in more effective and flexible cooperation in global value, industrial and supply chains". He said, "U.S. businesses can play a crucial role in Belt and Road cooperation".

CHINA-ECONOMY: WORKER PROTESTS IN CHINA MORE THAN TRIPLED IN FOURTH QUARTER OF 2023 COMPARED WITH SAME PERIOD IN 2022

According to data collected by the China Dissent Monitor of New York-based international human rights organization Freedom House, labour protests in China more than tripled in the fourth quarter of 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. It said between September and December 2023, Yiyan.com monitored and recorded 777 labour protests, compared with 245 during the same period in 2022. Kevin Slaten, Director of Yiyan.com, said worker protests are usually related to wage disputes and occupational safety. "The long-standing issues in these disputes in China are poor enforcement of labour protections and a complete lack of independent and effective unions". Most of the protests analysed by Yiyan.com were small, with half having fewer than 10 participants and 40% of protesters having between 10 and 99 people.

CHINA-ECONOMY: 2000 NORTH KOREAN WORKERS RIOT IN FACTORY IN JILIN

Yomiuri Shimbun reported (February 17) that the first large-scale riots by North Korean workers occurred at a clothing manufacturing and seafood processing factory in Helong, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, in China's Jilin Province. The factory is located in a development zone filled with factories and is near the Tumen River that flows along the China-North Korea border. The 2,000 North Korean workers rioted over unpaid wages and occupied the Factory and killed the Plant Manager. Many former female soldiers in their 20s were reported to have also participated in the riot. The riots began on January 11 and lasted till January 14. The North Korean workers were dispatched by a company under Pyongyang's Defense Ministry to earn foreign currency.

CHINA-PLA: GUANGMING DAILY ARTICLE BY NDU OFFICERS STRESSES 'RED GENES' AND DISCIPLINE IN PLA

Zhang Qi and Qian Junpeng of the School of Political Science, National Defense University, published an article captioned 'Let the red gene be passed on forever' in the Guangming Daily (February 18). The article emphasised that the 20th Party Congress had emphasised "that we should inherit the red gene and continue the red blood". It stressed that "Firm ideals and beliefs are the soul of the red gene. The way to run an army is to cast the soul first. Noble ideals and firm beliefs are the "soul" of revolutionary soldiers. This is the red factor in the blood of our army that is absolutely pure and cannot be contaminated in any way. It is also the red factor that every member of the revolutionary army must loyally maintain and have absolute faith in. Under the leadership of the party, our army has strengthened its ideals and beliefs, forged its inner soul, and always maintained the essence of a revolutionary army in different historical periods and different living and development environments". The article's emphasis was on discipline in the PLA.

CHINA-PLA: RESEARCHERS OF INSTITUTE OF WAR STUDIES, AMS, PUBLISH LENGTHY ARTICLE ON MILITARY MODERNISATION IN GUANGMING DAILY

Tian Kaiyuan and Deng Bibo, Researchers at the Institute of War Studies, Academy of Military Sciences, published a lengthy article in the Guangming Daily (February 18) captioned 'Follow

the path of building a strong military with Chinese characteristics', which said "National defense and military modernization is an important part of Chinese-style modernization. The internal logic of Chinese-style modernization determines the development direction of our military modernization. We must deeply understand and understand the modernization of national defense and military from the three aspects of development process, theoretical construction, and practical promotion. Answer the major contemporary issue of how to successfully develop a strong military with Chinese characteristics in the grand chess game of Chinese-style modernization." Tracing the history of China's military modernisation it said "China's national defense and military modernization is the modernization of the national defense and military of a socialist country under the absolute leadership of the Communist Party of China. China's armed forces are the people's armed forces, and serving the people is its fundamental purpose. This is the fundamental prerequisite for an in-depth understanding of the theoretical system of national defense and military modernization". "Xi Jinping's Thought on Strengthening the Army has pioneered the sinicization of Marxist military theory" and "War and combat theory is an important part of the theoretical system of national defense and military modernization". It said, "President Xi Jinping stands at the strategic level of coordinating the "two overall situations" and has formulated the goal of achieving the 100th anniversary of the founding of the army by 2027, basically realizing the modernization of national defense and the army by 2035, and fully building a world-class army by the middle of this century." It asserted in conclusion that "It is necessary to comprehensively strengthen military training and preparations, insist on fighting, preparing for war, and building while working hard to improve the strategic capabilities of safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests, and effectively fulfil the missions and tasks of the people's army in the new era."

