

# TWO SESSIONS

REFORM

## HK changes 'must move forward'

NPC says Aug 1 decision is unshakable after student activist applies for judicial review

By SHADOW LI  
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The decision on Hong Kong's constitutional reform made on Aug 31 by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress is "unshakable", Fu Ying, the NPC's spokeswoman, said on Wednesday. She said it is now time for the reform process to move forward without further delays.

Speaking at a news conference for the congress's annual session, Fu said she hopes Hong Kong can embrace universal suffrage in accordance with the Basic Law as originally planned.

Qiao Xiaoyang, chairman of the NPC's Law Committee, said there is no possibility of the Aug 31 decision being changed.

Fu was asked about the recent tension between Hong Kong residents and mainland tourists, and replied, "I always feel there should be mutual respect and we must remember each other's good qualities."

She said she remembers the generous donations that came from Hong Kong after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and the many residents from the region who volunteered to visit the stricken areas.

Fu said a new mainland reality TV show, *Running Man*, demonstrates how everyone in a team should work together as the team will fail if anyone is left behind.

She said the show, which features young TV stars from both the mainland and Hong Kong, provides an important example of mutual cooperation.

"Everyone involved has to

work together in order to succeed," she said. "I think some problems are not nonnegotiable and can be solved by talking things over. Focusing on negative things is counterproductive."

On Tuesday, a student activist from the University of Hong Kong who was a leader of last year's illegal Occupy Central movement applied to the Hong Kong High Court for a judicial review of the Aug 31 decision.

The application was criticized by members of the Hong Kong delegations to the two sessions, who urged the opposition camp to abandon their delaying tactics.

Henry Tang Ying-yen, a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said the application is "a waste of time" because only the NPCSC has the authority to interpret the Basic Law.

"A Hong Kong court does not have the authority to handle this issue," said Tang, a former chief secretary for administration.

CPPCC Standing Committee member Chan Wing-kee agreed, saying Hong Kong had wasted too much time already and there should be no more delays.

CPPCC member Lau Siu-kai said it is highly unlikely that a judicial review will overturn the Aug 31 decision.

"The NPCSC is the nation's highest legislature," Lau said. "Its decisions cannot be challenged outside the mainland."

Bernard Chan Chi-ze, a Hong Kong deputy to the NPC, said, "The central government had stated very clearly that the Aug 31 decision is final."



### Friendly meeting

Li Xiaolin, chairwoman of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and a CPPCC member, offers to pour water for Xu Lin, head of the Confucius Institute Headquarters, at a panel discussion on Wednesday in Beijing.  
ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

PROFILES

## Call for action to save ethnic language

By YANG JUN and PENG YINING

Wang Jichao's first language is Yi, but when he was 13 a teacher taught him to say a few words in Mandarin, including Beijing and Tian'anmen. He struggled to pronounce them, and had no idea what they meant.

On Monday, as a National People's Congress deputy representing Guizhou province, he arrived in Beijing for the two sessions at the Great Hall of the People on Tian'anmen Square.

Wang, a member of the Yi ethnic group, was born and raised in a remote mountain village in the province.

"In order to study science and other subjects, we had to learn Mandarin," said Wang, 58, who is now the director of a Yi language translation and research center at Bijie in Guizhou.

"Now the situation has changed: We need to preserve our ethnic language, as it is disappearing."

Wang said the number of people who speak Yi has declined sharply.

"In a county with 100,000 people, less than 1 percent speak Yi, let alone read and write the language," he said.

"Language is the spirit of our culture. It carries the history of our group. To preserve our ethnic culture, we have to save our language first."

Since 1982, Wang has been involved in researching and translating ancient texts written in the Yi language. He has published more than 30 books and translated Yi literature, including epic poetry, history and documents, into Chinese.

The texts were carved on rocks, bamboo sticks and bones, or written on leather, clothes and paper. Many have



Wang Jichao

rotted and become blurred. "If nobody saves them, then a language that is thousands of years old will eventually die," Wang said.

"The young generation feels it doesn't have to learn the Yi language to find a job and communicate. Mandarin is very easy to learn, because it is everywhere. Children learn Mandarin in cartoons and textbooks, but where can they learn the Yi language? Nowhere."

Yi characters, like those used in Mandarin, are square. Wang read out a poem, and though the pronunciation seemed strange, the rhymes were familiar — they are in fact similar to those used in ancient Chinese literature.

Wang said the poem was a prayer sent by the ancient Yi people to the god of knowledge.

"The Yi people admired literature. They worshipped the god of poetry and the god of books on special days," he said.

Wang has suggested to the NPC that elementary schools in areas where people of the Yi ethnic group live should provide Yi language classes.

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Su Jianguan and Zhao Kai contributed to this story.

LETTERS

## Petitioners appeal to leaders for assistance

By ZHAO XINYING and CUI JIA

Two-thirds of the letters received by the State Bureau of Letters and Calls are addressed to the national leaders, especially President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, 12 national legislators and political advisers were told when they visited the organization on Tuesday.

The bureau is responsible for receiving petitioners and handling written and online petition letters. Staff members open an average of 2,000 letters every day.

National People's Congress deputy Abudula Abbas, a professor of life sciences at Xinjiang University, said thousands of people were standing in line at the bureau's reception center in Beijing as they waited to present their appeals for help.

