

NPC

National People's Congress of China



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Migrant workers make a move to the Hall
People to have bigger say in laws
Highlights of Chinese top legislator's work report
Lessons in Chinese democracy





Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee Wu Bangguo (seventh from left) has a group photo with vice-chairpersons Yan Junqi, Jiang Shusheng, Li Jianguo, Chen Zhili, Han Qide, Lu Yongxiang, Wang Zhaoguo, Uyunqimg, Hua Jianmin, Zhou Tienong, Ismail Tiliwaldi, Chen Changzhi, Sang Guowei (from left to right). *Ma Zengke*

Pictorial Report of the First Session of the 11th NPC



President Hu Jintao makes an important speech at the closing ceremony of the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress on March 18, 2008.



Wu Bangguo, chairman of the 10th NPC Standing Committee, delivers a work report on the Standing Committee.



Premier Wen Jiabao makes the government work report.



The conference selects and nominates officials for the new government organizations.



Scene of the conference.
(Photos taken by Ma Zengke, Ma Zhancheng, Gao Jie, Ju Peng, Li Xueren, Liu Weibing, Yao Dawei and Wang Dongming)

The conference passes relevant resolutions.



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NPC annual session aims high on State affairs

By Bao Daozu

March is the month when winter gives way to spring, and in China it is also the time for the biggest political event of the year: The annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC), the country's top legislature.

This year's meeting is even more eye-catching, as it is the first full session of the 11th NPC, which is composed of 2,987 newly elected deputies from the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, as well as from the People's Liberation Army, for a term of five years.

The year 2008 also carries multiple significance for the Chinese. This is the 30th anniversary of the reform and opening up strategy, which has thoroughly transformed the national economic landscape. And in a few months, the nation will see its long-held Olympic dream come true.

Besides the routine items on the annual schedule, such as the review of the work reports of the Central Government, the NPC Standing Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, this year's session carries two particular tasks: To elect the country's new leadership for the next five years, and to scrutinize a blueprint for administrative reforms in the years to come. More specifically, a reform package featuring the so-called "bigger ministry" concept for the State Council, the central government, will be revealed.

The traditional centerpiece of the annual meeting - the report Premier Wen Jiabao delivers to the NPC on behalf of the central government - is also different from before. The report, similar to the United States' State of the Union address, generally details the government's work over the past year and its plans for the coming year. However, as this year's report is delivered at the

first full session of a new NPC, it reviews the past five years and outlines plans for the next five.

New leadership

What is it like to lead 1.3 billion people and keep an extremely vast, complicated country on track for sustained economic growth accompanied with ever-increasing international prestige? Hu Jintao seems to be the one who can offer an admirable and convincing answer.

At this year's NPC session, the 65-year-old was elected to another five-year term as both Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, the country's top military command, by nearly 3,000 members of the national legislature.

Last October, he was reelected general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, the top decision-making body of the 73-million-member Party.

Five years ago, when he first took office as Chinese president, Hu vowed to the deputies who voted for him: "I will fulfill the duty bestowed on me by the Constitution with great diligence, and serve my country and people with heart and soul." He has proved himself a man of his word, with a remarkable performance over the period.

When Hu first took over the helm of the country, what he and his colleagues in the new leadership inherited was a 25-year economic miracle featuring a stunning average annual growth of nearly 10 percent, as well as problems and challenges long veiled behind rosy GDP figures - widening urban-rural disparities, a yawning income gap and a deteriorating environment, to



The First Session of the 11th National People's Congress closed on the morning of March 18 at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing after completing its agenda.

Ma Zengke

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name a few.

To address these problems and strive for sustainable economic growth, Hu put forth the idea of “a comprehensive concept of development”. The new theory, now formally called the Scientific Outlook on Development, was written into the Party Constitution at the 17th CPC National Congress, becoming a guiding principle for the country’s efforts to build “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

Apart from the Scientific Outlook on Development, Hu was also believed to be the mastermind and strong advocate of many other new political ideas and concepts that gradually became popular phrases in the daily conversations of the Chinese people.

Most of these rather huge political terms were simplified into short and easy-to-remember phrases of four Chinese characters, such as “Yi Ren Wei Ben” (putting people first), “He Xie She Hui” (harmonious society), “Zhi Zheng Neng Li” (governing capability of the Party), and “Ba Rong Ba Chi” (eight do’s and eight don’ts for social ethics).

This year, as China marks the 30th anniversary of its historic reform and opening up policy, Hu has clearly stated that China will “unswervingly adhere” to this policy, which not only enjoys widespread public support, but also keeps up with the trend of the times.

NPC Standing Committee

Also at this year’s NPC session, 161 members of the 11th NPC Standing Committee were elected. Wu Bangguo was re-elected chairman of the NPC Standing Committee along with the election of 13 vice-chairpersons. Legislators endorsed the composition of special committees of the 11th NPC, such as the law committee, the ethnic affairs committee and the internal and judicial affairs committee.

In a speech that Wu delivered at the closing meeting of this year’s NPC session, he said a set of effective work mechanisms and measures had been formed within the NPC and its Standing Committee over the past five years, which had resulted in evident progress in legislation, and active exchanges with parliaments of other countries.

In the coming five-year tenure, Wu said he would work hard with his colleagues to continue enhancing and improving legislation, wasting no time to put in place major laws to support the country’s legal system while amending laws and regulations that are no longer suitable to China’s economic and social development.

“The NPC and its Standing Committee will continue to enhance and improve supervision, maintain social fairness and justice and bring into better play the role of the people’s congress in supervising government work and promote governance accord-

ing to law,” he said.

Wu also promised that the general public will have a greater say in legislation.

“Laws closely related to the interests of the people, such as the draft food safety law, must be made public to extensively solicit people’s opinions,” he said.

“Public hearings and debates will be held to conduct in-depth deliberations for highly technical or complicated laws such as the draft social security law,” Wu said.

The 13 newly elected vice-chairpersons of the 11th NPC Standing Committee are generally younger and better educated than their predecessors, too.

Among them, Wang Zhaoguo, Lu Yongxiang, Uyunqing and Han Qide were re-elected as vice-chairpersons, while Hua Jianmin, Chen Zhili, Zhou Tienong, Li Jianguo, Ismail Tiliwaldi, Jiang Shusheng, Chen Changzhi, Yan Junqi and Sang Guowei are new faces.

The number of the newly elected vice-chairpersons is two less than the 15 vice-chairpersons of the 10th NPC Standing Committee, echoing the country’s overall strategy to cut bureaucracy and boost efficiency.

Biographies also show that 12 of the 13 new vice-chairpersons were born in the 1940s, while on the previous NPC Standing Committee, only four were in this age category, with the rest born in the 1930s.

In addition, the average age of the new vice-chairpersons stands at 65.5, about one year younger than that of their predecessors when they were elected five years ago.

Analysts said the broad reshuffle of leaders of non-Communist parties is the major reason for the younger team of vice-chairpersons.

Among the 13 new vice-chairpersons, six are chairpersons of the country’s non-Communist parties, including the Revolutionary Committee of Chinese Kuomintang, the China Democratic League and the China Association for Promoting Democracy.

And the chairpersons of the parties were just elected late last year, with younger leaders coming to the fore.

“This election (of democratic party leaders) has the nature of a generation shift. We who were elected 10 years ago are stepping down and offering the posts to younger and more energetic leaders,” He Luli, former chairwoman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang and vice-chairwoman of the 10th NPC Standing Committee, said earlier.

The newly elected vice-chairpersons are also better educated and more than half of them have overseas academic experience.

Biographies show that seven out of the 13 newly elected vice-chairpersons have postgraduate degrees or doctorates. Only five of the 15 vice-chairpersons of the 10th NPC Standing Committee had similar qualifications.

Moreover, only five of the 15 former vice-chairpersons had

studied abroad, while seven of the 13 in the new leadership have done so.

For example, newly elected vice-chairwoman Chen Zhili was a visiting scholar at Pennsylvania State University in the United States from 1980 to 1982, and vice-chairman Jiang Shusheng has been a visiting scholar in both the United Kingdom and Italy.

Another five vice-chairpersons also have learning experience in the US, UK, Denmark or Germany.

State Council and other changes

At this year's NPC session, lawmakers also approved the new lineup of the State Council to lead the country's social, economic and administrative reforms in the next five years.

Wen Jiabao was appointed to a second five-year term as premier. Former Liaoning Party secretary Li Keqiang was appointed vice-premier. The other three are Hui Liangyu, who is already serving in the post and oversees agriculture, former Guangdong Party chief Zhang Dejiang and former Beijing mayor Wang Qishan.

Liu Yandong, former minister of the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, was elected state councilor.

New Defense Minister Liang Guanglie, former head of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Ma Kai, national police chief Meng Jianzhu and senior diplomat Dai Bingguo were also appointed state councilors. Ma was elected secretary-general of the Cabinet as well.

Other appointments approved by nearly 3,000 NPC deputies included 25 ministers, Zhou Xiaochuan as governor of the People's Bank of China and Liu Jiayi as auditor-general of the National Audit Office.

Apart from Liang Guanglie and Liu Jiayi, there are nine new faces among the Cabinet-level ministers. They include NDRC Minister Zhang Ping; State Ethnic Affairs Commission Minister Yang Jing; Minister of Culture Cai Wu; and State Population and Family Planning Commission director Li Bin.

