Top political advisor calls for progress in ethnic unity

China’s top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng on Wednesday called on people from north China’s Inner Mongolia autonomous region to make progress in ethnic unity ahead of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

China’s top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng visits a community of residents from various ethnic groups in Hohhot, north China’s Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Aug 9, 2017. Yu led a delegation from the central authorities to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of Inner Mongolia autonomous region.[Photo/Xinhua]

Yu, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks at a symposium marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

The symposium was attended by local officials and people of various ethnic groups and from all walks of life.

Yu urged efforts to make achievements in economic transformation and restructuring, deepening reform, improving people’s living standards and risk prevention.

During his visit to the Memorial Hall of Ulanhu, a veteran leader of the autonomous region, Yu said that people should learn from Ulanhu’s lofty spirit and good virtue to “build a beautiful Inner Mongolia and achieve the great Chinese dream.”

Yu also visited a community, a book store and sports facilities to extend

greetings.

While visiting an institute of biotechnology on livestock breeding, Yu called for more investment in R&D, adopting more core technologies and encouraging the institute to be an industry leader.

Inspecting a local ecological environment company, he learned about ecological restoration and grassland ecology while stressing the exploration of a sustainable green path that accords with national and local conditions.

China’s satellite sends unbreakable cipher from space

Chinese scientists have become the first to realize quantum key distribution from a satellite to the ground, laying the foundation for building a hack-proof global quantum communication network.

The achievement based on experiments conducted with the world’s first quantum satellite, Quantum Experiments at Space Scale (QUESS), was published in the authoritative academic journal Nature on Thursday.

The Nature reviewers commented that the experiment was an impressive achievement, and constituted a milestone in the field.

Nicknamed “Micius” after a 5th century B.C. Chinese philosopher and scientist who is credited as the first person ever to conduct optical experiments, the 600-kilogram-plus satellite was sent into a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 500 km on Aug. 16, 2016.

Pan Jianwei, lead scientist of QUESS and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), said the satellite sent quantum keys to ground stations in Xinglong, in north China’s Hebei Province, and Nanshan near Urumqi, capital of northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Communication distance between the satellite and the ground stations varied from 645 km to 1,200 km, and the quantum key transmission rate from satellite to ground is up to 20 orders of magnitude more efficient than that expected using an optical fiber of the same length, said Pan.

When the satellite flies over China, it provides an experiment window of about 10 minutes. During that time, 300 kbit secure keys can be generated and sent by the satellite, according to Pan.

“That, for instance, can meet the demand of making an absolute safe phone call or transmitting a large amount of bank data,” Pan said.

“Satellite-based quantum key distribution can be linked to metropolitan

quantum networks where fibers are sufficient and convenient to connect numerous users within a city over 100 km. We can thus envision a space-ground integrated quantum network, enabling quantum cryptography – most likely the first commercial application of quantum information – useful at a global scale," Pan said.

The establishment of a reliable and efficient space-to-ground link for faithful quantum state transmission paves the way to global-scale quantum networks, he added.

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19 dead, 263 injured from China 7.0-magnitude quake

Nineteen people have been killed and 263 got injured in a 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck a remote area in southwest China's Sichuan Province Tuesday night, local authorities said Wednesday night.

Rescuers prepare food to stranded tourists at the parking lot of the InterContinental Resort Jiuzhai Paradise in Jiuzhaigou County, southwest China's Sichuan Province, Aug. 9, 2017. A 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck Jiuzhaigou, a popular tourist destination, Tuesday night. Rescue work continues in quake-hit Jiuzhaigou. (Xinhua/Fan Peishen)

The dead include eight tourists and two locals. The identities of the rest nine were not yet known, said Liu Zuoming, Communist Party chief of the

Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture of Aba.

Ten people were in serious condition, including three in critical condition, the information office of the provincial government said in the latest casualties update.

