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XI'S THOUGHT BOOSTS GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL GOVERNANCE



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Photo taken on June 28 shows a street view in Hong Kong marking the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland. *Li Gang*





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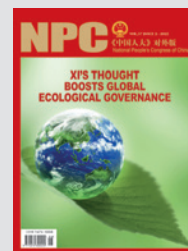
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COVER: April 22 marks World Earth Day, which was first launched in 1970, aiming to demonstrate support for environmental protection. The theme of Earth Day 2022 was "Invest In Our Planet." VCG



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Full text of Xi Jinping's address at the meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Xi Jinping, Chinese President, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission

(July 1, 2022)



President Xi Jinping attends an event celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center on July 1. Yao Dawei

Fellow Compatriots,
Dear Friends,

Today we are gathered here to celebrate this grand occasion marking the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland, and to hold the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

First of all, I would like to extend sincere greetings to all the people of Hong Kong. I also extend warm congratulations to the newly inaugurated sixth-term HKSAR Chief Executive Mr. John Lee, principal officials of the sixth-term HKSAR government, and members of the Executive Council. And let me express heartfelt appreciation to all our compatriots both at home and abroad, and international friends for their support for the cause of "one country, two systems" and for Hong Kong's prosperity and stability.

In the over 5,000-year history of Chinese civilization, our ancestors working hard on the land south of the Five Ridges is an important chapter. In the history of modern China after the Opium War in 1840, the humiliation of ceding Hong Kong is a page of pain, and also included is the Chinese people's fight for the survival of our country. The past century has witnessed how the Communist Party of China has united and led the Chinese people in its magnificent endeavors for a better future, to which fellow Chinese in Hong Kong have made unique and significant contributions. Throughout history, people in Hong Kong have always maintained a close bond with the motherland in weal and woe.

Hong Kong's return to the motherland marked the beginning of a new era for the region. Over the past 25 years, with the full support of the country and the joint efforts of the HK-

SAR government and people from all walks of life in Hong Kong, the success of "one country, two systems" has won recognition throughout the world.

Since its return, Hong Kong, amid China's monumental reform and opening-up efforts, has been breaking new ground, functioning as an important bridge between the Chinese mainland and the rest of the world. As a result, it has made irreplaceable contributions to our country's economic miracle marked by long-term, stable, and rapid growth. Proactively integrating itself into the country's overall development and carving out its role in national strategies, Hong Kong has maintained its strengths in its high degree of openness and in aligning with international rules. In doing so, the region has been playing an important role in raising China's opening up to a higher level with wider coverage and scope. With continuously expanding areas and enabling mechanisms for Hong Kong's cooperation and exchanges with the mainland, people in Hong Kong now have better opportunities to start their own businesses and make achievements.

Since its return, Hong Kong has overcome various hardships and challenges and advanced steadily forward. Be it the global financial crisis, the COVID-19 epidemic, or social unrest, none of them have stopped Hong Kong from marching forward. Over the past 25 years, Hong Kong's economy has been thriving, its status as an international financial, shipping, and trading center has been maintained, and its innovative science and technology industries have been booming. Hong Kong has remained one of the most liberal and open economies in the world, it has also maintained a world-class business environment, its previous laws including the practice of the common law have been maintained and developed, various social programs have made all-around progress, and



President Xi Jinping administers oath of office to principal officials of the sixth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center on July 1. Yue Yuewei



President Xi Jinping poses for a photo with newly inaugurated Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region John Lee Ka-chiu at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center on July 1. *Xie Huanchi*



overall social stability has been ensured. As a cosmopolis, Hong Kong's vitality has impressed the world.

Since its return, Hong Kong has ensured its people enjoy their status as masters of the region. With the policy of the people of Hong Kong administering Hong Kong and a high degree of autonomy in practice, the region has truly entered an era of democracy. Over the past 25 years, Hong Kong's constitutional order based on the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law of the HKSAR has been maintained in a steady and sound manner. The central government's overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong has been well implemented, and a high degree of autonomy in the region has been exercised as it should. The National Security Law in Hong Kong was adopted, which has established the legal system to safeguard national security in the region. The electoral system of Hong Kong has been modified and improved, thereby materializing the principle that Hong Kong should be administered by patriots. The democratic system of the special administrative region (SAR) conforms to both the "one country, two systems" principle and the region's constitutional status. It is in the interest of Hong Kong residents' democratic rights and the region's prosperity and stability, securing a bright future for the region.

Fellow Compatriots,
Dear Friends,

"One country, two systems" is an unprecedented innovation. Its fundamental purpose is to safeguard China's sovereignty, security, and development interests and to maintain

long-term prosperity and stability in Hong Kong and Macao. All that the central government has done are for the benefits of Hong Kong and Macao, for the well-being of all residents of the two regions, and for the future of the whole country. At the meeting celebrating the 20th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland in 2017, I stated that the central government, in implementing the principle of "one country, two systems," will maintain two key points: first, the central government will remain resolute in implementing the principle, and will not change or vacillate in this stand; and second, the principle will be implemented as what it is originally intended precisely. Today, I would like to stress again that "one country, two systems" has been tested repeatedly in practice. It serves the fundamental interests of not only Hong Kong and Macao, but also the whole country and the nation. It has gained wide support from the 1.4 billion-plus Chinese people including the residents of Hong Kong and Macao. It is also widely accepted by the international community. There is no reason for us to change such a good policy, and we must adhere to it in the long run.

Fellow Compatriots,
Dear Friends,

A review of the past can light the way forward. The practice of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong has left us both valuable experience and profound inspiration. What has been done over the past 25 years tells us that only if we have a profound and accurate understanding of the laws guiding the practice of "one country, two systems," can we make sure



Photo taken on June 16 shows Lee Tung Street before the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland in Hong Kong, south China. *Li Gang*

our cause advances in the right direction in a sound and sustained manner.

First, we must fully and faithfully implement the principle of “one country, two systems.” This principle embodies a complete system. Its top priority is to safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests. With this as a prerequisite, Hong Kong and Macao can keep the previous capitalist systems unchanged for a long time and enjoy a high degree of autonomy. Since the socialist system is the fundamental system of the People's Republic of China and leadership by the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics, all residents in the special administrative regions should willingly respect and uphold the country's fundamental system. The thorough and precise implementation of the “one country, two systems” principle will open up broader prospects for the development of Hong Kong and Macao. The more firmly the “one country” principle is upheld, the greater strength the “two systems” will be unleashed for the development of the SARs.

Second, we must uphold the central government's overall jurisdiction while securing the SARs' high degree of autonomy. Since Hong Kong's return to the motherland, it has been re-integrated into China's governance system, and a constitutional order was established with the “one country, two systems” principle as its fundamental guideline. The central government's overall jurisdiction over the SARs underpins their high degree of autonomy, and such autonomy bestowed by the law is fully respected and resolutely safeguarded by the central government. Only when the enforcement of the

central government's overall jurisdiction dovetails with the fulfillment of a high degree of autonomy in the SARs, can the SARs be well governed. The SARs uphold the executive-led system. The executive, legislative, and judicial branches perform their duties in accordance with the basic laws and other relevant laws. The executive and legislative branches check and balance and cooperate with each other while the judiciary exercises its power independently.

Third, we must ensure that Hong Kong is administered by patriots. It is a universal political rule that a government must be in the hands of patriots. There is no country or region in the world where its people will allow an unpatriotic or even treasonous force or figure to take power. The government of the HKSAR must be safely kept in the hands of those who love the country. This is an essential requirement for Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability and must not be compromised under any circumstances. To put the governing power in the right hands is to safeguard Hong Kong's prosperity and stability as well as the immediate interests of more than 7 million people in the region.

Fourth, we must maintain Hong Kong's distinctive status and advantages. The central government has always handled Hong Kong affairs from a strategic and overall perspective, taking into consideration the fundamental and long-term interests of Hong Kong and the country as a whole. The fundamental interests of Hong Kong are in line with those of the country, and the central government and Hong Kong compatriots share the same aspirations. Hong Kong's close connection with the world market and strong support from

the motherland are its distinctive advantages. Such favorable conditions are cherished by the people of Hong Kong and by the central government as well. The central government fully supports Hong Kong in its effort to maintain its distinctive status and edges, to improve its presence as an international financial, shipping, and trading center, to keep its business environment free, open, and regulated, and to maintain the common law, so as to expand and facilitate its exchanges with the world. On the country's journey toward building a modern socialist country in all respects and realizing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the central government believes that Hong Kong will make great contributions.

Fellow Compatriots,
Dear Friends,

Hong Kong compatriots have never been absent in the process, in which the Chinese people and the Chinese nation have realized the great transformation from standing up to growing prosperous and finally to becoming strong. From disarray to good governance, Hong Kong is entering a new phase of becoming more prosperous. The next five years are important for Hong Kong to break new ground and achieve another leap forward. While there are both opportunities and challenges, opportunities outnumber challenges. The central government and people from all sectors of Hong Kong society expect much of the newly inaugurated HKSAR government. People of all ethnic groups across the country wish Hong Kong have promising prospects. For Hong Kong, I have four proposals.

First, Hong Kong should further improve its governance. To promote the development of the HKSAR, it is of urgency to improve Hong Kong's governance system, governance capacity, and governance efficacy. The chief executive and the government of the HKSAR in the driver's seat are the first to be held accountable for the governance of the region. Administrators of Hong Kong should fulfill their commitments, materialize the "one country, two systems" principle

with concrete actions, uphold the authority of the Basic Law of the HKSAR and devote themselves to the development of the region. Personnel for public offices should be assessed on both ability and political integrity before they are recruited. Professionals who love both the motherland and Hong Kong with strong governance capabilities and passion for serving the public should be recruited as government staff. Administrators of Hong Kong need to have a new outlook on the motherland and have an international vision in order to make better development plans for the region from an overall and long-term perspective. They need to transform their concepts of governance to balance the relationship between the government and the market so that a capable government serves an efficient market. The HKSAR government needs to strengthen self-governance and improve its conduct to better take on its responsibilities and deliver better performance in ensuring stability and prosperity in Hong Kong.

