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Wu Zhengxing, official in the Guiyang forest fire prevention office

Country on pace to hit GDP target

Some areas, including Tianjin, lagging because of debt burdens

By WANG YANFEI
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Many eastern and central provinces had relatively stable economic growth in the first half of the year, while some regions struggled to find new growth drivers given their long-standing local government debt burdens.

A total of 11 municipalities and provinces — including Beijing, Shanghai and Sichuan province — saw faster economic growth than the national average over the period, according to the latest regional data.

The national economy in the January-June period grew by 6.7 percent year-on-year, with the full-year target set at 6.5 percent.

China's inland manufacturing and agricultural hub, Henan province, was the top performer with a first-half GDP output of 2.22 trillion yuan (\$325 billion), up 7.8 percent year-on-year. Nevertheless, disparities remain in China's regional GDP figures.

Economic growth in eight provinces, regions and cities saw a slower half-year pace. Tianjin, for example, showed signs of a marked slowdown. The GDP growth rate in the municipality ranked at the bottom of 15 cities and provinces that published first-half economic data, with only 3.4 percent year-on-year growth, far weaker than the 9 percent annual growth rate seen recently.

Tianjin was once among the fastest-growing of all urban areas, but the local government

later publicly acknowledged fabricating some data for 2017's economic performance. Much of the inaccurate data is associated with the development of the city's Binhai New Area.

The local government borrowed heavily to finance infrastructure and transportation projects, significantly raising its debt burden.

Earlier this year, Tianjin Municipal Development Co — a property firm backed by the government — defaulted on trust loans valued at 500 million yuan, the second default this year following a default of a company backed by the local government in Yunnan province.

“Slower growth in Tianjin reflects some embedded problems in the city's growth model as the city has long relied on investment. Heavy spending by the local government and big State-owned companies has raised concerns about their repayment capacity,” said Yang Guoying, a researcher at China Financial Think Tank.

The local government is pinning its hopes on high-end manufacturing to help the city regain growth momentum and steer away from investment-led growth, according to Chu Liping, deputy head of the municipal statistics bureau.

In May, the government announced plans to set up a 10-billion-yuan fund to boost the sector and a 100-billion-yuan fund to support the artificial intelligence sector.

Yang Cheng contributed to this story.

The problem of plastic



Tourists visit a replica whale shark made of plastic bottles at Rizhao Ocean Park in Rizhao, Shandong province, on Saturday. The bottles were collected along the seacoast by tourists and student volunteers. The sculpture drew attention to the problem of plastic polluting the Earth's oceans. YIN ZHAOGONG / XINHUA

Ministry drafting veterans' welfare law

By ZHAO LEI
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The Ministry of Veterans Affairs announced that it is drafting a law to safeguard the rights and interests of military veterans, and it convened a meeting on Thursday to discuss the idea, according to a report by People's Liberation Army Daily.

According to information published after the meeting, the first draft of a law on the welfare of military veterans was developed based on the principle that veterans must be respected and well-treated. It focuses on resolving difficulties faced by veterans, while proposing new institutions for dealing with veterans' affairs. It also embraces proven policies in use by local governments, the ministry was quoted as saying in a statement.

The draft law also specifies rules for handling veteran affairs, stipulates responsibilities of authorities and arranges training for military retirees.

In addition, it suggests that the government should set up an award system for veterans and create an assessment apparatus to examine local governments' performance in veteran affairs, the PLA Daily reported.

Qian Feng, vice-minister of veterans affairs, said at the meeting that the ministry will conduct more research and seek opinions and advice on the law, and will strive to push it through the legislative process as soon as possible.

A PLA human resources researcher who asked not to be named told China Daily that he expects the law to resolve the practical prob-

lems of veterans, such as difficulties in finding civilian work or applying for governmental allowances for injuries received while in the military. He said he hopes the law will improve training for retirees.

