

OPINION: CHINA'S WTO COMPLIANCE P.29 | FEATURES: HIBERNATING IN HAINAN P.36

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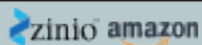
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Time for the Two Sessions

The annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee are China's major political gatherings. The NPC and the CPPCC National Committee are, respectively, the highest state organ of power and top political advisory body and both have five-year terms. Their annual sessions, usually held in March, focus on the economic and social blueprint of the country for the coming year.

The Second Session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee opened on March 4 and the Second Session of the 14th NPC opened on March 5, attended by approximately 2,100 members and 2,900 elected deputies, respectively.

At the opening of the NPC session, Premier Li Qiang delivered the Report on the Work of the Government, which reviewed last year's economic performance and laid out priorities for the government's work this year for deliberation and approval by the deputies. The CPPCC National Committee members were also present to participate in the discussion of the report and offer their comments.

Other routine duties on the NPC agenda include reviewing the implementation of the 2023 national economic and social

development plan and the 2024 draft plan; reviewing the report on the implementation of the 2023 central and local budgets and the draft central and local budgets for 2024; deliberating on the work report of the NPC Standing Committee, which carries out constitutional duties between the NPC's annual sessions; and examining the work report of the Supreme People's Court, the nation's highest court, and the work report of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, which mainly deals with public prosecution and the supervision of criminal investigation.

A legislative item on this year's agenda—amending the Organic Law of the State Council—will refine the way China's highest state administrative organ works. The law is being revised for the first time in over 40 years, since it was first passed in December 1982.

The CPPCC National Committee consists of prominent figures in all sectors of society—from political to artistic communities. They are also involved in national governance, making proposals for the betterment of the people and the country.

The Two Sessions are held in an open format. More than 3,000 journalists have registered to cover the events this year, including 1,000-plus from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and abroad. **BR**



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AIR TAXI TRIUMPH

A five-seat eVTOL (electric vertical takeoff and landing) aircraft conducts a demonstration flight near the Shekou Cruise Home Port in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, on February 27. The aircraft, named *Prosperity* and developed by hi-tech company AutoFlight, completed its first inter-city electric air-taxi demonstration flight from Shenzhen to Zhuhai, also in Guangdong, that day.

This cutting-edge “air taxi” service promises to reduce commuting time between these two cities from three hours by car to 20 minutes.



Becoming Cultured

A visitor takes a closer look at a cultural relic on display inside the new building of the Yinxu Museum in Anyang, Henan Province, on February 26. The new building officially opened to the public that day. Located near the archaeological site of the Yin Ruins, the location of the last capital of the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.), the expanded Yinxu Museum is the first national major archaeological museum to comprehensively present the Shang civilization.

Transport Network

China has made notable achievements in improving its transport infrastructure network over the past 12 months, the Ministry of Transport said on February 28.

Fixed-asset investment in the country's transport system totaled 3.9 trillion yuan (\$542.1 billion) in 2023, Minister of Transport Li Xiaopeng told a press conference.

A total of 2,776 km of high-speed railways were opened, and 7,000 km of expressways were built or expanded last year, Li said.

The country added or improved 1,000 km of shipping lanes, and the number of airports for transportation stood at 259.

Postal services were available to all administrative villages.

Tax Crimes

China intensified its crackdown on tax-related offenses to mitigate tax revenue losses in 2023, according to government agencies.

Last year, related authorities examined 174,000 businesses suspected of tax fraud, read a recent statement from eight departments, including the State Taxation Administration and the Ministry of Public Security.

In particular, approximately 16.6 billion yuan (\$2.3 billion) was recovered during crackdowns on crimes related to export tax rebates, according to the statement.

The eight departments said that they would continue to work together to tackle tax-related crimes, as part of efforts to safeguard China's tax security and ensure sound operations of the economy.

