

Xi's visits to Pakistan, Indonesia reaffirm ties

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), also Chinese president, paid state visits to Pakistan and Indonesia from April 20 to April 24, the first of his overseas trips this year.

During the trips, Xi discussed bilateral and multilateral relations, encompassing politics and economics, and involving both neighborhood and global diplomacy.

Building cooperation with Pakistan

Pakistan was among the first nations to recognize the People's Republic of China and then established diplomatic relations in 1951 by cutting ties with Taiwan. The two neighboring countries have forged an ironclad friendship in the past 64 years. Now thanks to Xi's visit, the two "iron friends" officially upgraded their relations to a new high — terming their diplomatic ties an "all-weather strategic partnership of cooperation."

In his talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Xi said that the Chinese side highly values its relationship with Pakistan, and has always made the relationship a priority in its foreign policy agenda.

For his part, Sharif said the Pakistani government and people have long anticipated Xi's visit. "The Pakistan-China friendship is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, and the Pakistani people treasure the brotherly relationship with China," he said.

The two countries signed more than 50 cooperation deals which are worth billions of dollars on a wide range of issues, from energy and infrastructure to education and culture. They also set a target of lifting bilateral trade to US\$20 billion in three years, up from the current US\$16 billion.

High on the agenda of Xi's state visit to the South Asian country was advancing the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a planned network of transportation and energy projects linking southwest Pakistan's deep-water Gwadar Port with northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The CPEC is located where the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road meet.

The Belt and Road Initiatives proposed by China in 2013 are unfolding this year. As part of this, the planning and building of financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund are proceeding smoothly.

Karot Hydropower Station in Pakistan, a China-Pakistan energy cooperation project, was chosen as the first investment project of the Silk Road Fund on its establishment in December, 2014. In addition, Pakistan is among the first batch of countries that applied to be a prospective funding member of the AIIB.

"We need to form a '1+4' cooperation structure with the CPEC at the center and the Gwadar Port, transport infrastructure, energy and



Visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) holds talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad, capital of Pakistan, April 20, 2015.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) delivers a speech at the opening ceremony of the Asian-African Summit 2015 in Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, April 22, 2015.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, his wife Peng Liyuan, Indonesia's President Joko Widodo and his wife Iriana take part in a highly symbolic stroll with other Asian and African leaders to commemorate the historic 1955 Bandung Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, April 24, 2015.

industrial cooperation being the four key areas to achieve a win-win results and common development," Xi said during the talks.

The Chinese president called for effective planning for industrial parks along the CPEC, and for finalizing the free trade area talks between the two countries at an early date.

Sajjad Malik, a Pakistani researcher and journalist, said the CPEC will be a game-changer for the region and the most formidable tool to fight militancy and terrorism, which is the biggest threat to the stability of the region. That is why Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif referred to it as a "corridor to peace."

In his speech addressing a joint sitting of Pakistan's parliament, the Chinese president spoke highly of the all-weather friendship and all-dimensional cooperation between the two countries.

Xi put forward a five-point proposal to usher in a new phase of bilateral relations, calling on the two sides to further boost strategic cooperation, pursue common development, carry on their long-lasting friendship, jointly address security challenges and strengthen coordination on international affairs.

The China-Pakistan community of common destiny is a strategic choice made by the two governments and peoples, which conforms to the interests of both

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countries, he added.

Akram Zaki, a former foreign secretary of Pakistan, said China, through its friendly relations with its neighbors, has been stressing the concept that "the real partnership is sharing with others, not taking advantages of other countries."

Revitalizing the Bandung Spirit

After visiting Pakistan, Xi flew to Indonesia to attend the Asian-African Summit and activities to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Bandung Conference.

China made indispensable and important contributions to the 1955 Bandung Conference which highlighted the unity and cooperation between Asia and Africa.

The Bandung Spirit, with solidarity, friendship and cooperation as its core principles, has consistently been China's policy to boost collaboration among developing countries.

Six decades later, Asian and African countries are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, forming a community with a shared future.