CHINA-PLA: PLA BORDER DEFENCE COMPANY EXERCISES IN ALI MSD AREA IN NGARI, TIBET

The Tashigang Border Defence company, a pivotal unit within the Ali military divisions' border defence regiment, confronts unique challenges posed by its strategic location amidst the Karakoram mountains, Gangdese mountains, and the Himalayas, with altitudes exceeding 4,500 mtrs. CCTV (February 19) described the areas as "the southwest border of the motherland - the border stretches for more than a thousand kilometres, and the famous Bangong Lake, Zhada Forest and Pulan Port are embedded in this land. This is the Ali region of Tibet." It said soldiers from the Tashigang Border Defense Company of a border defense regiment in

the Ali Military Division and the immigration management police painted a stone monument to strengthen the border on September 27, 2023. Acknowledging the critical importance of enhancing their capabilities in this high-altitude terrain, the company actively engages in specialized training, using rigorous exercises to address shortcomings and refine skills for diverse tasks. In preparation for heavy snowfall, they undertake comprehensive border control exercises, simulating real combat scenarios to improve their ability to manage borders under challenging conditions. The dynamic training regimen includes rapid manoeuvres, agile navigation, kneeling positions for shooting, and exercises while lying down, prepares officers and soldiers for the unpredictable nature of high-altitude border operations. The report also referred to exercises by the Purang Border Defence Company and Pulan Border Defence Company of the Ali military division.

CHINA-PLA: PLA AF BRIGADE IN SOUTHERN XINJIANG CONDUCTS EXTENSIVE DAY AND NIGHT EXERCISES

Huaxia (February 19) disclosed that the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) aviation brigade, based in Southern Xinjiang, has recently undertaken a significant initiative, engaging in an extensive series of day-and-night flight training exercises. The squadrons' primary focus during these drills was to elevate proficiency in face-to-face assault manoeuvre and air combat confrontations. Demonstrating a steadfast commitment to maintaining operational readiness, the aviation brigade deployed fighter jets in multiple batches for rigorous training sessions, emphasizing the diverse challenges posed by both daylight and nocturnal operations. The comprehensive program included simulated combat scenarios, with pilots refining face-to-face assault techniques and air combat confrontation strategies. This commitment underscores the PLAAF's dedication to enhancing the adaptability and versatility of its aviation assets, recognizing the unique challenges presented by varying op conditions.

CHINA-PLA: CASIC UNVEILS NEW AIR DEFENCE MISSILE SYSTEM AT SAUDI WORLD DEFENCE EXHIBITION

China unveiled its latest technological achievement, the FK-300 air defence missile weapon system, at the prestigious Saudi World Defense Exhibition. Developed by the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC), this cutting-edge anti-swarming and anti-munition air defence system marks a significant leap in Chinese military innovation. The FK-300's main

combat vehicle, based on the SX2220 6×6 platform, serves as a transporter, erector, launcher and radar (TELAR) platform, showcasing a comprehensive and sophisticated design. With two FK-3000 auxiliary launch vehicles, the FK-300 system demonstrates versatility, featuring a main combat vehicle armed with six anti-aircraft missiles, an automatic Gatling cannon, and 48 smaller anti-aircraft missiles. The FK-3000 auxiliary launch vehicle complements the system with a remote-controlled turret housing an electro-optical/infrared sight and 24 short-rng anti-aircraft missiles in six tubular launch containers.

