

China in countdown to annual political high season

Members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee have started to gather in Beijing for the top political advisory body's annual session, which is scheduled to open Friday.

Political advisors from central China's Henan Province were the first to arrive on Wednesday.

On Sunday, the National People's Congress (NPC), the top legislature, will also convene its annual session. Dubbed the "two sessions," the dual gathering is significant in China's political calendar as it sets the national agenda for the year and beyond.

This year the meetings carry extra weight as they are the fifth and last sessions of the 12th NPC and the 12th CPPCC National Committee.

At the parliamentary assembly, legislators are expected to deliberate a draft decision on deputy elections for the 13th NPC, and draft methods for the election of deputies to the 13th NPC from Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions.

The two sessions are also the first high-profile national political events held since President Xi Jinping was endorsed as the core of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee at a key CPC meeting last October.

Pledges to conform to the CPC Central Committee with Xi as the core are expected to feature significantly.

"The CPC needs a strong core of leadership. Otherwise, it will have no cohesiveness or competence to lead all manners of undertakings. The endorsement of Xi as the core has come naturally, with the backing of the entire Party and the people," said Xin Ming, a professor with the Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

Much of the focus during the March sessions will center on the economic front, as in previous years, with a government work report to be delivered by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to confirm the country's growth targets for the year.

China registered 6.7 percent GDP growth in 2016, a nearly three-decade low, amid concerns over weak growth momentum in major economies, rising trade protectionism, domestic debt overhang, excess capacity and a highly leveraged property market.

However the growth rate was within the Chinese government's target range and outpaced most other major economies, scotching rumors of a hard landing.

Although no official target for this year will be available until the opening

of the parliamentary session, China has targeted average annual growth of more than 6.5 percent during the 13th-five-year plan (2016-2020).

Explaining the plan to a key Party conference in late 2015, President Xi Jinping said maintaining an average annual growth of at least 6.5 percent was necessary to reach the target of doubling GDP and per capita income from 2010 levels by 2020.

The target is crucial for China to attain its two centenary goals: becoming a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2021, the 100th anniversary of the CPC, and a modern socialist country that is "prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious" by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

"I see 2017 as showing considerable continuity with 2016. Growth will continue to be fueled primarily by the increasing importance of consumption as opposed to investment, and services as opposed to industry," said Nicholas R. Lardy, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

With the CPC set to hold its 19th National Congress in Beijing in the second half of the year, stabilizing the economy will be prioritized by policymakers.

A Central Economic Work Conference late last year made "seeking progress while maintaining stability" the main theme for economic work in 2017, pledging progress in supply-side structural reform.

Xu Guangjian, vice dean of Renmin University's School of Public Administration, is confident in China's ability to maintain medium-high growth of 6.5 to 7 percent.

"The domestic market is yet to be further tapped, the infrastructure sector has huge potential for investment and resident consumption keeps growing steadily," he said.

Zheng Xinye, assistant dean of Renmin University's School of Economics, suggested increasing effective supply in medical, education and housing sectors in order to meet people's needs, give people a greater sense of gain and ensure steady economic growth.

For those eyeing the effects of China's economic projects on the rest of the world, the Belt and Road Initiative will be a focus.

The initiative, which has yielded infrastructure projects, economic and trade cooperation zones, and jobs, is telling evidence of China's resolution to champion free trade and open markets amid increasing anti-globalization sentiment and rising trade protectionism.

"The Initiative signals China's active participation in global economic and financial governance. Rather than a passive player in the building and maintenance of the international economic order, China has taken on responsibilities that match its economic status and national strength," Xu

said.

Lawmakers and political advisors will also take the occasion to review and discuss a draft General Provisions of Civil Law, which states the basic principles of the country's long-awaited civil code.

The drafting of the general provisions started in March 2015. Since June last year, the draft has gone through three readings at the top legislature. During the process, many opinions and revisions have been taken on board to address people's concerns, adapt to the country's needs and embody socialist values.

It is rare for a draft law or an amendment to go through three readings and not be passed. One outstanding case was the property law, which was passed in March 2007 after eight readings.

The draft states that personal liberties and human dignity are protected by the law, and is expected to be approved at the upcoming parliamentary session, a crucial first step in introducing a civil code, hopefully in 2020.

Since a decision to compile a civil code was made in October 2014, it has been treated as a necessary move to perfect the country's socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics, and significant in modernizing state governance.

Compiling a civil code takes two steps: formulating the general provisions, and integrating separate civil laws into a unified code.

"The making of the general provisions and the civil code will elevate the protection of civil rights to a new height," said Professor Yin Tian with the Law School of Peking University.

"This will contribute significantly to promoting the sound development of the economy, improving state governance, and preventing state power from encroaching upon the legitimate rights of civil subjects," Yin said.

Other topics at the NPC session include a state budgetary review, military spending and law enforcement.

China announced a 7.6 percent rise in its national defense budget last year, the lowest growth in six years, breaking off a five-year run of double-digit increases between 2011 and 2015.

The increase in 2015 was 10.1 percent.

[**China releases first strategy on**](#)

cyberspace cooperation

China on Wednesday released its strategy on cyberspace cooperation.

The International Strategy of Cooperation on Cyberspace is the first China has released regarding the virtual domain.

The aim of the strategy – jointly building a community of shared future in cyberspace – illustrates China's approach to cyberspace cooperation. Notably one that is based on peace, sovereignty, shared governance and shared benefits.

