

NPC/CPPCC 2015

ABE WELCOME AT PARADE IF JAPAN FACES PAST

Tea for two

Writers fill the tea cups of President Xi Jinping (習近平) and Premier Li Keqiang (李克強) at yesterday's general meeting of the third session of the 12th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Photo: Simon Song



REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK KEIRA LU HUANG

Li and Luo, wherefore art thou, Li and Luo?

When we found out that neither the Jiangsu (江蘇) Communist Party boss Luo Zhijun (羅志軍) nor its governor Li Xueyong (李學勇) would be attending yesterday's open session, reporters at the Great Hall of the People started to sniff around, eager to dig up the reason. Jiangsu is among the provinces that have been at the centre of the anti-graft crackdown over the past two years. In the provincial capital Nanjing (南京), both the city's party chief and its mayor have been snared by investigators. The well-off eastern province

also contains the hometowns of former president Jiang Zemin (江澤民) and disgraced retired security tsar Zhou Yongkang (周永康). Even vice-president Li Yuanchao (李源潮), who was once the province's party chief and who had a stint with the Communist Youth League, has been quoted as saying he feels helpless over speculation by overseas websites following the news that another youth league veteran, former presidential aide Ling Jihua (令計勳), had been placed under investigation. For journalists, especially those from media outside the

mainland like myself, open sessions of delegation meetings offer rare opportunities to question top officials. To these officials, it's a good time to dispel

rumours and promote their provinces. Corruption has been a hot topic at this year's National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Officials such as Shanxi (山西) party chief Wang Rulin (王儒林), and Jiangxi (江西省) party chief Qiang Wei (強衛), whose provinces have been hit by corruption scandals, have been willing to answer questions on the topic. But neither Luo, also a youth league veteran, nor his deputy Li, were even present in the room. In response to our questions on their whereabouts, most

people said they didn't know. A man with a delegation security badge said the party chief was busy. A delegate said the chief had attended all other meetings but had other things to do during the open session. Instead, reporters had to sit through two hours of dull speeches by several delegates. At the end, reporters shouted demands for an explanation of the absences; the host pretended not to hear. Afterwards, Xinhua issued an undated interview with Luo, who thanked the central government for its attention to Jiangsu. keira.huang@scmp.com

Anyone who is sincere can come to the event marking end of second world war, the foreign minister says in message to Japanese leader

Agencies in Beijing

The foreign minister said yesterday that Japan's political leaders needed to be more sincere in dealing with historical issues – and suggested that if they were then China would be open to inviting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to a military parade and other events marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the second world war.



Foreign Minister Wang Yi

"We will extend invitations to the leaders of all relevant countries and international organisations, and will welcome anyone who is sincere about coming," Foreign Minister Wang Yi (王毅) said during a press conference in Beijing, when asked whether China planned to invite Abe to the commemorations.

Will Japan continue to carry the baggage of history or make a clean break?

FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI

But Wang renewed calls for Abe's government to properly face Japan's role and its defeat in the war.

"Seventy years ago Japan lost the war. Seventy years afterwards, Japan must not lose its conscience," he said.

"Will it continue to carry the baggage of history or will it make a clean break with past aggression? Ultimately, the choice is Japan's."

Relations between the Asian powers have plunged over issues including territorial disputes and Japan's 19th- and 20th-century invasions, with the Communist Party regularly stoking nationalism as part of its claim to a right to rule.

"This [war] has been haunting the China-Japan relationship," Wang said, pointing his index finger in the air and recalling the words of an elder Chinese diplomat: "The more the victimiser is conscious of his guilt, the easier the victimised can recover from their suffering."

"Those in power in Japan should first ask themselves what they have done on this score. Of course, the people of the world will reach their own conclusion."

A meeting between President Xi Jinping (習近平) and Abe after an Asia-Pacific summit in Beijing in November was meant to clear the air but was instead marked by the brevity of the two men's handshake and body language that suggested disdain for each other.

China has been ratcheting up pressure on Abe over wartime

issues and over what he will say this summer on the anniversary of what Beijing calls its victory in a war of resistance against Japanese aggression.