At the department that deals with letters, the legislators and advisers saw cabinets filled with correspondence from across the country. Each province or autonomous region has its own cabinet.

## 2,000

The average number of letters the State Bureau of Letters and Calls opens every day

Legislator He Jihua, deputy mayor of Changsha, the capital of Hunan province, picked up a number of envelopes from a pile and saw that they were all addressed to Xi. He and the other visitors were surprised that so many letters were sent to the president.

Fan Xiaomao, the bureau's deputy director, said that on average, 15 percent of the letters contain suggestions concerning national development and social reforms.

"Some of the letters are forwarded to the leaders as they were written, while with others we draw up a list of the main points or compile extracts before sending them on."

Abudula saw the written instructions and comments made by Xi and Li on some of the letters.

"I could see that the leaders are not only concerned about national development as a whole, but also care for every individual in the country and hope to help solve their problems," he said.

The bureau handled millions of petitions last year.

"The workload of the staff members at the bureau is very heavy," Abudula added.

He suggested that people send in appeals for help and petitions online, as the bureau is required to respond to online submissions within a week. "Online petitions can reduce people's travel and accommodation costs, and the outcome is the same as when people come to the bureau in person," he added.

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### This way, please

A traffic policeman directs a group of delegates as they arrive at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. Thousands of delegates from all over the country are in the capital this week to attend the annual sessions of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the National People's Congress.

MARK SCHIEFFELBEIN / ASSOCIATED PRESS

By ZHANG YI  
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Liu Li's job as a foot masseuse may seem a lowly calling to some, but she says it not only provides her with food and clothing, but also keeps her in touch with the kind of people she represents as a National People's Congress deputy.

The farmer's daughter from Anhui province struggled from an early age to make her way in life, and this makes her an ideal advocate for the disadvantaged at the congress's annual session.

Liu, 34, the eldest of five children, was forced to drop out of primary school when she was 14.

"My dream had been to become a teacher, but when I left school I had to give up that idea," she said.

She held a number of jobs

over the years, starting out as a seamstress in a clothing factory.

"Finally, after doing numerous jobs in several cities, including waitressing, I found myself a useful position as a foot masseuse.

"I know how difficult it is to find a job when you have nothing more to show than a basic primary school education. I know, too, how desperately short of knowledge I felt as I looked for a better job."

In 2000, while working as a foot masseuse in Xiamen, Fujian province, she started sponsoring poor students, and 10 years later she was nominated as one of the country's top 10 most inspirational people.

She has helped more than 100 students over the years with contributions from her salary, giving regular support to 53 of them.



Liu Li

On Dec 20, she launched a charity in Xiamen. Inspired by her efforts to help the students, more than 500 people from all walks of life have since joined the organization, and as a result more than 300 students are now receiving regular financial support.

Apart from donating money, the members are helping the students in other ways. Some have given school bags and teaching services, while

others are working as volunteers to help run the organization.

Liu has started to speak up for farmers who turned their backs on the land to take jobs in factories and other businesses in the cities. They often do not know how to protect their legal rights.

She plans to present four suggestions at the annual session, including a proposal for an amendment to the Labor Contract Law.

"It will better protect the legal rights of millions of farmers' families over back-pay settlements, as bosses in some areas still withhold their employees' wages," Liu said.

If adopted by the congress, the proposal will remove loopholes in the law and make it easier for workers to ensure they are paid, she said.

SCIENCE

## Experts seek research funding shake-up to boost innovation, economy

By GAO YUAN  
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The national scientific research funding program urgently needs reform to boost the country's capacity for innovation, political advisers working in the science and technology field said on Wednesday.

Yin Zhuo, a member of the National Committee of the

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said spending on basic scientific research lags far behind that in Western countries.

"Less than 10 percent of the massive research budget went to support basic scientific projects. In developed nations, the proportion is 20 to 25 percent," he said, adding that low investment in the area will damage the country's scientific

competitiveness in the long run.

Total research and development spending broke through the 1.3 trillion yuan (\$210 billion) mark in 2014, according to the Ministry of Science and Technology. Enterprises contributed more than 76 percent of the sum.

Yin, director of the Expert Consultation Committee of the People's Liberation Army

navy, said reforms are necessary to encourage research.

"Scientists should receive sufficient funding at the start of projects so they can fully immerse themselves in their studies without worrying about money," Yin said.

The country allocates research budgets annually based on researchers' work in the previous year. But many projects last longer than a

year, which means scientists often have to find new sources of funding halfway through their research.

Sun Chaohun, a CPPCC member who leads a State-level mineral research lab in Sichuan province, said the scientific research funding system is in desperate need of reform because the way it is structured causes many scientists to neglect their studies.

"Some researchers are too engaged in making connections with the fund approval authority and spend half their working time on producing a better-looking financial report in order to obtain more investment the following year," Sun said.

"This is an absolutely absurd move for a scientist."

Wan Gang, minister of the Ministry of Science and Tech-

nology, pledged to push forward a series of reforms this year to encourage innovation.

"Local scientific innovation will greatly fuel China's economic development in the coming years," Wan said. "As the country is set to witness slower GDP growth in the foreseeable future, innovation will play an increasingly important role in boosting the economy."