The other five are heads of the "super-ministries", newly created in the institutional restructuring plan of the State Council. They are: Li Yizhong, minister of industry and information; Yin Weimin, minister of human resources and social security; Jiang Weixin, minister of housing and urban-rural construction; Li Shenglin, minister of transport; and Zhou Shengxian, minister of environmental protection.

In addition, Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou were elected vice-chairmen of the Central Military Commission (CMC), and Liang Guanglie, Chen Bingde, Li Jinai, Liao Xilong, Chang Wanguan, Jing Zhiyuan, Wu Shengli and Xu Qiliang were approved as CMC members.

The NPC also endorsed the nominations of Wang Shengjun

as president of the Supreme People's Court and Cao Jianming as procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

Future tasks

After the election of the new leadership, President Hu pledged clean governance and appropriate use of power to serve the people wholeheartedly in the next five years.

"I will serve the people and exert myself to work for the country ... be a good public servant and sincerely seek benefits for the people," Hu said at the closing meeting of this year's NPC session.

He expressed thanks to the NPC deputies and the entire nation for their trust, saying that the new leadership will keep to clean governance and willingly accept supervision from the people.

"We will strictly exercise self-discipline, devote ourselves to the public, and serve the country and the people in a cautious, conscientious and incorrupt way.

"I will exert my utmost not to let you down," he said.

China's new leadership, he said, will advance democracy and the rule of law, unswervingly maintain the uniformity, solemnity and authority of the socialist legal system, promote social equity and justice, and safeguard social harmony and stability.

"We will keep to the principle of 'putting people first', respect the people's status, exert their pioneering spirit and safeguard their rights and interests," he said.

Hu said the new leadership will keep working in a practical manner, free their minds, seek truth from facts and keep up with the pace of the times.

"We will take every opportunity, face every challenge, courageously seek reform and innovation and do everything in accordance with objective rules."

The president spoke highly of China's achievements in reform, opening up and the modernization drive in the past five years, which he attributed to the concerted efforts of the people.

"China has entered a critical stage for reform and development," he said, citing the extensive and profound reforms in China and the changes in the world.

Facing the new situation and new tasks, Hu said China must keep to its reform and opening up drive, promote scientific development, social harmony and the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Analysts also said the country's new leadership faces pressing challenges. Official figures show that inflation climbed to a 12-year high of 8.7 percent last month, driven by a 23.3 percent jump in food prices. The government's target is to contain inflation to 4.8 percent this year, the same level as last year.

Holding a safe and successful Beijing Olympic Games is also a key task this year.

Apart from these, reduction of energy consumption, environ-



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mental protection, and the resolution of social problems such as education and medical reforms have also been listed as major tasks for the government.

NPC deputies hailed the new leadership, saying they hope all targets set in the government report are met.

“The new leaders are elected and supported by the people. I believe they can lead the country to further prosperity,” said Yang Zhen, a deputy from Jiangsu province.

“I also hope the new leaders take more measures to tackle social issues, such as the widening gap between the rich and poor,” he said.

“Some members of the new Cabinet have held posts both in local governments and departments under the State Council and they are quite capable of handling economic issues,” said Dalielihan Mamihan, another NPC deputy from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

They are familiar with the deep-rooted problems of the nation, and will help solve thorny issues in the economic and social sectors, he said.

Administrative reform

In addition to the leadership reshuffle that is carried out once every five years, the 2008 NPC also took an impressive step toward the upgrading of government administration.

Unlike many past experiments starting at local levels and with limited scopes, this one began from the State Council, the Cabinet.

Five “super ministries” were established: The Ministry of Industry and Information, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Construction and Ministry of Transport. To strengthen government management on the energy sector, a high-level inter-ministerial coordinator, the national energy commission, was also established, with the setting up of a national bureau of energy as its working office under the NDRC.

The new bureau integrated the NDRC’s functions related to

energy management, the functions of the National Energy Leading Group and the functions of the Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense on nuclear power management.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health was empowered with overseeing food and drug safety.

After the reform, the State Council now has 27 ministries and commissions apart from the General Office after the reshuffle, compared with the previous 28.

President Hu vowed to accelerate the reform of the administrative system and build a service-oriented government at the 17th CPC National Congress last year.

“We must lose no time in working out a master plan for it,” Hu said.

At the beginning of this year’s NPC session, Premier Wen also labeled reform of the administrative system as “an important link in deepening reform, an important part of the reform of political institutions, and an essential step in improving the socialist market economy”.

Former State Councilor Hua Jianmin, also then secretary-general of the Cabinet, made explanations of the plan to this year’s NPC session.

On the necessity for the reform, Hua said in a report that the functions of government had not been completely transformed, with public administration and public services still weak; structure of government institutions was still not rational enough; powers in some aspects were too concentrated and lacked appropriate oversight and checks.

Hua listed the reasons for the government reshuffle as follows:

- The functions of government had not been completely transformed, and intervention in the microeconomy was still more than necessary. Public administration and public services were still weak as well.

- Structure of government institutions was not rational enough. Problems included overlapping responsibilities, and powers and responsibilities not well matched, with low efficiency quite serious.

- Power in some regards was too concentrated and lacked oversight and checks. The phenomena of misuse of authority, abuse of power for personal gain and corruption still existed.

Analysts said that, in fact, the entire restructuring exercise is aimed at lessening government control over the market and shifting focus to administrative matters and services. It will rearrange in a more rational manner the functions of government departments that exercise macro-economic regulation in reference to the NDRC and the People’s Bank of China.

An expert with Peking University’s School of Government, Zhang Guoqing, said the restructuring is a significant step in the country’s administrative reforms.

“The government will now focus on policymaking, providing service and supervision instead of intervening in micro-economic operations,” Zhang said.

For instance, industrial management functions of the existing Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense will now be part of the new Ministry of Industry and Information.

“Fragmented management functions led to disproportional industrial policies, prompting ministries to cross their threshold of supervision and intervene in enterprises’ operations,” said National School of Administration (NSA) researcher Gu Ping’an.

“Only unified ministries can plan, supervise and coordinate comprehensively for total industrial development.”

Social problems and needs have drawn planners’ attention in a huge way, said Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference member Chi Fulin.

“Unlike earlier restructuring, which mainly cut the number of ministries, the present one focuses on shifting government functions from economy-building to public service and addressing the most urgent social ills,” said Chi, who is also the executive director of China (Hainan) Institute of Reform and Development.

The merger of the State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) into the Ministry of Health shows the government’s determination to address social needs, Chi said.

Food regulation in the country is said to be “too fragmented” now because responsibilities for food safety are shared by at least six departments: The SFDA, the ministries of Health, Agriculture and Commerce, the State Administration of Industry and Commerce and the General Administration of Quality Supervision Inspection and Quarantine. Another advantage being seen from this restructuring is that it clarifies the new Ministry of Health’s role in food safety supervision, which had become very important after recent food scandals.

Property prices have also risen sharply in the past few years, Zhou said, making it difficult or almost impossible for many urban middle-income and poor families to buy a house.

“That is why the inclusion of rural construction in the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Construction signifies a major move,” Zhou said.

The present Minister of Labor and Social Security, Tian Chengping, said the merging of the Ministry of Personnel and his ministry into the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security will provide a national platform from where the whole country’s human resources can be coordinated.

“The merger will also help streamline all the procedures, from employment to social security,” Zhou said.



Premier Wen Jiabao shakes hands with reporters attending a press conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 18, 2008. Wen, accompanied by newly-elected vice-premiers Li Keqiang, Hui Liangyu, Zhang Dejiang and Wang Qishan, took reporter's questions on affairs of State and international. *Li Tao*

Two sessions: more open

By Bao Daozu

Every time the Great Hall of the People is decorated with red flags, those with a nose for politics will catch a whiff of something big happening.

That is certainly the case, because every March during the country's biggest political event -- the annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) -- people across the country and even the world will see red flags flying on top of the hall.

But this year's two sessions are slightly different from previous ones: People not only saw the adoption of the country's new leadership, but also much more open and transparent sessions.

The media

Tian Qi, deputy director of the two sessions' press center, said the biggest obstacle -- if there was any -- for a reporter covering this year's two sessions was not the language, traffic or even access to interviewees, but fellow reporters.

Official figures show that about 900 foreign journalists registered to cover this year's two sessions, up 20 percent year-on-year. Apart from these, there were also about 2,000 reporters from domestic media.

The press center promised to offer unprecedented access to both Chinese and foreign reporters. For foreign journalists who have always found it hard to compete with their Chinese counterparts in reaching interviewees because of language obstacles, the center offered them a special service.

All the foreign reporters needed to do was to fill up the interview registration form on the NPC and CPPCC official website. With just a click of the mouse, they left the "exasperating" job of actually setting up the interview to a group of dedicated staff at the center who speak excellent English.

This year's two sessions are slightly different from previous ones: People not only saw the adoption of the country's new leadership, but also much more open and transparent sessions.

By doing this, many foreign reporters achieved their goals. Reuters correspondent Ben Blanchard said it was a pleasant surprise for him to be able to discuss AIDS, drugs and the likelihood for dams to be built on the upper reaches of a China-Myanmar border river with the Party chief of the southwestern border province of Yunnan.

Blanchard found he himself became a star after the 40-minute interview with Bai Enpei, secretary of the Yunnan provincial committee of the Communist Party of China, on the sidelines of this year's NPC session, as many Chinese journalists asked him about how the interview went.

He said it was a pleasant surprise because it was all about sensitive issues some Chinese officials would have easily shrugged off with a "no comment" just a few years ago.

