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A SHOW OF HANDS

HK en route to universal suffrage in 2017



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Cover Photo: People participate in a march
against the Occupy Central campaign in
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EDITOR'S DESK

Significant Step For Hong Kong

China's top legislature decided on August 31 to grant residents universal suffrage in the election of Hong Kong's chief executive on the basis of nomination by a "broadly representative" committee.

This move marks a milestone in the development of Hong Kong's democratic governance and will lay a solid foundation for realizing the direct election of the chief executive.

There have been numerous controversies in Hong Kong in the past few years concerning how the chief executive should be selected. The recent Occupy Central movement—an occupation protest in Hong Kong's central business district—and its counterpart, the anti-Occupy Central movement, represent such disputes.

In fact, since China resumed its exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997, the Central Government has been pushing forward the progress of democracy in the special administrative region (SAR) according to its Basic Law, the SAR's mini-Constitution. In 2007, it further established a timetable for achieving universal suffrage in Hong Kong.

The decision to elect Hong Kong's chief executive by popular vote starting from 2017 onward represents the common will of its people. This approach has a solid legal basis and highlights the Central Government's commitment to achieving Hong Kong's long-term interests. It will allow groups holding different political opinions to shelve differences and reach a consensus, thus playing a significant role in keeping Hong Kong prosperous and stable.

When Britain ruled Hong Kong, the region's governor was appointed by the British Government and Hong Kong residents played no role in electing their leader. Since Hong Kong's return, the Central Government has established a set of democratic systems in the region based on the "one country, two systems" policy and the principle of "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong."

Since it is unrealistic to immediately establish a democratic system in the region after more than 100 years of colonial rule, the Chinese Government has put in place a transitional period, working toward universal suffrage starting in 2017. In this period, Hong Kong's chief executive is selected by an election panel made up of representatives from all across the SAR.

Over the past two years, certain groups in Hong Kong have attempted to deny the Central Government's right to oversee the region's political system and have advocated a different approach according to so-called "international standards." Such radical activities aimed at swaying away from the Central Government and leading Hong Kong astray are doomed to fail.

Achieving the direct election of Hong Kong's chief executive requires the concerted efforts of the Central Government, the SAR Government and ordinary Hong Kong citizens. It is widely expected that residents in the region will work together with the government to improve the region's governance and turn universal suffrage into a reality. ■

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FLORAL TRIBUTE

Young students present flowers at the Museum of the War of the Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in Beijing on September 3, or Victory Day, during a high-profile commemorative ceremony.

Top state leaders, veterans and local residents attended the ceremony, the first since China's national legislature ratified the official observance of Victory Day in February.

The war broke out in 1937 when Japan launched an all-out military offensive against China and ended on September 2, 1945, with the signing of a document declaring Japan's unconditional surrender.



Maiden Voyage

The ocean liner *Coconut Princess* departs from a port in Sanya, southernmost Hainan Province, for the Xisha Islands in the South China Sea after a cruise route linking the two sites formally opened on September 2.

Located to the southeast of Hainan, the Xisha Islands are a cluster of islets, sandbanks and reefs famous for their unusual scenery and ecosystem.

The Chinese Government announced in 2009 that Hainan would be developed as a destination for international tourists, including the Xisha Islands.

Martyrs' Day

On August 31, the Chinese top legislature approved the establishment of a national day to commemorate martyrs.

According to a decision by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), Martyrs' Day will be marked with events across the country on September 30 every year.

It is the third national memorial day in China, following Victory Day of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression on September 3 and National Memorial Day for Nanjing Massacre Victims on December 13, both ratified by the NPC Standing Committee in February.

Martyrs, as defined by the government, are "people who sacrificed their lives for the nation's independence and prosperity, as well as the welfare of the people since the First Opium War (1840-42)."

It is believed that China has about 20 million martyrs. However, as many of them did not leave their names during wartime, only 1.93 million martyrs

have been listed in the government directory. About 300 more people have been identified as martyrs annually in recent years.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs initiated feasibility studies on setting the day back in 2005, and won public support after soliciting feedback in the following years, according to ministry officials.

