
China Briefs

China Celebrates a Victory in Eliminating Poverty

At a grand ceremony in the Great Hall of the People on February 25, President Xi Jinping presented awards to dozens of people who have been instrumental in China's campaign of poverty alleviation. Thousands of party members and others were gathered in the Great Hall for the ceremony and to listen to the important speech of President Xi on the campaign.

Altogether, China has lifted some 800 million people out of the worst poverty, nearly 100 million of them during the last eight years. All 832 impoverished counties and 128,000 villages have also been removed from the poverty list.

In his speech, Xi made it clear that the campaign is to continue, to ensure that no one falls back into poverty, and that the conditions of life of the people will continue to improve. The new phase of the campaign will focus on rural revitalization, and a new cabinet-level group has been set up to take charge of it. "There is still a long way to go to solve the problem of unbalanced and inadequate development, narrow the development gap between urban and rural areas, and realize the all-round development of people and the common prosperity of all people," Xi said.

The campaign has had a remoralizing effect for many impoverished, developing countries that are attempting to develop programs of a similar nature. China has committed

to helping these countries achieve that goal. World Bank statistics have shown that, beginning with poverty-reduction results in the late 1970s, China has been responsible for over 70% of the global reduction in poverty over that period.

China Ready to Move Forward on Maglev Technology

China is now eyeing maglev technology as a key part of its transportation upgrade. While having developed the most extensive high-speed rail network in the world and become one of the chief suppliers of high-speed rail, it shied away from maglev in developing its system because the cost of maintenance would have been greater than conventional high-speed rail. For a time, it has maintained one maglev route, the Shanghai Transrapid, which goes from central Shanghai to the Pudong Airport.

China has continued to work on the technology experimentally. Most recently, it revealed what is probably the latest model for maglev at an experimental track at Southwest Communications University in Chengdu. This train will move at 620 km/hr (400 mph).

Japan is also experimenting with a similar maglev technology, although the magnetic coils in the Japanese model are cooled by liquid helium, while the Chinese model is cooled by liquid nitrogen, which is considerably cheaper. The Japanese prototype has to accelerate first before it begins to levitate, whereas

the Chinese prototype will levitate from a standing start.

The kinks still have to be worked out of the system, but the researchers believe that they can have a commercially viable product in six years. Already many provinces are planning on upgrading their transportation network with maglev, in light of the major expansion of the transportation network in China's latest Five-Year Plan.

Guangdong intends to build two maglev lines to bring together the Greater Bay Area. In addition, Sichuan, Shandong, Hainan and other provinces have plans for maglev; Sichuan proposes a maglev connection between Chengdu and Chongqing.

In December, Changchun Railway Vehicles Co. presented a new low-to-medium speed maglev with a maximum speed of 120 km/hr, for use in city commutes and travel to nearby tourist destinations. The three-car train can carry up to 500 passengers.

China and India Agree To Pull Their Troops Back from the Border

Progress has been made in bringing the tensions down on the China-India border. A flare-up in June led to the deaths of a number of Indian and Chinese soldiers. Mediation by Russia brought the two foreign ministers together and they succeeded in coming to an agreement for reducing their troops on the border and working to improve the shaky relationship.

Both sides have begun removing their tank units, and the infantry is also in the process of being phased out. Any structures that have been built during the dispute will be dismantled and the respective troops will return to positions they held before the stand-off of last year.

On February 26, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar spoke by phone.

Wang Yi referred to these two ancient civilizations as being at a similar level of development and revitalization, and that they should follow up the agreement by resolving differences in many areas. He said the two sides should work to achieve the strategic agreement made between the leaders of the two countries at their two meetings.

Minister Jaishankar said that India was prepared to adhere to the agreement on the border that they had reached in their Moscow summit and wanted to put bilateral relations back on track as soon as possible. The two also agreed to set up a hotline in order to exchange opinions in a timely manner.

Developing Countries Turn to China for COVID Vaccines

While the COVID vaccines of the major producers in the U.S. and Western Europe are being used almost entirely within their own countries, the poorer countries in the developing world have had nowhere to turn, except to China and Russia.

China has provided vaccines to over 50 countries, including Mozambique, Ghana, Peru, Algeria, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Egypt, Cam-

bodia, Senegal and even Hungary. China also made the decision to send 10 million doses to the multinational distribution alliance COVAX for distribution to developing countries, many of which are in Africa. Sinovac, the Chinese pharmaceutical company that produces one of the two Chinese vaccines, is prepared to help build local filling and packaging facilities in the countries where the vaccine will be distributed.

Western critics, including the *Washington Post*, have warned that the Chinese vaccines are less effective—even dangerous. But it's like telling a drowning man that the rope he is using to get out of the water is not 100% effective. Much of this, of course, is simply mean-spirited slander because of the failure of the West to provide the vaccines to the rest of the world—even having the gall to accuse China of “vaccine diplomacy” to gain influence.

Whether a vaccine is 90% effective or 70%, if it saves lives and is available, it will do more good than a 100% effective vaccine that remains in the laboratory or will not be exported.

Xi Discusses Cooperation in Africa and Eastern Europe with Macron

President Xi spoke on the phone with President Emmanuel Macron of France on February 26. The two exchanged Spring Festival greetings and discussed achieving greater progress in such areas of practical cooperation as energy, aviation, and food and other agricultural products, as well as fostering new driving forces for bilateral cooperation.

Recalling that at the end of last year, China and the EU had jointly announced the completion of a China-EU investment agreement, Xi called for concerted efforts to put the agreement into effect at an early date. While the agreement has been signed, there has been some foot-dragging by the EU bureaucracy, and the pressure from the French President could play a positive role in moving it forward.

Xi also called for collaboration in getting COVID vaccines to the developing world, a matter that has also been of concern for Macron.

Xi pointed out that cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries has been part of overall China-Europe cooperation and proposed working together with France to actively explore tripartite cooperation in that region. China has established the 17 + 1 group with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for launching major infrastructure projects, but they have been getting criticism from the EU, wary of the growing Chinese influence in the region. Cooperation with France in that region would go a long way in allaying those fears.

The two leaders are also in agreement with regard to Africa. President Xi said that he was encouraged by the growing interest shown by France and other members of the international community in Africa. Macron said that France was ready to strengthen communication with China in international affairs, and was looking forward to working with China to encourage the international community to provide debt relief and debt suspension for Africa and to help the continent achieve economic growth.