

6  TWO SESSIONS

PERSPECTIVE

Technology key to new stage of reform

China aims to achieve economic equality, improve living standards

By CECILY LIU
cecily.liu@
mail.chinadaily.com

China's leadership role in promoting global trade today is a continuation of the internationalization drive it started 40 years ago with the reform and opening-up policy, according to a senior academic in London.

Erik Berglof, director of the London School of Economics' Institute of Global Affairs, said the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are examples of

China championing global trade, development and connectivity.

Berglof, who formerly worked as chief economist and special adviser to the president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, was speaking ahead of this year's two sessions, which are expected to set the future strategic direction for China.

How China makes further reforms beyond 2018 is also expected to be an important topic.

Berglof said China is making a transition from its previ-

“China is coming closer and closer to the frontier of technology across a large range of sectors.”



Erik Berglof, director of the London School of Economics' Institute of Global Affairs

ous export-driven model to a more technology-led development. Within this new model, China's role in the global economy will also grow.

“China is coming closer and closer to the frontier of technology across a large range of sectors. This contributes to efficiency and productivity globally,” Berglof said.

As advanced technology

becomes a bigger contributor to China's economic growth, it is likely to contribute more to global technological advancement. Berglof said: “It will become an important partner in developing new technology. China's domestic market will also be important in creating demand for this technology.”

Berglof said China's drive to

achieve economic equality across the country and provide a better standard of living for the Chinese people is another significant element in this new stage of reform.

This year's two sessions are the first since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October, which ushered in a new era for China and emphasized improving the Chinese people's quality of life.

“There is now a fundamental change to the nature of the Chinese economy, with an increasing focus on providing better social welfare and better healthcare provisions and combating the country's inequity challenges,” Berglof said.

Internationally, this same

mentality of striving for more inclusive growth and creating a community with a shared future is already reflected in the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative and the AIIB-driven development projects, which Berglof calls “open and collaborative”. He stressed that insuring collaborative development for the Belt and Road Initiative into the future is crucial for its credibility.

He added that China's revision of the country's Constitution is also important. “In particular, ensuring the right checks and balances within the new framework of the Constitution is important for China's domestic development and international credibility,” he said.

Blue skies pave way for green lifestyles

By FU JING
fujing@chinadaily.com.cn

I have developed the habit of walking to work and for leisure if weather and distance permit. My smartphone counts the steps I take every day and sometimes I compare the record with my friends.

When I was assigned to cover this year's annual sessions of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

Fu Jing
Reporter's log

National Committee, I worried that the busy schedule of interviews might prevent me from sustaining my green lifestyle.

On Friday, an idea occurred to me: I could abandon door-to-door taxis and take the subway to meeting places and interviews during the coming days.

My office is about 1 kilometer from the nearest metro station. In terms of density of metro lines, Beijing is similar to London and Paris. You can walk to a station from any point in downtown Beijing in less than 20 minutes.

The deputies and members at the two sessions, who number more than 5,000, are staying in various hotels in Beijing, and I could access their hotels by metro.

With more lines still being constructed, Beijing has made stunning progress over the past decade in subway construction. I can still remember when attending a meeting in London in 2007, a participant used the sharp difference of metro line density of Beijing and London to argue that the gap between China and the West was huge.

PEOPLE IN THE NEW ERA

Power worker proposes support for skilled team

By HOU LIQIANG
houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Before Xu Qijin started maintaining power lines in Suzhou, Anhui province, his time after nightfall was mostly spent in darkness. “Life was hard then. Even the kerosene lamp was a luxury and could usually only be used when doing homework,” he said.

On a visit to downtown Suzhou, the member of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference made a decision to do work that could help people get power for lighting.

“When I saw a bulb, I thought how good it would be if I could do homework

under the light from it,” said Xu, 55, from the Suzhou branch of

the State Grid.

When he graduated from high school at age 19, he discovered that a local power station was recruiting and he didn't hesitate to apply.

The work was not easy. “We had to spend half of the working day walking in mountainous areas or through farmland to check the grid. The rest of the time, we had to work on steel frames up to 70 meters high, rooting out grid malfunctions,” Xu said.

Sometimes, he and his colleagues had to work more than 100 kilometers away from home. Instead of commuting every day, he

stayed in the area for up to a week, sharing a bed with more than two of his colleagues.

“The frames got so hot during the summer they could burn your skin if you didn't wear gloves. In winter, they were so cold that it was sometimes difficult to remove your bare hands,” said Xu, who was also a delegate to the 19th Communist Party of China National Congress, held in October.

Xu didn't expect to stay in the post for 36 years. “It was only the year before last that I didn't have to climb the frames any more. My apprentices stopped me from doing that considering my age,” he said.

“I thought about changing to another job, but when I look at these grids I feel so proud of my job.”

This time, he only had one proposal to be handed to the CPPCC National Committee about giving more preferential policies to the development of skilled workers in the country.

“The central authorities plan to develop artificial intelligence. AI development cannot be achieved without the support of a team of qualified skilled workers,” he said.

Xu said he began working on the proposal last month. After work, he talked with workers from other companies to find out their opinions. He also spent his weekends researching the topic.

