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LED ASTRAY

Abe's tribute to war criminals is a step in the wrong direction

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EDITOR

Doing Justice To the Past

China has declared Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe an unwelcome visitor following his recent visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. When asked whether Chinese leaders would listen to his explanations for the shrine visit in person, a Foreign Ministry spokesman ruled out the possibility by saying that Abe has "shut the door" on dialogue.

China is not alone. The U.S. State Department also expressed disappointment at Abe's visit to the Tokyo shrine, which honors fallen soldiers alongside several high-level officials executed for war crimes after World War II. Given the atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army under their leadership, the outrage of countries that fought against Japanese aggression was understandable.

Before making his decision to pay homage to the shrine, Abe must have been aware of the consequences. Previous shrine visits by elected officials invariably drew international condemnation. They were deemed as attempts to whitewash history and as appeals to right-wing conservatives who refuse to show remorse for Japan's aggressive past.

The fact that Abe disregarded international opposition shows that the Japanese prime minister pays little concern toward the feelings of China or other nations. The visit aggravated tensions caused by Abe's hard-line stance toward the China-Japan row over the sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands and his vows to amend Japan's pacifist Constitution. This has given the international community cause for concern about a possible resurrection of Japan's right wing, a dangerous trend that may destabilize the country and the region.

Despite its condemnation of Abe's visit, China has never intended to make its troubled history with Japan a barrier to cooperation. Instead, Beijing has long made it clear that it is willing to pursue an all-round relationship with Japan provided that Tokyo deals with history honestly. The two countries normalized diplomatic ties in 1972 based on a joint communiqué in which Japan acknowledged its war responsibility. Progress in bilateral relations, however, is often disrupted as the Japanese Government vacillates on its own perception of history.

At a time when China-Japan relations have hit a low point, there is still a positive side. Notably, China has been Japan's top trade partner since 2007, while Japan is China's fifth biggest trade partner. The Chinese people have become increasingly conscious of the complexity of China-Japan relations and will not vent their indignation recklessly. It is hoped that these positives will contribute to an eventual turnaround. But long-term stability in bilateral relations will not materialize until Tokyo truly repents for the colonialism and aggression against China and the region in the past. ■

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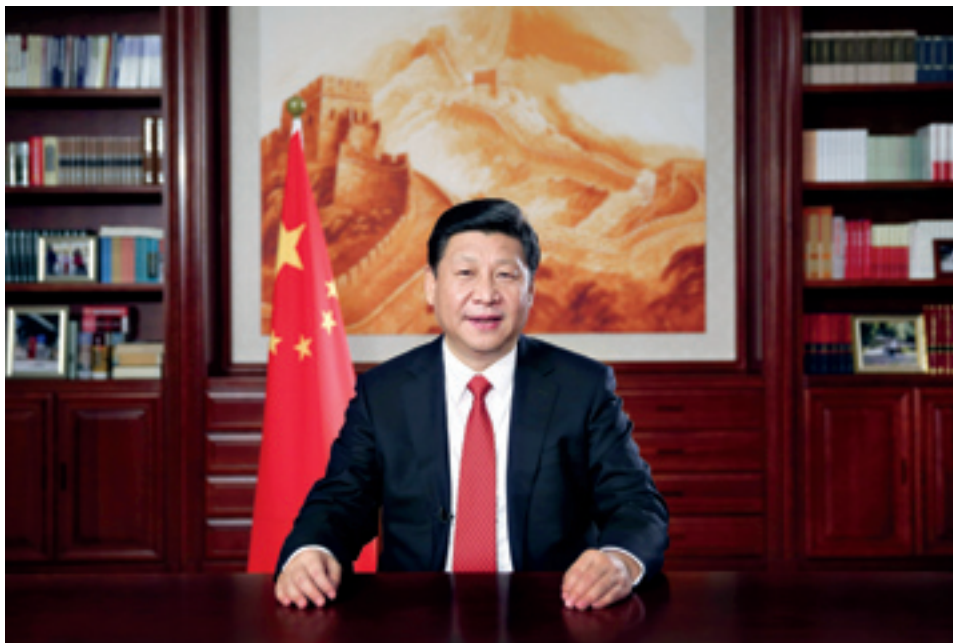
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CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S NEW YEAR ADDRESS

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and friends:

We welcome a 2014 that is full of hope.

As the New Year begins, let us also start anew. I'm delighted to extend my New Year wishes to the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, to our compatriots in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macao Special Administrative Region and Taiwan, to overseas Chinese and to our friends all over the world!

I wish seniors, children, and every family happiness, peace and health in the New Year.

At the time to ring out the old year and ring in the new, countless workers, farmers, intellectuals and cadres still remain at their posts working hard. Many of our compatriots are on the go, working in various regions of the world for the motherland. Many members of the People's Liberation Army, armed police and public security are performing their glorious duties.

Some of them are far away from the motherland and their relatives, and some cannot be reunited with either this year.