Maritime Adjudication

China has become a maritime judicial center for the Asia-Pacific region after three decades of effort, according to a report by the Supreme People's Court (SPC) on September 2.

Since maritime courts were first set up in China in 1984, cases have increased annually by around 10 percent. By 2013, a total of 225,283 cases had been handled, of which 215,826 had been concluded, involving over 70 countries and regions, said the SPC.

It was revealed that the annual caseload rose from a little over 100 in the early years to more than 20,000 in 2013, the most in the world.

Between 1984 and 2013, the courts detained 7,744 vessels, of which 1,660 were foreign, and auctioned off 633 of them, including 123 foreign ships.

The 10 maritime courts are located in Beihai in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Dalian in Liaoning Province, Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, Haikou in Hainan Province, Ningbo in Zhejiang Province, Qingdao in Shandong Province, Shanghai, Tianjin, Wuhan in Hubei Province and Xiamen in Fujian Province.

IPR Courts

Special courts for intellectual property rights (IPR) cases will be established in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, as per a resolution of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on August 31.

The courts will focus primarily on civil and administrative lawsuits regarding patents, new plant varieties, integrated circuit layout designs and technological knowledge.

Rotation of Educators

Heads and teachers at prestigious schools will take turns to serve in other schools, especially in rural areas or those with poor recognition, according to a plan released on September 2.

The move is aimed at narrowing the gap between rural and urban areas and between different schools, said a statement issued by ministries of education and finance as well as human resources and social security.

It is stipulated that after serving two tenures, headmasters and deputies in primary and junior high schools will take posts in other schools in the same county or district. Teachers will also rotate among schools after a certain number of years.

In some Chinese cities, tens of thousands of students compete for access to "key senior schools" with experienced teachers and better opportunities to be admitted to universities. Schools with poor recognition or located in rural areas often find it hard to attract students.

The widening education gap between regions and schools is attributed to unbalanced economic development and investment disparity.

China aims to achieve balanced

BEAR HUG

Performers wearing panda costumes welcome participants to the opening ceremony of the 2014 Fashion Week & Clothing Purchasing Exhibition in Beijing on August 30



performance among schools in the same county or district by 2020.

Birth Defect Study

Chinese scientists on August 28 began a research project looking into birth defects and genetic disorders, with 900,000 babies in the country being born each year with mental or physical disabilities.

The figure makes up about 5.6 percent of all newborns, the Ministry of Technology said when announcing the research, which will cover 79 major categories of birth defects and genetic disorders and involve surveys and analysis of biological samples.

The surveys will be based on the existing screening network for birth defects.

Although China started birth defect screening 20 years ago, only 1 percent of possible defects were covered at that time, so records on a large number of birth defects and genetic disorders are lacking.

Ministry officials said that the researchers' findings will be used to create a database for further study and decision making in this area.

Trademark Report

China continues to top the world in the number of trademarks registered, according to data from the State Administration for Industry & Commerce (SAIC) on September 2.

The number of valid trademarks registered in China totaled 7.61 million at the end of June, said the administration.

The SAIC had received over 14 mil-

"Only 20 percent of export-oriented firms have their own brands and just 11 percent of China's exports are sold under domestic brand names."

Zhang Mao,
Minister of the State
Administration for
Industry & Commerce



Preserving Treasured Structures

Workers repair a damaged section of the Great Wall in Luanping County, Hebei Province. The China Culture Relics Protection Foundation on September 1 established a special fund, worth 18.2 million yuan (\$2.96 million), to better finance the protection of the Great Wall.

The aging UNESCO World Heritage Site is confronted with pressing challenges including a shortage of renovation money in some undeveloped regions.

lion trademark applications as of June. China has led the world in the number of trademark applications since 2002.

Zhang Mao, Minister of the SAIC, downplayed the surging number of trademarks, saying only a small proportion of Chinese brands are recognized in the international market. He pointed out that Chinese enterprises still rely too much upon cost advantage.

The country's revised Trademark

Law went into effect in May to streamline registration procedures and improve protection.

Zhang promised more efforts to safeguard intellectual property, including trademarks, especially well-known brands, which are more vulnerable to "malicious" trademark registration.