Dow Jones business correspondent Denis McMahon had a similar experience. During the meeting, he received a text message confirming an interview with Ma Kai, minister in charge of the National Development and Reform Commission.

McMahon also stopped Li Yihuang, general manager of China's leading copper producer Jiaoxi Copper Group, on the latter's way to the bathroom during a break during the meeting and had an unexpected interview.

The residences of the deputies and political advisors were no longer off-limits to foreign reporters as well. The 11th CPPCC National Committee



A rural mother with her child cradling in her arms watches a large screen that broadcasts live the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress at the Beijing Railway Station square on the morning of March 5, 2008.

Jin Guolin



Reporters from home and abroad flock at the Great Hall of the People on the morning of March 18, 2008 to attend the press conference of Premier Wen Jiabao.

Wang Dongming

even published on its website the addresses and contact numbers of all the Beijing accommodation of its members.

“In the past, such information was classified to some extent,” Gong Shubin with Hong Kong Commercial Daily, said. “I can feel China’s self-confidence in opening the two sessions to the press.”

China issued new media rules last year that granted easier access to overseas reporters and promised greater transparency.

According to these rules, foreign journalists would not have to be accompanied or assisted by a Chinese official any more when they work in China. Also, they no longer need to apply for local foreign affairs offices’ permission for reporting news across the country.

This has allowed foreign reporters to learn more about the whole of China, “not just the few big cities”, Aileen McCabe from CanWest News Service, who visited Hunan, Guangdong and Jiangsu provinces for interviews last year, said. “I hope the rules still apply after the Olympic Games,” she said.

Apart from setting up interviews online and the opening of some residences of the deputies and political advisors, foreign television and broadcasting press organizations also got free broadcasting images and signals during this year’s meetings.

Figures from the China Central Television show that during this year’s two sessions, it offered live broadcasting signals of 81 events – a record high.

And then there was the Xinhua News Agency, which shared its pictorial story about the event with

foreign reporters – all pictures taken in and outside the meeting rooms could be used free of charge.

For NPC-CPPCC veterans, the memory of scurrying from one venue to another was probably still a vivid one. The task of merely finding the right place in Beijing could be daunting for a foreign reporter. But this year, buses commuted regularly between the media center and the various destinations, including the Great Hall of the People, where the two sessions were held.

Olga Tanasiychuk, a reporter from the National News Agency of Ukraine’s Beijing Bureau who started to cover the Chinese two sessions in 1994, said she did feel the change personally.

“For one thing, access to the meetings has been getting greater and greater,” she said.

And this year, reporters no longer had to chase after ministers as they walked through the northern entrance of the Great Hall of the People to ask them about relevant issues.

For years, arriving early at the hall and waiting near the entrance has been a reporter’s best, and sometimes only, chance to meet and ask questions of press-shy officials. Having been put on the spot, officials had to rely on quick wits, stoicism and even physical strength to fend off the media mob.

This year, the NPC’s media service department came up with a simple but effective plan to prevent such chaos: It sealed off the area with red tape and restricted reporters to a specific zone. But to meet the reporters’ demand of interviewing these high-ranking officials, they also set up a small interview platform in front of the red tape. Whenever a minister entered, media service staff would introduce him or her to the platform and let the minister greet the media.

The new scheme worked and there was indeed less chaos. Last year, former minister of commerce Bo Xilai almost fell down as he tried his best to push through the media crowds, and a reporter almost got choked when the long wires connecting broadcast reporters’ cameras and microphones wound around her neck.

But this year, ministers were noticeably more free to saunter down the red carpet to their meeting hall. Most of them, such as Zhang Weiqing, former director of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, Health Minister Chen Zhu and Education Minister Zhou Ji, were very media-friendly: They made stops and answered questions with smiles.

The NPC deputies and CPPCC members

Because this year's two sessions were the first full session of the 11th NPC and first full session of the 11th CPPCC, about 70 percent of the NPC deputies and CPPCC members were newly elected.

Although they were not very familiar with the meetings, the deputies and members tried their best to voice their opinions. And these different views, even heated debates, proved that the two sessions were moving towards even bigger democracy and openness.

For example, a CPPCC member, representing the business community, proposed three measures aimed at helping the rich and sparked heated debate nationwide. Zhang Yin, a successful self-made entrepreneur and one of the richest women in China, suggested that labor-intensive enterprises should not have to sign open-ended employment contracts; that lower the progressive tax rate of people whose monthly salary exceeds 100,000 yuan (\$14,084) from 45 percent to 30 percent; and that enterprises

Apart from setting up interviews online and the opening of some residences of the deputies and political advisors, foreign television and broadcasting press organizations also got free broadcasting images and signals during this year's meetings.

should be encouraged to import advanced and energy-efficient equipment, through a grace period of five to seven years before they are subject to import duties and value-added tax.

There was little doubt her proposals were seen as relatively self-serving, and they did not sit too well with the public, deputies and members because they neglected the interests of the common people.

However, whether Zhang's proposals are right or not, the fact that a CPPCC member was able to speak on behalf of her social group was a sort of

Workers of a coal preparation plant in Huaibei, Anhui Province watch a TV broadcasting of the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress on the morning of March 5, 2008. During the session, Premier Wen Jiabao made a government work report. *Pang Desheng*



“breakthrough”, Qin Xiaoying, a researcher with China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies, said.

Another CPPCC member’s proposals, regarding the use of taxpayers’ money, were also met with strong opposition. Sun Shuyi, from Shandong province, called on the central government to speed up the construction of the city of Jining – hometown of Confucius and Mencius – into an icon of Chinese culture and provide tens of billions of yuan in financial support for the project.

CPPCC members who strongly questioned or opposed Sun’s suggestion basically raised two counter-arguments: “Beijing is already an icon of Chinese culture, do we need a second one? And as taxpayers, we oppose any attempt to waste our money on construction projects in the name of culture.”

Qin said he was impressed that the NPC deputies and CPPCC members attached great importance to the way national funds are used.

“Even more significant is that such concern does not stem only from national awareness but also from the viewpoint of taxpayers,” he said.

“I believe the concerns of deputies and members for taxpayers’ rights will no doubt help advance the openness and democratization of and scientific approach to the deliberations and approval of the State budget and final State accounts. Those who

do not care about protecting taxpayers’ rights cannot be trusted with practicing democratic power on behalf of the public.”

Another “highlight” of the NPC and CPPCC plenary sessions was reflected in some deputies “picking on” government departments charged with providing public services. For example, take the issue of including Peking Opera in the music curriculum of primary and secondary schools. The Ministry of Education had decided to try it out in 10 cities and provinces beginning this spring.

Much to the surprise of government officials, 42 cultural heavyweights, including veteran Peking Opera star Mei Baojiu, son of the late Peking Opera legend Mei Lanfang, submitted a proposal at the CPPCC session demanding an immediate rethink of the move. The relevant officials at first brushed off the proposal, but were soon criticized by some CPPCC members.

“From this episode, we can see the NPC deputies and CPPCC members not only expect government agencies to provide public services but do it thoughtfully, carefully, scientifically and satisfactorily,” Qin said.

“In other words, the debates at the two national conferences prove that Chinese society is full of dynamics, and even small highlights indicate the progress of democracy in China,” he said.

Reporters felt the change as well. Wu Jiao, a reporter from China Daily who covered this year’s two sessions, said these debates stunned her a bit at first.

“In previous years, group discussions were described as being uniting and peaceful,” she said.

“Such candor is rare in a country where tranquility and obedience are considered traditional virtues.”

“But the strength of the debate made me feel as though speaking loudly and holding one’s ground had become typical during this year’s two sessions,” Wu said.

The Public

As usual, Premier Wen Jiabao’s press conference on March 18 this year once again aroused great public interest. Since the beginning of the two sessions, many key Chinese websites had set up special forums collecting suggestions from netizens, with questions for Premier Wen Jiabao par-

Villagers of the Xiaonan Village of Yongchuan District in Southwest China’s Chongqing Municipality watch and listen to the opening ceremony of the First Session of 11th National People’s Congress through the Internet on March 5, 2008.

Chen Shichuan



ticularly highlighted.

At the press conference last year, Premier Wen said he noticed that the two sessions had attracted people's wide attention because more than 10,000 questions were posted to the premier on the Internet alone and more than 26,000 people logged on to the relevant website.

Wen noted that he also browsed the website, and this gave further impetus to the netizens in participating and discussing State affairs. This year, an even larger number of netizens put forward questions for Premier Wen via major websites, such as Xinhuanet and CCTV.com.

Why do netizens pay so much attention to Premier Wen's press conference?

A netizen, self-named Wang Junwen, said that first, the Premier's easy-going style makes netizens feel warm; second, Premier Wen often tries to find out the aspirations of the people through various channels, including Internet; and third, Premier Wen wins the trust of the people.

Many netizens expressed their passion for Premier Wen and their trust of the government in the online message board. They put forward questions attentively, and passed their grassroots proposals to high-level officials.

"Some problems we are facing are critical and complicated and netizens hope the Premier's attention can give them confidence and strength," Wang said, referring to problems affecting people's immediate interests such as soaring prices, housing, education, medical care as well as social security.

And the Internet did make people's voices heard more easily. At this year's press conference, Premier Wen said during the two sessions that he did take some time to surf the Internet.

"Many Internet users raised questions and made recommendations to me, and many wanted to share my burden. There were several million responses, and perhaps over 100 million people were involved. The fact that so many people are following with great interest the two sessions and particularly the work of the government has greatly touched me. All their comments and recommendations show the trust, support, encouragement and inspiration they have given to the government," he said.