CHINA-TIBET: POLITBURO MEMBER AND HEAD OF UFWD SHI TAIFENG MET CHINESE RECOGNISED PANCHEN LAMA IN BEIJING ON FEBRUARY 21

Politburo member and UFWD Head Shi Taifeng met the Chinese-recognised Panchen Erdeni Chos-kyi rGyal-po on February 21 in Beijing and extended greetings for the Spring Festival and the Tibetan New Year to him and all Tibetan Buddhism believers. The Panchen Rinpoche presented Shi Taifeng with a 'hada' scarf. Acknowledging the achievements made by Panchen Rinpoche over the past year, "Shi Taifeng hoped that Panchen Rinpoche can conscientiously study Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and maintain a high degree of unity with the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core ideologically, politically and in action". He also expressed the hope that "Panchen Rinpoche can uphold the principle of developing Tibetan Buddhism in the Chinese context, and actively contribute to advancing the adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism to the socialist society". The People's Daily (February 22) quoted Panchen Rinpoche as saying "he would continue to improve political standards and religious knowledge, inherit and carry forward the patriotic and religious tradition of the Tibetan Buddhist community, and resolutely safeguard national unity and ethnic solidarity".

CHINA-GANSU: MORE THAN 4000 BUDDHISTS ATTEND "SUNNING OF BUDDHA" CEREMONY AT LABRANG MONASTERY IN GANSU

Xinhua (February 23) reported that more than 40,000 believers and visitors from home and abroad attended a grand Tibetan Buddhist event, known as the "sunning of the Buddha" ceremony, held on February 22 at Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province. It said nearly 100 lamas carried a huge thangka scroll bearing the image of the Buddha from the scripture hall to a nearby hill, followed by devout Buddhists as well as visitors. The thangka was unveiled at

around 11 a.m. on the hillside for believers to worship. Believers and tourists presented hadas, or white ceremonial scarves, to the scroll to pray for good luck. The event ended about half an hour later.

CHINA-HUNAN: HUNAN TAKES THE LEAD IN 'EMANCIPATING' THE MIND AND PROMOTING 'HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT'

On February 2, Hunan Provincial Party Committee Secretary Shen Xiaoming presided over a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Provincial Party Committee. The meeting reviewed the "Plan for Emancipating the Mind Discussion Activities" and pointed out that it is necessary to organize and carry out in-depth discussion activities for emancipating the mind, further motivating party members and cadres to unshackle, open their horizons, and relax their hands and feet to better promote high-quality development and modernization. The Paper (February 19) disclosed that Hunan Daily on February 18, reported that the Hunan Provincial Party Committee recently issued the "Notice of the Hunan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China on launching a major discussion on emancipating the mind throughout the province." It said the "Notice" was issued on February 5 and officially announced on February 18, the first working day after the Spring Festival. The "Notice" stated that the development history of Hunan's reform and opening up for more than 40 years shows that when we emancipate our minds, dare to venture, experiment, and boldly innovate, development will be good and fast; when we are conservative in thinking, timid, and stick to conventions, development will be sluggish and slow. According to the "Notice", this major discussion activity in Hunan Province is mainly carried out in units at the county level and above, and is connected with the theme education of studying and implementing Xi Jinping's socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era. It will be launched in early February 2024 and will basically be carried out in late March. Hunan will set up an office for the Emancipation of the Mind Discussion Activity in the Provincial Party Committee. The office will be located in the Propaganda Department of the Provincial Party Committee and will be responsible for organizing and guiding activities across the province.

ii) The Shanghai Securities News (February 18) said "Emancipating the mind is to truly identify the root causes of ideological problems and better promote high-quality development". It also said "currently Hunan is shouldering the important mission entrusted by the Party Central Committee to build a nationally important advanced manufacturing highland, a scientific and

technological innovation highland with core competitiveness, and an inland reform and opening up highland".

iii) Hunan Daily (February 18) reported that the Hunan Provincial Party Committee had recently issued the "Notice of the Hunan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China on launching a major discussion on emancipating the mind throughout the province"

(Comment: The Paper commented that Hunan's major campaign is to "emancipate the mind" and resist reliance on resources and capital investment to stimulate economic development. This is likely to become a nationwide campaign.)