Second, Hong Kong should continue to create strong impetus for growth. With its special status, Hong Kong enjoys good conditions and broad space for development. The central government fully supports Hong Kong in its effort to seize historic opportunities offered by China's development and actively dovetail itself with the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and other national strategies such as the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. The central government fully supports Hong Kong in carrying out more extensive exchanges and close cooperation with the rest of the world and in attracting entrepreneurs with dreams to realize their ambitions in Hong Kong. The central government also fully supports Hong Kong in taking active yet prudent steps to advance reforms and dismantle the barriers of vested interests in order to unlock enormous creativity and development potential of Hong Kong society.

Third, Hong Kong should earnestly address people's concerns and difficulties in daily life. "Those enjoying benefits and joy of all people should also share their burdens and concerns." As I once said, the people's aspiration for a better life is what we are striving for. Currently, the biggest aspiration of Hong Kong people is to lead a better life, in which they will have more decent housing, more opportunities for starting their own businesses, better education for their children, and better care in their twilight years. We should actively respond to such aspirations. The newly inaugurated HKSAR government should be pragmatic, live up to what the people expect of it, and consider the expectations of the whole society, particularly ordinary citizens, as what it should accomplish foremost. It should be more courageous and adopt more efficient measures to overcome difficulties and forge ahead. It should make sure that all citizens in Hong Kong share more fully and fairly in the fruits of development so that every resident will be convinced that if you work hard, you can improve the life of your own and that of your family.

Fourth, the people of Hong Kong should



A flag-raising ceremony is held by the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland at the Golden Bauhinia Square in Hong Kong, south China, on July 1. *Xinhua*



Helicopters carrying China's national flag and the flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region fly over Hong Kong, south China, during a flag-raising ceremony to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland on July 1. *Lu Binghui*

work together to safeguard harmony and stability. Hong Kong is the home of all its people, and harmony in a family brings success in everything. Through trials and tribulations, now we keenly feel that Hong Kong cannot withstand chaos and will not afford to have any, and we also deeply feel that the development of Hong Kong allows no delay. We must get rid of whatever interference there may be to concentrate our attention on the development of the region. Everyone in Hong Kong, regardless of profession and belief, can be a positive force and do his or her bit for the region's development as long as he or she genuinely supports the principle of "one country, two systems," loves Hong Kong, and abides by the Basic Law and the laws of the special administrative region.

It is my hope that all fellow compatriots in Hong Kong will carry on the mainstream values, which are characterized by the love of both the motherland and Hong Kong as the core and are in conformity with the principle of "one country, two systems," and that they will continue to follow the fine traditions of inclusiveness, seeking common ground while reserving differences, and keeping an unyielding spirit and the courage to strive for success with a view to creating a better future.

We must give special love and care to young people. Hong Kong will prosper only when its young people thrive; Hong Kong will develop only when its young people achieve well-rounded development; and Hong Kong will have a bright future only when its young people have good career pros-

pects. We must guide young people to be keenly aware of the trends in both China and the world and help them cultivate a sense of national pride and enhance their awareness of their status as masters of the country. We must help young people with their difficulties in studies, employment, entrepreneurship, and purchasing of housing, so that more opportunities will be created for their development and accomplishment. We sincerely hope that all of Hong Kong's young people will devote themselves to building Hong Kong into a better home, writing a rewarding chapter of their life with impassioned youth.

Fellow Compatriots,

Dear Friends,

As a Chinese poem goes, "I would like to borrow a pair of wings from the crane to soar up to the sky." China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability, and the successful practice of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong is an important part of this historic process. We firmly believe that, with the strong backing of the motherland and the solid guarantee provided by "one country, two systems," Hong Kong will surely create a splendid feat on the journey ahead toward the second centenary goal of building China into a modern socialist country in all respects, and will share the glory of the Chinese nation's rejuvenation together with people in the rest of the country. (Xinhua) ■

Enhancing luster to the pearl of the Orient

Hong Kong embarks on a new journey 25 years after its return to the motherland

By Yuan Yuan

Hong Kong has made an “irreplaceable contribution.” Since its return, it has contributed greatly to the motherland’s long-term, steady and fast economic growth, President Xi Jinping said on July 1.

It has become an integral part of the country’s overall development and actively aligned with national development strategies, Xi said at a meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR).

The Central Government fully supports Hong Kong in aligning with national development strategies, developing more extensive and closer exchanges and cooperation with the world, advancing reforms in an active and prudent manner and fully unleashing the enormous creativity and development vitality of Hong Kong society, he said.

At the ceremony, Xi administered the oath of office to the sixth-term Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu and other principal officials.



A view of Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong, south China, on June 22. Li Gang



President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan wave to the welcoming crowd upon their arrival in Hong Kong on June 30. Xie Huanchi

A new chapter

Shortly before the celebrations, the State Council rolled out new measures to further open up a district in its neighboring Guangdong Province to enhance the integration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

An overall plan with detailed measures to promote the development of Nansha District in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, was released on June 14 in a bid to deepen comprehensive cooperation within the GBA. Nansha, three decades ago an underdeveloped stretch of land in southernmost Guangzhou, in recent years has developed into a new favored place within the GBA following Qianhai in Shenzhen, and Hengqin New Area in Zhuhai, both in Guangdong.

The overall plan is expected to inject new momentum into the development of the GBA and Hong Kong.

Then Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor encouraged different sectors of society to proactively seize the opportunities generated by the new plan in Nansha and join hands in taking forward the development of the GBA.

“Hong Kong has the institutional strength of One Country, Two Systems and offers a first-class business environment,” Lam said on June 16.

Lee has also underlined the need for Hong Kong to seize

Hong Kong has become an integral part of the country’s overall development and actively aligned with national development strategies.

opportunities produced by the GBA to align the region with China’s mainland and the rest of the world.

Lee is the sixth-term chief executive of Hong Kong SAR and the first one after the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Ordinance was implemented in the region in 2021. The improved electoral system and the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in Hong Kong SAR (National Security Law in Hong Kong) are two major steps that the Central Government took to put Hong Kong back on the right track after the social unrest in 2019.

The law, adopted on June 30, 2020, has clearly defined four categories of crimes that severely endanger national security and their corresponding penalties, as well as established and improved the enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security at the levels of both the Central Government and Hong Kong SAR.



President Xi Jinping visits the Hong Kong Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases in Hong Kong, south China, on June 30. *Liu Bin*

The new electoral system followed in 2021. The amended Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law of Hong Kong SAR, respectively concerning the method for electing the Hong Kong SAR chief executive and the method for the formation of the Hong Kong SAR Legislative Council (LegCo) and its voting procedures, were passed during a session of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee in March of the year.

Under the new electoral system, the Hong Kong SAR Election Committee, originally established for the nomination and election of the chief executive, was reformed and given greater authorization. Its membership has been expanded from 1,200 to 1,500 and it now features two more key functions: electing a relatively large proportion of LegCo members and participating in the nominations of all LegCo candidates. LegCo membership has also been increased from 70 to 90.

"The 25-year practice of the One Country, Two Systems policy in Hong Kong SAR is a unique exploration of an innovative governance framework," Henry Ho, founder and Chairman of the One Country Two Systems Youth Forum, told Beijing Review. "The quarter-century journey wasn't all smooth sailing, though."

The misinterpretation of the policy resulted in a severe situation, including violent incidents and the calls for "Hong Kong independence," according to Ho. "One country is the premise of the two systems, but the latter for a long time received more attention—before and after Hong Kong's return to the motherland."

A safe harbor

Chris Tang Ping-keung, Secretary for Security of Hong Kong SAR, revealed during an interview with Global Times that in 2021 the Security Bureau, along with the Hong Kong Police Force and other Disciplined Services, engaged in a series of law enforcement activities targeting individuals and organizations endangering national security.

"Since the National Security Law in Hong Kong took effect, 189 individuals have been arrested by the police for endangering national security; among them, 122 were prosecuted. Five enterprises, too, have been taken to court," Tang said.

The law has helped restore order in the SAR. Tang also pointed out that the number of criminal cases recorded in the first quarter of 2022 fell 6.2 percent year on year, among which the cases related to violence dropped 10 percent, and robbery cases went down 23.3 percent—both hitting a record low in recent years.

"The measures from the central authorities have enabled Hong Kong to achieve a major transition from turmoil to order," said Kenneth Fok Kai-kong, a member of the LegCo, highlighting that the average daily turnover of Hong Kong stocks has jumped almost 60 percent from the 12 months preceding the law's enforcement, reaching HK\$150 billion (\$19.11 billion).

Ho quoted Ji Pengfei, Director of the Hong Kong and

Macao Affairs Office of the State Council from 1983 to 1990 and Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the Basic Law of Hong Kong SAR. Ji mentioned at the Third Session of the Seventh NPC in 1990, “The political structure of Hong Kong SAR should accord with the principle of One Country, Two Systems... Consideration must be given to the interests of the different sectors of society and a democratic system that suits Hong Kong’s reality should gradually be introduced.”

Ho echoed Ji’s words and said the new electoral system has created a fresh outlook for Hong Kong SAR. So far, the Election Committee elections, which took place in September 2021, the LegCo election in December 2021, and the Hong Kong SAR chief executive election this May were all conducted and concluded in an orderly manner.

Strong support

In the past quarter-century, Hong Kong has encountered many challenges, including the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak in 2003, the international financial crisis in 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020. “Hong Kong has seen many challenges,” Ho said. “And the Central Government has always offered strong support for its stability and development over the past years.”

Figures from the official Hong Kong SAR Government website showed that China’s mainland has become Hong Kong’s largest export market and source of imports, and Hong Kong has long been the mainland’s largest offshore financing platform. After its return to the motherland in 1997, Hong Kong technically continues to be treated as its own separate customs territory. More than half of the listed firms in Hong Kong are from China’s mainland. The renminbi deposit balance in Hong Kong had increased by nearly 133 times from about 6.3 billion yuan (\$940 million) at the end of May 2004 to 841.9 billion yuan (\$125.78 billion) at the end of April, and over 70 percent of the world’s offshore renminbi payments are handled in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has maintained its status as the No.1 financial center in Asia. In the latest edition of the Global Financial

Centers Index jointly published by British think tank Z/Yen Group and the China Development Institute in Shenzhen, Hong Kong maintained its third place in the overall global ranking, right after New York and London. Hong Kong’s GDP grew from HK\$1.37 trillion to \$2.86 trillion (\$174.51 billion to \$364.31 billion) from 1997 to 2021, growing at an average annual rate of 2.7 percent in real terms.