"When I was surfing the Internet, a few lines came to mind: What people are concerned about is what preoccupies my mind and what preoccupies the minds of the people is what I need to address.



Residents in Yongchuan District in Southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, celebrated the conclusion of the "two sessions" on March 18, 2008. *Chen Shichuan*

Our people spent so much time and energy to raise questions and make recommendations on the Internet because they want the government to solve problems," he said.

Wen said he could not answer all the questions at the press conference, but he knew the rise of prices tops the list of many questions.

"In the latter half of last year, prices rose too fast and made life difficult for the people, particularly the low-income groups. To stop prices from rising too fast and curb inflation is not only a concern to the people, but also an important responsibility of the government. We have set the goal of holding the CPI to a level of about 4.8 percent this year," he said.

Apart from political issues, NPC Chairman Wu Bangguo also promised that the general public would have a greater say in legislation.

"Laws closely related to the interests of the people, such as the draft food safety law, must be made public to extensively solicit people's opinions," Wu said while delivering a work report at this year's NPC session.

"Public hearings and debates will be held to conduct in-depth deliberations for highly technical or complicated laws such as the draft social security law," he said. ■

NPC

The First Session of the 11th NPC was held in Beijing on March 5-18, 2008.

Li Xueren



In China, there are five levels of people's congresses from the central to local levels. Deputies to people's congresses at different levels are selected through direct or indirect elections. Deputies to the NPC, the people's congresses of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government, and the people's congresses of cities divided into districts and autonomous prefectures are elected indirectly by the people's congresses at the next lower level. Deputies to the people's congresses of cities not divided into districts, municipal districts, counties and autonomous counties and deputies to the people's congresses of townships, ethnic townships, and towns are elected directly by their constituencies.

The National People's Congress (NPC) is the highest organ of State power. The country's top administrative, judicial and procuratorial organs are created and overseen by the NPC. The Standing Committee of the NPC is the permanent organ of the NPC. The tenure of an NPC and its Standing Committee is five years. The NPC and its Standing Committee are empowered with the rights of legislation, decision, supervision, election and removal.

The Constitution empowers the NPC with the total and highest position and the following major functions and rights:

1. To revise the Constitution and supervise its implementation; enact and revise basic laws and other laws of the State. The amendment of the Constitution shall be proposed by the Standing Committee of the NPC or one-fifth of the deputies to the NPC and can only be adopted by a majority of no less than two-thirds of the deputies to the NPC. Laws and other bills shall be adopted by the NPC with a majority of

the deputies to the NPC. The Constitution also stipulates that the NPC has the rights to alter or annul inappropriate decision adopted by the Standing Committee of the NPC.

2. To elect members of the Standing Committee of the NPC; to elect the president and vice president of the People's Republic of China, and decide on the choice of the premier of the State Council upon nomination by the president, the choice of other members composing the State Council upon the nomination by the premier; to elect the chairman of the Central Military Commission, and decide on the choice of other members composing the Central Military Commission upon nomination by the chairman of the Commission; to elect the president of the Supreme People's Court; and to elect the procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate. The NPC has the right to remove all the above-mentioned functionaries.

3. To examine and approve the plan for national economic and social development; to examine and approve the State budget and the report on its implementation; to approve the establishment of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government; to decide on the establishment of special administrative regions and the systems to be instituted in the regions; and to decide on questions of war and peace.

4. To exercise such other functions and powers as the highest organ of State power should exercise.

▶ CPPCC

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is an organization of the patriotic united front of the Chinese people. It is an important organization of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC. It is composed of the CPC, other political parties, mass organizations, different ethnic groups and representative public personages from all walks of life, representatives of compatriots of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao as well as of returned overseas Chinese and other specially invited people. The CPPCC members are selected through consultation and recommendation.

The system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC is a basic political system in China. Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, many major issues concerning economic construction, political life, social life and the united front have gone through consultation in the CPPCC. Such consultation may take the form of full discussion and repeated exchanges of opinions so that the policies, regulations and laws taken by the State are adequate and well-prepared, in conformity with the demands and wishes of the great majority of the people and in due respect to the rational ideas of the minority. The practice of consultation before decisions are made is an important characteristics and advantage of the socialist democratic system in China.

The Constitution stipulates that the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation shall continue to exist and develop. The CPPCC, an important organizational form of this basic system, will further play a significant role in the political and social life in China and its friendly exchanges with foreign countries, the modernization drive, maintaining the integrity of the country and strengthening the unity among all ethnic groups.

The First Session of the 11th CPPCC was held in Beijing on March 3-14, 2008.

Huang Jingwen



In China, the NPC and CPPCC are all important forms of Chinese characteristic socialist democracy, and they share some similarity in several aspects, for example, they are all under the leadership of CPC; both have their own standing committees; both of their tenures are 5 years, and their sessions are usually at same time: the CPPCC session usually begins two days ahead of the NPC session, and the two sessions run parallel for more than one week.

NPC Deputies

– Who they are and where they are from

With the opening of the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, the newly elected deputies to the 11th NPC have begun performing their duties.

The 2,987 new deputies have been elected from 34 of China's regions and the People's Liberation Army. The composition of the new deputies has changed greatly when compared with the 10th NPC, indicating that the country's top legislature is giving the grassroots more seats.

Deputies of ethnic minorities attend the NPC annual session.
Zhang Baoshan





A woman deputy in her ethnic costume.
Zhang Baoshan

The number of worker and farmer deputies is increasing

In the list of new deputies, the number of frontline worker and farmer deputies is increasing substantially, with frontline workers doubling that of 10th NPC deputies, and the number of farmers rising 70 percent.

It is commonly believed that top legislature should widely gather public opinion, and be a stage for all groups voicing their interests. It needs not only experienced politicians and social celebrities, but also grassroots deputies expressing real concerns of ordinary people.

Government official deputies are declining

Deputies from provincial governments are much less than before, dropping by one third compared with the 10th NPC. This means that more seats are given to people from various walks of life.

Each ethnic minority has its own deputies

There are 411 deputies from ethnic minorities, accounting for 13.76 percent of the total. Each ethnic minority has its own deputies, and those with a tiny population have at least one representative.

Female deputies are gaining more seats

The number of female deputies to the 11th NPC amounts to 637, making up 21.33 percent of the total, or 1.09 percentage points higher than that to the 10th NPC.

The larger proportion of female deputies indicates that more and more women are entering the country's top legislature, which is definitely helpful in protecting the rights and interests of women and, in particular, those of under-representation.

Migrant workers have been elected for the first time

The 11th NPC deputies also include three migrant workers. They are Zhu Xueqin from the Shanghai delegation, Hu Xiaoyan from the Guangdong delegation, and Kang Houming from the Chongqing delegation.

In recent years the number of migrant workers has been growing steadily and currently totals about 200 million. Migrant workers have made great contributions to China's economic development, thus needing their own representatives voicing and even crying their concerns.

Zhu Xueqin is a workshop manager at the Shanghai Huari Garment Co. Ltd.

Hu Xiaoyan comes from Sichuan and is now a vice manager of a finished product workshop at Guangdong Foshan Sanshui Xinmingzhu Jiantao Industry Co. Ltd.

Kang Houming is a worker at the Chongqing Urban Construction Investment Co.



Eight women NPC deputies meet reporters at the NPC press center on March 8, 2008, which is the International Women's Day. *Wang Dongming*

Deputies with junior college degree or above are the majority

Current NPC deputies have much higher education qualifications than past NPC deputies, with 92 percent holding junior college degrees or above, and 50 percent holding postgraduate degrees.

Better educational background of the deputies are believed to meet the requirement of efficient governance of the country, which is facing and dealing with social and economic issues much more complicated than ever before.

In addition, among the 11th NPC deputies, there are 35 overseas returnees, 36 from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 12 from the Macao Special Administrative Region and 13 from Taiwan. ■



Shen Jilan, who is a veteran NPC deputy, appears the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress. Jin Guolin

Been there, done that ... and still at it

By Lin Shujuan

At 79, NPC deputy Shen Jilan looks sturdier and healthier than someone decades younger.

It took her at least 12 hours to reach Beijing from her village in Shanxi province, the journey involving two bus transfers and a 10-hour night trip to Beijing by train. She did it on her own without any assistance.

“No fuss is necessary to add to the trouble of the government,” said Shen. “Compared with my first trip to the congress, this was nothing.”

By her first, Shen meant the journey in 1954 when she left home on a donkey, then traveled by truck and several trains before she reached Beijing four days later for the country’s first NPC session.

The most senior “congresswoman” in China, Shen has been a deputy to the NPC ever since the first session; and is the only person who has been elected as a deputy for all the 11 terms.

And she has witnessed at close quarters how the congress has evolved over the past 54 years: The sessions have been shortened, more state affairs are now discussed and younger deputies are better

educated.

As for herself, “nothing has changed,” said Shen. “I’m still an ordinary farmer.”

But it’s clear she did change as she picked up courage and confidence, as Shen

recalled her first experience at the NPC.

A pioneer who tried to break China’s millennia-old convention by pushing for equal pay for equal work for women in the early 1950s, Shen, then a 25-year-old farmer from a small mountain village, found it hard to tell the country’s leaders what really concerned her.

“My heart was beating like a drum when I sat there; I dared not utter a word.”

Yet in the following half century, Shen forcefully voiced her concerns about such matters as transportation in rural areas, consumer protection, judicial procedures and official corruption.