China's total tax and fee incomes reached 31.7 trillion yuan (\$4.4 trillion) last year, including 15.9 trillion yuan (\$2.2 trillion) of tax revenue and 8.2 trillion yuan (\$1.1 trillion) of social insurance premium income.

Public Litigation Cases

China's procuratorial organs filed and solved around 190,000 public interest litigation cases throughout 2023, the Supreme

People's Procuratorate (SPP) said on February 28.

Of the cases, 168,000 involved administrative litigation and 22,000 fell under the civil sphere.

The coverage of public interest litigation was further expanded last year, with procuratorial public interest litigation being incorporated into a series of new laws concerning people's living environment and ecological protection, among other matters.

Zhang Xueqiao, Deputy Procurator General of the SPP, said progress had been made in public litigation in traditional fields such as eco-environment and resource protection, food and drug safety, with more than 80,000 cases and 20,000 cases handled in the two fields, respectively.

In the meantime, efforts have been stepped up in more fields including production safety, personal information protection and the protection of the rights and interests of specific groups.

Cruise Ship

China's second domestically-built large cruise ship has been under structure construction and is expected to be delivered by the end of 2026, according to the Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of China State Shipbuilding Corp. Ltd.

The schedule unveiled by the shipbuilder on February 28 showed that the cruise ship is set to depart from the dock by late March 2026, with trial sailing commencing in June that same year. The dates for the ship's naming and delivery ceremonies will be announced before the end of 2026.

Compared with the country's first domestically-built large

cruise ship, the *Adora Magic City*, the new ship is larger in size, with a total tonnage of approximately 142,000 tons, a total length of 341 meters, a width of 37.2 meters and 2,144 cabins, an increase of 0.67 million tons in tonnage, an extension of 17.4 meters in length, and 19 additional cabins.

In January this year, the *Adora Magic City* completed its maiden commercial voyage after traveling 1,119 nautical miles (2,072 km) on a seven-day and six-night trip, garnering significant interest from tourists.

Giant Panda Base

The Beijing base of the China Conservation and Research Center for Giant Panda is set to commence operations in 2025, with 50 giant pandas planned to be introduced, according to local authorities.

The base, which is currently under construction, is situated within the Qinglonghu Forest Park in Fangshan District and covers a total area of approximately 133.3 hectares.

The first phase of the project, set for completion in 2025, will bring in 40 giant pandas, as well as companion animals such as golden snub-nosed monkeys and red pandas. It will also include

the construction of a giant panda cultural exchange center.

Online Literature Users

The number of users of China's online literature platforms reached 537 million as of late 2023, a 9-percent year-on-year increase, Xinhua News Agency reported on February 27, citing a new report released by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

The CASS report on China's online literature development research for 2023 showed the size of the country's online literature reading market exceeded 40 billion yuan (\$5.6 billion).

The report underscored cultural confidence as a new trend in online literature creation.

In 2023, online literature writers more noticeably incorporated elements of traditional Chinese culture into diverse literature genres, including literature on historical and contemporary topics, as well as science fiction, the report read.

The development of China's online literature industry over the past year also saw increased globalization.

The report showed that the overseas sales of online Chinese



Shaken, Not Broken

Students attend a class at Xiaohongping Primary School in Shiyuan Town of Jishishan County, Gansu Province, on February 26.

Reinforcement projects at the schools in Jishishan have been completed after a 6.2-magnitude earthquake hit the area on December 18, 2023.

literature "going global" surpassed 4 billion yuan (\$555.9 million) last year, with approximately 620,000 original works available to readers in more than 200 countries and regions.

Law Case Database

A database of cases tried by the people's courts was officially launched and made accessible to the public on February 27,

according to the Supreme People's Court (SPC).

The database contains authoritative cases that have been reviewed by the SPC and are deemed to have reference value for similar cases, the SPC said.

The initiative aims to highlight the practical effect of cases to better serve adjudication and academic research and raise public awareness of the law, according to the SPC.