He also pledged to increase penalties for trademark infringement, such as demanding more punitive compensation.

Back to School

Students at a middle school in quake-affected Ludian County, Yunnan Province, attend psychological counseling on September 1, the first day of the fall semester.

A 6.5-magnitude earthquake hit the area on August 3, killing more than 600 people and destroying more than 80,000 buildings, including many schools. A total of 231 makeshift schools have been built in the quake zone.

Students will receive training on earthquake safety, fire prevention and disaster reduction before they fully resume their lessons, according to local education authorities.



A Powerful Combination

About 20 billion yuan (\$3.26 billion) will be injected into an e-commerce joint venture (JV) formed by Dalian Wanda Group Co. Ltd., Tencent Holdings Ltd. and Baidu Inc. in the next five years, Wanda's Chairman Wang Jianlin said on August 29.

Wanda is China's leading property developer that runs the largest shopping mall network in China. Cinemas and other recreational facilities are included in the malls. Tencent and Baidu are China's leading Internet companies and also arch-rivals of the country's e-commerce leader Alibaba Group.

Initial investment in the project is 5 billion yuan (\$813 million), according to a joint statement released by the three companies. Wanda will control 70 percent of the shares in the new company while Tencent and Baidu will go halves with the remaining 30 percent.

Wanda set up the JV in a bid to bridge the online and offline sales channels, Wang said. "The JV will sell services rather than products," said Wang, adding his intention was to provide a new shopping and entertainment

experience to Chinese shoppers.

Wanda expects the number of subscribers of the JV to break 40 million this year, and that by 2015, it will hit 100 million.

PMI Data

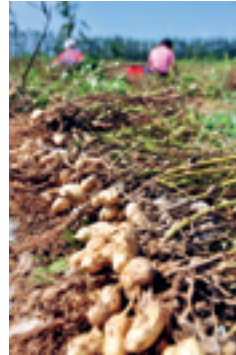
Growth in China's manufacturing sector slightly moderated in August, pointing to subdued momentum in the economic recovery, new data showed.

The purchasing managers' index (PMI) came in at 51.1 in August, down from July's 51.7, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing (CFLP) on September 1.

A reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below 50 reflects contraction.

A majority of sub-indices retreated in August, with those measuring production, new orders and purchasing volumes registering the biggest drops.

"The PMI data indicate some downward pressure on the economy," noted Zhang Liquan, an economist at the Development Research Center of the



WORKING FOR PEANUTS

Farmers harvest peanuts in Houlou Village, Liaocheng, east China's Shandong Province, on September 3

State Council.

But as the indices still stayed above the 50-point watershed, Zhang maintained that the basic trend of a steadily growing economy remains unchanged.

In contrast, official data suggested non-manufacturing activity slightly recovered in August as the tertiary industry was robust and market outlook remained optimistic.

The PMI for the non-manufacturing sector rebounded to 54.4 percent last month, according to the NBS and CFLP on September 3.

The official non-manufacturing PMI tracks business activity in sectors including construction, software, aviation, railways and real estate.

Cai Jin, deputy head of the CFLP, said China's overall non-manufacturing activity grew mildly and stably. He noted the satisfactory performance of the tertiary sector and predicted it would continue rising in the next few months.

Duty-Free Shop

The world's largest duty-free shop (DFS) opened its doors on September 1 in the coastal city of Sanya in south China's island province of Hainan.

The Haitang Bay Duty-Free Shopping Center has attracted nearly 300 international brands. For several of them, including Prada, Rolex and Giorgio Armani, it is the first time they have appeared in a DFS on the Chinese mainland.

With a shopping area of 72,000 square meters, the new facility will replace an existing DFS, which is just one seventh of the new store's size, in Sanya's downtown.

The State Council, China's cabinet, gave Hainan permission to run a duty-free program on a trial basis in April 2011 to promote the island as a world-class international tourist destination by 2020.

From 2011 to 2013, Hainan saw an annual 15-percent increase in its tourism revenue on average, with offshore duty-free sales accounting for 10 percent of the total revenue.