Senior Colonel Wei Changjin, political commissar of the Zaozhuang Regional Military Command and a decorated veteran, said that better care and benefits, especially for those who have served in tough environments or who have taken part in combat, will help to inspire young soldiers and encourage them to dedicate themselves to the military.

China has more than 57 million veterans, and the number is increasing by hundreds of thousands annually.

The Ministry of Veterans Affairs was created to safeguard the rights and interests

of military personnel and their families, to improve the service and management system for retired personnel and to make military careers more respectable, the government said.

Before its establishment in April, a number of government and military departments — the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and two bodies under the Central Military Commission — were involved in the management of veterans affairs.

Meeting with national legislators from the military in March, President Xi Jinping, who is also chairman of the Central Military Commission, said the country must guarantee that military personnel and veterans are respected. He called this a fundamental principle.

Briefly

BEIJING Prep complete at Army Games sites

Preparations for this year's International Army Games in China are complete, military sources said on Sunday. The sites in Korla, in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, and in Quanzhou, Fujian province, are ready, according to a statement from the training management department of the Central Military Commission. All foreign participants and their equipment have arrived at the sites for the competitions, which will begin on July 28. This year, the event — with 28 competitions — is co-organized by China, Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Iran. Four of the competitions will be held in China.

False advertising online targeted

China cracked down on 8,104 false online advertisements in the first half of 2018, up 64.2 percent year-on-year, according to the State Administration for Market Regulation. Fines totaling 116.7 million yuan (\$174 million) were imposed during the period, up 17 percent year-on-year. On Friday, the administration detailed 30 typical cases of illegal and false online advertisements covering various sectors, including healthcare, real estate, food and education.

HENAN Excavators uncover 504 ancient coins

Excavators building an irrigation system in Henan province recently unearthed 504 coins about 2,500 years old. The coins, which were dug up at a construction site in Sanmenxia, date to the mid- to late-Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC), according to researchers at the city's museum. Of the find, 434 coins are intact, researchers said. “It is rare to see such a large number of ancient coins so well preserved,” said Li Shuqian, head of the museum.

XINHUA

GRASSROOTS

Zunyi site keeps the past alive



Ian Goodrum
Reporter's log

Rare are the places that make you feel like you're surrounded by history. Rarer still are the ones that make history feel immediate and relevant.

I experienced both sensations on Sunday during a visit to the site of China's pivotal Zunyi Conference in Guizhou province, which memorializes a meeting the Communist Party of China held during the brutal Long March.

Of the tens of thousands of Red Army troops that began the march — a strategic retreat from Kuomintang forces during the Chinese Civil War — only a small fraction survived. The conference, held in the middle of the march in January 1935, marked a decisive change in leadership, paving the way for Mao Zedong to take command of the Party and its armed forces. This, of course, proved successful, and 14 years later the People's Republic of China was born.

For some, this shows the importance of the Chinese experience in the revolution.



Tourists in Guizhou province in April visit the site of the Zunyi Conference, a pivotal meeting that saved the Red Army during the Long March in 1935. LUO XINGHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Mao, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De, CPC members with deep roots in China, are contrasted with the Soviet-educated Bo Gu, a Red Army commander before the conference. While it's true that the socialist movement is international, I'm inclined to agree with this analysis. After all, we have the ultimate proof — the CPC's eventual triumph under Mao.

But to me, this is also a prime indicator of the CPC's ability to adapt and self-correct based on material reality and circumstances. Here we have a clear example: Errors that endangered the movement were handled, and the Party lived to fight another day. Bo remained an important figure in the revolution, though he lost his command.

Through this, we see a simultaneous respect for the past and a watchful eye on the present and future. Wu Dekun, deputy curator of the museum at the Site of the Zunyi Conference, told me as much when he discussed the

summit's lasting significance.

So it wasn't hard to make the connection between the outcome of this fateful meeting and the China of today.

The CPC's eventual victory in the war can be traced directly to the changes made at the Zunyi Conference, and that victory has led to undeniably improved lives for the Chinese people.

