

## The First Session of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Hold (CPPCC)

BEIJING - China's top political advisory body started its annual session Saturday afternoon in Beijing, kicking off an important political season that will highlight new missions for the country's goal of a "great modern socialist country."

Yu Zhengsheng, chairman of the 12th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, delivered a work report to 2,149 political advisors who gathered to discuss major political, economic, and social issues in the world's most populous nation and second largest economy. "We will focus our advice and efforts on the main issues in securing a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and embarking on a journey to fully



build a modern socialist China," Yu said. Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders attended the opening meeting at the Great Hall of the People. The CPPCC is an important organ for multi-party cooperation and political consultation led by the Communist Party of China (CPC). It is an important means of promoting socialist

democracy. Summarizing the work and experience over the past five years, Yu said the CPPCC should remain committed to its nature as "an important platform for all Chinese political parties, social organizations, and people from all ethnic groups and all sectors of society to work together and participate in the deliberation

of state affairs in a democratic manner."

He stressed that the top political advisory body will uphold the CPC leadership.

In regards to its future work, the CPPCC will give top priority to studying and applying Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and earnestly study the new thinking on and requirements for the patriotic united front and the CPPCC, Yu said. "We will promote the ready acceptance of the leadership of the CPC among all political parties, social groups, and people of all ethnic groups and from all social sectors that participate in the CPPCC, and firmly uphold the core position of General Secretary Xi Jinping," he noted. (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### China to Build Stringent Legal System for Environmental Protection

BEIJING - China will build a stringent legal system to protect the environment, a spokesperson for the annual session of the country's national legislature said Sunday. Zhang Yesui, spokesperson for the first annual session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), said that the 12th NPC Standing Committee had put the environment and ecological conservation high on its agenda. Six pieces of legislation concerning environmental protection, air pollution, water pollution, marine environment, environmental tax, and wildlife protection have been en-

acted or modified, said Zhang, adding that the committee also has ratified treaties including the Paris Agreement. "With all these efforts, a comprehensive legal framework is gradually taking shape," said Zhang. The Standing Committee had conducted inspections into the implementation of six pieces of legislation related to environment issues, and heard and reviewed seven State Council reports, as well as carried out inquiries and reviewed reports to enhance supervision, so as to ensure that once enacted the laws will be fully enforced, according to Zhang. (Xinhua)

### Iran Plant Stops Flaring Gas Worth Millions of Dollars

PERIAN GULF - Iran is about to save \$300 million a year after inaugurating an offshore project which will stop flaring gas in the Persian Gulf, a senior official was quoted as saying Saturday. The plant was completed with 70 million euros of investment, which will return in 100-120 days, Fars news agency quoted him as saying. In addition to its economic benefits, the project will have a positive environmental impact and reduce pollution from flaring of gas in Qeshm to the minimum, Bovard added. Gas flared at the oilfield before the inauguration of the plant equaled 14,000 barrels of crude oil a day. Oil producing countries often burn or flare a certain amount of natural gas that accompanies crude oil to the surface which is too small to be recovered or pipelined to a processing facility. (Press Tv)

A 2015 World Bank report said Iran flared some 10.5 billion cubic meters of gas a year, putting it behind Russia and Iraq as the third largest flaring country in the world. Its satellite data in 2017 showed an increase in flaring of more than 4 billion cubic meters compared to the previous year. On Wednesday, the country inaugurated a gas plant on Qeshm-land which is to process 80 million cubic meters per day of natural gas previously flared at the Hengam oilfield. "With an oil price of \$50 per barrel, the project will save more than

\$700,000 a day for the country," Managing Director of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) Hamid Bovard said. The plant was completed with 70 million euros of investment, which will return in 100-120 days, Fars news agency quoted him as saying. In addition to its economic benefits, the project will have a positive environmental impact and reduce pollution from flaring of gas in Qeshm to the minimum, Bovard added. Gas flared at the oilfield before the inauguration of the plant equaled 14,000 barrels of crude oil a day. Oil producing countries often burn or flare a certain amount of natural gas that accompanies crude oil to the surface which is too small to be recovered or pipelined to a processing facility. (Press Tv)