While addressing the Asian-African summit in Jakarta six decades later, Xi called for concerted efforts to build a community of common destiny for all mankind in line with the time-honored Bandung Spirit.

To that end, he raised a three-point proposal — to boost Asia-Africa cooperation, expand South-South cooperation and strengthen South-North cooperation.

Xi pledged zero tariffs for 97 percent of goods exported to China from the least developed nations with diplomatic ties to China, assistance for developing countries without any political strings attached and free training for 100,000 people from developing countries, among other measures.

Xi's down-to-earth proposals won praise at the summit. Samuel Stevquoah, chief of staff at the office of Liberia's vice president, said he highly appreciates China's provision of training opportunities for developing countries. "This is very important for us. We always look for opportunities to build the youth's capacity and make them stronger," he said.

At the sidelines of the summit, Xi met with the leaders of Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Iran and Cambodia, expounding China's foreign policy principles and methods to promote bilateral ties.

Don't miss:



Xi attends Bandung Conference anniversary



Pakistan and Chinese students dance to celebrate Pakistan Day

China's new normal: slower growth, healthier economy

China's economy grew 7 percent in the first quarter of 2015, a further slowdown from the 7.3 percent of the fourth quarter of 2014. However, a closer examination of the data shows that China is on track to achieving the "new normal", which features slower but higher-quality growth.

Slower growth

The first quarter GDP figure marks the lowest level since 2009, when the world economy was suffering the effects of the global financial crisis.

Besides GDP growth, other major economic indicators also fell below market expectations.

During the first quarter, industrial output rose 6.4 percent from a year earlier, down from 8.7 percent a year ago. Fixed-asset investment rose 13.5 percent year on year, a further slowdown from the 13.9 percent growth in the January-February period this year.

Other data also suggest continued weaknesses in the world's second largest economy.

The inflation rate in March remained tepid, rising 1.4 percent year on year. Meanwhile, the producer price index remained in the deflationary territory.

Trade also saw lackluster performance, with exports registering a big slump of 14.6 percent in March.

Positive signs

Despite the underperforming data, there are signs indicating China's economic transition is embracing a new and upgraded growth mode.

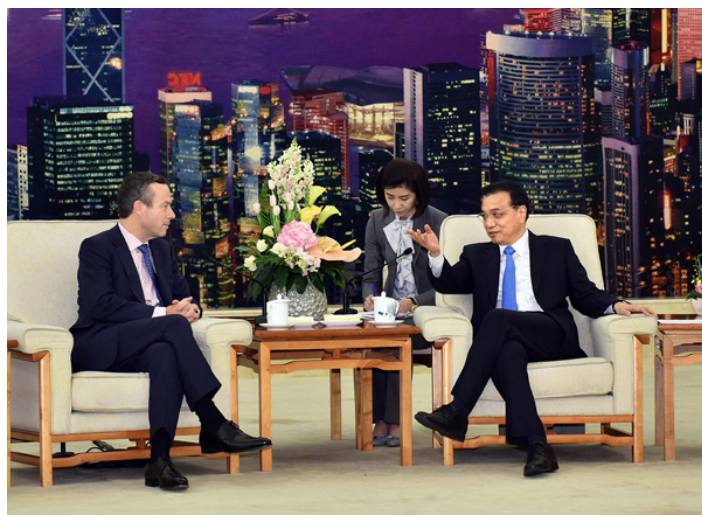
One of the biggest highlights comes from the service sector, which has become the largest GDP contributor for the past two years. It accounted for 51.6 percent of GDP in the first quarter, up from 48.2 percent in 2014 and 46.9 percent in 2013.

"A significant change in the industrial structure is the rapidly increasing growth in the service sector, and the trend is more obvious in the context of the transformation of the industry-oriented economic structure to a service-oriented one," said Sheng Laiyun, spokesman of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Despite the drop in growth, the restructuring of the Chinese economy is advancing steadily, and the transformation and upgrading are accelerating, Sheng noted.