Yet it's this comfort and prosperity that create distance between those early, desperate struggles and the rapidly modernizing country we know so well. When we're all absorbed in our daily lives it's easy to forget days gone by and think of history as something abstract and intangible.

Which is why sites like the one in Zunyi are so important. They reconnect us to our heritage, and remind us that these were real moments with real people, not mere paragraphs in a history book.

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In Guiyang, Mother Nature meets high-tech

By LIU XIANGRUI
and YANG JUN in Guiyang

Cloud technology has been playing a key role in supporting ecological protection efforts in Guizhou province in recent years, according to local officials.

By simply logging onto an app on their digital devices, members of the forestry department in Guiyang, Guizhou province, can record and compare detailed data related to their business — including biodiversity, the amount of forestry coverage, information about old and rare trees and patrol records over the past few years.

Forest fire management and an emergency response system were among the earliest ecological protection efforts in the city using digital technology.

Preventing fires

Since 2010, the city has begun building a geographical information system, a forest fire remote video monitoring system and a big data management and analysis platform for fire prevention.

The system includes one city-level direction center, 11 county-level centers and 47 remote fire monitoring terminals, effectively covering about 39,000 hectares of forest area — more than 10 percent of the city's coverage —

in central areas, according to the Guiyang Ecological Civilization Construction Commission.

By the end of 2017, Guiyang had invested more than 12 million yuan (\$1.8 million) in the construction of the monitoring system and the maintenance of the app, and has basically formed an intelligent cloud platform that monitors for disasters, helps manage resources and supports cultivation and industry. Subsystem functions range from surveys to forest fund management.

Enhanced accuracy

“The surveillance is very accurate. The information will be transmitted through the app within 10 seconds, which greatly improves the efficiency of forest fire prevention,” said Wu Zhengxing, an official in the Guiyang forest fire prevention office.

According to a recent report from Wu's department, forest fire incidents fell to only seven this year from a whopping 88 last year. Meanwhile, more fires have been reported quickly through the system.

“The reduction of fires and the quicker response times are the best evidence of digital efficiency in the forestry department,” Wu said.

According to Li Tao, an engineer at the forest resources management station in

Guiyang, the system has effectively improved field work, both for him and his colleagues.

“With the digital map and GPS in the app, we can easily find roads and avoid dangerous places in the forests. Before that, we needed to rely on a compass and paper map,” Li said.

In July, Li completed a forest survey that had lasted for a year and a half. He needed to investigate and record information before uploading to the app — data involving tree stocks and varieties, as well as fire hazard levels.

With the help of the platform, Li doesn't need to bring a lot of graphs along as he used to do 10 years ago to check changes in the forest such as soil conditions and plant varieties.

“What we need to do now is to click and choose the related items on the tablet, and find the remote sensing images and compare the changes,” he said.

Mission: Ecology

Guizhou is among 11 provinces and cities that are included in the Yangtze River Economic Belt, a key national development strategy. It has made ecological protection its most important mission.

Guiyang was recognized as the first State-level forest city by the State Forestry Bureau in 2004.

It is surrounded by a forest belt of 162,000 hectares, and has a coverage rate of 49 percent.

According to Zhao Deming, secretary of the Guiyang Committee of the Communist Party of China, the city will increase its forest coverage rate to 60 percent by 2020.

Investment needed

However, the huge area of forest also requires more investment in management, and the new digital management system, which is being upgraded, will effectively meet the needs, according to Wang Jianfeng, an official from the city's eco-civilization construction commission.

“The latest project of the Guiyang ecological cloud platform, — which has integrated forest information and management — will help the city realize its goal of ecological civilization.”

The system is only one part of the city's ecological cloud platform. It also includes collection and sharing of information about water, air, pollutants and other things to allow quick decision-making, Wang said.

Zhao Yandi and Li Hanyu contributed to this story.

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