CHINA-HEILONGJIANG: HEILONGJIANG PARTY SECRETARY XU QIN EXHORTS CADRES TO "EMANCIPATE THE MIND"

"Heilongjiang Daily" (February 18) on the first day after the Spring Festival holiday, the province's work conference on deepening capacity and style construction was held in Harbin. Xu Qin, Party Secretary of Heilongjiang and Director of the Standing Committee of the Provincial People's Congress, attended and delivered a speech. He emphasised that it is necessary to thoroughly implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's important expositions on capacity building and the important instructions of the important speeches during the inspection of our province, persist in promoting the construction of capacity and style, and solidly carry out the activities of "grasping the grassroots, laying the foundation, strong implementation, and achieving practical results". He exhorted cadres to "Further emancipate the mind, improve capabilities, change styles, strengthen implementation" and use new atmosphere, new responsibilities and new actions to promote comprehensive revitalization and achieve new breakthroughs. Deputy Party Secretary Liang Huiling presided over the meeting. Yang Bo, member of the Standing Committee of the Provincial Party Committee and Minister of the Organization Department, briefed the meeting on the assessment of the province's capacity and style construction in 2023.

CHINA-GUANGDONG: GUANGDONG PARTY SECRETARY CONVENES MEETING OF GUANGDONG ORGANISATION DEPARTMENTS AT ALL LEVELS TO REVIEW THEMATIC EDUCATION

On February 20, the Standing Committee of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee held a meeting to convey and study the spirit of the National Organisation Ministers Conference and study the implementation of the opinions of Guangdong province. Provincial Party Committee Secretary Huang Kunming presided over the meeting and delivered a speech. The meeting affirmed that the province's Organisational departments at all levels have carefully organized and carried out thematic education in the past year, and done a solid job in theoretical arming, selecting and appointing talents, strengthening the foundation, educating and gathering talents, etc., and promoted the achievements in party building and organisational work in our province. The meeting said it is necessary to consolidate the ideological and political foundation for promoting Guangdong's modernization drive and select and strengthen leadership teams at all levels.

CHINA-GUANGDONG: GUANGDONG HOLDS SECOND HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE IN SHENZHEN ON FEBRUARY 18

The Nanfang Daily (February 19) reported that Guangdong held its second provincial high-quality development conference in Shenzhen on February 18, emphasizing the combination of sci-tech innovation and industrial development. Guangdong Party Secretary Huang Kunming emphasized the importance of sci-tech innovation, saying that Guangdong should take the path of high-quality development, seize the critical factor of sci-tech innovation, and encourage companies, industries, and society to get involved. He stressed that it is a strategic move and a long-term plan for Guangdong to advance industrial sci-tech innovation and develop new productivity boosters. He urged the whole province to strive to accelerate the construction of an industrial sci-tech innovation center with a global influence. Huang Kunming also declared that the province will encourage enterprises to use new technologies, equipment, materials, and processes to improve product quality and production efficiency and foster future sectors. The aim is to launch a new batch of primary scientific research projects this year, promoting technology transformation for 9,000 industrial enterprises and facilitating digital transformation for 9,200 large industrial enterprises. Wang Weizhong, Governor of Guangdong, encouraged companies to be deeply involved in the province's priority tasks, such

as the high-quality development projects for counties, towns, and villages. He also encouraged scholars from technological and education sectors to promote and cultivate more talents who are good at innovation. Wang Weizhong indicated that Guangdong would continue to establish a market-oriented, law-ruled, and international business environment, creating better conditions for various business entities and talents. Ai Xuefeng, Director of Guangdong Provincial Development Reform Commission, said that this year, Guangdong would plan 1,508 provincial critical projects with an annual investment of 1 trillion RMB, including more than 370 projects covering four major industries, namely, new-generation information technology, biology, high-end equipment manufacturing and new materials, with an annual investment of about 150 billion RMB.

(Comment: Guangdong province has had the largest GDP in China for 35 consecutive years.)

CHINA-SHANXI: MS HU LIJIE APPOINTED MINISTER OF SHANXI ORGANISATION DEPARTMENT AND DEAN OF SHANXI PARTY SCHOOL

The Shanxi Provincial Party School (Shanxi Administration College) website showed that 1971-born Ms Hu Lijie has been appointed as a member of the Standing Committee of the Shanxi Provincial Party Committee, Minister of the Organization Department, and the Principal (Dean) of the Provincial Party School (Shanxi Administration College).

