

Cabinet reshuffle plan unveiled

Major changes aim to improve efficiency and public services, push forward institutional restructuring in key areas

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China unveiled a plan on March 13 for its biggest Cabinet reshuffling in years, as part of an effort to improve the government's structure, efficiency and service orientation.

The institutional reform plan of the State Council, China's Cabinet, says the body will have 26 ministries and commissions after its reshuffle. The State Council's ministerial-level entities will be reduced by eight and vice-ministerial-level entities will fall by seven.



Wang Yong

The reform plan was submitted to the first session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) for deliberation.

New entities include ministries of natural resources, veterans' affairs and emergency management.

There will also be new administrations under the State Council such as an international development cooperation agency and a State immigration administration.

The reform aims to push forward institutional restructuring in key areas. It is designed to strengthen

the government's economic management, market supervision, social management, public service and environmental protection.

State Councilor Wang Yong, who introduced the plan at the NPC session on March 13, said the reform will strengthen the overall leadership of the Party, help modernize the system and capacity of State governance and improve governance efficiency.

Cabinet reform will focus on transforming the government's functions, removing bottlenecks that impede the market's decisive role in resource allocation and facilitating the pursuit of high-quality growth, he said.

During the Third Plenary Session of the 19th Communist Party of China Central Committee from Feb 26 to 28, the CPC Central Committee adopted a decision on deepening reform of Party and State institutions.

The decision stated that deepening that reform is a profound change to promote the modernization of the system and capacity for governance of the State.

"Deepening the reform of the Party and State institutions is an inevitable requirement for strengthening the long-term governance of the Party," Liu He, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, said in an article published by

People's Daily on March 13.

The reform will cover different levels of institutions in the Party, government, people's congress, political advisory body, judiciary, social organizations, public institutions and within military-civil integration, said Liu, who is also director of the General Office of the Central Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs.

"Unlike past institutional reform, which mainly was related to government institutions and administrative systems, this institutional reform will be comprehensive," he said in the article.

Fu Yuhang, an NPC deputy from Southwest China's Sichuan province, said it follows the historical trend for China to deepen reform because some outdated agencies should be eliminated while many others should be merged.

"For example, the people are paying more and more attention to intellectual property, so it's a good idea to adjust this department," she said.

A new State intellectual property bureau will be established with the integration of some departments from three institutes, according to the reform plan.

Li Jing, an NPC deputy from Central China's Hubei province, said the reform plan should result in outstanding improvements in the

efficiency of the government work and make things more convenient for the people.

"I think China's State institutional reform is very positive. This is a sign of greater prosperity and stability for China's economy. It certainly will contribute to the whole world's economy," said Ali Obaid Al Dhaheri, the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to China.

"Government reform is a momentous move for China's internal development and global affairs," said Nasir Mahmood, director-general of the Department of External Relations and Legal Affairs at the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization. "It improves the effectiveness of the governing bodies and allows China to adapt to changing times."

Piriya Khempon, Thailand's ambassador to China, said his nation pays a lot of attention to China's institutional reforms because developments in the two countries can present opportunities to build new links.

Thai authorities, he said, will take a close look at changes such as the China National Tourism Administration being merged into the newly established Ministry of Culture and Tourism under the reform plan.

Zhang Zhihao and Cao Yin contributed to this story.

New ministries and commissions under proposed reform plan



Ministry of Veterans Affairs



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs



Ministry of Ecological Environment



Ministry of Emergency Management



Ministry of Culture and Tourism



Ministry of Natural Resources



National Health Commission

Move to centralize immigration tasks

Improving services with new national body shows the importance placed on attracting highly skilled foreigners

By ZHANG ZHIHAO
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China plans to establish its first national immigration administration to improve governance and services for immigrants, refugees and border control, according to a draft State institutional reform plan released on March 13.

Experts said this would improve government efficiency, provide better services and protection for legal immigrants, and help maintain public order.

"More and more foreigners are visiting and working in China, and this poses new requirements for improving immigration management and services," State Councilor Wang Yong said on March 13 when presenting

the draft to the fourth plenary meeting of the first session of the 13th National People's Congress.

To enhance the coordination and administration of immigration affairs, China plans to combine the Ministry of Public Security's immigration and border inspection duties in a new national immigration administration under the ministry, said Wang.

The new administration's main duties are creating and implementing immigration policies, managing affairs and procedures related to border control, and providing services for expatriates and Chinese citizens who are entering or exiting the country on personal business, he added.

At the same time, the new admin-

istration will manage refugee affairs, as well as coordinate the governance and repatriation of illegal immigrants.

The administration will also engage in international cooperation on immigration, Wang said.

The planned establishment of the new administration is the latest indication of the importance the authorities attach to attracting highly skilled foreigners, and the role they play in helping to transform China's economy with science and innovation.

In January, China began issuing 10-year, multi-entry visas in nine selected cities to attract senior entrepreneurs, scientists, artists and other highly skilled foreigners.

The visa also applies to their spouses and underage children,

according to the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs.

From 2000 to 2017, China's foreign migrant population nearly doubled from 508,000 to 1 million, according to a report from the International Organization for Migration.

However, this number pales in comparison to the 50 million immigrants living in the United States, the largest in the world in 2017, the report said.

He Weibao, a researcher at the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said immigrants have contributed greatly to socioeconomic and scientific development in the US.

In 2016, around 46 percent of innovators in the US were immigrants or the children of immigrants,

and 55 percent had doctorates in STEM subjects — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — according to a survey by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a US nonprofit public policy think tank.

"Attracting the best and brightest minds around the world and allowing them to innovate and flourish have been the keys to US economic and technological dominance in the past decades," said He. "China is hoping to emulate the success of the US."

The new administration is a "necessary step in centralizing immigration-related duties currently performed by multiple bodies", thus allowing greater efficiency, as well as improved services and protection for legal immigrants, he said.