“As China grows, Hong Kong grows with it,” said Allan Zeman, Chairman of Lan Kwai Fong Group, a key player in Hong Kong’s property market. “One Country, Two Systems has worked as demonstrated by the region now being back on track. Today, with patriots governing Hong Kong, we are on our way to a very strong Hong Kong.”

The Central Government has also provided firm support for containing the COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong. By March 24, six Central Government-funded temporary hospitals had been set up in Hong Kong, providing about 20,000 beds. Special trains have been launched to deliver pandemic prevention and control materials and many mainland medical teams have been dispatched to Hong Kong since 2020.

With the announcement of the outline development plan for the GBA in February 2019, Hong Kong’s integration with China’s mainland has been fast-tracked. “The number of Hong Kong youth seeking opportunities in the mainland for further study, business and work has been on the obvious rise,” Ho said. “And many places in the GBA have rolled out preferential measures for Hong Kong entrepreneurs.”

Under the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) approved by the Central Government, Hong Kong will continue to harbor “four traditional centers,” namely, an international center for finance, transportation and trade, as well as a center for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region.

Apart from that, the Central Government also supports Hong Kong in its development of “four emerging centers:” an international aviation hub, an international innovation and technology hub, a regional intellectual property trading center and a hub for the arts and cultural exchanges.

“We have confidence in the long-term prosperity of Hong Kong,” Ho said. ■



The award ceremony for a Putonghua (standard Chinese language) competition for primary and secondary schools takes place in Hong Kong, south China, on June 12. *Huang Qiantian*



Photo taken on May 1 shows Wang Shengfen's (standing) late night canteen in Xiamen, southeast China's Fujian Province. Wei Peiquan

One country, two systems

By Lan Xinzhen

When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the Kuomintang regime, defeated in the War of Liberation, retreated from the mainland to the island of Taiwan, sowing the seeds of division between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits.

The Democratic Progressive Party, the current ruling party in Taiwan, refuses to recognize the 1992 Consensus reached by the mainland and Taiwan that both sides belong to one China, and even tries to deny it. Its separatist push for "Taiwan independence," plus interference by foreign anti-China forces, has worsened relations across the Taiwan Straits.

The pursuit of "Taiwan independence" will lead to a dead end as the mainland will definitely not allow Taiwan to remain separated. Then in what way will the mainland achieve reunification with Taiwan?

The answer to this question was presented by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping 40 years ago in the early 1980s: peaceful reunification and One Country, Two Systems.

In his remarks delivered at the meeting marking the 40th anniversary of the release of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan on January 2, 2019, President Xi Jinping reiterated the vision of peaceful reunification and One Country, Two Systems is the best way to

realize China's reunification. "We do not renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary measures. This does not target compatriots in Taiwan, but the interference of external forces and the very small number of 'Taiwan independence' separatists and their activities. We people on both sides should work together to pursue peace, protect peace, and enjoy peace," he added.

The Message to Compatriots in Taiwan was issued on New Year's Day in 1979 by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature. It was a declaration of the mainland's policy for peaceful reunification. The message emphasized the centrality of the one-China principle, called for a halt to military confrontations, and proposed cross-Straits visits, transportation, postal services, as well as economic and cultural exchanges.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012, Xi has made a series of important remarks on upholding One Country, Two Systems in light of new developments.

Visionary policy

The concept of One Country, Two Systems is based on the premise of one China: There is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an



Chen Wei (standing), a chef from China's Taiwan region, poses for a photo with customers at his family restaurant in Xiamen, southeast China's Fujian Province, on May 2. Wei Peiquan

inalienable part of China and the seat of China's Central Government is in Beijing. This is a fact recognized by an overwhelming majority of the world's nations as well as the premise for a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question.

The Chinese Government is firmly against any words or deeds designed to split China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It opposes "two Chinas," "one China, one Taiwan" or any attempt that could lead to "independence of Taiwan." The Chinese people on both sides of the Straits all believe there is only one China and espouse national reunification. Taiwan's status as an inalienable part of China has been determined and cannot be changed. "Self-determination" for Taiwan is out of the question.

Then comes the coexistence of two systems. On the premise of one China, socialism on the mainland and capitalism in Taiwan can coexist and develop side by side for a long time. This concept has largely taken account of the actual situation in Taiwan and practical interests of compatriots there. After reunification, Taiwan's current socioeconomic system, its way of life as well as economic and cultural ties with foreign countries can remain unchanged. Private property, including houses and land, as well as business ownership, legal inheritance and overseas Chinese and foreign investments on the island will all be protected by law.

One Country, Two Systems guarantees Taiwan a high degree of autonomy. After reunification, Taiwan will become a special administrative region (SAR). It will have its own administrative and legislative powers, an independent judiciary and the right of adjudication on the island. It will run its own party, political, military, economic and financial affairs. It may conclude commercial and cultural agreements with foreign countries and enjoy certain rights in foreign affairs. It may keep its military forces and the mainland will not dispatch troops or administrative personnel to the island. On the other hand, representatives of the government of the special administrative region and those from different circles of Taiwan may be appointed to senior posts in the Central Government and participate in the running of national affairs.

Proved workable

The concept of One Country, Two Systems was put forward to settle the Taiwan question, but it was first applied in Hong Kong.

On July 1, 1997, the Chinese Government resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Hong Kong SAR was established.

Under the policy of One Country, Two Systems, the previous social and economic systems remain unchanged in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, different from the practice under the British colonial rule that a governor was appointed to administer Hong Kong without local people being consulted, now the head of the SAR is elected by the widely representative Election Committee and appointed by the Central Government. After its return to the motherland, Hong Kong has survived the 1997 Asian financial turmoil and 2008 global financial crisis and still remains prosperous, proving that the policy of One Country, Two Systems is workable.

Anti-China forces once tried to undermine the policy's practice. They cultivated pro-independence elements and incited violence to destabilize Hong Kong. The unrest over proposed amendments to Hong Kong's extradition law in 2019 seriously damaged the rule of law and order in Hong Kong. In response, the Central Government took powerful actions, promulgating the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in Hong Kong SAR. The law took effect in June 2020, restoring the stability of the region.

The sharp contrast between the chaos caused by the agitators in Hong Kong and the external groups behind them and the restored order proves that in developing democracy in Hong Kong, we must abide by the principle of One Country, Two Systems and the Basic Law of Hong Kong SAR and act in an orderly manner, in line with local realities and in accordance with the law.

Only by continuing to implement the policy of One Country, Two Systems fully and faithfully and supporting Hong Kong in developing a democratic system that conforms to the region's constitutional status and realities as a local administrative region under the direct jurisdiction of the Central Government, can we deliver benefits to the Hong Kong people. Since the policy proves suitable and workable in Hong Kong, the Central Government will stay committed to it.

Focus on peace

Besides Hong Kong, Macao, where the One Country, Two Systems policy is also carried out, has also achieved unprecedented prosperity since it returned to the motherland in 1999.

The implementation of the policy in Hong Kong and Macao provides valuable experience for it to be applied in Taiwan in the future.

The Chinese Government conceived a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question as early as the 1950s. In May 1955, Premier Zhou Enlai said at an NPC Standing Committee meeting that two alternatives were open to the Chinese people for the solution of the Taiwan question—by resorting to war or by peaceful means. The Chinese people would strive for a peaceful solution wherever possible, he affirmed.

In April 1956, Chairman Mao Zedong put forward thoughts for Taiwan-related policymaking such as "peace is the best option," "all patriots are of one family" and "it is never too late to join the ranks of patriots."

When talking about the Taiwan question in his report delivered at the 19th CPC National Congress in October 2017, Xi underlined the importance of upholding One Country, Two Systems.

"Resolving the Taiwan question to realize China's complete reunification is the shared aspiration of all Chinese people, and is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation. We must uphold the principles of peaceful reunification and One Country, Two Systems, work for the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations, and advance the process toward the peaceful reunification of China," he said. (Beijing Review)



A greener decade

By Ji Jing

The China National Botanical Garden was officially inaugurated in Beijing on April 18. With a planned area of 600 hectares, the garden features more than 30,000 kinds of plants and 5 million plant specimens from five continents.

The botanical garden, which contributes to biodiversity and harmony between humans and nature, is an epitome of the country's sustainable development. It is part of the efforts China has made to promote ecological progress since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012.

"Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee has devoted greater efforts than ever before to ecological conservation. The whole Party and the entire nation have become more conscious and active in pursuing green development, and made significant progress in building a Beautiful China," read a resolution on the Party's major achievements and historical experience in the past century, passed during the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, held from November 8 to 11 last year.

It noted that the CPC Central Committee has emphasized that ecological conservation is of vital importance for the sustainable development of the Chinese nation.

"To protect the environment is to protect the productive forces, and to improve the environment is to boost the productive forces," said the resolution.



Black-faced spoonbills fly in a wetland park in southeast China's Fujian Province on April 29. Wei Peiquan

Political and legal guarantees

Since 2012, green development has gained greater momentum as the idea that “green is gold” conceptualized by President Xi Jinping has taken root in the country.

In the report to the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, ecological development was included as a major task in the country's overall plan and the report proposed building a Beautiful China as a grand goal for ecological progress.

Eco-civilization was also included in the CPC Constitution as a development principle during that CPC national congress. It was the first time in the world that a ruling party had highlighted green development in its guidelines.

The Amendment to the Party Constitution passed at the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017 reiterated the vision that “green is gold.” In 2018, ecological progress was written into the Constitution.

According to the resolution adopted by the CPC Central Committee last year, the country's environmental protection endeavors have resulted in sweeping, historic and transformative changes.