CHINA-TAIWAN: CHINA'S COAST GUARD BOARDS TAIWANESE TOURIST BOAT ON FEBRUARY 19

China's Coast Guard boarded a Taiwan tourist boat carrying 11 crew and 23 passengers on a tour around Kinmen's main island on February 19 further escalating tensions.

(Comment: The incident occurred a day after Beijing said it would step up patrols in the area in response to the deaths of two Chinese fishermen who drowned last week while being chased by the Taiwanese Coast Guard.)

CHINA-TAIWAN: CHINA STEPS UP COAST GUARD PATROLS OFF TAIWAN SUBSEQUENT TO DROWNING OF TWO OF ITS FISHERMEN

Associated Press (February 18) reported that China is stepping up patrols in the waters off the coast of Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago, days after two of its fishermen drowned while being chased by the Taiwanese coast guard, which accused the boat of trespassing. The Chinese Coast Guard's spokesman, Gan Yu, said (February 18) the Fujian division will regularly monitor the waters off the southern coast of the city of Xiamen — a few kilometers from Kinmen — to strengthen maritime law enforcement.

CHINA-TAIWAN: TAIWAN INVESTMENT IN CHINA REGISTERS HUGE DROP OF 83.8 PERCENT SINCE 2010

The Taiwan Times (February 19) quoting the Mainland Affairs Council said that Taiwanese business people's investments in China last year hit a record low of 11.4 percent of total foreign investment. The Council said the number was a huge decline from 83.8 percent in 2010, mainly because Taiwanese businesspeople have been diversifying their investments globally over the past few years. It said data from the Ministry of Economic Affairs' Investment Commission showed that from 1991 to last year, 45,523 Taiwanese investments in China totalling US\$206.37 billion had been approved, accounting for 50.7 percent of overall foreign investment. It said Taiwanese businessmen have reduced investment in China and increased investment in the US, Europe, Japan and countries covered by the government's New Southbound Policy to diversify production risks. An official of the Council added that Taiwanese would not have considered pulling out of China if the economy was good, observing that they would keep a low profile regarding their plans to pull out of China for fear of retaliation from Beijing. He disclosed, however, that Hon Hai Precision Industry Co (鴻海精密) would find it difficult to withdraw from China, as its huge scale means any move it makes would have wide-scale ramifications, though small and medium-sized enterprises have begun to slowly "transfer" to other countries or return to Taiwan.

CHINA-INDIA: CHINA'S DEFENCE MINISTRY SAYS INDIA AND CHINA WILL TRY TO "TURN THE PAGE" IN THE BORDER SITUATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

In a brief statement (February 21) Chinese Ministry of National Defence said announced that the 21st round of the China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at the Moldo-Chushul border meeting point on the Chinese side on February 19. It said "The two sides conducted positive, in-depth, and constructive communication on resolving border issues of mutual concern". The statement added "that both sides agreed to continue communication through military and diplomatic channels, guided by the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries, to reach an acceptable solution for both sides as soon as possible and "turn the page" in the border situation".

CHINA-CANADA: CANADIAN FRIENDS OF HONGKONG DECLINE TO PARTICIPATE IN CANADIAN GOVERNMENT INQUIRY ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

The 'Canadian Friends of Hong Kong' issued a statement on February 20 captioned 'The Statement to Boycott the Foreign Interference Public Inquiry' declaring that it has not and will not participate in the Foreign Interference Commission Inquiry currently undertaking because of the following reasons:

We have grave concerns regarding the objectivity and the security integrity of the Foreign Interference Commission Inquiry, primarily due to standing being granted to individuals suspected to have strong ties to the Chinese Consulates, and their proxies. Specifically, we denounce the granting of full standing to MP Han Dong and Michael Chan, and intervener standing to Senator Yuen Pau Woo, by Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue.

This Inquiry functions like a huge fishing net – snaring up all kinds of foreign interference information and from all sources. A person who has full standing has the right to cross-examine witnesses and to access documentary evidence not admitted as exhibits. Even if documents are heavily redacted, just the titles of the documents, if seen by our adversaries, will give them a target as they will know what to look for.

