

Quality, efficiency should be growth focus: Li

The country's economic agenda should prioritize quality and efficiency to achieve this year's growth target, and also ensure improving public services such as education and healthcare, Premier Li Keqiang told lawmakers on Monday.

The Government Work Report set a target of around 6.5 percent, which is a medium high-speed growth in line with economic laws for the country's \$11 trillion economy, Li told deputies of the National People's Congress from the Shandong delegation during a panel discussion on Monday morning.

The economic growth will shore up employment, and the focus of this year's work should be on improving quality and efficiency by further reform and opening-up to strengthen intrinsic vitality, Li added.

Shandong reported GDP of 6.7 trillion yuan (\$972 billion) last year, or nearly 10 percent of China's GDP.

The premier said that ensuring medium high-speed economic growth must take supply-side structural reform as its central work while industrial transformation and economic upgrading are promoted.

The premier also called for continued administrative streamlining, lower institutional costs for enterprises and creating an inclusive and fair environment. Meanwhile, entrepreneurship and innovation should be encouraged to boost the transformation of traditional industries and cultivate new growth momentum, he said.

Li said economic achievements will be embodied in boosting employment, education, healthcare, social security, housing and environmental protection.

On Monday, another four members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee joined discussions of NPC deputies and members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said during discussions with deputies from Macao and Hong Kong that the country has made enormous progress—including new achievements while implementing the One Country, Two Systems policy since the 18th Party Congress in 2012.

At a meeting of sectors of the China Democratic League and public figures without party affiliation, Yu Zhengsheng, chairman of the National Committee of the CPPCC, said that General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping's speech on Sunday should be heeded regarding care and respect for intellectuals.

Wang Qishan, secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline

Inspection, called for protecting the sources of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers, while meeting with deputies from Qinghai province.

While talking to deputies from Tianjin, Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli called for steady economic development and social harmony to usher in the 19th Party Congress.

This amendment presents a monumental opportunity to increase voter participation – Cat Smith

Cat

Smith MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs, commenting on

Labour's victory in the House of Lords today, following Baroness Royall's amendment to the Higher Education and Research Bill, said:

"I am delighted that our colleagues in the Lords have defeated the Tories over their attempts to restrict student voter registration. Students are one of the most under-registered groups on the electoral roll and this amendment presents a monumental opportunity to increase voter participation whilst enabling councils to make significant savings on the canvassing process, saving our local authorities valuable time and resources.

"We now must ensure that the Tories accept this amendment when it moves to the Commons."

Despite some cosmetic changes, this remains a retrograde step for the United States – Thornberry

Labour's

Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Emily

Thornberry

MP, responding

to the US administration's updated travel ban said:

"Despite

some cosmetic changes, this remains a retrograde step for the United States.

"By

abdicationing its responsibilities under international law, the administration continues to send a terrible message to the rest of the world on the refugee crisis. While it remains to be seen whether or not this new executive order will stand up in court, nothing in today's announcement changes the fact that these measures are unnecessary, divisive and wrong."

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Tax transparency: Jeremy Corbyn's tax return

A Jeremy Corbyn spokesperson said:

"Jeremy's tax return is complete and accurate. He has declared all income and paid the appropriate amount of tax.

"The payment he received in 2015-16 as Leader of the Opposition of £27,192 appears on the return as a 'benefit' rather than as pay because that is how it is categorised by HMRC.

"This figure is calculated after deducting the waivers Jeremy has made of earlier increases to the benefit. These waivers were also made by his predecessor, Ed Miliband. A parliamentary pension contribution of £3,395 was also deducted (see note).

"We are disappointed the Cabinet Office did not clarify this and explain the figure used on the P60 yesterday in answer to media inquiries they received.

"It is also a matter of concern that some media organisations made entirely false claims without verifying or confirming the facts, and we expect these now to be corrected.

"The owners of the media companies that have attempted to cast doubt over Jeremy's transparent and accurate tax return are of course among those who could stand to lose from the tax transparency and justice the British people demand.

"Jeremy believes firmly in transparency. These media barons have tax questions of their own to answer. Tax avoidance and evasion deprive the public purse of billions in revenue for vital services and is unfair on those with much lower earnings who pay a higher proportion of their income in tax."