



TWO SESSIONS

Li urges Hubei to boost innovation

Premier says province should strive for rapid economic development

By HU YONGQI
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Premier Li Keqiang called on Hubei province on Friday to continue kindling researchers' enthusiasm for technological and business innovation and to accelerate the transformation from old economic drivers to new ones.

Hubei, in Central China, should promote innovation and entrepreneurship to cultivate new industries, especially as it is home to a large number of research institutions, universities and professionals, Li said when joining a panel discussion with National People's Congress deputies from the province.

The number of universities in Wuhan, the provincial capital, ranks second — behind only Beijing — among Chinese cities.

The premier urged the province to build a market- and law-based internationalized business environment, while reducing taxes, fees and institutional costs.

Li said Hubei's major economic indicators were higher than the national average last year. The province should enhance administrative reforms to improve the business environment and strengthen infrastructure, he said.

He also called on the province to make greater efforts in attracting talent and stimulating market vitality to withstand downward economic pressure.

Hubei is a leading province in Central China in terms of economic development and should strive to progress as rapidly as the more developed eastern part of the country, Li said.

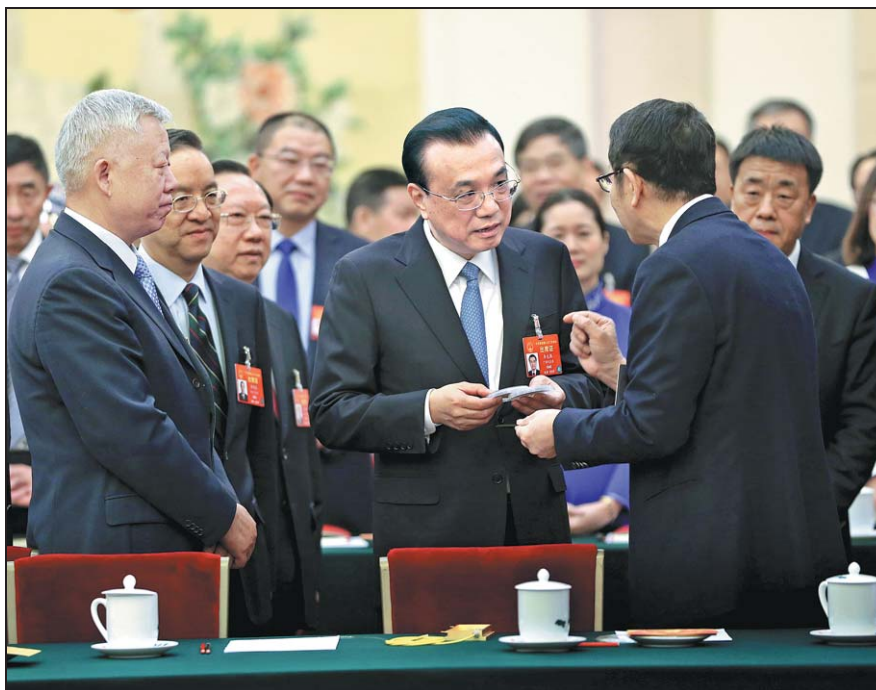
Before the premier's remarks, seven deputies spoke on high-quality development, protection of the Yangtze River, rural vitalization, industrial innovation, private businesses and education.

The province's GDP grew 7.8 percent year-on-year to 3.94 trillion yuan (\$586.14 billion) last year, said Jiang Chaoliang, secretary of the Hubei Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China. Last year, 890,000 new market entities were registered in Hubei, taking the total number to 5 million, and more than 920,000 people found new jobs in urban areas. The province aims to lift 900,000 people out of poverty this year, he said.

Wang Xiaodong, Hubei's governor, said last year's economic growth exceeded expectations and the province is striving to optimize its economic structure.

Hubei has the geographic advantage of being the connection between the northern and southern parts of China. It also has an education advantage, ranking first in university enrollments among Chinese cities.

The Wuhan East Lake High-Tech Development Zone, known as the "Optics Valley of China" and one of



Yan Dapeng, an NPC deputy and vice-chairman of Wuhan Raycus Fiber Laser Technologies, shows a high-tech chip sample to Premier Li Keqiang (center) at a meeting of the NPC's Hubei delegation in Beijing on Friday. WU ZHIYI / CHINA DAILY

China's earliest such zones, has 42 universities, 56 national key research institutions, 66 academicians, more than 200,000 professionals and more than 800,000 university students.