The strategic goals of China's participation in international cyberspace cooperation are: the safeguarding of China's sovereignty, security and development interests in cyberspace; the secure and orderly flow of information on the Internet; improved global connectivity; maintaining of peace, security and stability in cyberspace; enhancement of international rule of law in cyberspace; the promotion of the global development of the digital economy; and deepening cultural exchange and mutual learning, according to the strategy.

China's plan of action includes promoting the building of rule-based order in cyberspace, expanding partnership with other countries, boosting institutional reform in Internet governance, jointly combating cyber terrorism and crimes, and protecting individual privacy in cyberspace.

China supports Internet-based innovation and entrepreneurship, and is committed to assisting developing countries with cyber security capacity building, it said.

The country supports the formulation of cyberspace trade rules and effective policy coordination among countries, said the strategy.

China will work with other countries to strengthen global information infrastructure to facilitate the smooth flow of information, and facilitate cyber culture cooperation among countries, according to the strategy.

With the animation, comic and games industry as a priority area, China will carry out practical cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road, encourage Chinese enterprises to provide online cultural products and services catered to local needs based on local cultural resources, said the strategy.

The strategy was issued by the Foreign Ministry and State Internet Information Office.

Food firm is blacklisted over 'old meat' scandal



Fast food chain Shanghai Hushi Food Co and three of its former workers have been blacklisted over the 2014 expired meat scandal. [Photo/Shanghai Daily]

Fast food chain Shanghai Hushi Food Co and three of its former workers have been blacklisted over the 2014 expired meat scandal.

The Shanghai food watchdog yesterday said former executives Hu Jun, Liu Lijie and Zhang Hu has been convicted of food safety crimes and have been banned from the food industry for life.

The trio and the company also face restrictions on bank loans and land use permits.

Shanghai Hushi was found to have supplied meat that had passed its use-by date to companies such as McDonald's, KFC and Burger King between April, 2013 and July, 2014.

Hushi's food processing plant in Jiading District was raided by officials from the Shanghai Food and Drug Administration following a TV program accusing it of using out-of-date and substandard meat.

Hushi was fined 1.2 million yuan (US\$176,470) and its food production license was revoked.

The three executives were jailed.

The Shanghai Food and Drug Administration also said yesterday it had blacklisted nine people working at four restaurants for using poppy or other banned products in their food.

In one case, Ren Dongyun, the operator of a beef soup restaurant in Jinshan District, which was unlicensed, was jailed for seven months and fined 5,000 yuan last year by the Jinshan District People's Court after the restaurant's beef soup was found to contain papaverine – an anti-spasmodic drug – and morphine.

In another case, two people working for Afandi Snack Restaurant in Jinshan were sentenced to up to seven months in prison and fined 30,000 yuan last year for adding poppy capsules to soup to enrich flavor. These people face a lifetime ban from the food industry.

[Underground rooms near Tian'anmen to be removed](#)



Beijing starts to remove illegal rooms and buildings under the ground of the core area of the city. [Photo/Chinanews.com]

Beijing has started to remove illegal rooms and buildings under the ground of the city's core area. The government has vowed to remove nearly 14,000 square meters of illegal buildings this year.

On Feb. 28, more than 700 illegal rooms under eight residential buildings of the Hepingmen Community in West Chang'an Street have been removed. Nearly 350 people left the illegal buildings.

According to staff, the removing work at Hepingmen Community began early this year.

During the past two months, they have removed 13,862 square meters illegal buildings, 1,157 underground rooms, and helped 2,010 inhabitants find other places to live.

The government plans to rebuild the underground space and construct a range of facilities, such as parking lots to provide more convenience for the nearby residents.

Man seeks job to pay granddaughter's tuition



Yu Changyuan, 78, attends a job fair in Zhengzhou last Saturday for seeking a job to pay for his granddaughter's tuition. [Photo/zynews.com]

A construction job fair was held in Zhengzhou last Saturday. The oldest job seeker was a 78-year-old man named Yu Changyuan. He is a retired senior engineer and wants to find a job with a 4,000-yuan (US\$580) monthly salary, with the hopes of paying his granddaughter's tuition.

According to Yu, he was a senior engineer in Henan Fifth Construction Group, and he wanted to find a management position at the construction job fair to pay for his granddaughter's university tuition, as his son died last year. "Although I am old, I am still healthy and I can still work," said Yu.

However, Yu could not find a proper position at the job fair, because most of the positions were at construction sites and no one wanted to hire a 78-year-old man.

This was not the first time Yu went to a job fair. Liu Kai, a worker at the job fair, said that Yu started to seek a job after the Lantern Festival, which fell on Feb. 11 this year. At first, he thought that Yu was there to help his kids to find a job. However, he was shocked when Yu asked him whether there was any position for himself. According to Liu, the old man has a lot of certifications and this is the third time he came to the job fair.

According to Yu, he was born in 1938 in Shanghai and graduated from the Shanghai Urban Construction Academy in 1960. Then he was assigned to work at the Architectural Design Institute of Henan Province. After three years, he was assigned to work in Henan Fifth Construction Group until his retirement. He had participated in the construction of many projects in Zhengzhou since the 1980's.

After his retirement, he was hired by the Institute of Geodesy Photogrammetry and Cartography for 10 years. At 70, he was truly retired.

Yu had a son and a daughter. His daughter is a teacher in a middle school while his son used to work for Henan Rural Credit Cooperative. However, his son suffered from suffusion of blood on the brain last September and died three months after surgery for the ailment.

"He cried everyday over our son's death," said Yu's wife.

"My granddaughter is a top student and she will go to college next year. We want to help her and share her mother's burden after my son's death," said Yu Changyuan.