On behalf of the motherland and its people, I'd like to offer my sincerest wishes for a peaceful new year to them.

2013 was an extraordinary year for our nation and our people. We worked together to overcome a variety of obstacles and challenges, and made new outstanding achievements.

The achievements did not come easily and they were the result of blood and sweat from all of us. I'd like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to you all.

In 2013, we made an overall plan for comprehensively deepening reform and we laid out a grand blueprint together for future development.

In 2014, we expect to take further strides on the road of reform.

We have advanced reform with the fundamental purpose of making our nation stronger and more prosperous. We are aiming to achieve a higher degree of impartiality and justice in society so that people can live a better life.

Reform is a great cause that calls for common commitments and strenuous efforts from all of us. Under the reform and opening up, we have already made countless spectacular achievements. I firmly believe that the Chinese people will achieve even greater heights than before.

More than 7 billion people inhabit the planet Earth. We are all in the same boat and must keep watch and help each other to achieve common development.

We Chinese people seek to realize the Chinese dream, a great revitalization of the Chinese nation, and also wish that the dreams of people of all countries can come true.

I sincerely hope that the people of all the countries of the world will understand and help each other in the course of realizing their dreams and building the Earth that we rely on for survival into a shared beautiful home.

Life is always full of hope. Success belongs to those who forge ahead relentlessly.

On our way forward, we will encounter various risks and challenges. We still need to complete a lot of tasks so that common people can live a happier life.

We need to be modest and prudent when working together to write a new chapter in the development of our great nation.

Thank you all.

Arable Land

According to the results of the second national land survey released on December 30, 2013, China's arable land totaled 135 million hectares at the end of 2012.

The total arable land area was larger than in the previous land survey. However, the actual available arable land was just slightly above the stipulated redline of 120 million hectares set by the government to ensure food security, after deducting land arranged for forest and pasture restoration or land deemed not suitable for farming because of pollution.

The second national land survey was conducted between 2007 and 2009, coming nearly a decade after the first one ended in 1996.



WANG JIANWEI

Spearhead of Reform

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee made a decision to appoint President Xi Jinping to head a leading group for overall reform, on December 30, 2013.

The leading group will be in charge of "designing reform on an overall basis, arranging and coordinating reform, pushing forward reform as a whole, and supervising the implementation of reform plans," according to a decision adopted at a political bureau meeting.

It will research and decide major guidelines, policies and schemes for systematic reforms in economic,

political, cultural, social and environmental sectors as well as the Party system, the document said.

Xinjiang Attack

Eight terrorists died and one more was arrested during a bust on a group responsible for an "organized and premeditated terrorist attack" on December 30, 2013, according to sources with the Public Security Bureau of Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Nine terrorists attacked a police station while wielding knives in Shache County in Kashgar. They also threw explosives and set police

cars on fire.

An initial probe showed that the gang, led by Usman Barat and Abdugheni Abdukhadir, had gathered to watch terrorist videos and promote religious extremist ideas since last August. They also raised funds as well as making and testing explosives for planned terrorist attacks, according to police sources.

Police reported no additional casualties. They confiscated 25 explosives and nine knives from the site.

Local social order has returned to normal, according to police.

Asset Supervision

China ordered strict enforcement of a regulation that requires officials to report their assets and their family members' earnings.

The Organization Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee announced in a recently issued circular that authorities will enhance supervision that ensures officials' assets reports are accurate.

A revised regulation issued in 2010 requires officials to report their marriage status, property, and their children's and spouses' earnings, overseas business dealings and other investment activities.

However, some corrupt officials have circumvented the regulation by transferring their illegal gains overseas, or to their spouses and children so that they can avoid punishment.

According to the new circular, officials who fail to report their assets will not be eligible for promotion. They may also face punishments ranging from reprimand to dismissal.

The circular also revealed that authorities will launch random checks of the authenticity and integrity of asset reports.

Electoral Fraud

On December 28, 2013, the legislature of central China's Hunan Province announced that more than 500 local lawmakers had been disqualified, dismissed or had resigned over their roles in electoral fraud.



SHEN CHUNCHEN



LUNAR STAMPS

A post office worker in Shanghai shows off stamps commemorating Chinese lunar probe *Chang'e-3*'s successful soft-landing on the moon that were released on January 1, 2014



NEW YEAR GIFT

A volunteer gives a hat as a present to a student at a local primary school in Wendeng, Shandong Province, on December 31, 2013. Volunteer participated in a care-giving program for rural children whose parents work in cities

A total of 527 municipal lawmakers were present at the election of provincial lawmakers during the First Session of the 14th Hengyang Municipal People's Congress on December 28, 2012 and January 3, 2013.

Investigation has shown that 56 lawmakers elected offered a total of 110 million yuan (\$18 million) in bribes to 518 municipal lawmakers and an additional 68 staff.