The Community Spirit

An employer talks with job seekers at a job fair in Kongcun Township, Pingyin County, Shandong Province, on February 28. The county has organized job fairs in local communities to help rural workers and fresh college graduates secure employment.

Industrial Firm Data

Chinese authorities on February 26 released a three-year plan to enhance the protection of industrial firms' data.

From 2024 to 2026, China will work to raise awareness of data protection, protect important industrial data, strengthen data security management at key enterprises, and enhance data protection in key scenarios, according to the plan, released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The plan specifies 11 tasks to improve the country's abilities to protect industrial firms' data, regulate data security and support the data security industry.

By the end of 2026, China expects to have a data protection system for the industrial sector in place and keep major risks under control, the plan said.

Forex Transactions

The Chinese foreign exchange (forex) market recorded

transactions worth 24.67 trillion yuan (\$3.4 trillion) in January, according to data released by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on February 26.

The transaction volume of the client market was 3.76 trillion yuan (\$522.3 billion), and that of the interbank market was 20.91 trillion yuan (\$2.9 trillion), the data showed.

In terms of products, the spot market's cumulative transaction volume was 8.33 trillion yuan (\$1.16 trillion), and that of the derivatives market was 16.34 trillion yuan (\$2.27 trillion), according to the data.

Foldable Smartphone

Shipments of foldable smartphones in the Chinese market surged 114.5 percent in 2023 over the previous year, an industry report showed.

Shipment volume of the phones exceeded 7 million units last year, marking a year-on-year increase of over 100 percent

for four consecutive years, according to the report released by global market research firm International Data Corp.

The report attributed the breakout growth to improved consumer experience and a further decline in prices.

In 2023, foldable smartphones costing \$1,000 or more took up 66.5 percent of the market, down from the 81 percent registered in 2022.

Comprehensive Bonded Zone

The comprehensive bonded zone of Xiongan New Area in the northern province of Hebei launched export business on February 24.

Approved in June 2023, the zone covers a total area of approximately 0.63 square km. The first phase of the zone occupies around 0.42 square km. Comprehensive bonded zones are special commercial zones that enjoy favorable taxation policies.

The zone's policies, such as tax refunds, bonded imports and free circulation of goods within the zone, are expected to reduce institutional transaction costs and promote the agglomeration and development of high-end manufacturing and production services in line with the positioning of the new area, according to Wang Lei, deputy head of Xiongan Customs.

China announced a plan to establish Xiongan, which spans Rongcheng, Anxin and Xiongxian counties and several adjacent areas in April 2017.

The new area aims to relieve Beijing of non-essential functions related to its status as the nation's capital while also advancing the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

Real Estate Financing

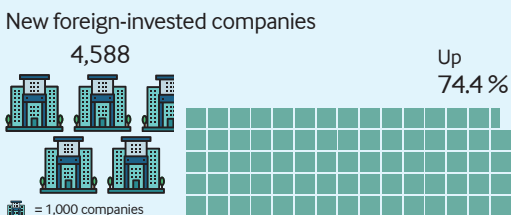
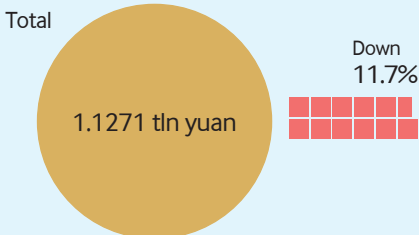
A total of 276 cities in 31 provincial-level regions across China had established real estate financing coordination

NUMBERS

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in January

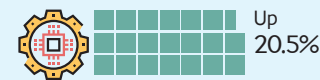
(All growth rates are y.o.y.)

Paid-in FDI into the Chinese mainland in actual use

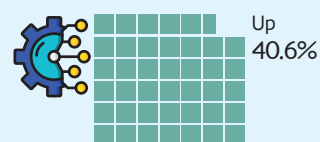


FDI into:

Manufacturing industry



Hi-tech manufacturing sector



mechanisms as of February 29, contributing to the country's efforts to promote the sound development of the property market.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said it had issued batches of white lists involving about 6,000 real estate projects eligible for financing support and forwarded them to commercial banks.

