

Li urges to keep economy growing

Premier calls for pragmatic policies rather than stimulus

By ZHAO YINAN
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Premier Li Keqiang urged governments not to underestimate current economic difficulties and to be "proactive" with "effective policies" when targeting problems that threaten to hold the Chinese economy to its slowest quarterly growth since 2009.

On a fact-finding trip on Friday to Haikou, capital of Hainan province, Li told local officials that maintaining economic expansion will be arduous and local governments must "rise to the occasion" and be "pragmatic" when issuing policies that motivate demand and keep the economy growing reasonably well.

Li visited Hainan — the country's largest special economic zone — amid estimates that the world's second-largest economy is expected to expand by about 7.3 percent in the first quarter of the year — its weakest showing since early 2009.

The reasonable growth range, a benchmark for Li to decide whether to issue stimulus policies, is a GDP increase of about 7 percent with inflation no higher than 3.5 percent.

Before going to Haikou, Li dismissed speculation that the central government will issue massive short-term stimulus policies, easing concerns that authorities may again opt for a massive stimulus package as



A saleswoman at a convenience store in Haikou, Hainan province, shows snacks similar to those bought by Premier Li Keqiang on Friday when he visited the store. They cost 19 yuan (\$3.05).
LUO YUNFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

it did in 2008. The move led to severe overcapacity and structural problems.

"A growth rate under this year's 7.5 percent target is acceptable as long as sufficient employment is ensured, and the government has prepared enough options to respond to any risks and is capable of maintaining economic growth at a reasonable range," the premier said in an earlier speech.

In Haikou, Li asked about the local export and import situation as he visited Haikou Harbour Container Terminal Co Ltd. March's international trade in China, the world's top

trader, reported a decline of 9 percent to \$332.5 billion.

Zhang Chenhui, the manager of the company's ferry business, said travel and trade in Haikou have both increased in the first quarter.

"Although exports and imports contracted, the trade of tropical fruits and other local specialties with interior provinces have increased," he said.

The premier said the country still has great potential for development since the enormous potential of domestic spending has not been tapped and can support the economy once it has been.

Haikou Harbor is one of China's 25 major coastal ports and an important gateway to countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Trade with ASEAN countries is the fastest-growing part of Haikou Harbor's imports and exports, comprising one-quarter of the volume with an increase of 62.3 percent last year.

Li also looked at how the Haikou Bureau of Commercial and Industry Administration has cut red tape for business startups, and he visited an ecological conservation area that has the country's

largest tidal mangrove forest.

Chen Zhiwu, a professor of finance at Yale University, said China is still trying to reverse the damage that the 2008 stimulus package did to its economy, and local governments should be cautious when working out "fine-tuning" policies to tackle the current difficulties.

Some measures are needed, but one should be careful not to overreact, he said. In addition, he warned that these fine-tuning policies should innovate businesses, instead of government-led investment, to rule out the possibility of overcapacity.

Record number of guns, knives seized in raid

By ZHAO KAI in Guiyang and HOU LIQIANG in Beijing

Guizhou police broke up a gang that was manufacturing and selling weapons and confiscated about 15,000 guns and 120,000 controlled knives, the largest such seizure ever in China.

Fifteen suspects were arrested after the four-month investigation. The gang's business covered 27 provinces and municipalities, including Guangdong, Guizhou, Hunan and Sichuan.

Some crossbows were also seized.

Private citizens are not allowed to own guns, according to Chinese law.

Yang Tao, an officer of the Criminal Investigation Department at the Guiyang Public Security Bureau, said the guns, pistols and rifles were made of iron and used steel balls as bullets.

The firing range of the pistols is 30 to 50 meters, he said.

Fired from a great distance, the guns could cause permanent disability, he said, and at close range they could be lethal, he added.

Yang said the firing range of rifles could exceed 200 meters.

Among the controlled knives are hacking knives and daggers.

"Those knives are made of stainless steel. All of them are edged and are very sharp," Yang said.

The police found evidence on the gang while investigating a robbery in Guiyang, Guizhou's capital. The police said a suspect in the case bought his gun from a man identified only as Qu.

A further investigation showed that Qu sold guns

and knives in Guiyang and bought those weapons from a gang in Shaodong, Hunan province.