The Hunan provincial legislature disqualified the 56 lawmakers while legislative bodies in Hengyang accepted the resignations of the 512 who took the bribes.

Another five provincial lawmakers who were not found to have offered bribes were still dismissed for "serious dereliction of duty." Three municipal lawmakers who did not accept bribes resigned for the same reason.

Another six who took bribes had already been transferred outside of the city and were no longer



at their posts.

Tong Mingqian, then Party chief of Hengyang in charge of the election, was removed from his new post as vice chairman of the Hunan Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference on December 21, 2013.

Space Trip

Chinese travelers will be able to take trips into space by the end of 2014 thanks to an agreement signed on December 27, 2013 in Beijing between a Chinese travel agency and the Netherlands-based space tourism firm Space Expedition Corp.

Travelers will pay a minimum of 580,000 yuan (\$95,000) to board the *Lynx Mark I* spacecraft produced by U.S. private aerospace company

XCOR, said Zhang Yong, CEO of Dexo Travel, a Chinese travel agency focusing on high-end travelers.

The *Lynx Mark I* spacecraft, which is expected to begin flights in the fourth quarter of this year, will take participants to a height of 60 km above Earth.

The spaceship arrives in outer space 60 minutes after takeoff and remains there for 20 minutes while the passenger enjoys the view, according to Zhang.

Online Extension

Expatriates can apply for resident permit extensions online as part of five new services, the Shanghai Exit-Entry Administration revealed.

Starting on January 2, 2014, foreigners can submit an online ap-

plication and then bring all required documents to the administration's office in the Pudong New Area on the appointed date. Residence permits will be issued within one hour.

Satellite Tested

China's high-definition Earth observation satellite, *Gaofen-1*, has been formally put into service, the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND) said on December 30, 2013.

The satellite has undergone eight months of in-orbit tests since it was launched into space on April 26, 2013. It not only met requirements, but outperformed what was expected when it sent back high-quality images, according to the SASTIND.

The satellite will provide assistance for geographic and resource surveys, environment and climate change monitoring, precision agriculture, disaster relief and city planning.

Gaofen-1 has given China self-sufficiency in obtaining more high-resolution Earth observation data, and China's use of remote-sensing satellites has entered a new phase, said Xu Dazhe, head of the SASTIND.

Gaofen-1 is the first in a series of satellites to be launched for high-definition Earth observation by 2016. It is also the first low-orbit remote-sensing satellite designed to be in use longer than five years.

Gaming Gaining Popularity

Game subscriptions in China hit 490 million in 2013, with sales topping 83.17 billion yuan (\$13.6 billion), according to the 2013 China Game Industry Annual Conference.

Client games are the most popular with a market share of 64.5 percent, followed by brows-

er games, mobile games, social games and console games.

Mobile games also have grown sharply, with games on televisions, reader handles and wearable devices expected to be where market players will begin to focus their efforts in the near future.



Bridge Opens

Cars run on the newly opened Yangtze River Bridge in Maanshan, Anhui Province on December 31, 2013.

Upon the completion of the bridge, the travel time between

Hefei, capital of Anhui, and Shanghai will be shortened by an hour and the travel time between Hefei and Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, will be shortened by half an hour.



Government Debt

The National Audit Office (NAO) said on December 30, 2013 that governments at various levels in China had been liable for a total direct debt of 20.7 trillion yuan (\$3.4 trillion) as of the end of June 2013. (See page 40)

The results came after a two-month-long nationwide audit of government debt by the NAO in August and September of 2013.

In summary, the audit results showed that direct debt owned by the Central Government stood at 9.81 trillion yuan (\$1.62 trillion) at the end of June 2013, while the remaining 10.89 trillion yuan (\$1.8 trillion) was owned by local governments.

The debt guaranteed by the Central Government was 260 billion yuan (\$42.98 billion), while debt guaranteed by local governments

totalled 2.67 trillion yuan (\$441.4 billion), according to the NAO.

Over the past year or so, the market has experienced anxiety over the scale of local government debt, as there has been no official update on it since mid-2011, when the NAO put the nationwide figure at around 10.7 trillion yuan (\$1.77 trillion) for the end of 2010.

PMI Drop

China's purchasing managers' index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector dropped to 51 percent in December 2013, down from 51.4 percent in November, according to official data released on January 1.

December marked the first time since June 2013 that the manufacturing PMI had declined, according to a statement jointly released by

the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing (CFLP). An index above 50 indicates expansion while an index below 50 indicates contraction.

Zhao Qinghe, an economist from the NBS, said that the weaker momentum indicated by December's PMI is due to seasonal factors. "The PMI figure still shows expansion in December, and it has remained above 50 for 15 consecutive months, which means the general industrial situation is stable," said Zhao.

Chen Zhongtao, an analyst from the CFLP, said that during the process of accelerating structural rebalance and controlling overcapacity, the growth rate of manufacturing industries may continue to slow in the near future.

