

China's top political advisor stresses unity with Xi's leadership

China raised the curtain on its annual political season on Friday, with top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng pledging conformity to the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core.

As chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, Yu delivered a work report to more than 2,000 political advisors gathered in the heart of Beijing to discuss the political, economic and social issues facing the world's most populous nation and second-largest economy.

Yu said that in the course of the nation's great rejuvenation, the importance of 2016 was assured by the endorsement of Xi Jinping as the core of the CPC Central Committee.

Xi's core status embodies the fundamental interests of the Party and the people, and will be of far-reaching significance. His political ideas should be a guidance for all, Yu told the political advisors.

During the gathering, attendees are expected to fully align their thinking with Xi's strategic blueprint of the "four comprehensives" – comprehensively achieve a moderately prosperous society, deepen reform, advance rule of law and govern the CPC strictly, which is crucial to the drive of China becoming a well-off society by 2020.

The CPPCC is an important vehicle for multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and the key to socialist democracy.

Political advisors come from various walks of life and ethnic groups. They serve as a think-tank for the government, legislative and judicial organs, and put forward proposals on major political and social issues.

Their proposals can be considered a rough barometer of public opinion, signaling issues of concern on anything from industrial policy to domestic violence, and telegraph the general national agenda for the next year and beyond.

In the past year, seminars have convened to discuss a plethora of topics including new development ideas, supply-side structural reform, revitalization of the northeast region, and rural poverty relief. Agendas also included creation and management of national nature reserves, preservation of land resources and prevention of pollution, Yu said.

Yu commended the advisors for their work on the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), saying 2017 is a more important year for the plan's implementation.

The CPPCC will help the country better adapt to the “new economic normal” of steady and healthy economic development, he said.

Friday’s CPPCC session was the start of the most important two weeks on China’s political calendar. The National People’s Congress (NPC), China’s top legislature, is set to begin its annual session on Sunday.

Together dubbed the “Two Sessions,” the meetings are where political and economic developments are reviewed and discussed and key policies are made. This year, attendees will also discuss the general provisions of civil law.

In his speech, Yu saw room for improvement in some aspects of CPPCC work.

“Discussion of state affairs needs to go deeper and to be more practical, work on democratic oversight needs to be further standardized, and CPPCC National Committee members need to do better in the performance of their duties,” Yu noted.

The advisors’ main efforts this year should be directed toward stable and healthy economic development, communication with representatives of public opinion in Taiwan, and maintaining social harmony and stability.

Yu said communication between political advisors and the youth in Taiwan should be strengthened to consolidate public support for the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.

Political advisors will continue to oversee the implementation of CPC Central Committee policies and raise practical proposals.

While praising the Standing Committee of CPPCC National Committee for promoting unity and friendship, Yu called for work on solidarity and friendship with the people in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese.

[News story: Avian flu near Redgrave, Suffolk](#)

Avian Influenza H5N8 virus has been identified on a premises near Redgrave during investigations following a recent nearby case.

Defra’s routine investigations following a confirmed case of H5N8 near Redgrave in Suffolk have led to the detection of the virus at a further separate premises.

Due to the unacceptable high risk and to contain the possible spread of avian flu, the UK’s Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer has today (3 March) confirmed

that proactive culling of around 55,000 birds will take place.

The premises will then be cleansed and disinfected, further reducing the risk to other birds. [A 3km Protection Zone and a 10km Surveillance Zone](#) are already in place following the previous case in the area. Our investigations will continue and the restrictions already placed on the site will remain in force until cleansing and disinfection is finished and the investigation is complete.

Public Health England advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency is clear that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

Read the [latest advice and information on avian flu in the UK](#), including actions to reduce the risk of the disease spreading, advice for anyone who keeps poultry or captive birds and details of previous cases. You can use our [interactive map](#) to check if you are affected by restrictions around any premises. Journalists with queries should contact Defra press office on 02082257318.

[News story: Open Rights Group campaign](#)

A large number of emails have been received about government plans to equalise the maximum sentence for online and physical copyright infringement at 10 years. This measure is contained within the [Digital Economy Bill 2016](#) which is in its final stage of the Parliamentary scrutiny process.

The Open Rights Group (ORG) campaign focuses on two areas. Firstly that an increased sentence may result in an increase of so called 'copyright trolls' threatening court action. Secondly, that the copyright clause within the Bill criminalises minor copyright infringement.

Infringement of another person's copyright in the circumstances covered by the redrafted criminal offences is already covered by existing criminal offences. The proposed measures in the Digital Economy Bill clarify the existing offences and take into account concerns that the ORG raised with government during consultation. The revised offence is designed to deter and deal with deliberate infringement, while protecting innocent or unwitting infringers.

Copyright trolls

Copyright owners are entitled to enforce their rights. On occasion this may include contacting members of the public who are alleged to have infringed their rights. Such approaches are entirely legal. However if done in a threatening or harassing way, members of the public can report the solicitors in question to the Solicitor's Regulatory Authority (SRA). The SRA has taken

action in previous such cases.

It is important to note that the criminal offences apply to making material available to others, not to those just downloading material to their computers. Anyone seeking to enforce their rights for the downloading of material would be unlikely to refer to this legislation.

The Intellectual Property Office has published [guidance](#) for members of the public who have received such approaches.

The risk of an increase of 'trolling' is considered to be low but the government will periodically review and respond to any concerns.

Minor infringement

The criminal offences penalise communicating a copyright work to the public and infringing a performer's 'making available' right. Both of these acts are considered criminal where a person knows, or has reason to believe, that they are infringing the right and either intends to make a monetary gain, or knows or has reason to believe that they will cause loss or expose the rights holder to a risk of loss in money. These offences focus on those causing harm either for monetary gain or a monetary loss or risk of loss to the rights holder. A mental element has been introduced which requires an intention to make a gain or knowledge or reason to believe that the copyright owner will suffer loss or be exposed to a risk of loss.

Ten year sentences would only be applied in the most serious of criminal circumstances. It is highly unlikely that small, unintentional infringement would be caught by this offence. A person who believed that their acts fell within a copyright exception, such as that relating to criticism or review or quotation, would not be guilty of an offence.

It would not be practical for the government to set a specific level of loss or gain at which infringement becomes a criminal offence. This is because the circumstances of each infringement needs to be taken into account.

[The Culture Secretary must now ensure MPs are given an opportunity to debate the Fox takeover deal – Tom Watson](#)

Tom

Watson, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, commenting on the 21st

Century Fox formal notification of its bid for full control of Sky, said:

“The Government should have referred this bid to Ofcom immediately and without equivocation.

“It is clear that Fox’s bid to take full control of Sky will significantly increase the size of the biggest media organisation in the UK and further concentrate power in the hands of a dominant industry player.

“It is therefore clearly in the public interest that the bid is referred to the regulator on media plurality and broadcasting grounds.

“In light of the Government’s decision not to immediately refer the bid and the effect the proposed merger is likely to have on the UK media sector, the Culture Secretary must now ensure MPs are given an opportunity to debate the deal before a decision is taken on whether to approve it.”

Ends

[Website launched to commemorate late Premier Zhou Enlai](#)

A website was launched on Friday to commemorate late Premier Zhou Enlai, born in 1898, in the lead-up to the 120th anniversary of his birth.

The website, zhouenlai.people.cn, featured a 366-day countdown to the anniversary, an introduction to his life, and poems, calligraphy and paintings that pay tribute to Zhou, as well as Zhou’s family letters and links to memorial halls dedicated to him in China and abroad.

Visitors can offer virtual “flowers” and pay homage to Zhou online as well as post messages to the website. Endi