Amending the environmental law is one such endeavor. In January 2015, the revised Environmental Protection Law came into force. The law, considered China's strictest anti-pollution legislation, stipulates tougher punishments for polluters, including daily, uncapped fines and court sentences.

The whole Party and the entire nation have become more conscious and active in pursuing green development, and made significant progress in building a Beautiful China.

The revised law gives the environmental protection authorities a wider range of powers to shut down companies with excessive emission levels or to seal their facilities to prevent them from polluting the environment.

It has also clearly spelled out local governments' responsibility to ensure environmental quality and specified that they would be held accountable for failure to do so.

“China has enacted or revised 13 laws and 17 administrative regulations covering the prevention and control of air, water and soil pollution, accompanied by meticulous efforts to guarantee the laws are strictly enforced,” Ye Min, Vice Minister of Ecology and Environment, said at the press conference on China's progress and reform in economy and ecological conservation, hosted by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee on May 12.

The strict legal system has become a powerful weapon for curbing environmental transgressions.

Improved environment

Over the past decade, China's environment has significantly improved. Last year, the share of days with good air quality in major cities rose to 87.5 percent, up 0.5 percentage points from 2020, according to the Ministry of Ecology and



The entrance of the China National Botanical Garden is seen in China's capital Beijing on April 18. *Ju Huanzong*

Environment (MEE) in January. The improvement has been made thanks to the Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan released by the State Council in 2013. The plan set the target of reducing the concentrations of PM_{2.5}—harmful particles with a diameter of 2.5 microns or less—in cities at or above the prefecture level by 10 percent by 2017 from the 2012 levels.

Since the plan was implemented, air quality in China has improved remarkably. From 2013 to 2019, the concentration of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and PM_{2.5} in the 74 major cities was reduced by 75 percent, 23 percent and 47 percent respectively. The improved air quality has greatly improved people's happiness and sense of fulfillment.

In April 2015, the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution was implemented. The plan set the goal of increasing the proportion of good quality water of seven key rivers including the Yangtze River, Yellow River and Pearl River to over 70 percent by 2020 and over 75 percent by 2030. It also vowed to reduce the proportion of black and malodorous water bodies in cities at or above the prefecture level to below 10 percent by 2020 and completely eliminate such water bodies in these cities by 2030.

River and lake chiefs have been designated across the country who are responsible for supervising work related to water resource protection and water pollution prevention and control.

In 2021, the proportion of surface water with good quality reached 84.9 percent, up 18.9 percentage points from that in 2015, according to the MEE in January.

Afforestation efforts have been enhanced over the past decade. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China's forest

China aims to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, President Xi Jinping announced at the General Debate of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly via video link in September 2020.

coverage had increased by 2.68 percentage points to 23.04 percent in 2020, according to statistics from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration. Voluntary tree planting has been promoted to mobilize the whole society to take part in afforestation. From 1981 to the end of 2021, there had been 17.5 billion instances of voluntary tree planting, with 78.1 billion trees planted.

The urban and rural living environment has also been improved. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in June last year, the area of green space in urban areas had reached over 2.3 million hectares, increasing by nearly 50 percent from that in 2012. As of the end of 2020, the proportion of villages with centralized treatment of domestic sewage surpassed 90 percent and over 68 percent of rural households had sanitary toilet facilities, according to the National Rural Revitalization Administration.

Thanks to the country's conservation efforts, it has made

significant progress in protecting biodiversity. Official statistics show that the country's wild giant panda population has increased to over 1,800, that of the wild Asian elephant has increased to 300, that of the wild Tibetan antelope has increased from 60,000-70,000 in the late 1990s to 300,000 and that of black-faced spoonbill has increased from just over 1,000 at the beginning of the 21st century to over 4,000. The Przewalski's horse and elk, which had become extinct in the wild, have reestablished their wild populations. With hundreds of giant pandas born during the period from 2004 to 2014, the animal's conservation status has been changed from endangered to vulnerable.

Similar ecological success stories have been emerging across the country. On October 12 last year, when addressing the Leaders' Summit of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, or COP15, via video link, President Xi Jinping announced that China had officially established its first group of national parks, including the Three-River-Source National Park, the Giant Panda National Park, and the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park. The protected area of the five national parks is about 230,000 square km, covering nearly 30 percent of the national key protected wildlife species on land.

On April 12, the Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park, the only habitat of the Hainan gibbon, a rare primate, announced that one such primate had been born, bringing the population of the species to 36. "There have been baby gibbons born every year in the past three years, which means efforts to protect the species have paid off," said Huang Jincheng, head of the bureau that manages the national park.

On the way to carbon neutrality

While China improves its domestic environment, it also contributes to global environmental governance. China has become an important participant, contributor and leader of global ecological development.

China aims to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, President Xi announced at the General Debate of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly via video link in September 2020.

China is committed to phasing out outdated production capacity in cement, plate glass and other industries, replacing coal for non-industrial sectors with cleaner energy and promoting energy conservation and emissions reduction in key industries. "In the past decade, the carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP have dropped by around 34 percent," Han Wenxiu, a senior official with the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, said at the press conference.

Great efforts have been made to adjust the energy structure and develop green and low-carbon energies. China's installed capacity of renewable energy power generation totaled 930 million kW by the end of 2020, accounting for 42.4 percent of the country's total, up 14.6 percentage points against that in 2012, according to the National Energy Administration.

Innovative measures have been taken to reduce emissions. China Carbon Emission Trade Exchange, China's national carbon market and the world's largest by volume of emissions, started operation on July 16 last year. The objectives

of the national carbon market are to reduce carbon emissions through trading. The trading scheme works by first setting caps on carbon dioxide emissions, then allowing price discoveries for carbon emissions through trading among participants in the market. Provided that carbon prices are high enough, such trading provides companies with financial incentives to save money by cutting emissions in the most cost-effective ways. The power industry was the first industry incorporated into the program, with over 2,000 power companies joining the market, accounting for over 40 percent of China's emissions. Once fully implemented, the market will cover large firms in seven additional sectors: petroleum refining, chemicals, nonferrous metal processing, building materials, iron and steel, paper and pulp, and aviation.

The Chinese people are adopting a green and low carbon lifestyle. China sold 3.5 million electric cars and plug-in hybrids in 2021, up 160 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology in February. A Clear Your Plate campaign was launched in 2020 to reduce food waste and garbage sorting has been promoted across the country to advance resource recycling and reduce pollution.

With the green development concept becoming engrained in every aspect of production and people's lives, a Beautiful China, where humans and nature live in harmony, is turning from blueprint into reality. ■

China's ecological progress in 2021

China continued to see steady progress in its green transformation of economic and social development, with significant improvement in the ecological environment in 2021.

The following are some related facts and figures from a communique released by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment on May 26.

- Last year, the percentage of days with good air quality was 87.5 percent in 339 cities at and above the prefecture level, up 0.5 percentage points year on year. Air quality in 64.3 percent of cities met standards, up 3.5 percentage points year on year.
- For the first time, the annual average concentrations of air-borne particles PM2.5, inhalable particulate matter PM10, ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide all saw year-on-year reductions in 2021.
- The average concentration of hazardous PM2.5 was 30 micrograms per cubic meter in 2021, down 9.1 percent year on year.
- The proportion of surface water at or above Grade III in the country's five-tier water quality system increased 1.5 percentage points year on year to 84.9 percent in 2021.
- The national ecological quality index (EQI) came in at 59.77, indicating China's relatively rich biodiversity, a relatively high proportion of natural ecosystem coverage, and a more complete ecological structure. (Xinhua)





Aerial photo taken on March 11 shows the fishway of the auxiliary dam in Nanmu River of the Dateng Gorge water conservancy project in Guiping, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. *Cao Yiming*

Xi's thought boosts global ecological governance

While planting trees at an annual activity in Beijing, President Xi Jinping said China has adhered to the notion that “green is gold” to fully promote the development of ecological civilization, advance afforestation and improve the living environment in both urban and rural areas.

Under the guidance of Xi's Thought on Ecological Civilization, China has been advancing the green transition of its economy over the past years, contributing to global environmental and climate governance.

On various occasions, Xi has expounded on this concept and called for concerted international efforts in global ecological governance. The following are some highlights of his remarks.

October 12, 2021

While addressing the leaders' summit of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Xi stressed the need to respect nature, follow nature's laws, protect it, and build a homeland of harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

The development of an ecological civilization should be taken as a guide to coordinate the relationship between humanity and nature, Xi stressed, adding that human activities need to be kept within the limits of the ecology and environment, while holistic conservation and systematic governance of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands and deserts need to be carried out.

September 21, 2021

In his speech at the general debate of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Xi said that China will step up support for other developing countries to develop green and low-carbon energy, and will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad.

Xi stressed the importance of improving global environmental governance, actively responding to climate change and creating a community of life for humanity and nature.

He also underlined accelerating the transition to a green and low-carbon economy along with achieving green recovery and development.



Aerial photo taken on July 19 shows the wetland near Jingbian County in Yulin City, northwest China's Shaanxi Province. *Tao Ming*

April 20, 2021

While delivering a keynote speech via video at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2021, Xi called for efforts to strengthen cooperation on green infrastructure, green energy and green finance.

Xi also called for improving the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition, the Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road Development and other multilateral cooperation platforms “to make green a defining feature of Belt and Road cooperation.”



Swans are seen at the Hekou Reservoir wetland in Yulin, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on October 31, 2021. *Tao Ming*



Aerial photo taken on March 27 shows Tibetan antelopes in Gerze County of Ali Prefecture, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. *Penba*

December 30, 2020

During a meeting with then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen via video, Xi called for speeding up green development, urging China and the European Union to give full play to their high-level dialogue mechanism on environment and climate, and provide mutual support in hosting international conferences on biodiversity, climate change, and nature conservation.

September 30, 2020

While delivering a speech at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, Xi stressed upholding multilateralism and building synergy for global governance on the environment, noting that faced with global environmental risks, countries “share a common stake” and form “a community with a shared future.”

“Unilateralism finds no support; cooperation is the right way forward,” he said. “We must firmly safeguard the UN-centered international system and uphold the sanctity and authority of international rules so as to enhance global governance on the environment.”