Figures from the local customs show that as of mid-August, the revenue in Hainan's two DFS stores had exceeded 9.2 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion).



Connecting the Dots

A catenary inspection car tests railway contact lines in Zhangye West Railway Station, a stop on the Gansu section of the Lanzhou-Xinjiang High-Speed Railway, on September 2. The 1,776-km passenger line connects northwest China's Gansu Province, Qinghai Province and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. It's expected to be put into use at the end of this year.



Honorable Discharge

Flood water is discharged through sluice gates on the Three Gorges Dam on September 2. Due to continuous rainfall upstream, the reservoir saw its biggest flood peak this year that day, leading to the discharge.

Rescue Plan

China will allow overseas investors to establish and own shipping enterprises, according to new guidelines that aim to boost the deficit-plagued sector.

The guidelines issued by the State Council on September 3 pledged to give an open door to foreign investors and private companies in the shipping industry.

Shipping businesses fully owned and controlled by foreign investors can be founded within the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone, according to the guidelines.

China's shipping industry is dominated by large state-owned enterprises such as China Ocean Shipping Group Co. and China Shipping Group Co. They have struggled with slumping revenues since 2008, when the global financial crisis crippled international trade.

The 10 shipping companies listed in China reported a total loss of nearly 1.5 billion yuan (\$245 million) in the first six months of this year, according to their financial reports.



Sino-Russo Pipe

On September 1, China and Russia started the construction of a joint natural gas pipeline in Russia's Eastern Siberia, as they implement a natural gas supply contract signed between the two countries.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli witnessed the welding of the first roll of pipes on the Russian side of the China-Russia East Route natural gas pipeline in Yakutsk, capital of Russia's Sakha (Yakutia) Republic.

According to a 30-year deal reached between China and Russia in May, the east route pipeline will start providing China with 38 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from 2018.

Chayandin and Kovyktin gas fields in Eastern Siberia will become major sources of supply when the pipeline begins to pump natural gas to China.

The pipeline will be jointly built by China National Petroleum Corp. and Gazprom of Russia, with the latter being responsible for building the part within Russian borders.

Anti-Trust Fines

Fines worth more than 110 million yuan (\$17.93 million) have been imposed on 23 property insurers and one insurance association in east China's Zhejiang Province after evidence of price fixing was found.

The Zhejiang Provincial Insurance Association and 23 local property insurance companies were found to have colluded on discounts on car insurance premiums during multiple meetings, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said on September 2.

The penalties against domestic insurance companies were the latest measures in China's anti-monopoly crackdown. Foreign carmakers and auto parts suppliers have also been fined for monopoly activities since the end of July.

The NDRC said it launched investigation into all 32 insurance companies in Zhejiang after it was tipped off that the provincial insurance association convened with 23 insurance companies to collude on discounts for premiums on newly purchased cars.

Fingerprint Payment

China's largest third-party payment platform, Alipay, is joining forces with telecommunications giant Huawei to develop a service allowing cellphone users to make online payments using fingerprints as verification.

The cutting-edge service will be applied on Huawei's flagship Ascend Mate 7, which is installed with a fingerprint sensor and debuted in Berlin, Germany, on September 4.

Users can make payments or transfer money through Alipay Wallet, a mobile application of Alipay, part of China's e-commerce giant Alibaba Group.

The security of users is protected by a specific technology that prevents third-party applications from being able to read the fingerprints, said Li Xiaolong, a senior Huawei executive in charge of mobile phone business.

Fingerprint payment is a promising step forward in the mobile world, with leading cellphone brands including Apple to Samsung also exploring its commercial use, said Kong Qi, a senior Alipay manager.