Now, she said she is especially glad that the government is focusing more on the interests of farmers.

“I’m proud to be a deputy representing farmers,” she said. “It is really an honor to speak for such a huge group. It is my duty and responsibility to convey their wishes and demands.”

“My strongest desire is to see every single farmer rich in our country.” ■



Archives show that Shen Jilan has consecutively been elected as the NPC deputy from the 1st to 11th NPC. Zhang Yun



Dozens of grassroots NPC deputies hold a collective press conference during the First Session of the 11th NPC on March 6. Three migrant worker deputies, Kang Houming (right) from Chongqing Municipality, Hu Xiaoyan (center) from Guangdong Province and Zhu Xueqin from Shanghai, attract media's attention during the interview. *Wu Qingcai*

Migrant workers make a move to the Hall

By Zhao Xu

When migrant worker Zhu Xueqin was elected a deputy to the National People's Congress, excited dormitory mates asked for one favor.

"They asked me to record whatever the premier says and bring it back to them," said Zhu, who was elected from Shanghai.

And to make sure, they bought her a mini recorder.

Zhu shared this intimate detail with a roomful of reporters who gathered at Beijing's Media Centre yesterday to ask questions of the NPC's 10 "grassroots

delegates" – street cleaners, construction workers and assembly line workers.

Of the 10, it was the three migrant workers who attracted the most attention, perhaps inevitable given this was the first time migrant workers were elected to the NPC.

"The fact that I am elected to the NPC speaks for itself. Thirty years after China launched its reform and opening-up drive, the role played by migrant workers and the contribution they have made are finally being given due recognition," Zhu, a native of Jiangsu province, said.

In his keynote speech at the NPC's

opening session on Wednesday, Premier Wen Jiabao talked at length about extending social welfare, including medical insurance, old-age pension and low-rent housing, to this group of people that constitute more than 13 percent of the country's population.

"More than many others, we need medical and workplace injury insurance," said Kang Houming, one of the three migrant worker delegates who spends most of his waking hours at a construction site in Chongqing.

"Our job requires close contact with many toxic materials, for example, asphalt. As a result, some of my colleagues have developed various occupational diseases," the native of Sichuan province said. "They need help."

As the country tries to bridge the widening income gap, fair compensation to migrant workers is on the top of the government agenda.

The Labor Contract Law, effective since January, makes it compulsory for companies to sign open-ended contracts with workers with more than two terms' service and provide insurance and overtime pay.

Another issue is education. Steps will be taken to ensure children of migrant workers in cities enjoy the same access to compulsory education as others, Wen said in his report.

Hu Xiaoyan, the third migrant worker deputy and a mother of twin daughters, said both her children are studying in Foshan, Guangdong province, where she worked in a local factory.

"Now it's up to themselves to change their own fate," said Hu, a native of Sichuan.

"What the premier said is just what we wanted to hear," she said.

And Zhu can carry that message back to her colleagues. ■

People to have bigger say in



laws

By Zhu Zhe



Chongqing Municipality holds a legislative hearing on the drafting of regulations on labor protection during hot weather on April 10, 2007.

Guo Jinjia



The general public will have a greater say in legislation, top legislator Wu Bangguo said on Saturday.

“Laws closely related to the interests of the people, such as the draft food safety law, must be made public to extensively solicit people’s opinions,” Wu said while delivering a work report at the 11th National People’s Congress (NPC) annual session.

“Public hearings and debates will be held to conduct in-depth deliberations for highly technical or complicated laws such as the draft social security law,” he said.

To seek public opinions, the NPC has published the full texts of the draft property law, the draft employment promotion law, the draft labor contract law and the draft amendment to the Law on Prevention and Control of Water Pollution in the past five years.

NPC figures show the Labor Contract Law elicited a record 191,849 suggestions in 30 days. Also noticeable is the fact that for the first time in its history, the NPC held a legislative public hearing on the proposed lifting of the individual income tax threshold in 2005.

More public participation in legislative work will ensure new laws fully express the common wishes of the people, said deputy director of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC

Standing Committee Shen Chunyao.

“The public’s right to know, participate, express and supervise can be ensured by open and transparent legislation,” he said. “More importantly, people can have a better understanding of the new laws when they participate in legislation.”

Apart from the draft food safety and social security laws, other legislations on this year’s agenda include the law on State-owned assets, circular economy law and the law on arbitration of disputes over contracted rural land, Wu’s report said. The revision of the Electoral Law, the Organic Law of the NPC and the Law on State Compensation are also on the agenda.

Wu said the 10th NPC Standing Committee accomplished the goal of establishing the basics of a socialist legal system, with 229 laws in force in China at present.

Preventing and controlling water pollution and protection of workers’ legitimate rights and interests will get priority on the NPC’s supervision list this year.

The NPC Standing Committee will hear and deliberate a special State Council work report to prevent and control water pollution. It will examine the implementation of the Labor Contract Law to determine whether it truly protects the rights and interests of the workers, the report said. ■

Legislation suggestions

By Yu Shujun

During the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress (NPC) held on March 5-18, a total of 462 motions were received from NPC deputies. The motions covered a wide range of issues in economy, politics and culture. Besides these motions, individual legislators all put forward various suggestions.

Below are some motions and suggestions raised by the NPC deputies.



NPC deputies Zhao Suping (right) from Henan Province, Zhang Jinliang (center) and Bi Hongzhen both from Gansu Province discussed a proposal on the construction of a railway road on March 7, 2008.

Du Yu



A judicial official introduces knowledge on the protection of legal rights among rural women on March 4, 2008. A legal popularization campaign was organized in Jiangqiao Township, Zhenjiang City in Jiangsu Province, on the protection of women and juniors as well as the prevention of domestic violence.

Wang Yongxiang

Legislation against domestic violence

This motion was put forward by a group of 30 NPC deputies from the Sichuan delegation, suggesting that the country should enact a law on preventing domestic violence to better protect the people's civil rights.

The motion says that from 2005 to 2007, the All-China Women's Federation received an annual average of 40,000 complaints about domestic violence, double the amount it received in 2000.

The Marriage Law, Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women and Law on the Protection of Minors clearly forbid domestic violence. In addition, the Supreme People's Court issued a definition of domestic violence. But they lack punishments for abusers and make it difficult for victims to seek judicial intervention.

The motion also mentions that 25 provincial-level regions are issuing local regulations on preventing domestic violence.

The motion suggests that a law against domestic violence should contain five parts: general provisions, legal liabilities, judicial intervention, administrative measures and social relief.

Note: According to the Organic Law of the NPC and NPC rules for discharging its duties, a motion on issues within the power of the NPC can be raised by the presidium of the NPC, the NPC Standing Committee, special committees of the NPC, the State Council, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, a provincial-level delegation (of deputies) to the NPC or a group of at least 30 NPC deputies.

Legislation on invasive alien species

This motion was put forward by a 30-deputy group from the Zhejiang delegation. It suggests that China enact a law to prevent invasive alien species from undermining the country's ecological safety.

The motion says that China now has more than 600 kinds of naturalized alien plants, including 108 kinds of alien weeds and more than 40 alien animals.

According to the motion, it should be clearly stated in the law that the evaluation and approval of introducing alien species should be strengthened and improved for uniform supervision and administration.

The motion also suggests a control system of invasive alien species be established, which focuses on forecasting, monitoring and controlling the species in early stages and quick response.



A volunteer worker weed out eichhornia crassipes, an invasive alien species, in Danzhou City, Hainan Province on July 3, 2007. About 10,000 volunteers participated in the activity. Statistics indicated that more than half of the 100 or so alien invasive species have sneaked into China.

Wang Qingqin



Customers adore cartoon hanging ornaments that read No Smoking. Tang Yanhui

Legislation on banning smoking in public places

This suggestion was made by Zhou Ji-anyuan, Vice Dean of the Hubei Xiangfan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, who said that banning smoking in public places has become a worldwide trend.

In November 2003, China signed the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control that requires all signatory countries to provide for protection from exposure to tobacco smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, indoor public places and, as appropriate, other public places.

Zhou suggested that to fulfill this commitment, China should enact corresponding laws or regulations that should include the following:

- A ban on smoking in all public places;
- A ban on smoking scenes in films, TV programs and other video programs;
- The posting of “No Smoking” signs in public entertainment places;
- The printing of “Smoking is harmful to your health” signs on cigarette packages;
- A ban on cigarette advertisements on television and outdoor billboards as well as in newspapers and magazines.



The Yichang Health Education Institute in Hubei Province organizes a non-profit anti-smoking campaign.

Liu Junfeng

Legislation on protecting personal information

This suggestion was put forward by Li Mingrong, Vice Procurator General of the Fujian Provincial People's Procuratorate. Li said that with the development of information technology, the improper collection, malicious use and handling of online personal information are disturbing individuals' privacy and threatening the safety of their property and reputation.

"It's urgent to protect personal information, which is necessary not only to protect people's rights, but also to promote the healthy development and e-governance and e-commerce," Li said.

The country should speed up legislation on protecting personal information, set up special institutions to manage this information, create a civil compensation system and protect citizens' private rights, he said.



A girl walks by a wall that was painted with eyes at a street in Beijing. Chinese laws stipulate clearly to protect citizens' rights to privacy. *Du Yang*

Many folk cultural arts are facing the danger of disappearing or being forgotten.