"A key task for 2014's macroeconomic policies is to expand domestic demand in order to stabilize overall growth, and to be careful about possible sharp contractions of exports since the international environment is complicated," said Chen.

Supportive measures are also needed to help the growth of small-scale manufacturing businesses, which will strengthen entrepreneur confidence, he added.

Economic Census

China's third national economic census entered its registration phase on January 1, after months of preparation, according to the NBS.

The census is designed to paint a wide economic picture of China's fast-expanding secondary and tertiary industries and to compile a database covering all economic sectors, NBS Commissioner Ma Jiantang said.

The census will survey over 10 million companies and 60 million privately or individually owned businesses over the next three months.

Nearly 3 million statisticians will collect data related to enterprise ownership, staff size, financial status, production capacity and research and development activities during the census.

According to Ma, refusal to register accurate data, leaking of census data by census officials and institutions, and tampering with data



LANTERN SEASON

Villagers make red lanterns in Donghuafeng Village of Jiaozuo, central China's Henan Province. As the Lunar New Year approaches, hand-made lanterns from the village are in high demand



NEW AIRCRAFT

Two ARJ21-700 aircraft roll off the assembly line on December 30, 2013 in Shanghai. The dual-turboprop planes will be delivered to Chengdu Airlines Co. Ltd. by the end of 2014



PEN XIN

will all be dealt with seriously. He added that data gathered during the census cannot be used as evidence for legal prosecution.

The final results will be released in the second half of 2014, according to the NBS. The census is conducted once every five years.

New Nuclear Plant

The first generating unit of the Yangjiang Nuclear Power Plant in south China's Guangdong Province was connected to the power grid and began trial operations on December 31, 2013.

The plant, which cost an estimated 73.2 billion yuan (\$12.1 billion), is scheduled to start operations in a few months.

Construction of the first unit of the second nuclear power plant in Guangdong started in mid-December 2008. Its six units will generate 48 billion kWh of electricity within a year after go-

ing into commercial operations around January 2019.

The Yangjiang plant will reduce coal consumption by 15.6 million tons of coal a year. It can also help cut emissions of carbon dioxide by 38.3 million tons and sulfur dioxide by 370,000 tons annually.

Prudent Policy

China should continue its current prudent monetary policy and maintain appropriate liquidity in 2014, the monetary policy committee advised the People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, on December 31.

The PBC should also keep money supply and total social financing growing at a reasonable pace, and optimize financing and credit structures, said the statement, which came after a regular quarterly

meeting of the committee.

The central bank should embed reforms in its daily macroeconomic management and continue improving the efficiency of China's financial market, it said.

More work should be done on interest rate liberalization, reforming the yuan exchange rate regime and keeping the yuan exchange rate stable at a reasonable and balanced level, it said.

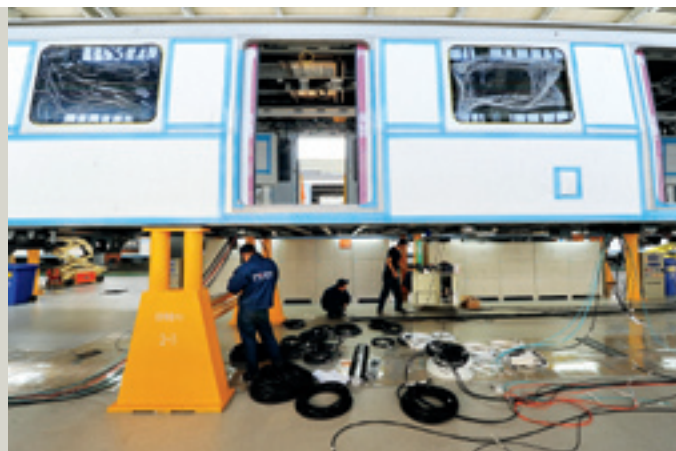
The 15-member monetary policy committee, headed by central bank governor Zhou Xiaochuan, is a consultative body for the forming of monetary policy by the PBC.

The committee is usually comprised of senior government officials from the finance ministry, statistics bureau and other financial regulators, as well as academics. It meets quarterly to make policy suggestions.

Railway Car Construction

Workers from CNR Changchun Railway Vehicles Co. Ltd. assemble subway vehicle components in Changchun, capital of northeast China's Jilin Province.

In 2013, the company ranked No.1 in terms of orders for railway vehicles.