Four seriously injured were transferred to the Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital in the provincial capital of Chengdu for better treatment Wednesday.

The earthquake hit Jiuzhaigou County at 9:19 p.m. Tuesday at a depth of 20 kilometers, according to China Earthquake Networks Center.

Jiuzhaigou is a popular tourist destination in the mountains on the eastern edge of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. It is part of the Aba prefecture and is known for its ethnic minority communities, mountainous landscape, and stunning scenery.

Tianjin aims to reduce winter air pollution by quarter

The north China city of Tianjin is aiming to lower a major air pollution indicator by a quarter this coming winter, the municipal government said Wednesday.

The city plans to reduce the density of PM2.5 – a measurement of fine particles in the air often used to gauge the severity of smog – to 70 micrograms per cubic meters in the period between October 2017 and March 2018. This represents a 25 percent drop from the same period last year.

The number of heavily-polluted days will also be cut by more than 20 percent, the government said.

Wen Wurui, head of Tianjin Environmental Protection Bureau, said the target will be reached by closing down polluting factories, phrasing out the use of coal for heating, raising vehicle emission standards, and enforcing load shedding on heavy industry manufacturers.

The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region sits at the heart of the North China Plain where air pollution, particularly winter smog, often occurs as a result of the high concentration of industrial and vehicle emissions, static air circulation and the burning of coal.

All three areas have set clean air targets.

Beijing, for example, aims to lower its PM2.5 density to 60 micrograms per cubic meter in 2017, a challenging target to reach according to meteorologists.

Giant pandas in quake-prone Sichuan

Whenever a strong earthquake hits southwest China's Sichuan Province, panda lovers across the world feel their hearts tighten.

A 7.0-magnitude earthquake hit Jiuzhaigou County, a popular tourist area, at 9:19 p.m. Tuesday at a depth of 20 km.

The China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda (CCRCGP) quickly confirmed that pandas and staff at its base, 400 km from the quake epicenter, were not affected by the earthquake.

Preliminary checks confirmed that no pandas were injured and their breeding houses in the center's several reserves remained intact.

However, the earthquake was near a panda migration corridor and might have an impact on the wild population in the area, according to Gu Xiaodong, deputy director of a local wildlife protection station.

Giant pandas live mainly in the mountains of Sichuan and neighboring Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. Due to habitat loss and very low birthrates, only about 1,800 still live in the wild, while some 300 live in captivity.

Panda reserves cover about 60 percent of their natural habitat and are home to 70 percent of wild population. Most of the habitat is in Sichuan, where earthquakes and habitat fragmentation have affected panda breeding patterns.

Secondary disasters, such as screes and barrier lakes, also change the habitat, cut off food sources and increase risks for the wild population.

On May 12, 2008, an 8.0-magnitude earthquake damaged Sichuan's Wolong Panda Reserve. Most of its pandas and staff were transferred to another facility in Ya'an, 140 kilometers from provincial capital Chengdu.

That facility fell victim to similar circumstances when a 7.0-magnitude earthquake hit Lushan County on April 20, 2013. The center reported minimal damage and all 61 of its pandas were uninjured.

A new panda breeding and research center, sponsored by the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), has been built on less rugged terrain in the Wolong reserve, with the capacity to accommodate 80 captive pandas.

Two years after the earthquake, Wolong restarted its program training captive-bred pandas to live in the wild.

Gu said after the 2008 quake a giant panda rescue plan was introduced. Local residents are required to report sightings of injured pandas to a wild animal protection center, who will send veterinarians and center staff to check the

panda’s condition.

Local forestry authorities also take measures to restore panda habitat after earthquakes.

In 2016, the provincial government put forward a plan for a giant panda national park that would unite the isolated habitats.

The park, which will cover 27,134 square kilometers, aims to restore migration corridors to link 67 panda reserves on six isolated mountain ranges. It will allow wild pandas to mate with pandas from other areas to enrich their gene pool and raise their numbers in the wild.