He also stressed upholding the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” for developed and developing countries in tackling environmental challenges.

April 28, 2019

While declaring the opening of the International Horticultural Exhibition 2019 Beijing, Xi expressed his hope that the green development concept embodied by the expo park would be spread to “every corner of the world.”

“Only with concerted efforts can we effectively deal with global environmental issues such as climate change, marine pollution and biological protection and achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals,” he said.

He put forward a five-point initiative: the pursuit of harmony between humanity and nature, prosperity based on green development, a passion for nature-friendly lifestyles, a scientific spirit in ecological governance and joint efforts to tackle environmental challenges. (Xinhua) ■

China's green miracles highlight Xi's vision of ecological civilization

In his recent letter replying to primary school students in the UK, Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced his vision of green development and his commitment to ensuring harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

Noting that he places great importance on tackling climate change, Xi said that he has always highlighted that “green is gold”—a notion that has won broad support in today’s China.

He also highlighted that the country has been taking unprecedented steps to tackle climate change, and made re-

President Xi Jinping said that China has been taking unprecedented steps to tackle climate change, and has made remarkable progress, adding that the country will continue making even greater achievements.



Chinese Ambassador to the UK Zheng Zeguang reads a reply letter from President Xi Jinping to primary school students at Francis Holland School on the issue of climate change on April 21. *Ren Chao*

markable progress, adding that it will continue making even greater achievements.

Indeed, under the guidance of Xi's vision of ecological civilization, tremendous progress on greening China has taken place over the past years, from cultivating the Chinese people's eco-civilization awareness to adding new forests, grasslands and wetlands, to combating air and water pollution.

Green awareness

A survey released during the United Nations (UN) Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in 2021 showed that the eco-civilization concept enjoys a high level of recognition among the general public in China.

Regarding the relationship between the environment and development, about 55 percent of people polled said the process of environmental protection brings new economic opportunities and presents a promising prospect, according to the survey, which was conducted by the Research Institute for Eco-civilization, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The findings were based on the answers to 10,038 internet questionnaires, along with more than 3.5 million online posts and comments that were analyzed with big-data technology, Zhang Yongsheng, head of the research institute, said.

"Ecological progress has significantly improved the quality of development and people's wellbeing in China," Zhang quoted the findings as saying.

Eco-civilization is spearheading a sweeping transformation of the development paradigm, reshaping the approach to development, the business model, people's understanding of a happy life, as well as attitudes toward consumption, employment and wellbeing, Zhang noted.

As Xi told the British students in his letter, schools of various kinds and at all levels in China emphasize ecological civilization education, adding that Chinese students, have developed a good habit of conserving energy and protecting the environment by starting from the trivial things in their lives and learning to live a green and low-carbon life.

Green miracles

In the letter, the Chinese president said the British students are welcome to visit China, and do a tour of the world's largest wind-power plant and solar-power station, as well as the widest man-made forest and the country's picturesque national parks.

As the president notes, these places bear witness to the Chinese people's ceaseless efforts to make their country beautiful. Over the years, forest coverage has expanded, the country's living environment has improved, and the economy has been placed on a more sustainable path.

Thanks to afforestation efforts, 960 million mu (64 million hectares) of trees have been planted in China over the past decade. The country's forest coverage has now reached 23.04 percent, up 2.68 percentage points from 2012.

The China National Botanical Garden was officially inaugurated in Beijing in April with a planned area of 600 hectares and the garden has more than 30,000 kinds of plants and 5 million representative plant specimens from



Chinese Ambassador to the UK Zheng Zeguang shakes hands with Lucy Elphinstone, headmistress of Francis Holland School in London, England on April 21. Ren Chao

five continents.

The garden is a national plant-diversity protection base, and an important symbol of the country's level of sustainable development.

China's environmental efforts have also garnered international acclaim. In 2017, China's Saihanba afforestation community won the Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental honor.

The area of desertification in the country has shrunk by an annual average of 2,424 square kilometers, indicating a reversal of the situation in the late 1990s, when it was expanding by 10,400 square kilometers annually.

In 2021, the share of days with good air quality rose to 87.5 percent, up 0.5 percentage points from 2020. This progress was built on marked improvements during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-20), which saw good-air days increase by 5.8 percentage points to 87 percent.

In addition, China's energy consumption per unit of GDP, or energy intensity, declined by 28.7 percent from 2011 to 2020. The proportion of coal in the nation's total energy-consumption mix was reduced from 69.2 to 56.8 percent during the 2010-20 period.

Though challenges still remain, looking forward, China will continue to place ecological protection high on its policy agenda.

On March 30, Xi planted trees in Beijing, marking the 10th year he participated in the annual tree-planting activity as the top leader, and demonstrating how much he values efforts to make the country's land greener.

"I want to do my bit for the Beautiful China initiative, and also to sow the seeds of ecological conservation in the entire society, among the Chinese youth in particular," he said. (Xinhua) ■

Chairman Li Zhanshu stresses environmental restoration of Yangtze River

Chairman Li Zhanshu stressed efforts to focus on the environmental restoration of the Yangtze River and keep the river clean in accordance with relevant laws.

Li, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, made the remarks during an inspection tour in central China's Hubei Province from June 30 to July 4.

Tasked with examining the local implementation of the Yangtze River Protection Law, the NPC Standing Committee inspection team led by Li carried out inspections in the cities of Yichang, Jingzhou and Wuhan, and held symposiums to hear about local work on implementing the law and relevant suggestions.

Li called for efforts to highlight the systematic conservation and restoration of the whole Yangtze River eco-system, and construct an ecological security architecture featuring harmonious relations between various bodies of water, high-quality water resources, and biodiversity.

The results of the inspections demonstrated the remarkable achievements that have been made, Li added.

Li also underlined unrelenting institutional and legal efforts to protect the Yangtze River, urging efforts to accelerate the building of coordination mechanisms, improve the legal system on the matter and ensure the sound implementation of duties prescribed by the law. (Xinhua) ■



Li Zhanshu, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, visits an industrial park of the Hubei Xingfa Chemicals Group Co., Ltd. in Yichang, central China's Hubei Province, on June 30. Huang Jingwen



Li Zhanshu, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, inspects Yangtze River conservation work at a river port in Hankou of Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province, on July 3.
Huang Jingwen

Photo taken on August 14, 2020 shows the Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province.
Cheng Min

Senior Chinese official emphasizes Yangtze River protection

A senior Chinese official underscored the protection of the ecological environment of the Yangtze River in accordance with the law on June 28.

Wang Chen, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and vice chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, made the remarks while addressing a meeting with a law enforcement inspection team.

The team was preparing to inspect the enforcement of the

Yangtze River Protection Law in seven provincial-level regions of the Yangtze River basin from July to September this year. The law, which is China's first legislation on a specific river basin, went into effect on March 1, 2021.

At the meeting, Wang urged the team to carry out the inspection with solid efforts, adding that the restoration of the Yangtze River ecological environment must be given top priority in accordance with the law, added Wang. (Xinhua) ■



Wang Chen (center), member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, addresses a meeting of the Yangtze River Protection Law enforcement inspection team in Beijing on June 28. *Xu Lin*

Highlights of President Xi's quotes on conservation of China's 'mother river'

In an inspection visit to southwest China's Sichuan Province in June this year, President Xi Jinping visited Yibin, where the Jinsha and Minjiang rivers converge into the Yangtze River.

He noted that sound ecological conservation along the Yangtze River basin is the precondition for advancing high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, places great importance on the ecological protection of the 6,300-km-long Yangtze, China's longest river. Over the past few years, he has undertaken multiple inspection tours along the Yangtze and convened several symposiums to advance the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, which covers nine provinces and two municipalities and accounts for more than 40 percent of the country's population and economic aggregate.

The following are some highlights of his quotes:

– The Yellow River and the Yangtze River are the mother rivers of the Chinese nation. The protection of the mother rivers is a crucial project concerning the great rejuvenation and sustainable development of the Chinese nation.

– The cost of the fishing ban in the Yangtze River is not small, but it is worthwhile to protect the ecology of the whole basin.

– The Yangtze River boasts a unique ecological system. Restoring its ecological environment will be an overwhelming task and no large-scale development will be allowed along the river at present and for a rather long period to come.

– Promoting the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt is a major strategy concerning overall national development.

– Efforts should be made to blaze a new trail of green development that gives priority to the ecology, so as to provide powerful support for the high-quality and sustainable development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. (Xinhua)



Aerial photo taken on May 19 shows a view of the Wushan section of Yangtze River in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality. Wang Quanchao



China passes new law to strengthen black soil protection

China's top legislature on June 24 passed a law regarding black soil conservation, as part of efforts to ensure the country's grain security and protect the ecosystem.

The law, adopted after a vote at the closing meeting of the 35th standing committee session of the 13th National People's Congress, addressed the country's need for measures designed to specifically protect black soil.

Black soil, or chernozem soil, found in China's northeastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning and in some parts of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, produces about a quarter of the country's total grain output, making it crucial to China's food supply.

However, excessive reclamation has eroded the soil, depleted its nutrients and the chernozem layer is thinning out, posing a threat to the country's ecological security and sustainable agricultural development.

The law, consisting of 38 provisions, specifies the responsibilities of the government and "agricultural production operators" to protect black soil and went into effect on August 1. (Xinhua) ■

Li Zhanshu, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, inspects Zhalong National Nature Reserve in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, on June 10. *Pang Xinglei*



Farmers transplant rice seedlings in a field in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province on May 18. Wang Jianwei

Soil protection gains momentum in northeast China

By Lu Yan

Before daybreak on some mornings in May, Zhang Wendi frequently went to his fields to check if the corn he sowed had emerged from the ground.

Zhang is chairperson of the Hongwang Agricultural Machinery Farmers Professional Cooperative in Lishu County, Jilin Province. Every year, he is overjoyed to see the new green seedlings emerge, bringing with them the promise of the harvest to come.

His corn fields are part of Lishu's test plots for the conservative farming system the county adopted in 2007. Thanks to the large-scale application of new technologies and techniques, yields have increased and so has income.