Commercial banks acted swiftly to review these projects and have approved loans of more than 200 billion yuan (\$28.2 billion), the ministry said.

In January, China announced a plan to establish a financing coordination mechanism for the real estate sector to meet the legitimate financing needs of real estate projects and support the stable and sound growth of the country's real estate market.

Stock Index Adjustment

British stock index provider FTSE Russell will exclude one

and add 76 Chinese A-shares as constituents of its stock indices after the close of business on March 15.

After the adjustment, the FTSE China A All Cap (Stock Connect) Indices will track the performance of 1,973 A-shares, the company announced in a semi-annual indices review report.

The market value of these A-shares will account for about 6.18 percent of FTSE Russell's Emerging Index, up from approximately 5.71 percent.

A-shares are yuan-denominated stocks of China-based companies that are traded on Shanghai or Shenzhen stock exchanges.

Following the adjustment, a notably increased number of Chinese companies will be covered by the FTSE Russell indices, and overseas capital is likely to expand investment in A-shares, said Shen Chao, a macro and strategy analyst at the HSBC Jitrust Fund Management.

Global Strategic Hub

Shanghai has become the fifth global strategic hub for British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, joining hubs in the United States, Sweden and Britain, the company announced at the 2024 Shanghai Bio-Pharmaceutical Industry International Development Conference that opened on February 26.

The Shanghai hub is a global strategic center that integrates research and development (R&D), commercial and production operations. It plays an important role as a strategic launching pad for AstraZeneca's global strategy, R&D and long-term development, the company noted.

"We see great opportunity for Shanghai and the Yangtze River Delta region to leverage its international capabilities to globalize local innovations, for instance by promoting global recognition of Chinese clinical

research data," AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot said, adding that his company remains committed to further exploring the Chinese market.

Import Logistics

China's import logistics registered steady expansion in 2023, data from the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing showed.

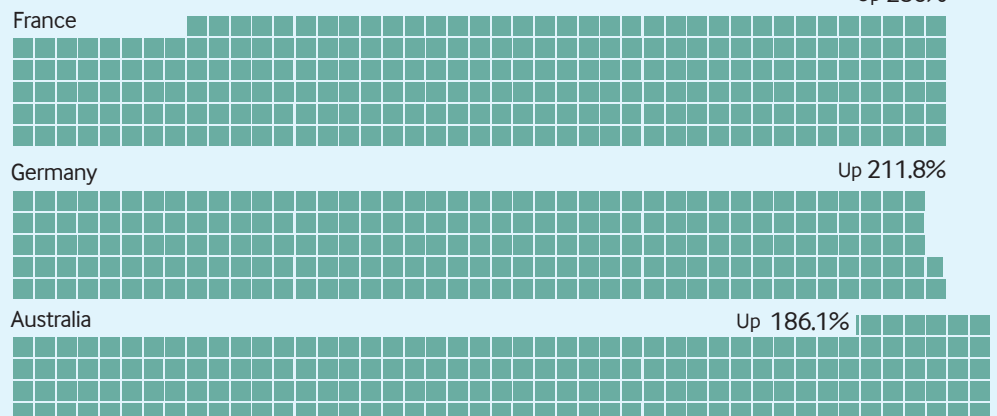
The country's total value of import logistics stood at 18 trillion yuan (\$2.5 trillion) last year, up 13 percent year on year, with the growth in each quarter topping 10 percent, according to the organization.

Specifically, the flow of imported bulk commodity further expanded. China's imports of energy products, such as crude oil, natural gas and coal, hit 1.16 billion tons, soaring 27.2 percent year on year.

The country also imported 1.46 billion tons of iron, aluminum and other metal ore in 2023, up 7.6 percent from the previous year.