Employment is also stable, another sign of a healthy growth model. According to Sheng, 3.2 million new jobs were created in the first quarter of this year and the unemployment rate stands at around 5.1 percent.

Another highlight was the increasingly promising consumer spending. Of the three major growth drivers, consumption is the most stable sector, compared with slowing investment and exports. Retail sales rose by 10.8 percent year on year in the first quarter, boosted by surging e-commerce transactions. In the first three months, online retail sales surged 41 percent and accounted for 8.9 percent of total retail sales.

"China is a country that is never short of consumption potential. The key is how to tap that potential," said the NBS spokesman. Measures such



Premier Li Keqiang meets with Editor of the Financial Times Lionel Barber of the UK in Beijing, March 31, 2015.

Don't miss:
• Press briefing on Q1 economic performance

as increasing incomes, improving the consumption environment and solving people's concerns in consumption should be adopted to exploit that potential to the fullest, he said. "That's why we remain confident about China's economic prospects."

Enough 'firepower'

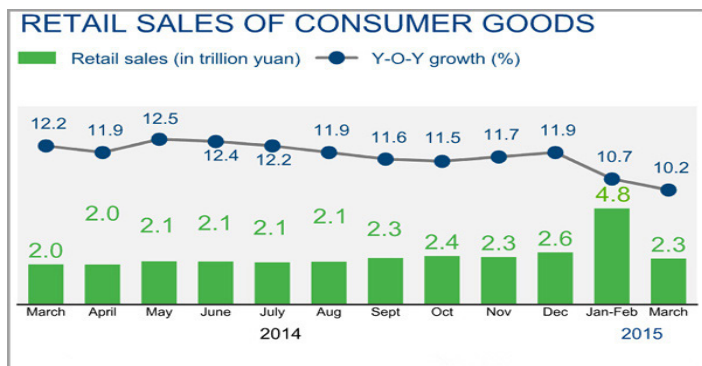
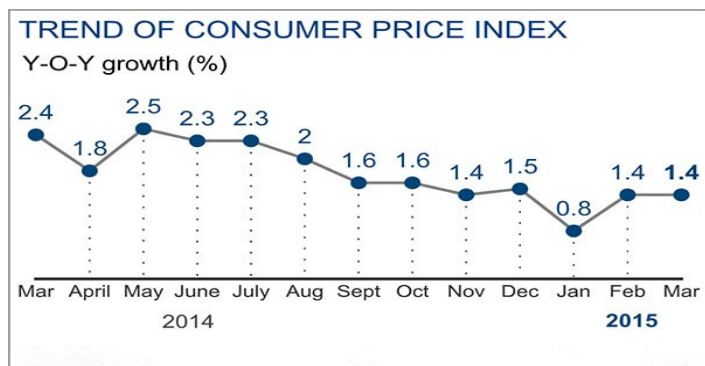
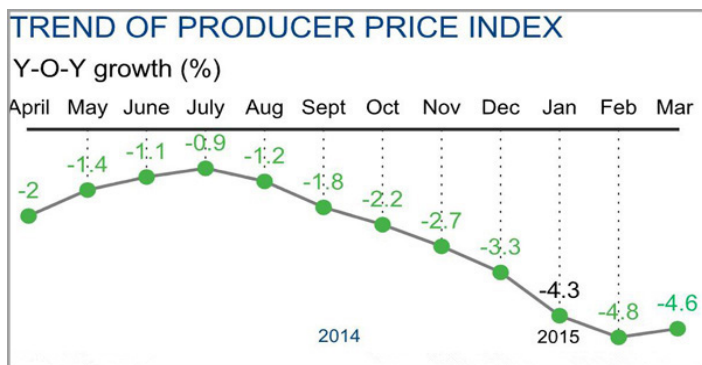
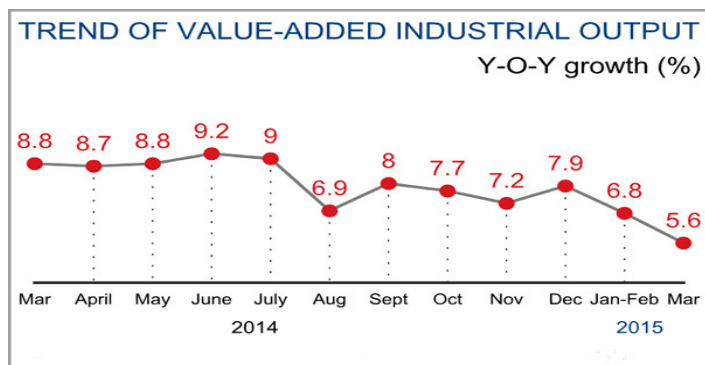
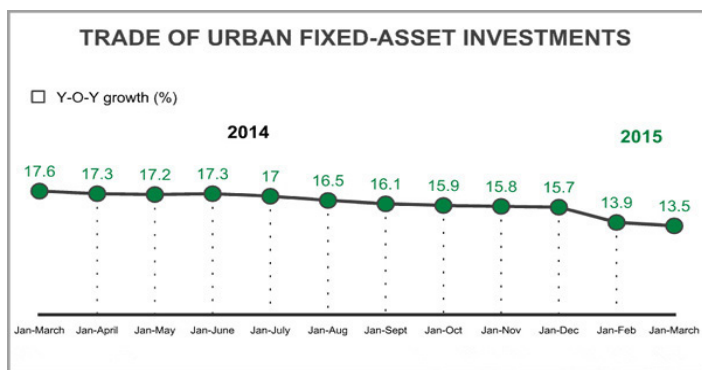
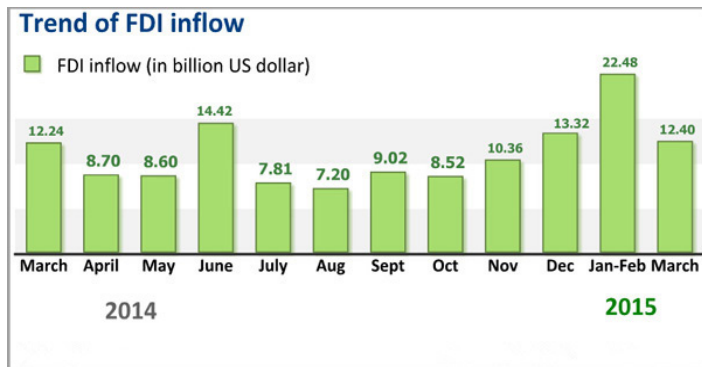
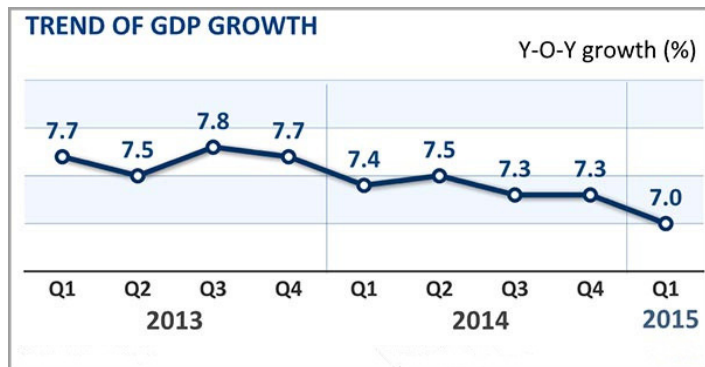
Chinese policy makers have repeatedly stated that the country has enough firepower within its policy ammunition to avoid a hard landing. If the slowdown ever causes widespread unemployment or a drop in individual incomes, China would not hesitate to intervene.

"We are able to keep economic operations within the proper range," said Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during his recent interview with the Financial Times in early April. "Since the fourth quarter of last year we have fine-tuned our fiscal and monetary policies, but these adjustments are not a QE policy but targeted regulatory steps, and they have paid off."

"It's true that our economy still faces downward pressure," Li said, but he voiced his confidence in achieving a healthy growth rate.