### Turkmenistan Reveals Data on Execution of State Budget

ASHGABAT - The revenues of Turkmenistan's state budget amounted to 2 billion manats, while the expenditures - 1.9 billion manats in January-February 2018, the Turkmen government said in a message March 3. "Salaries, pensions, state benefits and student scholarships have been fully financed," the message says. Moreover, 63 social facilities, 31 wastewater treatment facilities, 416,900 square meters of housing, as well as various engineering systems are being built in the districts. The total amount of used capital investments made up 172.6

million manats. The official exchange rate of the Turkmen manat against US dollar has remained unchanged since January 2015 (\$1 = 3.5 Turkmen manats). The revenue part of the state budget has been formed, mainly, through oil and gas, chemical, power engineering and construction sectors. Agro-industrial complex, transport sector, communication sector, textile industry and food industry will further develop. Turkmenistan holds one of the key positions in the supply of natural gas in the region, which is exported to China and Iran. (Trend)

### Tajikistan, Uzbekistan Reach Mutual Understanding on Border Issues

DUSHANBE - Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have concluded negotiations during which the sides reached full mutual understanding on issues of demarcation and delimitation of disputable sections of their state borders, Tajik Telegraph Agency TajikTA reported March 3. "The meetings of working groups of government delegations of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan were held in Tashkent from Feb. 24 to March 1," the Uzbek Foreign Ministry said in a message. "During

the meetings, the negotiations on delimitation and demarcation of the state border were held in a constructive atmosphere and in the spirit of friendship and mutual understanding." The working groups prepared annexes to the draft agreement between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan on certain sections of the border to implement the protocol of the Tajik-Uzbek Intergovernmental Commission for Delimitation and Demarcation of Borders, signed Feb. 24 in Uzbekistan's Fergana. (Trend)

### Roger Bannister, First To Run Mile in Under 4 Minutes, Dies

LONDON - Roger Bannister, the first runner to break the 4-minute barrier in the mile, has died. He was 88. Bannister's family said in a statement that he died peacefully on Saturday in Oxford, the English city where the runner cracked the feat many had thought humanly impossible on a windy afternoon in 1954. Bannister, who went on to pursue a long and distinguished medical career, had been slowed by Parkinson's disease in recent years. He was "surrounded by his family who were as loved by him, as he was loved by them," the family said

in a statement announcing his death on Sunday. "He banked his treasure in the hearts of his friends." Helped by two pacemakers, Bannister clocked 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds over four laps at Oxford's Iffley Road track on May 6, 1954, to break the 4-minute mile - a test of speed and endurance that stands as one of the defining sporting achievements of the 20th century. "It's amazing that more people have climbed Mount Everest than have broken the 4-minute mile," Bannister said in an interview with The Associated Press in 2012. (AP)

LAGOS - Fishing boats look like specks alongside Egina, which has been moored for the last month in Lagos. Even the container ships that normally dominate the port look like small boats. The floating production storage and offloading facility (FPSO), developed by the French group Total, looks a lot like a giant Lego set. Everything about it is huge: its weight (220,000 tonnes), length (330 metres/1,083 feet) and width (60 metres). At 33 metres, it's as high as a 10-storey building. The vessel is in its final

## Nigeria Looks to Local Skills to Develop Oil and Gas



stage of construction and will soon produce some 200,000 barrels of oil a day or about 10 percent of national production.

In the next few months, Egina will head to the Niger Delta and link up to 44 subsea wells some 1,600 metres under the Gulf of

Guinea. Up to 2.3 million barrels of crude can be stored in its hull, before being taken abroad to be refined. (AFP)

## Vietnam Seeks To Pacify China As Landmark U.S. Carrier Visit Signals Warming Ties



HONG KONG/HANOI - The visit of a U.S. aircraft carrier to Vietnam for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War is a powerful symbol of the growing strategic ties between the former foes.

But the arrival on Monday of the USS Carl Vinson also illustrates Hanoi's complex and evolving relationship

with Beijing over the disputed South China Sea. For months now, Vietnamese envoys have been working to ease the concerns of their giant

Chinese neighbor over the prospect of broader security co-operation between Hanoi and Washington, according to diplomats and others familiar with discussions. Vietnamese diplomats and military officers have repeatedly stressed the country's independent foreign policy and its desire for broad foreign relations - hoping to maintain stable ties with China while standing up to it over the South China Sea, the sources said. (Reuters)

### Voting In Belgrade Tests Ruling Populists' Grip on Power

BELGRADE, Serbia - The Serbian capital of Belgrade held a municipal election Sunday that is being seen as a test of the ruling populists' firm grip on power in the country. The Belgrade vote was for local authorities only but it's considered important because of the city's key role in Serbia's economy and politics. President Aleksandar Vucic's governing center-right Serbian Progressive Party has led the polls ahead of the vote. But Serbia's fractured opposition parties hope to mount a challenge in

the traditionally liberal capital city. They have accused Vucic's party of intimidating opposition supporters, registering phony voters and slinging mud at political rivals in media outlets that the party controls. The ruling party has rejected the accusations. Some 1.6 million voters will choose the 110-member city assembly, which appoints the mayor. Two dozen parties and groups are competing but only few are expected to pass the 5 percent threshold to enter the assembly. (AP)

### China Says Military No Threat, but Refuses to Reveal Budget

BEIJING - China has no desire to overturn the existing international order and its increasingly powerful military does not constitute a threat to others, the spokesman for the country's ceremonial legislature said Sunday.