ZHANG NAN

Numbers

5

Number of firms that China's securities regulator has approved for listing on mainland stock exchanges in January 2014, breaking the one-and-a-half-year IPO drought brought on by a regulatory ban

5.3 mln

Number of vehicles recalled across China in 2013, up 65.5 percent from a year earlier

40 mln

Sales target for smartphone manufacturer Xiaomi Corp. in 2014, more than double their 2013 target

8.76 mln

Average number of passengers that Beijing subway network carried daily from January to November 2013, up 30.5 percent year on year

THIS WEEK WORLD



BANGLADESH

A supporter of the governing Bangladesh Awami League is injured after a clash with supporters from the opposing Bangladesh Nationalist Party during a protest in Dhaka on December 29, 2013. Opposition leader Khaleda Zia has called on the government to step down



XINHUA/AF



XINHUA/AF



RUSSIA

A security officer pats down a visitor to Moscow's Red Square on December 31, 2013. Security measures were tightened in the Russian capital after terrorists set off two bombs in Volgograd



BRAZIL

Two women waded through a flooded street in Vila Velha on December 28, 2013. At least 44 people have died and more than 60,000 have been left homeless following torrential rains in southeast Brazil



XINHUA/AF



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

A group of Ivorian nationals arrive at Abidjan, the nation's capital, on December 30, 2013 after fleeing fighting in the Central African Republic



SPAIN

Revelers, dressed in mock military dress, take part in a flour fight in the town of Ibi, southeastern Spain, on December 28, 2013



NEPAL

A mahout gives his elephant a morning bath in Chitwan on December 28, 2013, during the elephant festival. The festival featured elephant soccer games and an elephant beauty pageant

“Although New Year’s concerts should help create a happy atmosphere, we wanted to bring something new to the audience. For example, Strauss’ *An der Schönen Blauen Donau* can be heard at almost every New Year’s concert, but the chorus version of the classic piece may be refreshing to audiences.”

Liao Changyong, Vice President of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, talking about a concert staged by the conservatory’s symphony orchestra and choir in Shanghai on December 28, 2013



“The Shanghai market is more in line with international markets, and has a broader perspective. It has a large number of collectors from diverse backgrounds who are dedicated, and they prefer themed collections.”

Wu Shaohua, Director of Shanghai Collectors Association, commenting on Shanghai’s art collection market



“Given that hepatitis B is still around, it’s important for babies to get vaccinated. It’s difficult to establish a causal link between the vaccines and the babies’ deaths since nearly all infants in China receive the vaccine as part of a successful vaccination program.”

Bernhard Schwartlander, the WHO representative in China, commenting on December 26, 2013, on the latest developments surrounding the deaths of 11 newborns after being inoculated against hepatitis B



“We believe that the Russian side can ensure security and make the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics a great success.”

Hua Chunying, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, at a news briefing on December 31, 2013



MASTER RECEIVES AWARD



Buddhist master Hsing Yun was awarded a “person of the year in spreading Chinese culture” award at a ceremony hosted by China Central Television on December 20, 2013.

Hsing Yun, who was born in Jiangsu Province in 1927 and arrived in Taiwan in 1949, is known for his humanistic Buddhism philosophy and credited by Buddhist scholars as one of the forefront leaders in the modern reformation of Buddhism. He has opened monasteries, universities and schools around the world, as well as engaging in religious dialogue with other Buddhist sects and religious faiths.

He is the founder of Buddha’s Light International Association, one of the largest international Buddhist organizations in the world.



SENIOR OFFICIAL SACKED



Li Chongxi, former Chairman of the Sichuan Provincial Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, was removed from his post for suspected violations of Party discipline and law on January 2.

Li, 63, became the 18th provincial-level official investigated for suspected disciplinary violations since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012 and the sixth investigated in December, 2013, alone.

Yangtze River Ecology

Oriental Outlook
December 19

In today's China, experts on water conservation seem to have become enemies with experts on ecological conservation. In 2013, discussion on the collapse of the ecological system in the Yangtze River once again triggered a conflict between the two groups.

As the biggest river of China and Asia, the Yangtze River is significant to the Chinese people. In recent years, the development of the river has reached something of a peak. This development is exemplified by series of large-scale projects, including the Three Gorges Dam, the South-North Water Transfer

Project and the cascade development of the upper Jinsha River.

Against this backdrop, a group of ecological experts led by Cao Wenxuan, an academic with the Chinese Academy of Sciences who has long studied the ecological system of the Yangtze River, advocated a 10-year suspension of all human activities in the river. This moratorium is regarded as the last possible chance for the ecological protection of the Yangtze River.

Cao commented that ecological protec-



tion efforts over the past few years were not effective enough. For instance, the Chinese river dolphin, an ancient species which has lived in the Yangtze River for 25 million years and is protected by the country under first class protection, is now functionally extinct. Another species that is similarly under first class protection in the river—the Chinese paddlefish—has not been seen in the past 10 years.

As far as Cao sees it, the key to solving the ecological crisis in the Yangtze River is to balance the appeals of different interest groups.

Train Ticket Rush

People.com.cn
December 30

On December 28, China's railway system began selling train tickets for the upcoming Chinese New Year. The holiday season brings on an annual peak travel season that lasts 40 days, which will last from January 16 to February 24 this year. The official website for ordering tickets online, 12306.cn, once again became bombarded by traffic from millions of passengers across the country. As expected, the website's system failed to cope after tickets sales began, with the sudden burst in activity causing it to go down for a short period of time on December 28.