To welcome the upcoming Olympic Games in Beijing, Tibetan Opera Troupe rehearses an ancient drama on April 8, 2008. With a history of more than 600 years and as the "image of Tibetan culture," the Tibetan Opera has been included into the first national intangible cultural heritages list. *Jue Guo*

Legislation on protecting intangible cultural heritage

This suggestion was made by Jiang Jian, head of the Shandong Qufu Hospital under China's Red Cross Society.

"Our country's intangible cultural heritage is being severely diminished," Jiang said. "Many folk cultural arts are facing the danger of disappearing or being forgotten.

"To inherit our intangible cultural heritage, we should enact a law on protecting them as soon as possible, so that a list of our intangible cultural heritage items can be established and an inheritance and protection system can be completed in a legal framework," she said. ■

Highlights of Chinese top legislator's work report

China's top legislator Wu Bangguo delivered a report on the work of the Standing Committee of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) on March 8 to the First Session of the 11th NPC.

Following are the highlights of Wu's report distributed to journalists at the 2nd plenary meeting of the parliamentary session:



Deputies listen attentively to a report made by NPC Standing Committee Vice-Chairman Wang Zhaoguo on the draft of Property Law on March 8, 2007. The second plenary meeting of the Second Session of the 10th NPC was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. *Mao Jianjun*

LEGISLATION

There are 229 laws currently in force in China, and approximately 600 administrative laws and regulations and over 7,000 local ordinances currently in force. In the past five years, the NPC and its Standing Committee passed 100 pieces of legislation, including:

- the amended Constitution that enshrines the Important Thought of Three Represents, clarifying the country's respect for and protection of human rights and its protection of the rights of citizens to hold property and receive an inheritance; the Anti-Secession Law; Interpretations and decisions on articles in the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, which helped promoting the healthy development of democracy in Hong Kong; and the Law on Supervision.
- the Law on Property Rights; the Enterprise Bankruptcy Law; the Antitrust Law; and the decision to eliminate the Regulations on the Agricultural Tax, ending 2,000-year history of farmers paying taxes in China.

PARTY LEADERSHIP

The NPC must conscientiously uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China to ensure that the proposals of the Party become the will of the State through legally stipulated procedures and that the personnel recommended by Party organizations become the leaders of the organs of State power through legally stipulated procedures.



FOREIGN CONTACTS

The NPC has established mechanisms for regular exchange with the congresses and parliaments of 14 countries and the European Parliament. It has established or maintains contact with the congresses and parliaments of 178 countries. It has set up bilateral friendship groups with the congresses and parliaments of 98 countries, and has become a member country of 12 international and regional parliamentary organizations and an observing member of 3 multilateral parliamentary organizations.

SUPERVISION

– As a result of NPC law enforcement inspections, as of the end of 2006 all wages due to rural migrant workers in cities in arrears since 2003 or before, totaling 33.7 billion yuan, had been paid. All the back pays will be cleared up in the first half of 2008.

– As of the end of 2007, 11,200 small illegal coalmines had been closed. The number of major, large-scale gas explosions was down 46.3 percent and the number of fatalities down 65.4 percent in 2007 compared with the figures for 2005. The crackdown has been a result of request to the State Council by the legislature.

Li Tiejing (second from right), vice-chairman of NPC Standing Committee, checks out work safety situations of a colliery 740 meters underground in Fuxin Coal Industry Group, Liaoning Province.

Liu Zhongwei



The NPC must urge relevant authorities to formulate or revise supporting regulations for laws to ensure completion of the formation of the socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics by 2010.

NEW LAWS IN PIPELINE

The NPC must urge relevant authorities to formulate or revise supporting regulations for laws to ensure completion of the formation of the socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics by 2010.

– New laws in the making include the Law on State-owned Assets, the Social Security Law, the Food Safety Law, the Circular Economy Law and the Law on Arbitration of Disputes Concerning Contracted Rural Land. The Electoral Law,



A food inspection vehicle checks the quality of products sold at supermarkets and shopping malls in Kaifeng, Henan Province on April 11, 2008.

Li Zhenjiang

the Organic Law of the NPC, and the Law on State Compensation will be revised.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The NPC must further expand the orderly participation of ordinary citizens

in legislative work. For laws such as the Food Safety Law that are closely tied to the interests of the people, the draft laws should be publicly posted so that the opinions of all sides can be heard, particularly those of ordinary people. ■



Community officials elaborate policies on the collection of social insurance among citizens in Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Province on March 26, 2008.

Shi Yucheng



The First Session of the 11th National People's Congress opened on the morning of March 5, 2008 at the Great Hall of the People. About 2,970 NPC deputies listened to the government work report delivered by Premier Wen Jiabao.

Wang Dongming

China's parliament starts annual session, sets GDP growth at 8%

The 11th National People's Congress (NPC) of China, the parliament, started its first session in Beijing on March 5 with the GDP growth rate this year targeted about 8 percent and CPI increase around 4.8 percent.

Premier Wen Jiabao evaluated government work in the past five years as "making major achievements in reform, opening up and modernization", but also admitted that there are still some prominent issues and deep-rooted problems affecting economic performance.

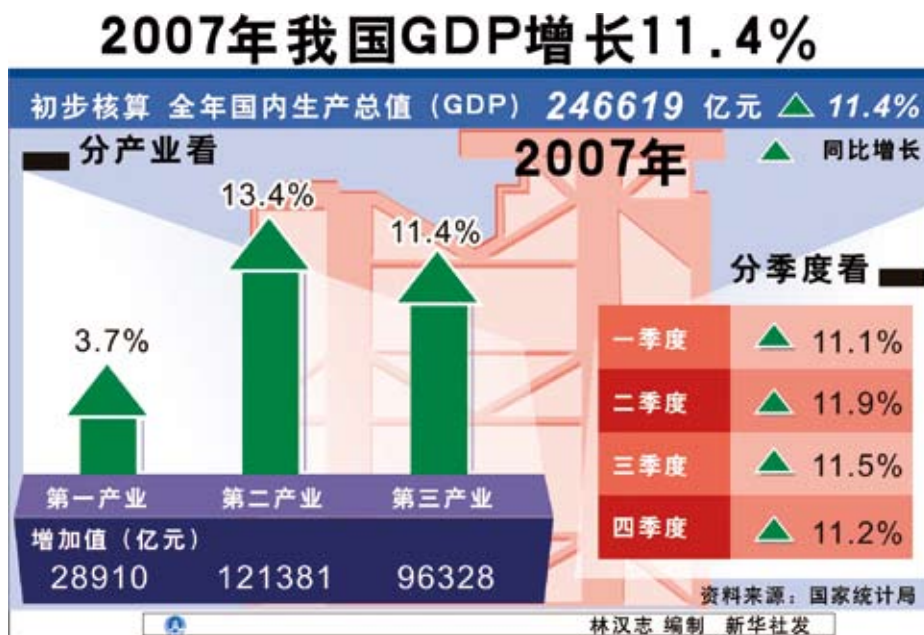
"We vigorously responded to the complex and volatile international environment, strove to overcome various difficulties hindering economic and social development, and prevailed over the sudden and severe outbreak of SARS and catastrophic natural disasters such as the recent snow and ice storms," Wen said in his government work report.

China's GDP in 2007 reached 24.66 trillion yuan, an increase of 65.5 percent over 2002 and an average annual increase of 10.6 percent, rising from the sixth highest one in the world to the fourth. Total government revenue reached 5.13 trillion yuan, a 171 percent increase over 2002. Foreign exchange reserves exceeded 1.52 trillion U.S. dollars.

The agricultural tax was rescinded, ending the centuries-old practice of farmers paying taxes. China's grain output rose four consecutive years to top 500 billion kilograms in 2007, he said.

Free compulsory education was made available to all rural students, marking an important milestone in the history of the development of education in China. The basic frameworks for a public health system and a system of basic medical services covering both urban and rural areas have been put in place, he added.

But he also admitted that China has experienced overheated growth in fixed asset investment, excessive supplies of money and credit, and imbalance in its in-



The growth rate of gross domestic product, or GDP, reaches 11.4 per cent year on year in 2007.

China has experienced overheated growth in fixed asset investment, excessive supplies of money and credit, and imbalance in its international payments in recent years.

ternational payments in recent years. The current price hikes and increasing inflationary pressures are the biggest concern of the people.

"Both uncertainties in the international economic environment and potential risks have increased," he added.

Under such background, he announced the following targets for economic and social development in 2008: on the basis of improving the economic structure, productivity, energy efficiency and environmental protection, the GDP should grow by about 8 percent, and the rise in the CPI should be held at around 4.8 percent.

Ten million jobs should be created in urban areas, and the rate of registered urban unemployment should be kept at around 4.5 percent. Some improvement should be made in the balance of pay-

ments.

After the central economic work meeting, which was held late last year, for the first time proposed the "two prevents", Wen reiterated in the report that the primary task for macroeconomic regulation this year is to prevent fast economic growth from becoming overheated growth and keep structural price increases from turning into significant inflation.

In his 40-page government report, he also talked about energy conservation, emission reduction, environmental protection and ensuring product quality and safety, ensuring the wellbeing of the people and improve their lives, as well as accelerating reform of the administrative system and intensifying government self-improvement.

"Our current plan for the reform of



NPC deputies from Liaoning Province delegation discuss government work report on March 9, 2008. *Ma Zengke*

bodies of the State Council mainly centers on changing the way the government functions, appropriately dividing responsibilities among departments that exercise macroeconomic regulation, adjusting and improving bodies in charge of industrial management, and improving departments responsible for public administration and public services. The plan explores ways to establish larger departments that organically integrate the functions of smaller departments," Wen said.