FDI in the Chinese mainland from



(Source: Ministry of Commerce)

THIS WEEK WORLD



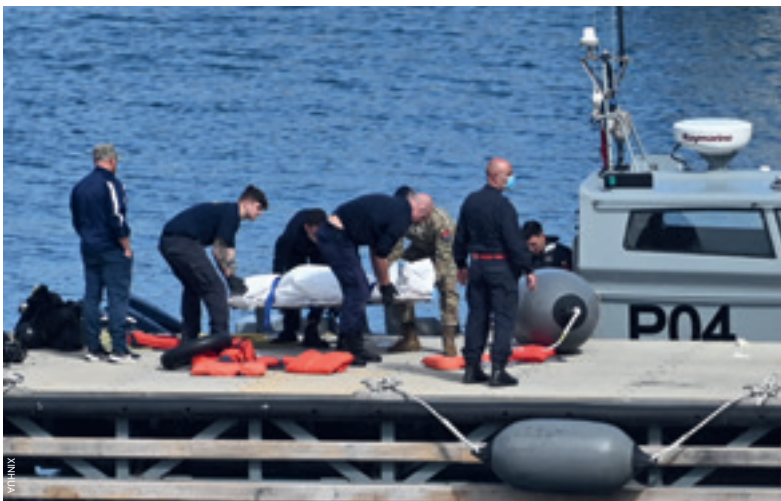
EGYPT

Tourists visit the Great Temple of Abu Simbel during the Sun Festival in Aswan on February 22. During this festival, the first morning light reaches the innermost shrine of the temple, casting a gentle glow upon the sculptures within



MALTA

Rescue workers carry the remains of a migrant in Pieta on February 23. Five people were confirmed dead and eight others injured after a migrant boat capsized



SPAIN

Attendees explore the 2024 edition of the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona on February 26. The MWC is the world's leading trade fair for mobile technology and related industries



KENYA

The Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) underway in Nairobi on February 26. The UNEA-6 opened with delegates renewing their call for robust multilateralism to support action on threats to planetary health



AUSTRALIA

An artist from Xi'an, capital of China's Shaanxi Province, dazzles an audience with a fire-breathing performance during the China Culture Day held at the Chinese Embassy in Canberra on February 27



HUNGARY

Members of the Hungarian parliament vote on a bill on Sweden's bid to join NATO in Budapest on February 26. Their approval of the bill paved the way for Sweden's membership in the military alliance

THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ SCIENTIST AWARDED FOR TRANSPLANT THERAPY

Scientist **Huang Xiaojun** received the annual Distinguished Service Award from the Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research on February 23. The award was given in recognition of his groundbreaking development of the Beijing Protocol, a method for conducting stem-cell transplants. The center is a research collaboration between the Medical College of Wisconsin and the U.S. National Marrow Donor Program.

A member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and head of the Institute of Hematology at Peking University, Huang established a series of key techniques for bone marrow transplantation that gradually developed into the Beijing Protocol. The protocol has increased the three-year survival rate of leukemia patients receiving transplants from approximately 20 percent to about 70 percent.

The protocol has been put into use in countries including the Republic of Korea, Italy and France.



Stuck in Vacation Mode

Rednet.cn
February 22

The island of Hainan, a tropical paradise in south China, was one of the nation's hottest holiday destinations during the Chinese New Year holiday in February. Renowned for its mild climate, vast beaches and luxurious resorts, the island received over 9 million tourist visits this year, a 48-percent increase from last year.

However, this unprecedented surge in travel came with a sharp side effect. With the transport system heavily overstretched and airline ticket prices soaring high, thousands of tourists were left stranded on the island near the end of the holiday.

To ease congestion, authorities added outbound flights, increased the use of wide-body aircraft, which come with two passenger aisles, and introduced additional ferry services for those who had traveled to the island by car.