"More importantly, this model is a departure from traditional farming methods, and is aimed to protect the black soil in the best way possible," Wang Guiman, a local official in charge of promoting farming technology, told Jilin Daily.

In June, China's top legislature passed a law on black soil conservation. It stipulates consistent government funding

Government expenditure in black soil protection should be ensured, along with comprehensive protection measures in engineering, agronomic techniques, farming machinery and biology.

and targeted protection measures as part of efforts to ensure the country's grain security. The law went into effect on August 1.

The 'giant panda' of land

The black soil, or chernozem soil, found in China's northeastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning and

some parts of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, produces about one quarter of the country's total grain output, making it crucial to securing China's food basket. Northeast China is also a major area for maize and soybean farming.

It takes 300 million years to form a 100-cm layer of black soil, according to Chen Wenfu, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Chinese Vice Premier Hu Chunhua once described the soil as the "giant panda of cultivated land" that plays an irreplaceable role in ensuring China's food security, during an on-site inspection in the city of Suihua, Heilongjiang, in June 2021.

Unfortunately, years of excessive reclamation, fertilizer overuse and ineffective management have caused degeneration of the black soil and eroded the soil's nutrients. The chernozem layer is now thinning out, posing a threat to the country's ecological security and sustainable agricultural development.

Take Jilin's statistics as an example. Local monitoring data showed that the organic matter content of black soil in the province had dropped from 8 percent in the early 1950s to less than 2 percent in the recent decade.

The new law says that government expenditure in black soil protection should be ensured, along with comprehensive protection measures in engineering, agronomic techniques, farming machinery and biology. The scope of the black soil protection area should be appropriately delimited and adjusted based on both its previous reclamation and current utilization, to better protect and restore the resource in systematic,

The new law stipulates harsher punishment for those who cause soil erosion in black soil areas in accordance with relevant laws and regulations.



A handful of black soil in Yichun, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, on May 19. Wang Song

phased and targeted manner, according to the law.

Lishu's adoption of the model was an example of a national key grain output county successfully changing course to preserve its soils. "In the past, many farmers used the land without allowing it to recover and, in pursuit of high yields, crop rotation was rarely performed," Wang said, noting that as the economic value of corn is higher than that of soybeans, farmers chose to grow corn season after season, depleting much of the soil's fertility.

Developed by the local agricultural department, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and China Agricultural University (CAU), the new model focuses on technical measures such as no-tillage seeding and returning crop stalks to the field to reduce soil disturbance, improve its structure, and increase fertility and water retention capacity. The measures also help limit the use of chemical fertilizers, save labor and maintain, or even increase, yields.

When the measures were first introduced, some farmers had their doubts. "We wanted to keep the land fertile, too. We were hesitated because if it didn't work, one whole year of hard work would just go down the drain. But local officials promised to compensate us if things didn't go well," Zhang said. "As we saw tangible results of high yields and more income, we become fans of these new techniques."

In 2020, the country allocated 1.6 billion yuan (\$238 million) to subsidize farmers for protecting the soil.

As time goes by and techniques have improved, Lishu farmers have seen better and better results. In the past two years, the county's grain production has increased by about 8 percent, according to the local agricultural authority.

Grain growers throughout China's northeast are also coming up with locality-specific methods of protecting their black soil. In June 2021, Heilongjiang introduced a regulation on the protection and utilization of black soil in the province, which has over 45 percent of China's black soil lands.

Before that, the government revealed several cases relating to the abuse of Heilongjiang's soil. In one example, a criminal surnamed Wang rented agricultural land from farmers in

multiple villages to dig peat, a non-renewable resource rich in organic matter, from beneath the layer of black soil. As a result, planting conditions of the rented farmland were severely damaged.

In 2021, the criminal and his accomplices were punished with fines and terms of imprisonment.

The black soil conservation law stipulates harsher punishment for those who cause soil erosion in black soil areas in accordance with relevant laws and regulations.

The law also encourages farms to enhance protection efforts and be subject to supervision and inspection.

This year, all villages in Heilongjiang launched a system of division of responsibility. The system ensures that the soil is protected by a specific person in charge of supervising the condition of farmlands. They will also be held accountable if the black soil under their



A smart soil protection technology model is on display at an exhibition in Changchun, northeast China's Jilin Province, on September 24, 2021. Xu Chang

supervision becomes degenerated.

The smart way

Intelligent technologies have given a push to black soil protection, while ensuring production remains high. In 2005, a hi-tech farm was set up in Jiamusi, Heilongjiang, where experts and agricultural students introduce advanced technology to local farmers. The platform is the joint effort of CAU, a subsidiary of the Beidahuang Group, a leading agricultural enterprise, and the local government.

At the farm, intelligent operations have enabled unmanned seed germination, paddy preparation, seedling transplanting, fertilizer application and drone topdressing.

In 2019, farmer Ru Ziyang joined the endeavor and his land became part of the farm. Since then, he has been using a smartphone application to check the soil moisture, air temperature, plant growth and other information of each plot.

"Since the arrival of the CAU professors and students, we have abandoned our old-fashioned farming methods," Ru told China Youth Daily, adding that the biggest change is that the amount of fertilizer used has been reduced, while the land utilization rate has been improved.

"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, labor is in short supply, and the overall farming cost has been increasing year by year.

The application and promotion of the intelligent navigation-assisted driving system saves manpower, reduces costs, and improves work efficiency for farmers transplanting rice," said Dong Chuanbao, a member of the farm's technology team.

Fan Mingsheng, a professor at the CAU's College of Resources and Environment Sciences, records the progress of soil protection efforts. In 2021, the smart agriculture demonstration area covered 233 hectares, involving 11 farming households. The new management techniques have increased output by 7 percent and reduced the labor cost of applying fertilizers by half, reducing fertilizer consumption by a fifth, and helping farmers increase their income by more than 2,000 yuan (\$298) per hectare.

"Scientific and research institutes should conduct research to address the specific difficulties faced by farmers nationwide, so that they are more willing to use advanced technologies," Zhao Lixin, head of the Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development in Agriculture at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, told Beijing Review.

"Many farmers are still unwilling to innovate because they are used to the old techniques. They are afraid the new methods will be costly and troublesome. Governments and research organizations should help relieve them of such worries," Zhao said. ■



Significant progress in rule of law over the past decade

By Wang Hairong

“Comprehensively advancing law-based governance is an essential requirement and important guarantee for socialism with Chinese characteristics,” reads the Resolution of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party Over the Past Century, which was adopted at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee in November 2021.

Solid progress has been made in advancing the rule of law in China since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012. Top-level designs and major plans have been put forward to ensure sound legislation,

strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice, and observance of the law by all.

Overarching guidelines

Advancing the rule of law has been incorporated into the four-pronged comprehensive strategy for the country's development, put forth by President Xi Jinping in 2014, which also consists of completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, expanding in-depth reform and enforcing strict Party self-governance.

Also in 2014, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC



The photo taken on December 14, 2021 shows a theme park promoting the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China in Hefei, east China's Anhui Province. Xie Chen

'The number of new laws enacted over the last decade has increased by one third compared with the decade before, and the number of laws amended has nearly doubled,' Xu Anbiao said.

Central Committee adopted a decision to advance the rule of law. Then in 2017, after the 19th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee established its Commission for Overall Law-based Governance and made major decisions on promoting law-based governance in all fields.

The CPC's first-ever central conference on work related to overall law-based governance took place in November 2020, marking the establishment of Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law and its status as the guiding thought for law-based governance. Major principles of the thought include upholding Party leadership on overall law-based governance, taking a people-centered approach, and adhering to Constitution-based governance.

The Party has emphasized that law-based governance should reflect people's interests and wishes, protect their rights, enhance their wellbeing, and protect and promote social fairness and justice, according to the 2021 decision.

Legislative achievements

China's legal system has become more full-fledged in the past decade.

Since 2012, 68 new laws had been enacted and 234 laws had been amended by the National People's Congress (NPC) and its standing committee. This has brought the country's total number of effective laws to 292.

"The number of new laws enacted over the last decade has increased by one third compared with the decade before, and the number of laws amended has nearly doubled," Xu Anbiao, deputy head of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, summed up China's legislative progress in 2012-21 at a press conference on April 25.

Basic, comprehensive and guiding laws in important fields such as national security, health and culture have been formulated and promulgated; laws in other important fields such as the environment, education, and science and technology have been systematically and comprehensively revised, according to Xu. Breakthroughs have been made in legislation in emerging fields such as network information and biosafety.

Amendments to the Constitution were adopted at the First Session of the 13th NPC in 2018. The amendments have established the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era in China's political and social life, and underline the importance of the Party's leadership.

Supervisory commissions have been written into the Constitution as the supervisory organs of the state, and by bringing all those exercising public power under supervision, the Party's leadership in the anti-corruption efforts is strengthened.

Related provisions were also revised to implement the five-sphere integrated plan to promote coordinated economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological advancement and the second centenary goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects by 2049, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) celebrates its 100th birthday.

In addition to the amendments, efforts have been made to uphold the authority of the Constitution, including designating December 4 as the National Constitution Day, and mandating all officials to swear allegiance to the Constitu-

tion upon taking office. The country has also established an inspection system to ensure all laws and regulations are in strict compliance with the Constitution, Xu added.

Another milestone in Chinese legislation during the past decade is the adoption of the Civil Code, the first of its kind in the PRC.

Xu hailed it as a “major achievement in advancing socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics” and said that “it has incorporated socialist core values and the concept of green development into civil legal norms.”

The Civil Code comprises sections on real rights, contracts, personality rights, marriage and family, inheritance, and tort liabilities, as well as general and supplementary provisions. It addresses issues that people are concerned with, including new problems emerging from such areas as urbanization, environmental protection, plus the application of artificial intelligence and other digital technologies.

China has also enacted or revised more than 20 laws directly related to national security in the past decade, according to Tong Weidong, an official with Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, at the press conference.

These include the National Security Law enacted in 2015, and laws on counter-espionage, counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, biosecurity, and nuclear safety. The Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), which went into force in 2020, has played a significant role in putting Hong Kong society back on the right track, said Yang Zhaoye, head of the research office of the committees of Hong Kong and Macao basic laws under the NPC Standing Committee, at the press conference.

