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CHINA'S CRACKDOWN ON CULTURE CONTINUES

China's National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) is cracking down on "unhealthy" cultural content in the media, the high salaries of its stars and tax evasion in the industry. Anyone appearing on TV should be carefully selected with political and moral conduct as criteria, and should join in public welfare programs and assume social responsibilities, the NRTA has said. Notices from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism said that all performers, including livestreaming stars, must attend "professional ethics training," while the Association of Performing Arts has mandated that contracts will be terminated with performers who "lack moral discipline," and China's internet regulator announced a crackdown on "chaotic" celebrity fan culture. In late August, an editorial in the Guangming Daily criticized "effeminate" male stars as immoral and accused them of damaging the values of adolescents. (CNBC, September 2, 2021)

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ACCUSED OF "FABRICATING ECONOMIC DATA"

Statistical inspections of 19 provinces have revealed that local officials are fabricating economic performance data to improve their chances of promotion. According to a report published by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, localities instructed enterprises to create false data that showed predetermined "steady increases" in profits. Officials met with firms to assign them statistical fraud tasks, and then rewarded them with "fraud subsidies" and preferential policies. Before submitting their data, local companies had to send it to officials to be "checked." Some local governments "forced subordinates and enterprises to fabricate figures at each level to complete their target achievement mission; some companies did not resist or object to this interference in their independent reporting rights, but instead catered to the local governments in exchange for development support," the Central Commission's deputy bureau chief, Mao Youfeng, has disclosed. (*South China Morning Post*, September 4, 2021)

PRENATAL TEST UNDER INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY FOR MILITARY LINKS

Five countries are reviewing the NIFTY prenatal test made by Shenzhen-based BGI Group because it has ties to the Chinese military. The test, which collects and screens the DNA of women and fetuses for more than 80 genetic conditions, has been taken by 8.4 million women in 52 countries. BGI developed the test in collaboration with People's Liberation Army hospitals. Canada's privacy commissioner said the company's connections to the PLA raised important questions about its collection of "highly sensitive" information. Slovenia and Germany are examining whether the test complies with European Union data protection rules. (Reuters, September 7, 2021)

TIANANMEN VIGIL ORGANIZERS IN HONG KONG CHARGED

Hong Kong police have demanded that the pro-democracy Hong Kong Alliance hand over its financial records and the personal details of its members, and when the group refused to do so police officers arrested five members of the alliance's standing committee. The group's three top leaders – Lee Cheuk-yan and vice-chairs Albert Ho and Chow Hang Tung – have been charged under the city's new national security law with subversion and working as "foreign agents." The police have also charged the organization itself, hit it with financial penalties, and frozen its HK\$2.2 million (\$283,000) in assets. The Hong Kong Alliance is best known for organizing the city's annual vigil for victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. (BBC, September 10, 2021)

CHINA USING HONDURAS ELECTION TO "CREATE CONTROVERSY": TAIPEI

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry has accused China of using the Honduran election to "create controversy" and undermine its relations with the country. Honduras' left-wing opposition party, led by former president Manuel Zelaya, said that if it wins the presidential election it will recognize Beijing. In response, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry has warned Honduras not to be drawn in by China's "flashy and false" promises: "Recently, China has even used the democratic election in our ally to create controversial topics and the false image of unstable diplomatic relations between our country and Honduras. The government will take concrete actions to demonstrate our country's assistance to the development of Honduras' economic and social affairs, and strive for the support of Honduras' ruling and opposition parties for Taiwan." In 2018, El Salvador recognized Beijing, leaving Honduras as one of only 15 countries with diplomatic relations with Taiwan. (Reuters, September 10, 2021)