

Premier Li stresses poverty relief

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has urged faster progress in poverty relief, saying that innovative mechanisms are needed and more funds should be collected to fight poverty.

He made the remarks during an inspection tour of southwest China's Yunnan Province from Monday to Wednesday.

Travel agency boycotts Japan hotel over history denials

China International Travel Service Limited announced on Wednesday that it will end all business relations with a Japanese hotel chain which refused to remove books from its guest rooms denying the Nanjing Massacre took place.

The official statement released by CITS, a State-owned enterprise, said that APA Hotels' actions had outraged all Chinese.

"After the news came out, we immediately removed APA Hotels from our website so that no tourists could book that hotel through us," said the statement.

"We have also asked our head office and all subsidiaries to check whether they have business relations with the group. Any such business has to be stopped immediately. We will not suggest the hotel group to our clients and we will not run any of its advertisements either."

At a news conference on Tuesday, Zhang Lizhong, spokesman for the China National Tourism Administration, said APA Hotels' actions were a blatant provocation to Chinese tourists and had violated professional ethics.

Zhang said the administration has asked the whole industry to stop doing business with APA Hotels, adding that they hope all Chinese tourists boycott the chain.

On Dec 13, 1937, during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937-45), the Japanese invaders captured Nanjing. Over the following six weeks, they conducted a massacre where an estimated 300,000 people, including children, were tortured, raped and murdered.

Beijing specifies 198 key tasks for 2017

The Beijing municipal government will have 198 key tasks in 2017, and each task will be supervised by at least one government leader, the executive meeting of the municipal government has approved.

The 198 tasks are put into eight categories. They are as follows:

1. To set forth main goals for social and economic development.
2. To relocate Beijing's non-capital functions and advance the coordinated development of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.
3. To promote the supply-side structural reform, and improve Beijing's economy both in quality and in efficiency.
4. To strive to address "big city problems" and expand the city's capacity for sustainable development.
5. To deepen the innovation-driven development strategy, and build Beijing as the national sci-tech innovation center
6. To adhere to the path of the advanced socialist culture, and build Beijing as the national cultural center.
7. To uphold the people-first principle, and safeguard and improve people's livelihood.
8. To strengthen the construction of the government itself.

Among these specific categories, to address "big city problems" and to improve people's livelihood are given priority with tasks under these two categories totaling 85; tasks of removing Beijing's non-capital functions number 26. Each of the 198 key tasks will be overseen at least by one municipal government leader.

As per the requirement of the city's 2017 government work report, breakthroughs should be made in three key areas. They are as follows:

1. To complete the construction of Beijing-Qinhuangdao Highway; to continue with the construction of Pinggu Rail Transit Line; to promote traffic integration in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.
2. To plant 100,000 mu (1 hectare equals 15 mu) of ecological water resource protection forest in Beijing and Hebei, and 40,000 mu of forest for environmental protection in Beijing and Tianjin; to advance environmental remediation and ecological repair of the Yongding River, the Chaobai River and the north section of the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, among other inter-provincial rivers.

3. To properly link up industries; to guide certain industrial projects to relocate and cluster in areas such as Caofeidian demonstration zone; to promote the development of the Tianjin Binhai – Zhongguancun service platform for innovation; to support the green industrial development in Zhangjiakou – Chengde ecological function area.

The construction of the sub-center will focus on the building of the administration and ancillary facilities in 2017. According to the government's work plan, four municipal authorities, along with government-affiliated administrative departments, will start relocation at the end of this year.

The sub-center building also includes the road-system construction, improvement of the environment, landscape showcase work of cultural resources highlighted by the Grand Canal.

With regard to advancing the supply-side structural reform and improving the quality and efficiency of Beijing's economy, active moves will be made to phase out companies stuck in deficit. More than 50 "zombie enterprises" will be eliminated from the market. Health, senior care, culture and sports, recreation and tourism industries will be given to boost.

[Activist unhappy with zoo's explanation](#)

An animal welfare campaigner has accused the head of a Hangzhou zoo of failing to properly answer accusations over abuse of its tigers.

Hu Chunmei triggered widespread outrage when she shared edited footage online of a performance involving white tigers at Hangzhou Safari Park, which she recorded on Jan 12.

The two-minute clip features a confrontation between a tiger and a handler, which ended with the animal falling off the stage into a pool of water, and images of a tiger with a wound on the right side of its nose.

The footage has been shared thousands of times on Sina Weibo and other social media platforms, with many netizens criticizing the park.

In response, a manager at the zoo who was identified only as Ma gave an interview on Monday to Qianjiang Evening News, a local daily, in which he denied the animals had been abused.

However, Hu, head of the Saving Performing Animals Project run by the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation, a private NGO based in Beijing, said she was not satisfied with his explanation.

“He showed a photo of a tiger to the newspaper, saying that it was the one that fell into the water and that it was in a very good condition. But it’s not the same tiger. Its stripes are clearly different than the one in the video,” she said.

“The zoo manager also said the tiger that fell into the water was the same one with the wound on its face. He’s not telling the truth. When the tiger falls in the video, the one with a scar on its nose can be seen on the other side of the stage.”

Ma was quoted by the paper as saying the wound was an “inflammation of lymph nodes below the skin” and that the reason the animal had no canine teeth was because it was “in a dental transitional period”. All the tigers in the show were under the age of 3, he added.

Calls to the management office at Hangzhou Safari Park went unanswered on Tuesday.

The tourist attraction, which is in Fuyang district of Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, has been in operation since 2002 and is the largest wildlife park in East China, covering 2.66 square kilometers.

A statement issued on Monday by the Zhejiang Forestry Administration said the park had been ordered to suspend all animal performances.

[HK returns armed vehicles to Singapore](#)

Hong Kong customs officials announced on Tuesday that nine Singaporean armed vehicles seized two months ago will be returned after the completion of an investigation.

The Singaporean vehicles were impounded by customs on Nov 23 “because there was a suspected breach of Hong Kong law”, said Roy Tang, commissioner of customs and excise of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The armed vehicles were inside a cargo ship from Taiwan that was passing through Hong Kong. They were on their way back to Singapore following a military drill in Taiwan.

Tang said that customs has finished its investigation. The case may lead to criminal prosecution, according to a news release from the Hong Kong government.

“Import, export and transshipment/transit of strategic commodities in breach of licensing requirements are criminal offenses punishable under the Hong Kong law,” he said, adding that the military vehicles and the associated equipment will be returned to Singapore.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had thanked Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying for resolving the matter.

"This is a positive outcome," the Singaporean ministry said.

On Jan 17 in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying urged the Singaporean government to stick to the one-China principle when she was asked about the seizure of the vehicles.

China attaches great importance to its relationship with Singapore, and at the same time, China's stance on the one-China principle is firm and unchanged, she said.

Jia Duqiang, a senior researcher in Southeast Asia studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that by seizing the vehicles, China sent a signal to Singapore that the city-state should stick to the one-China principle, especially as Taiwan authorities led by Tsai Ing-wen are challenging Beijing on sovereignty.

Returning the vehicles is a positive sign for the China-Singapore relationship, he said, adding that bilateral ties have been frustrated in recent months as a result of what he called Singapore's "improper remarks" on China's stance on the South China Sea issue.

In July, Singapore asked "all parties to fully respect" the ruling of an arbitration case on South China Sea territorial disputes. China insisted that the ruling is "null and void", and has no binding force.