The Criminal Law has also been amended. “The application of the death penalty has been further reduced, and the community correction system has been improved,” Yue Zhongming, a spokesperson for the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, told the press conference.

Moreover, the law-making process has embodied the concept of whole-process people’s democracy. “The voice of the people can be heard in all stages of law making, including the drafting, deliberation and adoption of a law, so as to ensure that the legislation reflects the common will of the people,” Xu said.

In the past, only the first draft of a law was published to solicit public opinions, whereas now, after the first draft has been revised according to public feedback, the second draft will also be published for public comments.

Another important area of progress is the establishment of community-level legislative outreach offices. At present, 22 such offices have been established nationwide and comments have been collected via the platforms for more than 130 laws, Xu said.

Judicial progress

In the past decade, efforts have also been made to advance reform in the judicial, procuratorial, and public security domains to ensure the fairness, integrity, efficiency and authority of law enforcement and judicial work.

“Focus has been placed on removing bottlenecks that undermine judicial fairness,” said Shen Liang, Vice President of

the Supreme People’s Court (SPC) at a press conference on April 22.

In 2015, courts changed their case filing procedure from accreditation to registration. Now more than 95.7 percent of cases can be filed upon submission, according to Shen.

The difficulty in executing court rulings has also been tackled. Shen said the SPC has set up an online system to precisely locate dishonest people subject to enforcement and their properties. The information of defaulters is published according to law and their nonessential consumption is restricted.

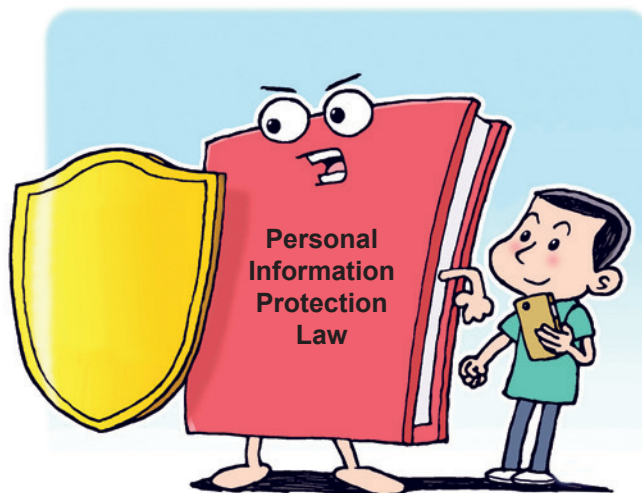
Through reforming the litigation system, the quality and efficiency of case handling have improved. Reform measures that have been piloted include imposing lenient penalties on those who admit their guilt and accept punishments in criminal cases, and the application of quick trials for simple cases.

Shen said Chinese courts have strictly adhered to the principles of legality, evidence-based judgment and presumption of innocence, so as to ensure that fair rulings are given to the guilty and the innocent are protected from criminal punishment.

Reform has also been carried out to hold judges accountable for the cases they adjudicate; give play to the oversight role of tribunal and court presidents, and strengthen the supervision and management of important, difficult or complex cases; and made the handling and supervision of cases traceable throughout the whole process.

In order to prevent the interference of various stakeholders on law enforcement and judicial activities, measures have

The reform in the legal sectors has provided a strong guarantee for social and economic development in China, and enables people to enjoy safer lives.



Xu Jun



An intermediate court in Taiyuan of Shanxi Province holds an online trial on February 10, 2020. Sun Liangquan

been taken to strengthen the supervision of procuratorial organs over judicial work, expand the participation of people's jurors in trials, and other channels for people to participate in and supervise law enforcement and judicial activities, Jing Hanchao, Deputy Secretary General of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee, said at the press conference.

The related legal provisions, procedures and results of law enforcement and judicial work are disclosed so that people can witness how justice is delivered, Jing said. China has made public court proceedings and judgments, trial procedures and the execution of effective judgments, as well as reasons for any ruling.

In addition to courts, procuratorial organs have also taken measures to ensure judicial fairness. Yang Chunlei, Deputy Procurator General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP), said at the press conference that the SPP has made great efforts in rectifying wrongful judicial decisions, holding those behind the decisions accountable, and stepping up oversight to prevent negligence of duty and abuse of power.

Establishing the public interest litigation system initiated by procuratorial organs is a major reform launched at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee

in 2014. Procuratorial organs have filed public interest litigation in the fields of environmental and resource preservation, state-owned assets protection, food and drug safety and so on.

In the past decade, China has also made vigorous efforts to promote the digitization of justice. Case filing, fee payment, court hearings, investigation, document delivery and various litigation services can now be carried out online, Jing said, adding that some parties can now file a lawsuit using just a smartphone app.

Measures have also been taken to deliver justice to remote and rural communities. Circuit trials have been dispatched to serve local residents, handling case filing, mediations and trials, as well as overseeing execution of rulings on the spot. The coverage of legal assistance has also been expanded, with service available in almost all detention centers and courts.

The reform in the legal sectors has provided a strong guarantee for social and economic development in China, and enables people to enjoy safer lives. A survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2021 showed that 98.6 percent of the respondents felt safe living in the country.

"China has been recognized as one of the safest countries in the world," Jing said. (Beijing Review) ■



Members of the local Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, government agencies representatives and real estate management companies discuss ways to improve waste disposal in residential communities in Guangzhou, south China's Guangdong Province, on November 19, 2021. Zhuang Xiaolong

Greater rights, better protection

By Lan Xinzhen

During the 2022 Spring Festival holiday in early February, Zero Tolerance, a documentary on the anti-graft campaign of the Communist Party of China (CPC), went viral online, with many applauding the central authorities for curbing corruption with an iron fist. The program also documented China's achievements in advancing whole-process people's democracy.

Whole-process people's democracy differs from the Western concept due to differences in traditional cultures and national conditions. In China, no consideration outweighs that of the people. As the documentary stated, the Chinese detest corruption; if corrupt officials are left unpunished, the public interest will suffer.

China's democratic system keeps pace with national economic growth and social progress, with the people acting as true masters of their country.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in November 2012, particularly, the Party's efforts to promote a clean and honest government, as well as whole-process people's democracy,

have made great headway. The national congress of the CPC, which takes place every five years, is the highest governing organ of the Party.

Through its actions, the CPC intends to ensure that the power entrusted to the government by the people is used for the good of the people. The concept of whole-process people's democracy is gradually blending into all aspects of political life. Today, a landscape where officials are honest, the government is clean, and political integrity is upheld has taken shape, and it is advancing continuously.

Upgrades

Different from the United States, where the ruling elite often only caters to the interests of the upper class, in China, the people run their own country.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the country implemented the system of governance of the people's democratic dictatorship together with the

fundamental political system of people's congresses. Other institutional procedures of whole-process people's democracy include multiparty cooperation and political consultation under CPC leadership, a broad patriotic united front, regional ethnic autonomy, and community-level self-governance. These well-coordinated procedures serve to put into place diverse, open, and well-organized channels to ensure that the Party's policies and the state are integrated with the people's aspirations.

The people's democratic dictatorship combines two aspects: democracy for the people and resolute action against any attempt to subvert the country's political power or endanger public or state security. Democracy and dictatorship appear to be a contradiction in terms, but together they ensure the people's status as masters of the country. Tiny minority gains are sanctioned in the interests of the great majority, and "dictatorship" serves democracy.

The National People's Congress (NPC) is the highest state organ of power and the national legislature of the PRC. Since the 12th NPC, in session from 2013 to 2018, every NPC deputy, i.e., the voice of the people in their respective areas, has been elected based on the same number of voters in both rural and urban areas, meaning urban and rural residents have equal levels of representation. Residents in cities had eight times more representation than those living in the countryside in the NPC from 1953 onward; that gap narrowed to 4:1 in 1995.

Take the 13th NPC, in session from 2018 to 2023, for example. Among the roughly 3,000 deputies are 468 workers and farmers, accounting for 15.7 percent of the total; 613 professionals, making up 20.6 percent; and 438 members of ethnic minorities, constituting 14.7 percent.

Recent years have witnessed deepened reforms of CPC and state institutions, lifting the country's governing capacity to a new level.

Governments at all levels must first consider the people's opinions before making decisions and give priority to improving the lives and addressing the concerns of the people. The government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic fully reflected its governance concept: putting the people first. Resources are marshaled from around the country to support the fights against outbreaks in individual cities and treatment is free of charge. As a result, China's COVID-19 mortality and infection rates are far lower than those in the U.S.—a nation with far more advanced public health facilities.

The past decade has seen the Chinese population become more passionate about participating in state governance and politics, and satisfaction with the government's overall performance, too, has gone up. According to a 2020 survey by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University, the Chinese people's satisfaction with their government was 93.1 percent.

Respecting rights

In China, human rights are respected and protected. The people enjoy extensive rights and freedoms endowed by law.

In November 2021, people's congress deputy elections at both the county and township levels were held across the country. President Xi Jinping cast his vote at a polling station in the Zhongnanhai electoral district of Beijing's Xicheng Dis-

trict. The elections saw over 1 billion people cast their votes.

China's Constitution protects the people's right to vote and to be voted for, an entitlement reinforced by the 18th CPC National Congress. Mobile ballot boxes are one of the new measures taken since then to ensure the voting rights of people with diminished mobility. Li Chaolan, who is 106 years old, a voter in Tianquan County, Sichuan Province, put her choice into the mobile ballot box.

To push forward the modernization of the country's governing system and capacity, the Party has ramped up human rights protection. In 2014, the Fourth Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee adopted a resolution on advancing law-based governance. "We need to strengthen legislation in key areas, and quickly improve legal systems that ensure equal rights and interests, equal opportunities, and fair rules for all; ensure that citizens' personal rights, property rights, basic political rights and other forms of rights are inviolable; and ensure that citizens' economic, cultural, and social rights are respected," the document read. It also underlined the importance to provide stronger judicial protection of human rights.

Currently, China has the largest social safety net in the world, covering senior care, healthcare, social welfare, and more. In 2020, 1.36 billion people nationwide had access to basic health insurance.