To resolve the problem of overlapping responsibilities and of powers not being matched by responsibilities, the plan clearly defines the responsibilities and powers of each department, clarifies the relationship of responsibilities among departments, and improves the mechanism for interdepartmental coordination and cooperation.

"The plan will be submitted to you for deliberation and approval," he said.

He pointed out in his report that it has been 30 years since China introduced the

reform and opening up policy, which has brought about great historic changes to the country. However China is still in the primary stage of socialism and will remain so for a long time to come.

"To further promote unfettered development of the productive forces, promote greater social fairness and justice, and attain the magnificent goals of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and modernizing China, we must continue to unswervingly implement the reform and opening up policy," Wen added.



We will prepare for and organize the Games well, strengthen cooperation with the international community, and create an excellent environment to ensure that the Games are a unique, well-run sporting event.

— *Wen Jiabao*

array of military tasks, staunchly protect China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, and provide strong support for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects."

When mentioning cross-Straits relations, he said any issue that concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be decided by all the Chinese people, including Taiwan compatriots.

"The attempts of Taiwan independence secessionist forces to deny the reality that the mainland and Taiwan belong to one and the same China and to undermine peace in the Taiwan Straits are doomed to fail," Wen said.

The opening meeting was presided over by NPC Standing Committee Chairman Wu Bangguo.

A total of 2,970 lawmakers were present at the opening meeting, along with top leaders Hu Jintao, Jia Qinglin, Zeng Qing-

hong, Li Changchun, Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, He Guoqiang and Zhou Yongkang.

The 13-day-and-a-half session elected the leadership and members of the 11th NPC Standing Committee, State president and vice president, chairman of the Central Military Commission of the People's Republic of China (PRC), president of the Supreme People's Court and the procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

The session decided on the candidate for the premiership of the State Council, candidates for vice-premiers, State councilors, heads of all ministries and commissions, governor of the People's Bank of China, auditor-general of the National Audit Office, secretary-general of the State Council and the candidates for vice-chairmen and members of the Central Military Commission of the PRC. ■

Wen said the 2008 Olympics and Paralympics will be held in Beijing. "We will prepare for and organize the Games well, strengthen cooperation with the international community, and create an excellent environment to ensure that the Games are a unique, well-run sporting event."

When mentioning national defense and the military, Wen said, "Our aim is to enable the army to fully carry out its historic mission in the new stage in the new century, enhance its ability to respond to security threats and accomplish a diverse



NPC deputies from Hong Kong delegation deliberate government work report during the First Session of the 11th NPC.
Wang Dongming

Making government work better

Transformation of government functions is crucial to the administrative reform. It means the government should allow the market to play a fundamental role in allocating resources and give citizens and civil organizations a bigger say in public affairs.



The fourth plenary meeting of the First Session of the 11th NPC was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 11, 2008. State Councilor Hua Jianmin, who is also the secretary-general of the State Council, made a report on the reform of the cabinet. Yao Dawei

China's institutional restructuring got a powerful push this March as lawmakers at the National People's Congress approved an extensive reshuffle plan of the State Council, which focuses on streamlining government department functions. In a recent interview with the People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency, a spokesperson for the State Commission Office for Public Sector Reform answered questions about the progress being made in the administrative reform and what steps need to be taken to accelerate and improve this reform.

► How the functions of the government will be transformed?

Transformation of government functions is crucial to the administrative reform. It means the government should allow the market to play a fundamental role in allocating resources and give citizens and civil organizations a bigger say in public affairs. The government should provide public goods more efficiently.

The whole process will focus on three key aspects: First, the government should perform its functions in a balanced and comprehensive way. While stepping up market regulation and macroeconomic control, more emphasis should be placed on improving social management and public services. Second, central and local governments should focus on their respective areas of social management and public services. Third, efforts should be intensified to define functions of government departments more clearly to match power with accountabilities and avoid overlapping of responsibilities.



Ministers of the State Council had a group photo taken on March 18, when the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress concluded at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing after completing all agenda.

Ren Chenming

The ongoing reform is expected to accelerate the formulation of appropriate structures and method of administration, improve government management results, match power with accountabilities and raise governance efficiency.



► What is the core task of the government institutional restructuring?

Institutional restructuring is to be guided by the basic principle of simplification, uniformity and efficiency and focuses on checks and coordination of decision-making, executive and supervisory powers. Efforts will be made to press ahead with the establishment of “super departments” with integrated functions, in a bid to standardize government compositions, optimize the administrative structure and improve administrative operations.

The ongoing reform has four principal tasks: furthering the institutional restructuring of the State Council, pushing forward the implementation of various restructuring initiatives in local governments, downsizing and standardizing various organs for deliberation and coordination of their working offices and stepping up the restructuring of different categories of public institutions. In the meanwhile, stricter controls will be imposed on the size of government departments, before legalized personnel quotas are finally in place.

► What does “checks and coordination of decision-making, executive and supervisory powers” mean?

Checks and coordination of decision-making, executive and supervisory powers are about the allocation of powers and coordination of relations between government departments. Proper integration of functions and their exercisers and reasonable allocation of decision-making, executive and supervisory powers will solve the problems of

A pedestrian passed by the newly-founded Ministry of Transport (MOT) on March 24, 2008. MOT was the first ministry to open after China reshuffled its ministries and administrations.

Zhui Ying



China's Ministry of Environmental Protection officially opened on March 27, 2008. Zheng Xiongzen

over-concentration of power, weak oversight and inefficient bureaucracy. The ongoing reform is expected to accelerate the formulation of appropriate structures and method of administration, improve government management results, match power with accountabilities and raise governance efficiency.

► What are the focuses of the institutional restructuring of the State Council?

Institutional restructuring of the State Council has the following focuses:

--To strengthen macro-control and regulation of key areas, and promote scientific development. This calls for reasonably defining the functions of regulatory agencies to form a scientific, authentic and efficient macro-control system; improving the management of industrial and information sectors and accelerating the realization of a new type of industrialization; strengthening energy management system and ensuring energy security; reforming the management of the transportation system and speeding up the integration of various transportation means; increasing efforts in environmental protection and promoting the building of an envi-

ronment-friendly society; and creating a favorable environment for sound and rapid development.

--To guarantee and improve people's living standards, and strengthen social management and public services. For this purpose, measures will be taken to improve personnel management; establish an overall social security network encompassing unemployment insurance, pension and other programs; step up the establishment of a housing guarantee system and coordinate urban-rural construction; and streamline the administration of food and drug issues and improve the accountability system in food safety control. The government will address the real problems that affect the life of the general public and the problems that the public is most concerned with.

--To explore ways for the establishment of "greater ministries" with integrated functions. That is to merge departments with similar functions, redesign regulatory systems of key sectors, strengthen and realign departments engaged in social management and public services, and downsize and standardize various organs and their offices for deliberation and coordination, on the basis of the abovementioned adjustments.

► What are the measures to strengthen and improve macroeconomic control and regulation?

Proper allocation of the functions of regulatory agencies will substantially increase the feasibility, timeliness and effectiveness of macro-control measures.

The National Development and Reform Commission will adjust its functions, reduce interventions in economic operations, and slash the number of matters subject to its examination and approval. It will focus on deepening the reform of the investment system, improving the management of planning and industrial policies, enhancing macro-control, and driving and coordinating the overall economic restructuring, so as to provide favorable environment for sound and rapid development. The Ministry of Finance will reform the budget and taxation systems; upgrade the system that is designed to match resources with responsibilities of central and local governments; speed up the establishment

Reform is necessary to optimize the integration of various transportation means, in order to raise efficiency and speed up the building of a convenient, smooth, efficient, safe and comprehensive transportation system.



Newly-founded Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security officially opened on March 31, 2008 in Beijing.
Zheng Xiongzeng

of a unified, standard and transparent fiscal transfer payment system; and consolidate the public finance system. The People's Bank of China, or the central bank, is to finetune the monetary policy, improve the foreign exchange rate regime and strengthen the coordination with financial market regulators, with the aim to prevent and mitigate financial risks and ensure financial security.

The National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance and the People's Bank of China will establish and update mechanisms to coordinate their respective macro-control measures. In addition to fulfilling the responsibilities of their own departments, these agencies should cooperate closely with each other to give full play to the directive role of State development programs, specific plans and industrial policies in macroeconomic regulation, and make a comprehensive use of fiscal, taxation and monetary policies in building a scientific, authentic and effective macro-control system.

How has the government's management of the energy sector been enhanced?

Energy management will be intensified mainly through the following steps: First, considering the fact that energy management involves a host of departments in economic, foreign affairs and resource sectors, strategic decisions on energy affairs will be made and coordinated at higher levels in the government. Second, the government's energy management will focus on formulating and implementing industrial plans, policies and standards, developing new energy sources, and strengthening energy conservation. Third, since energy manage-

ment is an issue of longstanding significance, it must resort to State development strategies along with planning, investment, pricing and other macroeconomic policies and means, so as to achieve an organic integration of energy management, socioeconomic development programs and macro-control.

Why and how can the management of key industries be improved?

The responsibilities of regulating industrial sectors used to be scattered among several government departments. This makes it difficult to coordinate the regulatory work. It is necessary to have a specific department performing all relevant functions, in order to strengthen overall planning and guidance, coordinate the advancements of informatization and industrialization, promote the integration of hi-tech and traditional industries, and push forward the shift of industrial sectors' development priority from being big to being strong. The new regulatory agency is designed to take charge of laying out strategic plans, making policies, devising standards and providing overall guidance. In light of the policy to separate the functions of the government from those of enterprises, it will not interfere in operations of enterprises that will compete in the market independently.