The gang controlled several warehouses where many guns and controlled knives were stored. Many vehicles visited those warehouses, and the trade was very active, police said.

Du Chuang of the Guiyang Public Security Bureau said the gang in Shaodong was a family business.

"They ran their business in the name of a cutter factory and gave out their business cards all over China," Du said.

Knives with blades more than 22 cm long and those with blades more than 15 cm long and a point angle of less than 60 degrees are classified as "controlled knives."

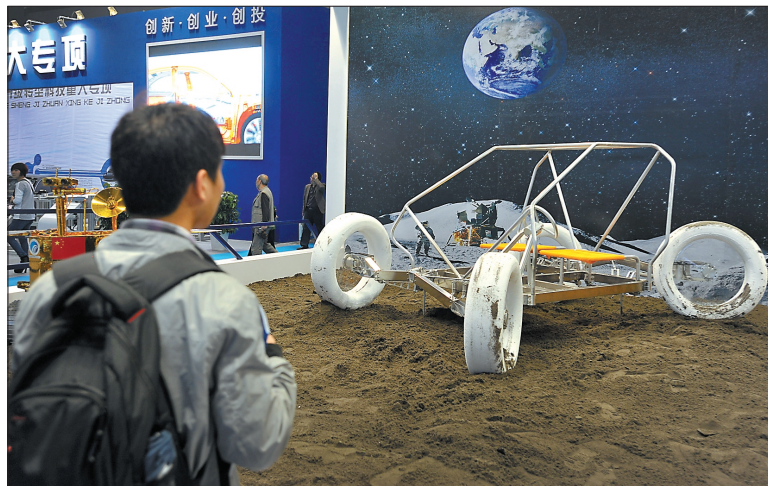
In 2008, the Ministry of Public Security issued a notice requiring sellers to record the identities of people who purchase controlled knives since they are considered dangerous.

Figures that the Ministry of Public Security had earlier provided to China Daily show that between 2009 and 2013, gun-related crimes fell by 35 percent, compared with the previous five years.

In 2003, the numbers hit a record low, decreasing by 37.9 percent, data showed.

Police have vowed to strengthen efforts to combat gun- and explosives-related crimes after a rise in such crimes in Shaanxi, Guizhou and Yunnan provinces caused many casualties since January.

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A visitor inspects a lunar rover at the 11th China Chongqing High-tech Fair on Thursday. The rover is expected to serve the nation's first astronauts who will set foot on the moon.
GAN XIAYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

New lunar rover unveiled at Chongqing tech fair

By LUO WANGSHU in Chongqing and ZHAO LEI in Beijing

China's space exploration agency unveiled a four-wheeled lunar rover on Thursday, sparking speculation about sending Chinese astronauts to the moon.

The vehicle was displayed at the 11th China Chongqing High-tech Fair that opened in the southwestern metropolis, and instantly attracted a frenzy of attention.

Being developed by the Ministry of Education's Center of Space Exploration, the vehicle can carry two people and a heavy payload. It will serve the nation's first astronauts who will set foot on the moon, according to Zhan Hanjing, deputy chief designer at the center.

Research and development for the rover was commissioned jointly by several central departments that oversee China's space program, including the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense and the Ministry of

Education, he said, adding that the conceptual design began at the end of 2013.

"I don't know whether the task signifies that the government has decided to pursue missions to the moon," Zhan said. "But I can tell you that the task was given to us by the government, and all of its costs are covered by State funds."

He declined to disclose the project's budget or the amount of money that has been spent so far.

China has not yet created a manned lunar exploration project, Wu Weiren, chief designer for the nation's lunar probe program, said in earlier reports.

The new moon vehicle, though appearing rough and unsophisticated, boasts an outstanding ability to roam over bumpy terrain with its lightweight frame and supreme strength, Zhan said.

He said the center is also working on two other rovers, but didn't elaborate.

The first manned rover was used in the US Apollo 15 mission in 1971. Altogether, there have been three lunar vehicles

driven by astronauts on the moon. All were from the United States.

"We studied the US manned rovers used in Apollo 15, 16 and 17 missions and adopted their experience in our design," Zhan said.

China's first rover to touch the moon's surface is the 140-kilogram, six-wheeled Yutu, which was part of the Chang'e-3 mission last year. It began operating on Dec 15.