Dou Xiankang, president of

Wuhan University, said basic research, in fields including mathematics and physics, should be strengthened, and the mechanism for selecting talent for scientific and technological innovation should be improved.

Yu Shaohua, deputy general manager of China Information Communication Technologies Group, urged the central government to give more support to boosting innovation in central and western parts of the country.

Guiyang commits to opening up more fields of business

By XU XIAODAN
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Guiyang, the capital of southwestern China's Guizhou province, is taking big strides in opening up to the outside world, aiming for high-quality economic development, the city's mayor, Chen Yan, said.

Speaking on the sidelines of the ongoing annual session of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, Chen said, "We plan to form a comprehensive opening-up system covering more fields by 2020, with total foreign trade volume exceeding \$5 billion."

The system is expected to boost the city's foreign trade volume to \$50 billion by 2035, added Chen, who is also an NPC deputy.

He said the proposed foreign investment law, widely discussed among national legislators and political advisers during the two sessions, will further fuel the city's opening-up by giving it a strong legal foundation.

The drafting of the law included thorough consideration of the need to protect the legitimate rights and interests of foreign investors in China, he said.

Guiyang, also known as "China's Data Valley", has seen foreign trade grow rapidly in recent years. The total volume of foreign trade reached \$3.49 billion in 2018, up by 15.2 percent year-on-year, according to the city government, and the growth rate was 2.6 percentage points higher than the national average.

"Guiyang ranks first in Guizhou province in terms of growth rate, thanks to all-around measures and policies," Chen said.



Although \$3.49 billion is a small fraction of the country's total trade volume of \$4.62 trillion, it is remarkable for a mountainous, inland city like Guiyang with relatively limited resources, he said.

Guiyang has managed to transform its geographical challenges into strengths by extending its traffic connections with neighboring regions, the mayor said.

The city now has an expressway network that stretches 602 kilometers, and high-speed trains link it to major cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou in Guangdong province, and Hong Kong within seven hours, according to the city government. More than 160 air routes connect Guiyang to major domestic and foreign cities, it said.

The transportation network has served the city's opening-up well, giving it smooth connections with major ports along the Yangtze River Economic Belt in the north and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in the south, Chen said.


"We have trade with over 160 countries and regions in both production and services," he said, adding that the city's biggest trade partners are the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the United States, Australia, Pakistan and New Zealand.

The city has established an active foreign trade market, including trading with 64 countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, Chen said, adding that the volume of BRI trade reached \$1.55 billion last year.

Guiyang plans further opening-up efforts to accelerate its development and catch up with more developed regions, he said.

"The focus of our future cooperation will be the companies and projects related to the major national campaigns," Chen said. "We plan to introduce companies in manufacturing, tourism and biomedicine, the industries we want to promote, from the major trade partners — European countries, Japan, South Korea, ASEAN countries — and also developed domestic regions."

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Executives laud draft investment law

By ZHONG NAN
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The draft foreign investment law will create a more transparent, stable and predictable business environment for global companies in China, which will in turn be a strong magnet for investment, creativity and productivity, senior business executives with foreign-based companies said in recent interviews.

They spoke as the National People's Congress prepares to vote on March 15 on the draft foreign investment law.

"As the bill has entered the review and decision-making stage, we certainly are paying close attention to how it evolves and how it may impact us," said Ian Chung, China CEO of AECOM, a US-based

urban and infrastructure planning company.

Chung said China's continuous efforts in further opening-up are definitely welcomed by foreign companies.

Curt Ferguson, president of Coca-Cola for China and Korea, said, "We are happy to see China is shifting its focus to high-quality growth, as the stable and sustained growth of China's economy is an important basis for our development in the country."

The US company views the draft law as a practical tool to provide new business opportunities across China.

Gao Yan, CEO of China of Germany's Thyssenkrupp, said China's efforts to revamp existing foreign investment laws convey very positive signals.

"We have seen a variety of further concrete opening-up measures designed to improve the business environment for foreign investment, such as lowering tariffs, simplifying the approval process for business licenses and implementing the new negative list for foreign investment," he said.

A level playing field enables strong players to grow in a sustainable manner and tap more opportunities inside and beyond the China market, no matter whether they are Chinese or foreign companies, said Yan Bin, a member of the 13th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee and co-chair of the Belt and Road General Chamber of Commerce (Hong Kong).