As pointed out in the article The foreign interference inquiry could backfire on our national security.

The statement also quoted a former Australian politician and some China experts to support their stand.

CHINA-HUNGARY: CHINA AND HUNGARY SIGN SECURITY PACT INVOLVING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JOINT PATROLS

The Times (February 20) reported that Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban has signed a security pact with China, including an agreement for joint police patrols, in a new sign of his determination to allow Beijing a stronger foothold in the European Union. China's Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong visited Budapest at the weekend at the start of a tour of Europe. He received a warm welcome in Hungary. The full text of the agreement, signed by Wang Xiaohong and Hungary's interior minister, Sándor Pintér, was not made public and details were left vague in the two sides' public statements, which were released only days later. However the Hungarian statement said it would involve "enhancing cooperation in law enforcement and joint patrols".

(Comment: China's largest car battery firm, CATL, has announced it will spend \$7.1 billion on a factory in the city of Debrecen, Hungary's biggest foreign investment deal. A Chinese company is also building a new Budapest to Belgrade railway line, as part of President Xi's "Belt and Road Initiative", to which Hungary subscribes.)

CHINA-RUSSIA: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY DECLINES TO COMMENT ON NAVALNY'S DEATH CALLING IT RUSSIA'S "INTERNAL AFFAIR"

Responding to a question from an AFP journalist the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said (February 17) regarding the death of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny, "This is Russia's internal affair. I will not comment."

CHINA-U.N.: CHINA CRITICISES U.S. VETO OF UNSC RESOLUTION ON GAZA

Beijing Daily (February 21) reported that the United Nations Security Council voted on a draft resolution proposed by Algeria on behalf of the Arab countries calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. The draft resolution was not passed due to the exclusive veto of the United States. Zhang Jun, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, voted

in favor of the vote and made an explanatory speech to elaborate on China's position. Zhang Jun said that China expressed strong disappointment and dissatisfaction with the veto of the draft by the United States. Zhang Jun also said the Security Council had an overwhelming consensus, but "the United States has used its veto power to kill the Security Council consensus. The US veto sent the wrong signal and pushed the situation in Gaza into a more dangerous situation".

CHINA-US: CHINESE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC SECURITY MET U.S. HOMELAND SECRETARY MAYORKAS IN VIENNA

Beijing Daily (February 19) reported that Chinese State Councillor and Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong met U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas in Vienna on February 18. It said Wang Xiaohong stated that both sides should implement the important consensus reached by the heads of state of the two countries at the San Francisco meeting, uphold the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation, and promote drug control and law enforcement cooperation between the two countries. Wang Xiaohong requested that the U.S. side respect China's core interests and major concerns, effectively address issues such as unwarranted harassment and interrogation of Chinese students in the U.S., the security of Chinese diplomatic and consular missions and personnel in the U.S., and visa restrictions on Chinese institutions and personnel, injecting more positive energy into the stable, healthy, and sustainable development of China-U.S. relations.

CHINA-US: CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI AND U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE BLINKEN MEET ON SIDELINES OF MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE ON FEBRUARY 16

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met at the Munich Security Conference on February 16, the latest in a series of talks between Chinese and US officials since November 2023. Xinhua said Wang Yi urged the US to remove its "illegal, unilateral sanctions" on the country's nationals and businesses. He also called on the Biden administration to "stop unwarranted harassment and interrogations" of Chinese citizens traveling to the US — a request that follows reports of Chinese students being denied entry to the US over visa issues. Xinhua and the US both described the meeting as candid and constructive. The Readout from the US spokesman's Office said that Blinken had emphasized

the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the South China Sea. The two sides had substantive discussions on a range of regional and global issues. The US Secretary of State raised concerns over the PRC's support for Russia's war against Ukraine, including support to the Russian defense industrial base. The two sides also exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East and on the Korean Peninsula and affirmed that their respective senior officials should meet to follow up on these discussions. The US Secretary of State discussed his recent travel in the Middle East and U.S. diplomatic efforts in the region. Both sides recognized the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between the United States and the PRC across a range of strategic issues, including consultations and high-level meetings in key areas in the coming months.