The website was launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Railways—which was restructured as the China Railway Corp. (CRC) in March 2013—aiming to make ticket purchasing faster and more convenient for rail passengers. However, their system doesn't have the resources necessary to cope. It has frequently seen itself the subject of criticism by Internet users when it experiences such technical difficulties. Drawing from the lessons of the past, the CRC immediately fixed the problems and restored the system to working order as quickly as possible this year. On top of this, the CRC has launched a mobile platform for ticket ordering.

However, online orders for train ticks still fail to meet demands. Fundamentally, problems plaguing online ordering should be attributed to inadequate capacity of China's rail network during the Chinese New Year. China needs to develop a comprehensive solution to resolve transport capacity issues occurring around festivals. For this reason, people should be more tolerant of the CRC and their efforts to improve the situation.

No Smoking for Officials

Beijing Times
December 30

The Central Government recently issued a mandate stipulating that officials are not allowed to smoke in public places. The government demands its own officials set an example for society through abiding by the smoking ban themselves.

In actuality, the ban on smoking in public was brought into action a few years back, though it has failed to have much of an impact.

The latest measures look to enhance the effectiveness of the no smoking rule. In addition, the mandate aims to strengthen regulations for officials. In public places, the behavior of officials and public servants catch the attention of the common people. If officials do not follow regulations, neither will the common people. Furthermore, the credibility of the government will be damaged by such misconduct. Strict regulations for officials are therefore helpful for the country in improving the public environment and establishing the rule of law.

Performance Assessment Reform

Caixin Century
December 23

On December 9, 2013, the Central Government declared the reforming of the existing GDP-oriented performance assessment system for local government officials. Efforts toward ecological conservation and environmental protection will play a bigger part in assessments.

The reform aims to revise the existing system under which local government officials' working performance was assessed by their contributions to the economic growth rate. It is hoped that the reform will build up a correct concept of what makes for administrative achievements.

In China, GDP has played a major role in assessing local officials' performance for the past three decades. Recently, the situation was finally changed. The major reason for this amendment has been the alarming environmental deterioration experienced. The year 2013 marked the worst air quality ever recorded in China. By November 2013, the country's average hazy days were the most ever recorded in the past 52 years.

In addition to the deteriorating air quality, water pollution and soil pollution are also getting worse. All these factors together are sounding an alarm for the environment.

The good news is the reform has already been launched. Nevertheless, there are still challenges ahead. For instance, how to truly change the deep-rooted GDP worship?



Liu Weibing

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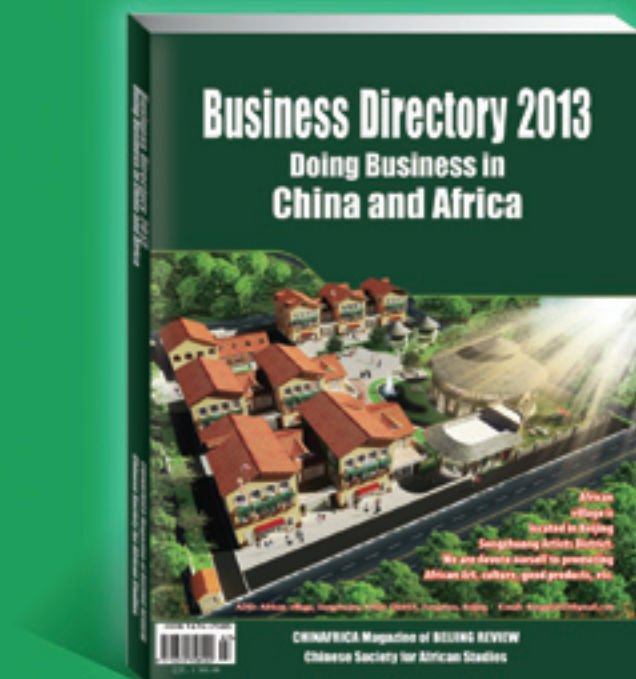
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COVER STORY

DISTORTING HIS

Shinzo Abe's personal political ambitions endanger the region's stability



CONTROVERSIAL: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on December 26, 2013



PAYING RESPECTS: File photo taken on December 7, 1970 shows then German Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the monument to Nazi victims at the Warsaw Ghetto in Warsaw, Poland

TORY

By Ding Ying



YINXU

Yin Shuzhang, 76, can never forget one winter night in 1943. It was the night when her family and a neighbor's family stayed in a small cave close to her village on the coast of east China's Shandong Province to hide from Japanese soldiers patrolling the area. She and her neighbor's 3-year-old son both caught a fever from the cold.