Luo Jiaming, an NPC deputy and mayor of Meishan, holds an orange on Friday while answering questions about agriculture at a meeting of the NPC's Sichuan delegation during the ongoing two sessions in Beijing. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Scenic area on track for full reopening

By HUANG ZHILING
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Jiuzhaigou, a scenic valley in southwestern China's Sichuan province that is on the UNESCO World Heritage list, will fully reopen to tourists in the foreseeable future, a senior official said on Friday.

It was closed temporarily following a magnitude 7 earthquake in August 2017 and partially reopened a year ago.

Peng Qinghua, secretary of the Sichuan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, heralded the full reopening at a group discussion during the annual session of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, in Beijing.

Tourist attractions in Jiuzhaigou, in Sichuan's Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture, include 108 alpine lakes and its Tibetan and Qiang ethnic cultures.

Some of Jiuzhaigou's scenic wonders were damaged in the earthquake, which killed 25 people and injured 493.

Two days after the quake, the Nuorilang Waterfall collapsed. Standing 24.5 meters tall, it was China's widest waterfall at 270 meters and had been chosen by netizens as one of the country's most spectacular natural sights.

Since the partial reopening of the scenic area on March 8 last year, visitor numbers have been capped at 2,000 a day because rebuilding work is underway.

Jiuzhaigou's post-quake recon-

struction plan called for 220 projects to be completed by next year, and 76 have been finished. Landmarks such as the Nuorilang Waterfall and Wuhua Lake have been restored to their former beauty, Yang Kening, head of Aba, said at the group discussion, which was open to the media.

Jiuzhaigou is one of five sites in Sichuan on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The others are Huanglong in Aba, which is known for its karst formations and colored ponds; Mount Emei in the city of Emeishan, which is one of China's four sacred Buddhist mountains; the Leshan Grand Buddha in the city of Leshan, which is the world's largest sitting Buddha; and the habitat of the giant panda.

Peng said he considered Jiuzhaigou, the giant panda and the Sanxingdui Ruins, 40 kilometers from the provincial capital of Chengdu, to be Sichuan's top three calling cards. More than 80 percent of the world's giant pandas are in Sichuan.

Sanxingdui was found by a farmer digging in his fields in 1929. Since then, more than 10,000 gold, bronze and jade items dating back to between 5,000 and 3,000 years have been unearthed there.

The ruins, located on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, serve as proof that the origins of Chinese civilization are diverse, dispelling theories the Yellow River was its sole starting point.

What they are saying in 'passage interviews'

China will continue its development of artificial intelligence, given it is a technology closely related to people's livelihoods. Meanwhile, China will collaborate with other countries in maximizing the benefits of AI and minimizing its harm.



working with Chinese teams on a scale never seen before.
Gou Zhongwen, head of the General Administration of Sport of China

Over the past 50 years, 16 satellites from the Fengyun series have been launched. Eight of them are functioning and focusing on meteorological situations in China and around the world. Data garnered by these satellites are available to about 90 countries and regions around the world, as well as 2,600 users in China.



improve scientific research to solve bottleneck problems in cancer prevention and treatment.

Ma Xiaowei, head of the National Health Commission

With the boom in mobile internet and the popularity of affordable smartphones, Chinese rural areas will embrace the next wave of internet dividends in the next decade.

The internet will not only make urban life better and more convenient, but also help revitalize rural areas and achieve big strides in rural development.

Yao Jinbo, CEO of 58.com, a major online classifieds marketplace, and a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress



The core of China's manufacturing industry lies in innovation, and Chinese enterprises must master core technologies as part of a broader push to develop and transform the country's manufacturing sector.

Gree is committed to independent innovation and development, and concentrates on cultivating its own talent. At present, Gree has 14 research institutes, 13,000 technical employees and nearly 1,000 laboratories, with hopes of creating platforms and opportunities for youths who have dreams.

Dong Mingzhu, chairwoman of Gree Electric Appliances and a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress



In terms of research, China will continue cooperation with other countries on basic algorithms, models, chips, systems and other fields related to AI.

As for AI-related ethical and social issues, China will strengthen its research in drafting new laws and regulations, and expand global cooperation in tackling the issues together.

Wang Zhigang, minister of science and technology

Necessary measures and cooperation have been put in place to build a competitive Chinese national team capable of vying with the world's best in winter sports and achieving breakthrough results at the 2022 Winter Olympics.

A decent performance at home means Chinese athletes will have to qualify for all 109 events at the 2022 Games, with the aim of winning the biggest number of medals in the country's Winter Olympics history.

An experimental program of drafting and developing winter sports hopefuls from talented summer event athletes made sound progress in 2018, and a strong team of 80 foreign coaches from Europe and North America has been



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