China's central bank cut interest rates for the second time this year at the end of February and has just announced a second cut to the reserve requirement ratio in the banking sector. The country has also ruled out plans to boost infrastructure investment and encourage private investment in these projects.

"It won't be easy to achieve 7 percent growth again this year," said the premier. "This will require vision, perseverance and courage."



Belt and Road blueprint attracts worldwide attention

China issued its much-anticipated blueprint on the Belt and Road initiatives in late March, which has gained worldwide attention.

Entitled "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road," the plan was issued to give shape to the Belt and Road initiatives, which were proposed by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), also Chinese president, in 2013.

The blueprint was jointly issued on March 28 by China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce.

To echo the interests of the international community, the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held a briefing for foreign embassies and multinational companies in China on April 16.

Ou Xiaoli, an inspector in the NDRC's Department of Western Development, and a member of the team who drafted the action plan, briefed 198 diplomats from 130 countries.

Ou elaborated on the action plan, saying that the aim of the Belt and Road initiatives is to make regional resource allocation more efficient, the production factors more freely available and the regional market further integrated.

Ou described the cooperation areas as infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, industrial investment, energy and resource, financial cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, ecological protection and maritime cooperation.

"The action plan signifies that the Belt and Road initiatives are moving from a top-level design to a combination of top-level design and practical cooperation," Ou noted.



Nearly 200 diplomats from foreign embassies in China and more than 130 representatives of transnational enterprises attended the briefing held by the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in Beijing on April 16, 2015.



A briefing was held by the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in Beijing on April 16, 2015, in a bid to introduce and interpret "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road."

Diplomats scrambled to ask questions during the Q&A session. Shakhmat Nuryshev, Kazakhstan's ambassador to China, asked about the cooperation mechanism of the initiatives. Ou Xiaoli responded, "We should be doing group dancing as well as ballroom dancing," referring to both the multilateral cooperation mechanism and bilateral consultation.

Ou also revealed that China is currently studying the necessity of setting up a platform to better carry out the plan.

The Kazakhstan ambassador told China.org.cn after the briefing that a total of 33 deals worth US\$23.6 billion were signed between China and Kazakhstan in late March, including a cooperation agreement on transportation, energy and infrastructure.

All the projects are currently going smoothly and a joint venture company has been established in China's Lianyungang City to transport goods from China to Southeast Asia, the ambassador said.

Diplomats have hailed the Belt and Road initiatives and expect to see their implementation.

"China proposed the framework, which fits its status as the world's number two economic superpower... The initiatives show that China really means the fact that it has international obligations, [namely] the development of Asia, Africa and Europe so that all people can

come closer together to take advantage of this huge undertaking," Vassilios Costis, the Greek ambassador to China, said before the briefing.

A diplomat from Pakistan's Embassy in China told reporters after the briefing that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is a part of the Belt and Road initiatives, will connect China's Xinjiang and Pakistan's Gwadar Port and will "make vital progress."

Apart from foreign diplomats, the corporate sector has also shown great interest in the initiatives.

"The corporate sector is the main force and beneficiary in building the Belt and Road. The initiatives will trigger huge market demand in China and the countries involved and will create tremendous opportunities for companies," said Zhang Yansheng, secretary-general of the NDRC's Academic Committee, in a briefing to 137 representatives from 109 multinational companies on April 16.

A representative from Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation asked whether companies that are not located on the Belt and Road will be able to reap the benefit of the grand initiatives.

Zhang reassured him saying, "The initiatives are intended to build a new pattern of international cooperation, in which Japan and Western countries are a major part. Our common interests are so great that the initiatives will bring us more opportunities to develop together."

China's Yemen evacuation attracts global praise



A crew member guides a girl to board a Chinese navy vessel in Aden Harbor, Yemen, March 29, 2015. China is withdrawing hundreds of citizens from Yemen to Djibouti with the help of Chinese warships.

China wrapped up its evacuation mission on April 7 by dispatching two naval vessels to evacuate the last batch of Chinese citizens from war-torn Yemen. In four operations since March 29, a total of 629 Chinese nationals and 279 foreign citizens were evacuated aboard Chinese vessels.