The Chinese buggy has outlived its design life of three months and is in its fourth period of dormancy.

"The scientists and designers will overcome a host of technological difficulties before they produce a usable manned rover," an insider with China's lunar exploration project said, who wished to remain anonymous.

"For instance, they must design a reliable wheel. A new navigation system is also needed."

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Program: More convicts may join community service

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"We need to adopt a special law to standardize law enforcement and introduce regulations to further refine supervision and education for offenders included in such a program," Wu said.

In the meantime, justice departments will set up a platform to share information with other judicial organs, including public security, prosecuting authorities, courts and the prison system.

Electronic ankle tags are an option and training offenders in new skills to get them

into the workplace is also an option.

In China, community corrections programs have been established in 342 cities, 2,824 counties and townships, as well as 40,176 communities, according to the ministry.

Canada, which has the highest non-custodial rate, has 79.7 percent of its convicted criminals in such programs.

Li Wei, a lawyer from the China Lawyers Association said, "After scrapping *laojiao*, it's possible more convicts will join in community corrections, which will bring practical challenges for justice officers to manage them."

Policies aim to curb judicial corruption

By ZHANG YAN
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The Ministry of Justice announced measures to fight judicial corruption, especially regarding reduced sentences, probation and noncustodial sentences.

The measures will "effectively curb correctional officers' misconduct and corruption involving bribery," said Vice-Minister of Justice Zhang Sujun.

The move follows a case in February when the Supreme People's Procuratorate started extradition procedures against Zhang Hai, former president of beverage maker Jianlibao Group.

He was suspected of offering bribes to prison officers to obtain an early release from jail and then went overseas with his girlfriend.

Zhang had been convicted of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds and sentenced to 15 years by Foshan Intermediate People's Court in Guangdong in 2007.

The top prosecuting department said Zhang's 15-year jail term had been reduced several times before he was freed in 2011.

Prosecutors investigated

24 suspects for dereliction of duty, including 14 correctional officers and one court judge, for allegedly helping Zhang get his sentence reduced.

"We will strengthen supervision for application and approval procedures involving reduced sentences and conditional release," the vice-minister said.

Figures provided by the ministry show that between 2008 to 2013, national prison departments dealt with 506,000 applications for sentence reduction and 36,000 parole applications.

Zhang said they will pay particular attention to sentence-reduction applications for cases involving taking advantage of one's position, financial fraud and organizing criminal gangs.

To tackle corruption in prisons, he said, justice departments will boost procedural supervision and enhance prison security.

Hong Daoode, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law, said the measures are essential to "preventing malpractice and bribery, and conducive to ensuring fairness and enhancing the credibility of law enforcement."

Loophole closed for officials' early release

By AN BAIJIE
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After four years in prison, former official Wang Jian-sheng applied for a commutation of his sentence in March.

However, his application was rejected by the Henan High People's Court because the court has tightened the regulations on commutations.

Wang, the former head of Yuzhou's public security bureau in Henan, was sentenced to 11 and a half years in prison on Dec 15, 2009, for accepting bribes totaling 485,000 yuan (\$78,000).

In his application, the former police chief claimed that he performed well in prison, saying that he had met the standards for commutation since he had received a "compliment" and a "merit record" while serving the sentence.

Under the province's rules, prisoners can get a compliment after accumulating 40 points, and a merit record after being complimented twice. Each prisoner can get five basic points per month, and the mark depends on their performances.

But the court rejected Wang's application because he was released on medical parole five times while serving the sentence.

"Wang has been jailed only for a total of 22 months in the past four years," the court said in its verdict. "Even though he had received a compliment and a merit record, the court could not confirm that he regretted his crime."

The commutation requests of two other imprisoned former officials in Henan province were rejected at the same time.

Zhang Liyong, president of Henan High People's Court, said that it used to be easy for imprisoned former officials to get a commutation or probation.

"In the past, many imprisoned officials got compliments and merit records by offering bribes to judicial officials, and their applications of commutation could be easily approved," Zhang said.

Some corrupt officials with 10-year sentences could get released after being imprisoned for only four years with falsified compliments and merit records, he said.

To prevent judicial corruption, the provincial court established China's first court for commutation and probation in 2012, and prisoners who are former officials at and above county levels must be tried before they are approved for commutation or probation.