POLAND

Polish President Bronisław Komorowski (right) and his German counterpart Joachim Gauck take part in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Westerplatte Monument during a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of the start of World War II on September 1



MALAYSIA

A boy looks out at a Malaysia Airlines plane parked on the tarmac at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on August 29. Malaysia Airlines will slash 6,000 jobs, trim its route network, and replace its CEO under plans announced to stave off bankruptcy



THAILAND

Polo players battle for the ball atop elephants during the annual King's Cup elephant polo tournament in Samut Prakan Province on August 28



HUNGARY

Tens of thousands of rubber ducks float down the Danube in front of the Parliament building during a rubber duck race for charity in Budapest on August 31



JAPAN

Workers clear a drain to exterminate mosquitoes at Yoyogi Park in Tokyo on September 1, following an outbreak of dengue fever in which at least 34 people have been infected



LIBYA

Members of the Libya Dawn Islamist militia gather at the U.S. diplomatic compound in Tripoli, on August 31

↓ REELECTED MACAO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Chui Sai On, incumbent Chief Executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR), was reelected for another five-year term on August 31.

Chui won 380 votes from the 396 members of the Election Committee who attended the voting. The Election Committee comprises a total of 400 members. The Central Government will carry out the process of appointment after receiving the formal report on the election by the Macao SAR Government.

Cui was the sole candidate in this year's election. At a news conference after the election, he pledged to fully implement the principle of "one country, two systems" while improving the livelihoods of Macao residents.

Born in Macao in 1957, Chui completed his Ph.D. in public health at the University of Oklahoma. He served as secretary for social affairs and culture of the Macao SAR Government from 1999, when the former Portuguese colony was returned to China, to 2009.



BYD: Opting for Electric Autos

Caixin Century Weekly
August 25

Thanks to a series of policies favorable to new-energy automobiles issued in late 2013, these vehicles are again becoming the focus of China's car market. Privately owned hi-tech company BYD presented its plug-in hybrid vehicle, Qin, in December 2013, and sales of the car have since skyrocketed. Meanwhile, more than 5,000 orders have come in for BYD's electrically powered K9 bus, with expected total sales reaching 10 billion yuan (\$1.6 billion). Comparatively, prior to 2014, BYD had sold just over 1,000 of these buses in total. Are such figures a hint that a rise in electrically powered automobiles is on the horizon?

Despite increased sales, conflicts remain. Petroleum and other traditional industries are opponents of purely electric vehicles, as the development of such vehicles squeezes out space for traditional ones. Yet in China, due to the shortage of charging stations, the room for growth of fully electrically powered automobiles is limited. People are afraid that these cars might break down, with nowhere nearby to charge them. Plug-in hybrid vehicles like BYD's Qin can potentially alleviate worries over car charging. In the coming decades, such vehicles may even become the mainstream mode of private transportation.

Air pollution levels necessitate the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles, and China has now produced systematic policies that give priority to electrically powered buses in public transportation. BYD's goals coincide with the government's push.



Shenzhen: A City Powered by Innovation

Outlook Weekly
September 1

While many local governments across China are struggling to cope with the decline of investment-driven growth, Shenzhen has explored a new path. Fixed asset investment accounts for less than 20 percent of local GDP. Comparatively, scientific research funding represents more than 4 percent of its GDP, even higher than that of most developed countries. Its GDP growth rate in the first half of the year reached 8 percent, higher than the country's average.

Indeed, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, established shortly after China adopted its reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s, is gradually losing the policy privileges that it used to boast. A larger advantage is taking shape there: Local economic development is being pushed to a higher level by various scientific and technological innovations. A number of resident hi-tech companies like Tencent, Huawei and ZTE Corp. are now expanding their markets out to the rest of the country and even around the world.

"The death rate from breast cancer has dropped in recent years worldwide, but the trend in China is the opposite. Most patients in China are diagnosed at a late stage due to a lack of awareness and regular screenings."

Sun Qiang, Director of Peking Union Medical College Hospital's Breast Center, at the annual meeting of the Global Chinese Breast Cancer Organizations Alliance in Beijing on August 31

"China needs legislation on consumer product safety to protect consumers and improve the quality of all products. The government's supervision alone cannot always effectively ensure their safety, as we are faced with millions of products, a changing market and various factors that affect safety."

Liu Zhaobin, chief engineer with the General Administration for Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, at a September 2 seminar organized by the administration



The key to industrializing scientific and technological progress is the integration of technology and capital. Outstanding human resources are essential. In the first half of the year, Shenzhen recruited more than 2,000 professionals with an overseas education in areas such as finance, information technology and computer science, up 63 percent compared with the same period last year.

