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ANOTHER XI JINPING THOUGHT CENTER OPENS

As part of the drive to enshrine Xi Jinping Thought, China has opened another research center, bringing the total to 18. The new addition, run by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, is dedicated to Xi Jinping's Thoughts on Ecological Civilization. Last year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a center to study Xi's thoughts on diplomacy, the National Development and Reform Commission has created one dedicated to economic policy, and the Law Commission has one to spread his views on law. Some Xi centers are affiliated with local governments (e.g., Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, Shandong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Fujian) while others are linked to universities (e.g., Peking University, Tsinghua University, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Central Party School). (*South China Morning Post*, July 9, 2021)

CHINA EASES CHILD-REARING COSTS TO BOOST BIRTHS

Over the next five years, China will reduce childcare costs and shore up labor protections for women, a new official policy document has laid out. The guidance calls for measures to aid parents, including exempting the costs of raising a child under 3 from income taxes, prioritizing families with children in home buying and renting, expanding parental leave, and increasing affordable childcare. Local authorities must stop fining people who violated earlier family-planning policies and remove any obstacles in securing jobs and enrolling their children in school. The new guidance did not give a concrete timeline for the changes, however, and left implementation up to localities. (*Wall Street Journal*, July 20, 2021)

FOR-PROFIT TUTORING BARRED IN CORE SCHOOL SUBJECTS

China has banned all for-profit after-school tutoring in core school subjects in a crackdown on its \$120 billion private education sector. Institutions offering tutoring on school curricula must be registered as non-profit organizations, and no new licenses will be granted. Curriculum-based tutoring institutions are barred from raising money through listings or other capital-related activities, and listed companies are banned from investing in such institutions. Any firms currently in violation of the new rules must immediately take corrective measures. In June, Xi Jinping said schools, not tutoring firms, should be responsible for student learning. News of the policy change, which also bars foreign investment in private tutoring businesses, triggered a heavy sell-off in shares of Chinese tutoring firms. (Reuters, July 23, 2021)

POWER OUTAGES SPREAD AS TEMPS RISE

In mid-July, 11 provinces reported record demand and peak-load electricity surges. Many cities, including Beijing and Xi'an, are facing power outages as demand and supply shortages strain China's energy grid and force operators to schedule disruptions on overloaded networks. Beijing has warned some districts of planned outages that could last as long as 11 hours. Xi'an cut power to several districts as temperatures hit above 95 degrees Fahrenheit, and restricted electric vehicle charging to off-peak hours. The heat waves also caused floods that disrupted coal production and transportation at mines and harbors. Beijing has vowed to build up its coal reserves, and ordered the six biggest state-owned power firms to restock enough coal for a week by July 21st to prevent blackouts. Coal futures, in turn, have surged to 926 yuan per metric ton. (*Japan Times*, July 20, 2021)

LOCAL BUSINESSMAN SENTENCED TO 18 YEARS

A prominent Chinese pig farmer has been sentenced to 18 years in prison and fined 3.1 million yuan (\$480,000) for organizing an attack on officials and other offenses. Sun Dawu, chairman of the Dawu Agriculture Group, was among 20 employees who stood trial at the People's Court in Gaobeidian, Hebei after they tried to stop a state-owned enterprise from demolishing the company building in August 2020. Sun was convicted of gathering people to attack state organs, obstructing public affairs, picking quarrels, sabotaging production, illegal mining, illegal occupation of farmland and illegally taking public deposits, the court said. Other defendants received sentences ranging from one to 12 years and the company was ordered to refund 1 billion yuan (\$155 million) to investors. (Associated Press, July 28, 2021)