

Stricter Scrutiny

China's new supervisory commissions monitor everyone in public positions of power By Zeng Wenhui

Liu Jianchao, a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, attracted considerable media attention during a plenary meeting of the Zhejiang delegation to discuss the draft of the Supervision Law on March 13. Liu is head of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhejiang Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection and director of the Supervisory Commission of Zhejiang Province.

Surrounded by journalists after the meeting, Liu said that the draft covered almost all the reform practices adopted by Beijing, as well as Zhejiang and Shanxi provinces, in the pilot reform of the supervisory system over the past year and a half.

"Establishing supervisory commissions to perform duties in accordance with the Supervision Law will be the most effective way of fighting corruption," said Liu.

The Supervision Law was adopted at the first session of the 13th NPC, held in Beijing March 5-20. Lawmakers also passed a constitutional amendment that includes a new section on supervisory commissions and elected the director of the National Supervisory Commission. This has laid the groundwork for a complete supervisory system that covers everyone holding public office.

The Zhejiang experience

In November 2016, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee issued a document calling for the establishment of supervisory commissions at various levels in Beijing, Shanxi and Zhejiang. Shortly after, the Standing Committee of the 12th NPC issued a resolution on the implementation of the pilot reform.

Liu says supervisory commissions in Zhejiang act as specialized anti-graft bodies, performing unified decision-making and command responsibilities. This solves the problem of overlapping duties among the Party's discipline-inspection commissions, the government's supervision departments and the procuratorates in the fight against corruption and the investigation of duty-related crimes.

Jia Yu, an NPC deputy and chief procurator of the Zhejiang Provincial People's Procuratorate, has been involved in the reform of the supervisory system in the province. Jia says that since Zhejiang was selected for the pilot reform program, procuratorates across the province have been supporting the policy. All their institutions and staff members in charge of duty-related crime investigation and corruption prevention have been transferred to supervisory commissions as planned. More than 1,600 staff members from procuratorates in the province have been transferred to the commissions, accounting for 15.4 percent of procuratorial employees. "They are the backbone of the procuratorates and will play an important role in supervisory commissions at different levels in the province," said Jia.

Liu says Zhejiang has seen the supervisory system broaden its scope. Prior to the reform, 383,000 people in Zhejiang were covered by administrative supervision; now 701,000 people are under the remit of

the supervisory system, an increase of 83 percent.

Ke Jianhua, an NPC deputy and secretary of the CPC Guigan Community Committee in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, says she is in favor of incorporating community management team members into the supervisory system. Subjecting them to supervision shows that the country attaches great importance to community governance, and it would deter those performing public duties at the community level from abusing their power.

In November 2017, the Standing Committee of the 12th NPC decided to expand the pilot reform of the supervisory system. Supervisory commissions have subsequently been set up in other provinces, cities and counties.

A legal framework

In the amendment to the Constitution, a section on supervisory commissions was included. Article 123 reads that supervisory commissions at all levels of the People's Republic of China are the country's



The inauguration ceremony for China's new National Supervisory Commission takes place in Beijing on March 23. Zhao Leji (left), member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, attended the ceremony

consistent with the amended Constitution and the Supervision Law, according to Liu.

Fang Lingmin, an NPC deputy and director of the Supervisory Commission of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, agrees. According to the new amendment, supervisory organs will coordinate with judicial agencies, procuratorates and law enforcement departments in the handling of duty-related offenses. Fang said that as the reform of the supervisory system progresses, more laws will have to be modified to ensure that related departments better cooperate with each other.

"After the Supervision Law has taken effect, the Criminal Procedure Law, the Law on the Organization of the People's Procuratorates, the Public Procurators Law and the State Compensation Law must be revised. We also need to establish and improve some other related systems and institutions," Fang said.

Before he was appointed head of the Supervisory Commission of Zhejiang, Liu was director of the International Cooperation Bureau of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. He said the architects of China's supervisory system reform had reviewed the country's cultural traditions and historical methods of governance prior to implementation. The anti-corruption practices were also evaluated before they were amalgamated into the Supervision Law.

Fighting corruption with an open mind, China is ready to cooperate with other nations, which in turn will help the country run its supervisory system better, he said.

"In the future, we will strengthen anti-graft cooperation with other countries, including the exchange of ideas and collaboration in measures and specific cases. If other countries need help from China in fighting corruption, China is ready to lend a hand," Liu said. ■

supervisory organs. This confirms the legal status of supervisory commissions as state institutions, with the new commissions sharing staff and premises with the Party's existing discipline-inspection agencies.

Article 127 states that supervisory commissions will independently exercise their power of supervision and will not be subject to interference by any administrative organ, public organization or individual.

Xu Rui, an NPC deputy from east China's Jiangxi Province and secretary of the CPC Ruijin Municipal Committee, told *Beijing Review* that the fact that a section on supervisory commissions is included in the Constitution indicates that China is intensifying efforts to combat corruption.

According to the Supervision Law, everyone in the public sector is under observation, including civil servants; quasi-civil servants; persons engaged in public affairs in organizations with public management authorization; management team members in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and public education, research, culture, health care and sports institutions; management team members in community-level self-governance organizations; and others performing public duties in accordance with the law.

Zeng Wenming, an NPC deputy and mayor of Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province, told *Beijing Review* that the supervisory system reform will strengthen the Party's leadership in the battle against corruption, establishing a centralized, unified and highly efficient supervisory system and promoting the modernization of the country's systems and capacity for governance.

"The Supervision Law is a national law on anti-corruption, increasing the number of persons subject to supervision, consolidating scattered supervisory forces and making supervisory institutions more authoritative," said Zeng.

In Zeng's view, the establishment of supervisory commissions prevents the government from supervising itself. "In the past, the torch of supervision was partially in the hands of the government, but now it will be shifted to supervisory commissions, changing the internal supervision of those in the public sector to external supervision. Supervision will thus be more independent and rigorous," Zeng said.

More to come

Following the adoption of the Supervision Law, many other related pieces of legislation will need to be revised so that they are



Staff members (first, second and third left) of the Supervisory Commission of Longyao County, north China's Hebei Province, visit a company to check its use of government poverty alleviation funds on March 27



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