Rising Need to Protect Most Vulnerable

Yangcheng Evening News September 1

Over the month of August, tragedies befalling several college-age women gained wide public attention. For instance, a 20-year-old woman in southwest China's Chongqing was killed by the driver of an unlicensed taxi. Another female college student in Jinan, east China's Shandong Province, was held captive and sexually

abused by the driver of an unlicensed scooter after taking a ride with him. She suffered serious injuries.

Surely these young women did not deserve such tragic destinies and inhumane treatment at the hands of others. In cities with insufficient public transport systems, unlicensed taxis run rampant. A public education campaign is needed to steer people of all ages away from these dangerous, unlawful drivers. Loopholes in the public security network are also to be blamed. Self-protection only goes so far, and mechanisms should be put in place in populous cities to safeguard those most at risk, like these young women.

↓ FIRST PLA SPOKESWOMAN

Senior Colonel **Xing Guangmei** has recently gained attention as the first spokeswoman for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy. Last November, when seven PLA units installed new spokespeople, she was the only woman assigned to the position.

Xing has since assumed her new role, sharing duties with a spokesman named Liang Yang. She came into the spotlight on August 26 when she spoke to the media in Weihai, east China's Shandong Province, where an event commemorating the 120th anniversary of the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 was held.

Xing, 46, holds a Ph.D. in law and does research at the PLA Navy's academic institute in areas that include maritime security policies. She previously worked as an instructor at a military academy in Shandong's Qingdao, her native city.



“The Chinese market is extremely important to us. The Chicago Department of Aviation is looking forward to working collaboratively with the Beijing Capital International Airport to bring more air services and travelers to both cities, which is vital for job creation and economic development.”

Rosemarie Andolino, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Aviation, at a forum for airport CEOs on September 2 in Beijing

“All sex-selective abortions should be treated as criminal offenses, as they are in India and South Korea, where baby boys are also favored.”

Yuan Xin, a professor of demographics at Nankai University's Institute of Population and Development, responding on September 3 to a draft government regulation aimed at combating illegal sex-determination tests and abortions

COVER STORY

A NEW CHAPTER FOR DEM

The first ever round of universal suffrage for Hong Kong's chief executive will be



OCRACY

held in 2017 By Li Li



EASTERN PEARL: A panoramic view of Hong Kong's Kowloon Peninsula and Hong Kong Island in May

Hong Kong's democracy is about to make another leap forward after the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee decided to grant universal suffrage in the selection of Hong Kong's chief executive on the basis of nomination by a "broadly representative" committee.

The decision on how the chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) will be selected was passed unanimously at the bi-monthly session of the standing committee of China's top legislature on August 31.

The decision allows two or three candidates to run for the HKSAR's top job after obtaining support from at least half of a nominating committee that "shall be chosen in accordance with the number of members, composition and formation method of the election committee for the fourth chief executive."

According to the NPC decision, all eligible voters in the region will be able to have their say in who the chief executive for the HKSAR will be, while the existing system and voting procedures for the Legislative Council will remain unchanged. Under Hong Kong's Basic Law, it is stipulated that "all permanent residents of the HKSAR shall have the right to vote and the right to stand for election in accordance with law."

Li Fei, Vice Secretary General of the NPC Standing Committee, said during a press conference on August 31 afternoon that the size of the nominating committee was set at 1,200.

The chief executive-elect, after being selected through voting by the populace, will still need to be appointed by the Central Government, according to the decision, which stressed that the chief executive has to be a person who "loves the country and loves Hong Kong."

Li said this is a basic requirement for the "one country, two systems" policy. The method for selecting the chief executive by universal suffrage must provide corresponding institutional safeguards for this purpose.

Top Chinese legislator Zhang Dejiang also said on August 31 that the new decision was of great importance to implementing the principles of "one country, two systems" and ensuring that the region maintains a high degree of autonomy while following the Hong Kong Basic Law.

"The decision is vital for steadily developing democracy in Hong Kong and implementing the selection of the HKSAR chief executive by universal suffrage according to law," he said.