Xu said he now spends most of his time training apprentices, hoping to contribute to the building of a team of skilled workers for the country.



Xu Qijin, a CPPCC National Committee member

Work report discussed



Members of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body, discuss the work report of the 12th CPPCC National Committee. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Innovation underpins achievements

By ERIK NILSSON
erik_nilsson@chinadaily.com.cn

I've been extremely fortunate as a journalist to have witnessed several historic Chinese events from the front lines over the past 12 years.

These include the two sessions in March last year and the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October.

I've also covered astonishing transformations nationwide since last spring from such remote destinations as the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, where poverty alleviation has accelerated tremendously, to outside my Beijing apartment's window, through which I increasingly gaze upon clear skies.

This year will mark the first meetings of the National People's Congress, China's top legislative organ, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top advisory body, since the dawn of the new era.

So, the world is watching to see how Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era will be implemented during this year's two sessions.

I attended this momentous occasion in 2017 primarily as the host of a new-media series explaining what it means for the country and the world. These videos racked up nearly 100 million views.

And I'm honored to be given the opportunity to again report from the forefront of this year's particularly significant two sessions to discover how China will chart the

course of 2018 and beyond.

It's worth reviewing national progress since March 2017. Major dimensions include poverty alleviation, environmental protection, e-commerce, cashless mobile payments, transportation infrastructure, and science and technology.

China's innovation has proved crucial to achievements in these areas.

The speed and scale of China's poverty alleviation, for instance, is unprecedented in world history. The country has announced it will eliminate all extreme poverty by 2020.

I was honored to be in the front row during the 19th Party congress, when General Secretary Xi Jinping said China will also build a “moderately prosperous society across all metrics”.

That's because I've personally witnessed much of the progress toward this mission firsthand.

Xi said at the Party congress, “On the march toward prosperity, no one must be left behind.”

Over the past year, I've traveled to nomadic communities on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau that have transformed since I first visited six years ago; a rural settlement in Hebei province where an innovative program uses solar farms to power a brighter future in drought-affected areas; and urbanization in Guizhou province that has elevated former villagers' quality of life.

Poverty alleviation is a component of China's development I've followed closely during my journeys through

almost every provincial-level jurisdiction on the Chinese mainland, except for Chongqing, over the past 12 years.

And I'm particularly excited to see what new measures will be announced during this year's two sessions — and to share what I discover with the world.

That is, new specifics as to how the country will continue to “make steady progress toward realizing common prosperity for everyone”, as Xi said at the 19th Party congress.

I'll also closely follow new measures to advance science and technology — areas in which China is advancing rapidly.

Recent milestones include first light of the world's largest radio telescope, the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope, better known as FAST; the journeys of the *Jiaolong* submersible, which can dive deeper than any other manned vehicle; and the world's fastest supercomputer, which can perform 100 quadrillion calculations per second.

Indeed, world-class scientists are pushing such innovations forward. Since last year's two sessions, I've hosted videos about two great, late scientists — Huang Danian, who advanced the country's geo-exploration technology, and Zhong Yang, who led the collection of 5 million seeds, including those of species dif-

icult to even discover because they only grow on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau's extreme altitudes.

Also, I've spent much of the past year traveling aboard China's rapidly expanding network of high-speed rails and highways, as the country has continued accelerating transportation-infrastructure development.

And the views from my apartment's window have become notably bluer, as the government has advanced environmental protection nationwide.

The annual number of smoggy days decreased by 19.4 to 27.5 nationwide between 2013 and 2017, the National Meteorological Center reported. It dropped to 42.3 from 71.1 in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region during that period.

Premier Li Keqiang announced new measures to alleviate the capital's air pollution during last year's two sessions.

Today, those words' truth is literally as clear as day. They can be seen in the skies.

Indeed, these grand achievements largely hail from decisions made at the annual meetings of the NPC and the CPPCC.

Many people are aware of the two sessions' significance. But fewer understand the specifics of how they work and exactly how they shape progress.

I look forward to covering this year's events to discover how China plans to continue to advance in the coming year and beyond — and what that means for the country and the world.

Tech leader talks



Liu Qiangdong, chairman of e-commerce retailer JD and a CPPCC National Committee member, speaks with reporters on the sidelines of the annual two sessions.

JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

2020

the year by which China aims to eradicate extreme poverty

While the West has slowed its pace of development since then due to financial and debt crises, China's economy has sustained a rapid pace, which has allowed massive investment in urban infrastructure.

Now, in megacities such as Beijing, the subway has become the first travel option for many people.

And bluer skies in previously smog-prone Beijing are helping to make walking more attractive.

In recent weeks, it has been mostly sunny, clear and pleasant in the capital. In December, Beijing was even among the top 10 Chinese cities in terms of air quality due to new measures to curb expansion of polluting industries and shift to clean energy instead of coal.

Moreover, both the Beijing municipal government and the central government plan to continue the fight, listing tackling pollution and poverty among the “three big battles”.

China aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2020. Certainly, it will take longer to deal with the severe pollution in the air, water and soil.

The determination and political will to achieve the goal of constructing a “beautiful China” will be reiterated at the two sessions.

If the proposed directions and measures are followed, not only will Beijing's metro line density match that of Western metropolitan areas, but so too will its environment.