The right to education, too, is guaranteed. Compulsory education is free in both rural and urban areas; in 2020, 95.2 percent of students in the nine-year compulsory education stayed in school until graduation.

While the West buzzes with rather critical rhetoric regarding China's democratic theories, systems and practices, the Chinese Government and people understand that while extracting positive results from foreign political cultures is viable, the country must not forgo its own political system. Blindly copying other models of democracy would be a problematic endeavor—it risks creating cultural conflict, political volatility and even social turmoil, which would stop growth, rather than stimulate it. (Beijing Review) ■



NPC deputy Du Meishuang (3rd right) visits a village in Changde of central China's Hunan Province on February 16. *Chen Sihan*

United like pomegranate seeds

-- Tibet tells stories of ethnic unity

Barkhor Street is a famous scenic and shopping area in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. Near the street sits a mosque, which stands out against the backdrop of neighboring Tibetan-style buildings, where local Muslims go to pray regularly, while Buddhists worship at the landmark Jokhang Temple on the street.

The Wabaling community, where the mosque is located, is home to over 8,700 people from 10 ethnic groups, including Tibetan, Hui, Han and Bai. Despite having different religious beliefs and customs, residents live in harmony, with many families made up of two or more ethnic groups.

President Xi Jinping has stressed on many occasions that the Chinese nation is closely united like the seeds of a pomegranate. "We are all members of the community of the Chinese nation."



A Fuxing bullet train runs on the Lhasa-Nyingchi railway in Nang County, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on April 14. *Chogo*

Caring neighbors

Liu Gabu, from the Hui ethnic group, goes to the mosque every Friday. Originally from northwest China's Gansu Province, Liu, 51, came to Lhasa 32 years ago to start a beef and mutton business.

"I fell in love with the city largely because the people here are so nice," he said.

He recalled his two-wheeled cart, which he used for meat delivery, that often got stuck back when the roads in Lhasa were still bumpy. "I often found total strangers coming to help pull out the cart," he said.

Via a matchmaker, Liu met his wife, a Tibetan from Sichuan Province. The couple bought a villa with six bedrooms in Lhasa. When the family goes on vacation, they leave the key with a Tibetan neighbor.

"My neighbor is very kind. He takes care of our house, and waters the flowers," Liu said.

In Tibet, there are 45 ethnic groups with Tibetans and other ethnic minorities accounting for more than 90 percent of the population.

The region has long had a fine tradition of exchanges, communication, and integration among ethnic groups go-

Since the reform and opening up in 1978, economic and cultural exchanges between ethnic groups in Tibet have become closer and their sense of national identity has grown stronger.

ing back to ancient times. In the 7th century, Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo married Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), starting a new chapter of building ties among different ethnic groups.

Since reform and opening up started in 1978, economic and cultural exchanges between ethnic groups have become closer and their sense of national identity has grown stronger.

While addressing the central conference on ethnic affairs in August last year, Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, said that guiding all ethnic groups to jointly strive for fully building a modern socialist country must be taken as a crucial task of the CPC's ethnic work in the new era.

One community, one family

Yangpel, a community worker from Wabaling, said more than 100 couples spanning Tibetan, Hui and Han ethnic groups have wedded in the Wabaling community. During festivals of different ethnic groups, the community organizes activities, inviting the families of cross-ethnic groups to enjoy festive food.

"We offered mooncakes at the Mid-Autumn Festival and yogurt at the Tibetan Shoton Festival for them to enjoy together," she said.

Halima, 81, enjoyed the mooncakes last year. The former Tibetan farmer named herself "Halima," a Hui-style name, after marrying her Hui husband, a telecommunications worker. Her younger daughter-in-law is from the Han ethnic group.

Their house, a three-story Tibetan building, is decorated



A tourist poses on Barkhor Street that winds around Jokhang Monastery in Lhasa, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on July 23, 2021. *Jigme Dorge*





People of different ethnic groups dance and sing to celebrate the coming Spring Festival and the Tibetan New Year on Barkhor Street in Lhasa, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on January 26. *Purbu Tashi*



People dressed in traditional costumes celebrate the Tibetan New Year in Shannan, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on March 3. *Chogo*

in various ethnic styles, including a Tibetan liquor vessel, an Islamic-style alarm clock, and Han-style ceramic horses.

The big family celebrates all Han, Tibetan and Muslim festivals, including Spring Festival, Tibetan New Year, and Eid al-Fitr.

“The secret to harmony among family is caring for each other and understanding each other,” Halima said.

Tibet is also a prime example of how ethnic unity has boosted local development. Regional GDP ballooned to 208 billion yuan (\$31.1 billion) in 2021 from 129 million yuan in 1951; all registered poor residents and counties shook off poverty by the end of 2019, meaning that the region escaped absolute poverty for the first time in history.

While visiting the region in July 2021, Xi said people of all ethnic groups had jointly contributed to the development of Tibet and written the history of Tibet.

“Tibet could never have attained these achievements without ethnic unity,” said Losang Jamcan, director of the Standing Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People's Congress. “Tibet's development over the past 70 years has offered convincing evidence that solidarity and stability bring prosperity.” (Xinhua) ■



Primary school students in Tibet practice drawing in front of the Potala Palace in the 1950s. Ren Yongzhao

Better education for China's ethnic groups

By Yang Zekun

Specialized cultural and education policies have been implemented according to China's 56 ethnic groups in order to fully protect people's rights to education and to provide firm support for localized development, according to experts attending a recent symposium.

The International Symposium on Educational Development and Rights Protection in China's Ethnic Minority Areas was held on July 2 in Beijing and was co-organized by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the China Society for Human Rights Studies. The symposium was a sideline event of the 50th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Experts at the event said that with strong support from the government and its promotion of local socioeconomic development, education and culture, ethnic minority areas such as the Tibet autonomous region have made rapid progress. They added that along with the progress, local culture and

languages have been protected.

In Tibet, 16 periodicals, 12 newspapers and more than 7,600 books with about 44 million copies in the Tibetan language have been published as of December, 2021, said Wang Yanzhong, director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the CASS.

"Education in Tibet is advancing with each passing day," he said. "A complete modern education system has been established there."

From 2012 to 2021, the central government invested some 215 billion yuan (\$32 billion) in education in Tibet. As of 2012, a 15-year public education system has been provided to people in Tibet—meaning children can participate in free education from kindergarten to high school. This type of development is ahead of other regions in the country, and Tibet's financial-aid system for students covers all levels of education, according to Wang.

The level of education and length of schooling for people

in Tibet have also been greatly improved.

The number of people with college degrees per 100,000 people in the region doubled from 5,507 per 100,000 in 2010 to 11,019 per 100,000 in 2020.

The average amount of time spent at school among those who have recently joined the labor force is 13.1 years—approaching the national average—providing Tibet with better human resources for its own development, he said.

Boarding schools play a key role in safeguarding children's education rights, particularly for those from poor and remote rural areas.

Students and families in these areas can voluntarily take advantage of boarding schools in bigger cities. Such institutions give children who live far away access to quality education. All compulsory education is offered at no cost at these schools, said Chang An, a professor at Northwest University of Political Science and Law.

"The inheritance of ethnic minority languages and cultures is well reflected in boarding schools, which have special courses in these fields, especially in the ethnic colleges, and children's health rights are also well protected there," Chang said. ■



Students in class at a primary boarding school in the county seat of the Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on February 26. *Ding Lei*



Doctorate graduates, cultivated in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, proudly walk together on May 23, 1951. *Chogo*

A thriving Tibet in eyes of lawmakers

Gesang Zhoigar is the former Communist Party chief of Tama Village in Lhasa, capital city of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, and a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), China's national legislature.

"It is an honor, as well as a responsibility for me. All my proposals over the years have gotten responses and the problems I have raised have been solved," she said.

Born into a family of serfs who struggled for subsistence, Gesang Zhoigar said she felt lucky that she and her siblings had the opportunity to receive education, with some later becoming teachers.

"I've witnessed what Tibet has achieved over the decades. Today the region is more open and inclusive, and is brimming with more confidence than ever before. People of all ethnic groups here are very optimistic about the future."

"As a grassroots deputy, I feel honored and excited that I can take note of people's ideas and bring my proposals to the 'two sessions'," she said. "I will continue to speak for the people, and contribute toward their happiness."

Tashi Gyaltsen is the only NPC deputy of the Lhoba ethnic group from Tibet's Doyu Lhoba ethnic autonomous township. There are nearly 4,300 Lhoba people in the country, making the ethnic group one of the smallest among China's 56 ethnic groups.

"It was not until the third grade that I began to learn standard Chinese," Tashi Gyaltsen said, adding that he later was enrolled in a junior high school outside his hometown.

He recalled that on his first day to the high school, the tall buildings on the way impressed him. "It was the first time that I had ever seen such buildings. I was determined to study hard so that I could return to my hometown to build highrises."

Doyu has seen two-story dwellings spring up in recent years, with tap water, electricity and toilets. The township has access to the internet as well.

"Villagers are living in decent homes. They own cars and drive to the cities to go on holiday," Tashi Gyaltsen said, noting that there were only a few cars in town a decade ago.

By the end of 2021, the per capita disposable income of rural Doyu residents in Doyu reached 26,583 yuan (\$4,200), up 16.6 percent year on year. Agricultural and industrial projects such as creating a fungus planting base have been established, which are expected to increase local incomes.

"The government work report this year highlighted the development of central and western regions, as well as ethnic minority areas. I believe that the border areas will become better and better," said the lawmaker. (Xinhua)



A staff member displays cultural and creative products during a fair in the Tibet Museum in Lhasa, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on May 18. *Jigme Dorje*



Students at Lhasa Ali high school attend a class by a teacher at the Xi'an Gaoxin No.1 High School via an online education system in Lhasa, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on April 8. *Zhang Rufeng*





A medical expert registers a student for CHD screening in Qushui County of Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region on April 22. *Zhang Rufeng*



A flag-raising ceremony is held to celebrate Serfs' Emancipation Day at Potala Palace Square in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on March 23. *Jigme Dorge*



YANGQUAN



A city for living, working and traveling