The transportation sector is the backbone of the national economy. Since the initiation of reform and opening-up policy, the industry has great achievements and is expected to maintain vigorous growth in the future. Reform is necessary to optimize the integration of various transportation means, in order to raise efficiency and speed up the building of a convenient, smooth, efficient, safe and comprehensive transportation system.

What impacts will the ongoing reform have on social management and public services?

Social management and public services are important functions of the government. The reshuffle

of government departments under the State Council will abide by the people-first principle and focus on improving people's livelihood.

The reform of the personnel management and social security system have the following objectives: to integrate the personnel management systems in government departments, public institutions and enterprises; build a unified and standardized human resources market by merging former markets separately dedicated to white-collar workers and laborers; promote labor mobility and effective allocation of human resources; coordinate employment and social security policies; and build and improve an overall social security networks encompassing unemployment insurance, pension and other programs. These reforms are expected to better tap

China's human resources and further emancipate and develop productive forces.

Focuses of the reform of the housing and urban-rural construction management systems are to deepen housing reform, establish a housing guarantee system and improve the low-rent housing system to meet the demands of low-income families, and strengthen the overall planning of rural-urban construction to push forward the urbanization process.

The administration of food and drug safety will be reinforced through furthering the implementation of the food safety control responsibility system and clarifying responsibilities of relevant departments. ■

▶ Ministerial Lineup

The following is a list of ministerial members of China's State Council approved on March 17 at the Seventh Plenary Meeting of the First Session of the 11th National People's Congress.

Minister of Foreign Affairs: Yang Jiechi
Minister of National Defense: Liang Guanglie
Minister in charge of the National Development and Reform Commission: Zhang Ping
Minister of Education: Zhou Ji
Minister of Science and Technology: Wan Gang
Minister of Industry and Information: Li Yizhong
Minister in charge of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission: Yang Jing
Minister of Public Security: Meng Jianzhu
Minister of State Security: Geng Huichang
Minister of Supervision: Ma Wen (female)
Minister of Civil Affairs: Li Xueju
Minister of Justice: Wu Aiying (female)
Minister of Finance: Xie Xuren
Minister of Human Resources and Social Security: Yin Weimin
Minister of Land Resources: Xu Shaoshi
Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Construction: Jiang Weixin
Minister of Railways: Liu Zhijun
Minister of Transport: Li Shenglin
Minister of Water Resources: Chen Lei
Minister of Agriculture: Sun Zhengcai
Minister of Environmental Protection: Zhou Shengxian
Minister of Commerce: Chen Deming
Minister of Culture: Cai Wu
Minister of Health: Chen Zhu
Minister in charge of the State Population and Family Planning Commission: Li Bin
Governor of the People's Bank of China: Zhou Xiaochuan
Auditor General of the National Audit Office: Liu Jiayi

Lessons in Chinese democracy

By Ian Morrison



Electorates in Zaozhuang of Shandong Province cast votes during a direct election to select deputies at district- and township-people's congresses on November 16, 2007. *Liu Wei*

What China does believe is that all nations should have the wherewithal to follow their own paths of development and run their affairs in the ways they see fit.

The term democracy is used and abused so often in the world today, with the anti-China lobby keen to contend it is unheard of in this country.

The question we should ask is, does democracy exist in China? I would argue that it does. But what someone in Berlin, Baltimore or Beijing regards as "democratic" may be different.

China's system of people's congresses and advisory bodies is one that has developed as a result of this nation's unique conditions, just as political systems in, for example, the United States or the United Kingdom - one having a directly elected president and the other being a constitutional monarchy - have developed according to their own specific historical circumstances.

What I have learned in China is that, as a proudly independent nation, it does not develop "models" for others to copy and does not expect others to try to impose their "models" on it. What China does believe is that all nations should have the wherewithal to follow their own paths of development and run their affairs in the ways they see fit.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" political system that can be imposed anywhere regardless of circumstances. Britain's experiences trying to impose the "Westminster model" on former colonies across Africa prove this approach simply does not work.

And many aspects of China's political system remain relatively unknown in the West, such as democratic elections, contested ballots and the existence of nine political parties. In my time in China I have witnessed two elections for deputies to the district people's congress (the highest level to be directly elected) where I live - Beijing's Cha-

oyang district, with voters going to the polls to elect the district legislature for an area that is home to some 2.3 million people.

And from what I have seen, these elections are no mere formality. There is a long process for selecting and nominating candidates in the run up to polling day.

This process, in which meetings are held at the grassroots level to discuss the merits of the nominees, is accompanied by publicity urging the greatest possible participation in the process and the maximum possible turnout on polling day, with the latest election, on November 8, 2006, seeing two of my colleagues at China Daily - neither of them members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) - stand as candidates.

In fact, since reform and opening up were launched almost three decades ago, and the work of the eight non-Communist parties resumed, they, and people who belong to no party, have been playing a growing role in Chinese political life.

Two non-Communists now serve as cabinet ministers, more than 31,000 work as officials at or above the county level and more than 60 percent of the current members of the nation's top advisory body - the 11th CPPCC National Committee - are non-CPC members.

One way to improve the quality of democracy in China would be to enhance the role played by units of the CPPCC - particularly at the grassroots level - making them more representative of the communities in which they operate.

It would also help to encourage more public discussion in order to ensure that the proposals made by these bodies better reflect public opinion.

Making officials more accountable is also important. It should generally be made easier for members of the public to approach the officials and civil servants who, after all, are working on their behalf. ■

Ian Morrison is a senior copy editor with China Daily

Villagers from Linggui Village in Sichuan Province elect a "special supervisor" to inspect village affairs including policy making, opening of village administration and the work style of officials.
Zhong Min



Substance without all the sparks

By Jules Quartly

More people generally have better ideas and make better decisions than just one person. This is why public input in the political process is necessary.

From this outsider's perspective looking in, the annual sessions of China's top legislature and political advisory body appear to be remarkably harmonious.

By the end of the first session of the 11th CPPCC National Committee, 4,772 proposals had been raised, covering agriculture, healthcare, education, employment, social security, housing, environmental protection and food and drug policies.

But among the suggestions and polite discussion there seems to have been little time left to argue. There was none of the obvious cut-and-thrust that characterizes politics elsewhere.

Legislative sessions in the United States, much of Europe and in many Asian countries, for example, often feature a lot of grandstanding, with politicians arguing their cases and being shot down by members of the political opposition. Prime minister's question time in England is a bit like bear baiting. Politicians wait their turn to savage the leader and when they smell blood jump in for the kill with a rhetorical lunge.

This was termed "adversary politics" by the scholar S. E. Finer and characterized as "a stand-up fight between two adversaries for the favor of the lookers-on".

This raises the question: When does the arguing happen? Before the NPC-CPCC? Or after? Is Chinese politics really so harmonious? As an outsider, I thought it prudent to ask the insiders, journalists who know how the system works.

One reporter who is covering the sessions said there were, in fact, differences between delegates and their disagreements were public. She pointed to the case of the "symbolic city" planned in the hometown of Confucius in Shandong province.

The 300-sq-km city is intended to revive traditional values and will be a site for national ceremonies. It is projected to cost about 30 billion yuan (\$4.2 billion).

Even so, this did not deter CPPCC member and president of the Anhui Dramatists' Association Hou Lu from speaking up. She said she was a taxpayer and didn't want her money thrown away on a white elephant, then wrote a counter-proposal and started a petition against it.

Another colleague said NPC deputies

were encouraged to be more outspoken. A cursory look at our own coverage reveals a diversity of opinions. For instance, there was a plethora of suggestions on how to improve healthcare.

These ideas will be forwarded, along with the other proposals, to standing committees for further consideration and possible implementation. Presumably there will be counter proposals and nitpicking over the details. This is "democratic centralism" in action, a tenet of the Constitution.

My feeling is that openness and transparency are important, if only for the reason that we tend to show what we are proud of and hide what we are ashamed of. It is also an important mechanism to hold people accountable.

More people generally have better ideas and make better decisions than just one person. This is why public input in the political process is necessary.

Adversarial politics and hissy fits add spice for the media, sells papers and drives up clicks on the Internet. But eventually the public tires of it, hence the apathy of many voters in established democracies.

The model here is socialist political democracy, which entails people making proposals, discussion and collective decisions so the majority is respected while the minority is protected. In action, it appears more consensual than argumentative. ■

The author is a writer and copy editor with China Daily



Under the Lens

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1. Foreign diplomats in China attended the opening ceremony of the First Session of the 11th NPC on the morning of March 5, 2008.

2. Reporters gather around to interview NPC deputy and economist Lin Yifu.

3. Cao Jingxing, a famous anchor from Hong Kong's Phoenix TV, snaps ethnic-minority NPC deputies in ethnic clothes outside the Great Hall of the People.

4. Ethnic-minority NPC deputies from Yunnan Province deliberated the government work report on the afternoon of March 7.

5. After completing all agenda, the First Session of the 11th NPC concluded with the national anthem on March 18.

6. A foreign reporter with a simultaneous interpretation equipment on head listens attentively when attending the press conference of the First Session of 11th NPC at the Great Hall of the People.

(Photos taken by Zhang Yu, Wang Dongming and Liao Pan)



NPC

National People's Congress of China