They were found by a soldier from the "Chinese Collaborationist Army," which was made up of Chinese soldiers forced into service by the Japanese. While the two families awaited their deaths in desperation, the soldier whispered to them, "I didn't want to be a traitor. The Japanese forced me with guns." He passed Yin a warm boiled egg, which was a luxury in those days, and left quietly. Yin survived, but the neighbor's son died three days later.

"In those days, things like this happened almost every day. Running away from the Japanese was routine," she recalled. "How can I forget those terrifying days?"

Yin's story is but one among thousands from the time of Japan's aggression in other Asian countries during World War II. People in China, Korea as well as countries in Southeast Asia were killed, raped, mugged and had their dignity trampled on during these years, which is why none of these countries can ever forget the aggression that they suffered at the hands of Japanese forces.

Unfortunately, Japan's official attitude toward its wartime history remains vague, with some even attempting to revise it or otherwise downplay the atrocities committed by their forefathers.

Japanese officials recently incited a major diplomatic incident when they paid tribute at the Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines all Japanese soldiers that died in conflicts from the Boshin War (1868-69) up to the end of World War II, including 14 convicted Class A war criminals. Even after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo ▶▶

Abe attracted condemnation from members of the international community—including many East Asian countries ravaged by the Empire of Japan's colonialism, as well as its own ally, the United States—Japanese Internal Affairs Minister Yoshitaka Shindo still paid a visit to the shrine on the first day of 2014. These visits not only heightened regional tensions, but aroused alert worldwide over Japan's increasingly right-leaning leadership.

"I cannot understand. Since when were murderers good people?" Yin asked.

Conservative estimates suggest that at least 35 million Chinese nationals were killed during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937-45). People like Yin wonder: Will Japan make a return to the political views of its past? Will the country retread the path it walked before?

The war-linked Yasukuni Shrine has long been seen as a symbol of Japan's past militarism. The 14 Class-A war criminals enshrined there include Hideki Tojo, who planned Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and Abe's own grandfather Nobusuke Kishi, who was charged with Class-A war crimes though not tried or convicted.

Complicating matters

Yang Bojiang, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), considers Abe's Yasukuni Shrine visit as another step rightward following the release of a national security strategy, new defense program guidelines and a medium-term defense buildup plan in December last year. The three documents are seen as aiming to free Japan from its postwar political shackles.

On a personal level, Abe can fulfill his own political desires, said Yang. The researcher predicts that as Abe has pledged to restore Japan's status, it will be only a matter of time before he tries to lift the country's self-imposed ban on exercising the right of collective self-defense, or coming to the aid of an ally under armed attack.

Zhang Yong, another researcher of Japanese studies with the CASS, pointed out that being a representative of politicians born after World War II, Abe has no clear understanding of Japan's responsibilities toward the outcomes of the war, which is why he tries to beautify Japan's aggression and distort history.

"He prefers military realism instead of political realism. He chose an extremist method of visiting the shrine to fulfill his political mission



of right deviation," Zhang said. He noticed that Abe's visit had sent two messages: getting rid of the postwar international system to make Japan a political and military giant and seeking more support by catering to the domestic right.

"The only effect of Abe's visit is the deterioration of the East Asian situation, and increased tension in current conflicts between Japan and its neighbors," said Zhang, predicting that the relationship between China and Japan is going to become even more complicated.

Abe's visit to the shrine not only hurt the feelings of the nations that Japan invaded during World War II, but also violated the conscience of international society and challenged the postwar international order, said Qu Xing, President of the China Institute of International Studies.

"The 14 Class-A war criminals represented at the Yasukuni Shrine should be nailed to a pillar of shame in history. They were Japan's versions of Adolf Hitler, but they are still worshiped by Japan's right-wing politicians. It humiliates international society as a whole. The Chinese people and our government will definitely fight against this dangerous trend," said Qu.

Making a choice

Chinese Ambassador to Japan, Cheng Yonghua, published an article in *Mainichi Shimbun*, one of Japan's major newspapers, on December 30,

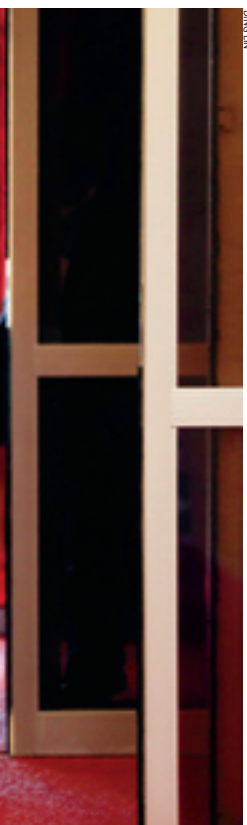
2013. In the article he stated that China has always differentiated Japanese people from Japanese militarists, and war criminals from ordinary soldiers. Like Chinese people, Japanese people were also victims of war, to which Japanese militarists should be held responsible.

"We have no objection to ordinary Japanese paying tribute to their family members. But Japanese leaders' visits to the shrine concern the country's understanding of war. China can never accept such visits," said Cheng.