A major focus is on whether Abe will uphold Japan's past apologies, such as those expressed in statements on the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the war's end, which used the terms "colonial rule" and "aggression".

An official 1995 apology by then-prime minister Tomichi Murayama said Japan "through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations", adding the premier felt "deep remorse" and offered a "heartfelt apology".

Unlike the former Soviet Union, China does not hold major annual military parades, but has announced plans for one to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of the second world war.

Wang, a former ambassador to Japan, said it was "perfectly normal" for China to stage the parade and that the main purpose was to "remember history, commemorate the martyrs, cherish peace and look to the future".

Beijing has not given a specific date for the parade, but it regards September 3, the day after Japan signed its formal surrender to Allied forces on board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, as victory day. Kyoto, Agence France-Presse

Xinhua's interview with Chen: actor's cut

Stephen Chen in Beijing
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Actor Chen Daoming (陳道明) would appear a man of many talents – not only is he a famed thespian and delegate to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, he seems to have turned his hand to news editing.

A reporter with state-run news agency Xinhua prompted controversy on the weekend by releasing an interview with Chen, admitting she had let him edit it "with his own hand".

Journalist Wu Yu (吳雨) was upfront about how her report had gone through substantial changes by Chen, even bragging about it. "Many media colleagues may envy me – a 'super hunk' sat on the floor with me yesterday, editing my report with his own hand!" Wu wrote.

Chen, 59, a household name on the mainland, has starred in internationally released films such as Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and *Coming Home*, and the Hong Kong movie *Infernal Affairs 3*.

The interview was not politically sensitive. Chen had mainly talked about the quality of Chinese film production.

Wu wrote that she had promised Chen he could look at the draft before publication, "just to make sure everything's correct". She was impressed by the "meticulousness and seriousness" of the "charismatic" actor.

When Chen began making changes, she sat aside thinking "change whatever you want".

Chen appears to have taken the offer seriously, changing both his quotes and even the headline.

Chen Yantao (陳懿濤), deputy editor-in-chief of *News Weekly* in Guangdong, said the article "crippled" her eyes and likened it to a primary school pupil's homework. "It's not even writing, but the diary of a kneeling, kissing fan," she wrote on her microblog.

It's not the first time a local reporter has been criticised for getting too cosy with a subject. An agency reporter once got so "excited" about taking a photo with NPC spokeswoman Fu Ying (傅瑩) he forgot to ask questions.

But Wu also had fans. "She is better than those journalists who make things up to win eyeballs," said one person on Sohu.com.



China and Canada have agreed to issue visas to each other's citizens that will be valid for up to 10 years. Photo: SCMP Pictures

China and Canada seal deal for 10-year visas

Agence France-Presse in Beijing

China and Canada will grant each other's citizens visas valid for up to 10 years, Beijing's foreign minister announced yesterday.

The agreement, which goes into force today, comes as Western countries increasingly seek Chinese business and investment, and mirrors one with the US announced last year.

"China and Canada have just reached an agreement issuing visas to each other's citizens with the validity period of up to 10 years," Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on the sidelines of the National People's Congress, the country's Communist-controlled parliament, in Beijing.

No other details were immediately available.

Ottawa last year cancelled a permanent residency visa scheme for foreign investors popular with wealthy Chinese, thousands of whom reportedly had applications pending.

Every year mainland Chinese travellers make more than 100 million "outbound" trips, tourism authorities say.

While most travellers go to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, they represent a growing and increasingly coveted source of high-spending visitors in destination countries.

Beijing and Washington announced in November a reciprocal deal to extend student visa validities to five years, with business and tourist visas stretched out to a decade, up from one year now.

The announcement came during a visit to China by US President Barack Obama.

There were 1.8 million Chinese visitors to the US last year, Obama said, adding US\$21 billion to the economy and supporting more than 100,000 jobs.

"This agreement could help us more than quadruple those numbers," Obama said at the time, describing it as an "important breakthrough which will benefit our economies, bring our people together".

100m
Mainland tourists make this many "outbound" trips each year

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