This was the first time China used navy vessels to evacuate its citizens from overseas, and it was also the first time it carried out a specific evacuation of foreign citizens. The operations at the edge of one of the world's most volatile hotspots were a triumph of humanitarian spirit.

On March 26, Saudi-led coalition forces launched air strikes in Yemen against the Shiite Houthi group. The rampant violence in the small Middle Eastern state led to a complete breakdown of order and endangered the lives of both the locals and foreign citizens working there. With tensions building up, China halted its participation in the international anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden and directed its naval fleet to rescue the stranded Chinese nationals with the help of the Chinese embassies in Yemen and Djibouti.



A Chinese navy ship carrying 83 Chinese and Sri Lankan nationals evacuated from Yemen arrived at the Port of Djibouti on April 7, 2015.

"The security situation has worsened in Sanaa in the last few days. There was almost constant bombing during the daytime and explosions could also be heard at night," Zhang Qijiang, an engineer from Nantong No.3 Construction Group, said onboard the warship on April 7. "But the moment I embarked on the Linyi frigate, my nerves were at ease. We are really grateful for what the government has done for us."

The Chinese Embassy in Yemen made a very detailed plan before the evacuation. It only took about half an hour for more than 400 people to embark on the warship in the first operation.

"The moment I saw the naval vessel, I felt at home," said Zhang Hongbin, a worker who was involved in the construction of the national library in Yemen, which was a project aided by the Chinese government.

The operation was very risky, as some fighting was taking place close to the Chinese ships, but it was also efficient and successful, so after witnessing the rescue of the first group of Chinese nationals, 10 countries asked China for help.

"The air strikes in Yemen really scared all of us. We were lucky that we could leave the country," said Usaca Perera, a Sri Lankan who served as the liaison person coordinating the evacuation of more than 40 Sri Lankan citizens. "On behalf of my compatriots, I thank the Chinese government."

The foreign ministries of Germany, Poland, Pakistan and Japan also expressed their gratitude to China. "We are grateful to the government of China, the people of China and the Chinese navy, for bringing our people safely to Djibouti," said Pakistan's ambassador to Ethiopia, Imran Yawar, when receiving his compatriots in Djibouti.

The evacuation has won praise both domestically and internationally. On the Chinese microblogging website Sina Weibo, there was a comment that has become popular and been echoed by many people. It said, "The strength of the motherland is not about how many visa-free agreements it can sign with other countries, but that it can bring you home from danger."

According to Tim Collard, a retired British diplomat who spent most of his career in China and Germany, the evacuation showed to the Chinese people that "their country is willing and prepared to take action to protect them."

The evacuation of Chinese nationals and foreign citizens reaffirmed China's commitment to its people and displayed its image as a major responsible country in maintaining international peace and security, said Zhang Junshe, a research fellow at the Chinese Naval Research Institute.

Luo helps her fellow villagers living on the edge



Luo Yunlian

Deep in a gorge surrounded on all sides by lofty mountains and intersected by the rushing rapids of the Dadu River in southwest China's Sichuan Province, there is a village called Gulu, which literally means "the village with an ancient path," but to the locals, it is better known as Tianti Village, which means the "village on top of the sky ladder," because in the past, the only way to get to the village was using ladders to descend the 800-meter cliff.

Due to the height of the mountains, Gulu Village was totally cut off from the outside world and had no access to electricity. Before 2010, villagers led a primitive life, and most elders had never been out of the village.

The year 2010 was significant to the villagers as Luo Yunlian was elected head of the village's Communist Party of China (CPC) committee. "I had been out of the mountains, so the villagers thought I knew how things were going on out there and believed I could help them get rich," she said.

Luo was born into an Yi ethnicity family in the village. She was brought up by her grandmother, who had a good reputation in the village and was looked up to. "My grandmother always told me to bear other people's interests in mind," Luo said. "As the village's Party head, I must work for the wellbeing of the people, because that is my duty."

