



China Reform Monitor: No. 1269

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January 9:

China will set up a new body, the National Inspection Committee, to expand supervision and anti-corruption among non-party members, who are currently not under the purview of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the Communist Party of China's (CPC) official news website reports. The new agency, whose functions and responsibilities are modeled on the CCDI, will begin with parallel pilot programs in Beijing, Shanxi and Zhejiang. Officials for the new body will be appointed by the National People's Congress, and remain subordinate to the CPC. The announcement came during a key meeting in which President Xi Jinping called for "continued efforts" to tackle corruption, and adopted rules to regulate the powers of its officials. The meeting coincided with a documentary aired on China's state broadcaster featuring disciplinary officials jailed for blackmailing other officials during anti-graft probes. *The China Daily* has hailed the new rules, saying disciplinary officials are "vulnerable to temptation" just like others.

January 12:

North Korea's Hui Chol, vice foreign minister for Asian affairs, is in Beijing for about a week to meet with Chinese officials and senior diplomats of other countries, *Kyodo* reports citing "diplomatic sources." The five-member North Korean delegation also includes Ri Thae Song, vice director of the Foreign Ministry. Meanwhile, Vietnam's Communist Party Nguyen Phu Trong has begun a formal visit to China, which the official Xinhua news agency said comes during a "spring of certainty" as nervousness in the South China Sea subsides. Yet, tensions still remain over reports that Vietnam has been carrying out reclamation work on one of the islands under its control in the disputed waters.

January 13:

Nigeria has ordered Taiwan's trade representative office to move out of its capital city and to stop using the island's formal title in its name. This came as China's foreign ministry Wang Yi is visiting the African country, who has hailed the announcement as "conforming to the overall trend." Ni Yongjie at the Shanghai Institute of Taiwan Studies told the Hong Kong's *Economic Journal*: "It's clear that squeezing Taiwan's diplomatic space is part of Wang Yi's African visit agenda. The move is to warn Tsai Ing-wen of the consequences should she choose to go down the path of Taiwan independence. It is not only Africa, mainland China is also targeting Latin America, Oceania and Europe. This shows Beijing has escalated its diplomacy war against Taiwan as 'diplomatic block-off 2.0'. However, it is unclear how much Beijing is willing to spend on luring 'poor countries' away from the island."

January 14:

Beijing will spend more than 18.22 billion yuan (\$2.6 billion) to fight air pollution in 2017 in an effort to limit the annual average density of PM 2.5 particles to around 60 micrograms this year, said Lu Yan, head of the Beijing Municipal Reform and Development Commission. PM 2.5 are fine particles measuring no more than 2.5 micrometers in diameter that lodge in the lungs and cause respiratory problems. Average density of PM 2.5 in the Chinese capital was 73 micrograms per cubic meter in 2016. In 2017, 700 villages will switch from coal to clean energy, coal use will be cut by 30 percent to 7 million metric tons, and 300,000 outdated vehicles will be phased out, the official Xinhua news agency reports.

January 17:

China bought more than \$1 billion in food products from Russia last year, replacing Turkey as the top importer of Russian food, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. "Frankly, they want everything. Everything that can be consumed by a human being in China is something they're interested in," said Petr Shelakhaev, head of the Russian government's Far East Investment and Export Agency. In China, where genetically modified products and poor sanitation have created serious health problems, Russian products are seen as safe and sanitary. "We want to eat more Russian food," Cai Guiru, deputy president of state-owned transportation firm China Chengtong Holdings Group, told a business summit in Russia. The U.S. sells \$26 billion worth of food to China annually. Negotiations to allow Russian pork, chicken and beef into Chinese markets are expected to be completed soon, allowing pork exports to China to begin early this year, followed by chicken and beef by 2019. In Primorye, near Khabarovsk, Russian farming conglomerate Rusagro is building a large pig-breeding complex to meet Chinese demand. Miratorg, McDonald's top Russian meat supplier, is eyeing beef sales to China.