These, however, were only a quick-fix remedy for the overflow of tourists, a problem that has existed for quite a while. With the continuous opening up of the island, which was declared a free trade port in 2018, Hainan's tourism sector needs a full upgrade to cope with the ever-increasing flow of visitors and trade. Airports and ferry services need to devise new sustainable measures to optimize their capacities and authorities should also consider setting tourist quotas for travel hotspots.



Freezing Out the Competition

China Newsweek
February 5

As a major terminus for several rail lines connecting Beijing to the country's vast northeast region, the Beijing Chaoyang Railway Station has recently become an arena for a frenzied race for attention between destinations in the nation's northeastern provinces. This winter, the station has been plastered with all kinds of travel campaign ads. "Explore Huanggu." "It's never too cold in Fuxin." "Come to Beipiao, the Swan City." Though these

"We believe that our relationship is a testament to the power of education to build bridges between cultures and to promote peace and understanding."

Jennifer Fridley, Principal of Susan Clark Junior High in Muscatine, Iowa, the U.S., commenting on the school students' visit to China in January as a part of a student exchange program initiated by China, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

"Not a single company declared a complete withdrawal from the Chinese market."

Harley Seyedin, President of the American Chamber of Commerce in South China, at a news conference on the release of the 2024 Special Report on the State of Business in South China on February 27

names may sound unfamiliar, they are all connected by a single theme, ice and snow tourism in northeast China.

The competition for tourists started with the sudden popularity of Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang, China's northeasternmost province. Harbin's newly acquired fame has prompted its peers in the other two northeastern provinces to take action. Changchun, capital of Jilin Province, has introduced new bus lines to better connect its ice and snow arenas. Local authorities also invited the "little tangerines," a group of 11 children from Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in the south, whose travel to Harbin had become a social media sensation, to visit Changchun. Shenyang, capital of Liaoning Province, has launched free shuttle services to facilitate travel between local winter travel spots.

These promotional strategies have wooed a considerable number of tourists to the northeast. However, authorities should also understand that the key to Harbin's success is neither "little tangerines," nor free gifts and services, but years of commitment to building a highly integrated winter tourism industry. Instead of competing with Harbin for online attention, other cities should focus on finding their own potential strengths.

Throwback Fashion

Ce.cn
February 21

A hashtag that has been lately trending on Chinese social media is neo-Chinese fashion, a style that blends elements from traditional Chinese attire with modern aesthetics. Once a niche sector reserved for a small circle of young fashionistas, neo-Chinese fashion has evolved into a highly developed industry that covers a wide range of traditionally inspired clothing.

One classic example is the horse-face skirt, a type of pleated skirt that usually serves as a lower garment for *hanfu*, the traditional clothing of China's Han people.

In recent years, young designers have taken the intricate pleating of this traditional piece and given it a more modern silhouette.

The neo-Chinese style boom has not only helped many traditional textile businesses transform into fashion brands, but also trickled into other industries, such as home décor, cosmetics, and food and beverages.

Of course, some manufacturers have turned the trend into a gimmick, offering mass produced products at the expense of quality and originality. However, despite the presence of a few black sheep, the trend is largely charting out new territory for Chinese businesses, where the old-school charm of ancient crafts and trades mixes with modern fashion.

↓ BEVERAGE GIANT FOUNDER DIES AT 79

Zong Qinghou, founder of the Wahaha Group, a food and beverage giant headquartered in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, died of lung cancer on February 25 at the age of 79.

Zong has long been regarded as one of the landmark figures in Chinese business history. He was the richest man in China in the early 2010s. In 1987, he became manager of a school-run enterprise in Hangzhou. With a loan of 140,000 yuan (\$19,488 at current rates), his team sold soda, pop-sicles and stationery. From these humble beginnings grew Wahaha, now a conglomerate with 81 production bases and more than 180 subsidiaries, employing nearly 30,000 people.

The group took 227th place on the list of China's top 500 private enterprises in 2023, having achieved total operating revenue of 51.2 billion yuan (\$7.1 billion) in 2022.