After becoming the village's Party head, the first thing Luo tackled was improving the primitive living conditions. The same year she was elected, she managed to get a government fund of more than 2 million yuan (US\$322,139) to pull electricity cables into the village across the mountains.

After modernizing the village, she began to tackle poverty. Through research, she found that the local soil and climate were fit for growing walnuts, but the villagers were unwilling to take any risks. To start the project, Luo used her own savings to plant walnut trees over more than 13 hectares of land and persuaded the local government to invest 2 million yuan into the project.

When the walnuts were planted, the next thing Luo dealt with was transportation. In 2003, the local government carved out a zigzag track on the cliffs, which enabled the villagers to use mules to transport goods and personal items for the first time, but this was far from sufficient. Luo began to appeal to the government for more help. Last year, the local government spent more than 3 million yuan (US\$482,700) building fences along the rocky track and promised more to come.

Over the past years, Luo has become immersed in village affairs, and many people couldn't understand why she chose to stay in such a remote place instead of living a comfortable life in a big city.

"Gulu Village is my home. Everyone here is family to me. Who could enjoy themselves outside when their family is living a poor life back at home?" Luo said. "As my grandmother told me since my childhood, one should have a sense of responsibility."

Due to her extraordinary performance, in 2013, Luo was elected as a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), or the country's top legislature. Every year in early March, she goes to Beijing to represent the locals in exercising state power. When she is in Beijing to attend the meeting, her grandmother sits in front of the TV, trying to find her on the



Luo Yunlian at the 2015 NPC session in Beijing

Major events in April

[April 11: China to offer aid to flood-hit Chile](#)

Key words: Chile, aid

China will provide US\$500,000 in cash to flood-hit Chile, the Ministry of Commerce said.

[April 15: CPC, KMT to commemorate 2005 meeting](#)

Key words: CPC, KMT, Taiwan

The Communist Party of China (CPC) on the mainland and the Kuomintang (KMT) Party in Taiwan will commemorate the achievements of the meeting between leaders of two parties in 2005, a mainland official said.

[AIIB announces full list of founding members](#)

Key words: AIIB

China announced the full list of 57 founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

[April 22: China releases wanted list for worldwide fugitive hunt](#)

Key words: fugitive, corruption

Interpol's National Central Bureau of China has released a wanted list of 100 persons worldwide as the country intensifies hunt for economic fugitives.

[April 26: Xi extends condolences to Nepal over strong quake](#)

Key words: Nepal, earthquake

Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a message of condolences to Nepalese President Ram Baran Yadav over a disastrous earthquake in the country, which has caused a huge loss of property and lives.

news, wearing her bright ethnic clothing.

During the NPC annual meeting this year, Luo raised several proposals on improving rural transportation and people's livelihood.

"Visitors have been calling Gulu: a village on the stairway to heaven. They love Gulu, because it is beautiful, and special, and so do I," said Luo. "We will make life more convenient for both villagers and visitors, without destroying its beauty."

A Great Road to Take: The Communist Party of China and China's Socialism



The book "A Great Road to Take: The Communist Party of China and China's Socialism" is written by five young scholars from Peking University, Tsinghua University, Renmin University of China, and Fudan University.

In the book, the writers face "China's problems" squarely. With a full understanding of China and the West, with an interdisciplinary academic field of vision, and from the aspects of civilization, politics, society, basic level and economy, the writers analyze the advantages and problems of China's road, China's system and China's governance, and probe into how the Communist Party of China (CPC) overcomes multiple crises and challenges.

The book helps to give the outside world a correct understanding of the CPC and Chinese socialism, and a correct view of Chinese social reality. Pan Wei, professor of the School of International Studies, Peking University, commented on the book, saying it analyzes the gains and losses of Chinese governance systems and governance capabilities, and it sincerely points out how to improve the Party's construction and how to adhere to the socialist road in the new technology era. It elaborates on two principles: first, the handling of Chinese affairs must be under the CPC leadership; second, only by believing the people can the CPC lead the people.