Abe and his acts have once again exposed the dangerous intention of the Japanese right wing to beautify war criminals and challenge the results of World War II as well as the postwar international order, said Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Urging Japanese politicians to reflect on their history and correct errors, Hua stressed that the Chinese and Asian people will never allow Japan to turn back the clock.

Abe's administration has often defined the Japanese-U.S. relationship as an alliance based on the same interests and values. However, Abe has recently reached the bottom line of the United States' conceptions of history and war, said Liu Jiangyong, a professor with Tsinghua University. On the issue of Abe's visit to the shrine, Washington and Tokyo's interests and values are quite different, Liu pointed out.

"If some countries were to worship Osama



ENVOY: Japanese Ambassador to China, Masato Kitera (front), arrives for a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on December 26, 2013. At the meeting, Wang expressed strong condemnation over Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine

Bin Laden as a martyr 50 years later, would the United States accept it?" asked Liu. He added that regional instability is not in the interests of Washington's Asia-Pacific policy.

"This move amounts to a barefaced denial of the abhorrent atrocities the Empire of Japan committed during a dark chapter for humanity, and also a blatant refusal to face up to or learn from history," said *People's Daily*, the flagship newspaper of the Communist Party of China, in a commentary on January 2.

The commentary compared Japan's attitude with that of Germany. "Abe's conspicuous lack of historical honesty contrasts shamefully with the courage and vision of late West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, who dropped to his knees at the monument to victims of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in a spontaneous act of genuine repentance," the article read. "The sincere remorse and in-depth reflection of Brandt and other German leaders paved the way for their nation to be accepted by the international community. The moment Brandt knelt down, his nation stood up."

Now, Japan has to answer the question: Will it stand up from the shadow of war and become a responsible power in the region? Or will it resort to its old path and become a common enemy to its neighbors? ■

International Reactions

China

Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi severely criticized Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, calling it a brazen affront to people of all countries that suffered from Japanese aggression and colonial rule.

"The Chinese people cannot be insulted, nor can the people of Asia or the world be humiliated. Abe must own up to Japan's wrongdoing, correct their mistakes and take concrete measures to remove its egregious effects," Yang said in a statement. "Abe is the prime minister of Japan. His visit to the Yasukuni Shrine is by no means a domestic affair of Japan, still less an act by an individual."

"In regard to such a leader, the Chinese people will certainly not welcome him, and Chinese leaders will unquestionably not speak with him either," Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said. "Abe has made poor calculations of China-Japan relations and made one mistake after another," Qin said, adding this move constituted a deliberate trample on human conscience and an unscrupulous challenge to truth and justice.

The UN

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, "Leaders bear a special responsibility to be sensitive to the feelings of others, especially the memory of victims, as the region should strive to be forward-looking and harmonious." It is highly regrettable that tensions from the past are still plaguing the region, Ban added.

The United States

"We were disappointed that Japan's leadership has taken an action that will exacerbate tensions with Japan's neighbors," said Marie Harf, spokeswoman of the U.S. State Department. "Our message is very clear from the words we chose."

Russia

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stressed Russia's opposition to Abe's visit, deeming it a provocation to its Asian neighbors. Abe's visit shows that Japan is unwilling to face up to its past objectively and is trying to whitewash its militaristic history of aggression and colonial rule, he said. Russia is dissatisfied with Japan's attitude toward the outcomes of World War II.

Lavrov urged Japan to correct its erroneous historical view and avert further moves that will similarly hurt the feelings of the victims of Japanese aggression in various countries and that will inevitably intensify regional tensions. He said that Russia is ready to work with China to safeguard regional security and stability, and that Russia holds a completely identical stance with China on the Yasukuni Shrine issue.

The EU

Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine is not conducive to lowering tensions in the region or to improving relations with Japan's neighbors, a spokesperson for EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said in a statement.

"All countries in the region have reaffirmed their commitment to peace and stability in recent months," said the statement. "The EU has consistently emphasized the need to build on this by handling disputes with careful diplomacy and by refraining from actions which can raise tensions."

It said the EU urges the countries involved to build positive and constructive ties with their neighbors that will bolster confidence, defuse tensions and assure the long-term stability of the region.

Germany

"All nations must honestly live up to their role in the cruel war events of the 20th century... only on the basis of an honest account is it possible to build a future," said German Foreign Ministry spokesman Steffen Seibert. He suggested that Japan should face up to the history. "This is a conviction that Germany takes to heart and applies to all countries," said Seibert.

South Korea

Seoul described the visit as "untrustworthy behavior." South Korean President Park Geun Hye criticized Japan for "digging up the wounds of the past." "In the new year ... I hope that there will be no act of letting trust between countries crash and people's feelings deteriorate..." Park said.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se warned that Seoul will deal sternly with Japan's nationalist actions, saying further repercussions on the already strained relations between South Korea and Japan are inevitable.

(Source: Xinhua News Agency)



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