Britain made no mention of democracy for Hong Kong until the dying days of nearly 150 years of colonial rule. Before Hong Kong was re-

turned to China on July 1, 1997, the Governors of Hong Kong were all appointed by the British Crown, without recourse to any pretense of democracy.

A milestone

The first chief executive of the HKSAR was elected by a 400-member selection committee in early 1997, while the second, third and fourth chief executives were elected by an election committee, the membership of which had grown from 800 to 1,200 in the meantime.

In December 2007, the NPC Standing Committee resolved that the election of Hong Kong's fifth chief executive in 2017 may be implemented by the method of universal suffrage.

The latest decision said that "implementing universal suffrage represents historic progress in Hong Kong's democratic development and a significant change in the political structure of the HKSAR."

Speaking during the press conference on August 31, Li said the NPC Standing Committee's decision marked a "key moment" in Hong Kong's democratic development and is crucial to its current and future stability, as well as the fundamental interests of Hong Kong residents and foreign investors.

"Hong Kong has accomplished democratic progress it never enjoyed under the British rule of over 150 years," said Chen Zu'er, head of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies. "I should congratulate the Hong Kong people today for being so close to universal suffrage."

Speaking at an event on September 1 to discuss the NPC's decision, Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying said, "The majority of Hong Kong citizens—namely, the 5 million qualified voters of the selection of chief executive in 2017—will be able to cast their votes to select the chief executive."

"This is the first opportunity, a very good opportunity, for Hong Kong to have one man, one vote, universal suffrage. This is something we should all feel proud of," he added.

The HKSAR Government will now draft a detailed election proposal and consult the public in the coming months. A resolution detailing the reform will be given to the Legislative Council in the first quarter of next year.

Hong Kong's former chief secretary, Tang Ying-yan, said he supports the decision and hopes that the new round of public consultation will be launched at an early date.

The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce Chairman Pang Yiu-kai said that Hong Kong people wish to implement universal



INTRODUCING UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE: Li Fei (right), Vice Secretary General of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, and Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, before a briefing session on the NPC Standing Committee's decision in Hong Kong on September 1

suffrage as soon as possible, and "it will be a historic milestone for Hong Kong if we can elect our ideal leader in 2017 through 'one person, one vote.'"

The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce appealed to all sectors of Hong Kong to put away prejudices and seek for consensus to implement universal suffrage and promote the democratic development of Hong Kong.

The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong said the decision created a clear framework for Hong Kong's constitutional reform, and it will be helpful to the Hong Kong government and different sectors in accelerating the process of democracy.

The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, the biggest political party in Hong Kong, said the decision marked an important step in Hong Kong's constitutional

reform, and it calls on the region's society to concentrate on discussion and build consensus.

"The nominating committee shall nominate two to three candidates for the office of chief executive in accordance with democratic procedure," the decision read. "Each candidate must have the endorsement of more than half of all the members of the nominating committee."

Not everyone in Hong Kong has been pleased by the Central Government's decision. The protest movement Occupy Central has vocally demanded for elections in which any candidate can run for chief executive. For weeks, protesters have taken to the streets. The organizers of the movement had threatened to lock down Hong Kong's central business district on an unspecified date if the election reform plan did not satisfy them.

But in response, the Alliance for Peace &

Democracy, an anti-Occupy Central movement, managed to gather close to 1.5 million signatures during a one-month campaign that ended in mid-August.

When asked about the demands advocated by groups like Occupy Central, Li said they clearly run against the Hong Kong Basic Law, adding that such "unpractical" calls had led to "a tremendous waste of time" in Hong Kong society. He said the changes demanded by the group are "tailored only for their own interests and needs."

He said having two or three election candidates will make for an efficient election system and complies with the opinions of the majority expressed during a five-month consultation conducted by the HKSAR Government from December 4, 2013, to May 3, 2014.

Peking University professor of law Qiang Shigong said that the stipulation of two to three candidates will allow the ballot to be more efficient and avoid having to hold multiple rounds in case several candidates each only get 10 or 20 percent of the vote.