However, in a break with recent practice, Zhang Yesui refused to provide a figure for the rate of growth in the national defense budget. That move follows complaints that China isn't open enough about how it funds its military or what the goals of its massive campaign of expansion and modernization are.

Zhang sought to strike a reassuring tone in remarks at a news conference on the eve of the opening of the National People's Congress' annual two-week session. (AP)

### Russia's New Underwater Drone Hardly Possible To Intercept: Navy Chief

MOSCOW - Russia's new underwater nuclear drones can stealthily approach targets with a global range, the country's navy chief was quoted by local media as saying Sunday. The new apparatus will have an effectively unlimited travel range and feature a low noise profile and high maneuverability, all of which allow the new weapon to stealthily approach targets.

The weapon will allow the navy to complete a wide range of tasks in remote maritime zones and areas near the target territory, said the chief.

The testing of the drone is underway. The drone will be introduced into the navy once all testing is completed. The chief also stressed that all elements of the system are manufactured in Russia. (Xinhua)

## Netanyahu to Talk With Trump about Attending Embassy Opening

JERUSALEM - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he will discuss the possibility of US President Donald Trump attending the May opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem when he meets Trump on Monday. Netanyahu made the comment late Saturday before boarding a flight to the United States. "I'll definitely discuss with him that possibility," Netanyahu said in response to a journalist's question on whether he planned to invite Trump for the occasion. "I'm very grateful to him for this historic decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to move



the American embassy to Jerusalem on our independence day," he said. The May 14 date of the embassy opening coincides with the 70th anniversary of the founding of Israel. For Palestinians, the date represents the anniversary of the Nakba, or "catastrophe", in which hundreds of thousands ei-

ther fled or were expelled from their homes in the war surrounding Israel's creation. Trump's December 6 Jerusalem declaration outraged Palestinians and broke with decades of international consensus that the disputed city's status must be negotiated between the two sides. (AFP)

## South Korea Sending Envoys to North Korea As Trump Suggests U.S. Willing To Talk

SEOUL - South Korea will dispatch a delegation led by senior security officials for a two-day visit to North Korea starting Monday, the presidential Blue House announced Sunday, as U.S. President Donald Trump hinted that he is ready to talk to Pyongyang. For its part, North Korea said it was not begging to talk with Washington and denounced upcoming U.S.-South Korean joint-military exercises, warning that it would take counter measures against the United States if they went ahead. The drills will take place next

month, a South Korean presidential security adviser said according to the Yonhap news agency. They had been delayed until after the Winter Olympics and Paralympic games in South Korea. South Korea's presidential Blue House said in a statement that National Security Office (NSO) head Chung Eui-yong and National Intelligence Service (NIS) chief Suh Hoon, a veteran of past negotiations with the North, will be among the 10-member South Korean delegation visiting Pyongyang. (Reuters)

## S.Korean President's Special Envoys to Visit DPRK on March 5

SEOUL - South Korean President Moon Jae-in decided to send his special envoys to visit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on March 5, after top DPRK leader Kim Jong Un's dispatch of a special delegation to South Korea last month. The South Korean special delegation, composed of five envoys and five working-level officials, will be led by Chung Eui-yong, a top national security adviser for Moon and head of the National Security Office of the Blue House, Yoon Young-chan, Moon's senior press secretary, told a press briefing on Sunday.

Four other special envoys are Suh Hoon, director of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), the country's spy agency, Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung, Second Deputy NIS Director Kim Sang-gyun, and Yun Kun-young, a senior Blue House official.

The special delegation will travel via a western direct route to the DPRK on a special plane Monday afternoon for a two-day visit to Pyongyang. During their stay in Pyongyang, the South Korean delegation will hold dialogues with senior-level DPRK officials to build peace on the Korean Peninsula and improve inter-Korean relations, the Blue House press secretary said.

It would be the return visit to Kim Yo Jong, the younger sister of the DPRK leader. The younger Kim made a three-day visit to South Korea to attend the Winter Olympics last month. (Xinhua)