“The flamboyant combination of design flair and mechanical precision exemplified in these 300-year-old timepieces must be seen to be believed.”

Sir Ian Blatchford, Chief Executive of the Science Museum in London, in a recent interview with *Global Times*, expressing his gratitude to the Palace Museum in Beijing for cohosting an exhibition displaying 23 precious British clocks collected by ancient Chinese emperors

“The rapid development of mini dramas is conducive to enriching the content ecosystem of shortvideo platforms, enhancing user engagement and enticing a new breed of users.”

Ma Shicong, an analyst with Beijing-based Internet consultancy Analysys, commenting on China's fast-growing online mini dramas, grouped into genres including suspense, mystery and romance, in a recent interview with *China Daily*

As the annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the top advisory body, are currently underway, *Beijing Review* presents the stories of several NPC deputies and CPPCC National Committee members. We hope these reports help readers understand who they are and how they work for the nation.

COVER STORY

VILLAGE OF VITALITY

A village head in Zhejiang leads local drive for rural modernization By Lu Yan

Since taking charge of Lizu Village in Yiwu, Zhejiang Province in 2017, Fang Haolong has been working hard to improve it. A variety of measures have been taken, such as creating a clean environment, developing local industries, attracting professional personnel and promoting tourism.

“Ensuring a nicer place for villagers to live and for tourists to visit, as well as a well-off life for residents has been a long-cherished goal of mine,” Fang, Director of the Lizu Villagers’ Committee, also Secretary of the village’s Communist Party of China (CPC) branch, told *Beijing Review*.

A makeover

Its remoteness and inaccessibility once made Lizu a poverty-stricken village well-known for being “dirty, messy and backward.”

Then, in June 2003, Zhejiang provincial authorities launched the Thousand Villages Demonstration and Ten Thousand Villages Renovation Project, also known as the Green Rural Revival Program, with the aim to renovate 10,000 administrative villages in the province

and transform 1,000 of them into models of moderate prosperity. For 20 years, the project has turned thousands of villages into beautiful places and changed the face of the province’s countryside.

Under the project, Lizu began rehabilitating its environment by tackling challenges in sewage and solid waste disposal, and by upgrading roads and rural toilets.

In 2005, the village was selected to be one of the project’s demonstration villages. Fang, a member of the village Party branch at that time, was always willing to take on any tiring or dirty work, including wading through the mud of a fetid roadside ditch to remove rubbish, and helping farmers clean up piles of refuse that had accumulated in front of and behind their houses. “The project is such a good opportunity for change, so village officials must take the lead and contribute more to the village,” Fang said.

All his efforts were witnessed by his fellow villagers. In 2017, they elected him secretary of the village Party branch. By that time, though he had received an invitation to work at a company in the city with a handsome income, he didn’t accept. Some villagers felt it was a pity that he gave up the opportunity and instead became a farmer with his legs covered with mud. “I just want to do more for the village,” Fang said.

Over the years, Fang has led infrastructure improvements to the entire village, including building a cultural center, a senior care center, a laundry room, a garbage treatment facility and a square equipped with colorful lights for villagers to congregate in.

As a deputy to the 14th National People’s

Congress (NPC), China’s top legislature, Fang undertakes the important responsibility of representing the people, and the public interest is his top priority. In the course of his work, he frequently visits villagers’ homes, farmlands and business centers to learn about their work and concerns and seek their suggestions. The passenger seat beside him in his car is piled up with the documents he needs for reference. “As I’m always in between places, the car is like my office,” he said.

Every year, the NPC, the highest state organ of power, and the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body, hold full sessions to deliberate matters relevant to the country’s development. These two sessions are usually convened in early March.

The current NPC has some 3,000 deputies, elected by the country’s provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, special administrative regions and armed forces. Of them, about 16.69 percent are frontline workers and farmers, and 32.55 percent are Party and government officials.