Defending the requirement that the candidates have to be endorsed by half of the nomination committee, Professor Qiang said in the past the chief executive

was elected only by the 1,200 members of the election committee while in the future universal suffrage will apply to over 6 million Hong Kong residents. "The elected candidate must have the endorsement of over half the committee, which takes into consideration all the different political, religious and social groups' standpoints," Qiang said.

"The proposed Occupy Central protest would harm the region's prosperity and growth. I believe the SAR has prepared plans in accordance with the Basic Law, if the illegal protest continues. The Central Government will not just sit back and watch if the protest escalates," Chen from the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies said.

No stagnation

Experts believe the NPC Standing Committee's

decision has offered a clear direction and provided guidelines for achieving the goal of universal suffrage in 2017. But there remains room to negotiate, such as how to make sure the selection of the nomination committee is more democratic.

"We cannot afford a standstill in our constitutional development or else the prosperity or stability of Hong Kong will be at stake. All Hong Kong people, irrespective of their political affiliations, should come together with one heart, one vision, to take forward the democratic development of Hong Kong, and to implement universal suffrage," said Leung.

He added that different opinions must be expressed peacefully, rationally and legally.

"The decision has clearly shown the Central Government's bottom line over the debates over the election procedures of the chief executive," Lau Siu-kai, emeritus professor of sociology of Hong Kong-based Chinese University and Vice President of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies, told *Beijing Review*. He said that the Central Government has indicated that it would not back off on fundamental issues.

"It is really time for radicals to decide between these two paths: resisting the amendments to pursue their personal short-term gains or truly putting the long-term democratic development of Hong Kong first," said Professor Lau. He said that the leaders of those opposing

Proposed Election Process for HKSAR Chief Executive in 2017

- A broadly representative nominating committee will be formed, which must be consistent with the size, composition and methods of choosing its members of the election committee that chose the current chief executive in 2012.
- The nominating committee will endorse two to three candidates, each by a majority of all the committee members.
- Each eligible voter is entitled to pick one candidate.
- The winner of the election will be subject to appointment by the Central Government.

the reform should lower their expectations of becoming chief executive and instead focus on maximizing their influence during the first round of universal suffrage.

Tai Yiu-ting, an associate professor of law at the University of Hong Kong and a co-founder of Occupy Central, admitted at an interview with the *South China Morning Post* on September 2 that his movement's strategy to win concessions from the Central Government on election reform had failed and that support for the sit-in was waning.

The adoption of the NPC decision represents the second step in Hong Kong's five-step electoral reform. The first step was that Leung filed a report to the NPC Standing Committee on issues relating to the election methods for the chief executive and Legislative Council on July 15 based on the five-month consultation.

During the following stages, the specific

method of universal suffrage shall be prescribed in accordance with legal procedures through amending Annex I to the Hong Kong Basic Law. Such amendments must be endorsed by at least two-thirds of all the members of the Legislative Council and with the consent of the chief executive before being submitted to the NPC Standing Committee for approval.

If the specific method of universal suffrage for selecting the chief executive is not adopted in accordance with legal procedures, the method used for selecting Hong Kong's leader for the preceding term shall continue to apply, the decision said.

Li said whether Hong Kong could achieve universal suffrage depends on the subsequent steps, and called on "certain groups in Hong Kong to set aside prejudices and personal interests, showcase their political courage and wisdom to push forward universal suffrage in the 2017 election."

"Some might say that if we don't have universal suffrage in 2017, we could still redo everything in 2022. But I think if we miss the opportunity in 2017, Hong Kong may never have the chance to regain the momentum lost," he said.

Ng Leung-sing, the finance committee chair of the Legislative Council of HKSAR, said the mainstream public opinions in Hong Kong will play a significant role in the final results of Hong Kong's election reform during an interview with www.thepaper.cn on September 2. "If all voters decide that watching the 1,200 election committee members cast the ballots is not as good as casting their own ballots, the 'pro-democracy' legislators will have to take their opinions into consideration and turn to support the electoral changes in the decision," said Ng. ■



CELEBRATING A NEW ERA: A flag raising ceremony is held at the Golden Bauhinia Square in celebration of the 17th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China on July 1



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