

China ruling party leaders pass historic Xi resolution

Xi's tenure marked by sprawling anti-corruption crackdown

BEIJING: Top Communist Party leaders wrapped up a key meeting in Beijing by passing an important resolution on the country's past, state media said yesterday, which is expected to cement President Xi Jinping's grip on power.

Xi, the uncontested leader of the world's most populous nation, has been heading a pivotal plenary of the ruling party's top figures since Monday in the Chinese capital. Some 400 members of the powerful Central Committee passed China's resolution on "Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party's Centennial Struggle"—only the third ever such resolution in its 100-year history.

The previous two resolutions were issued under former leaders Mao Zedong in 1945, and Deng Xiaoping in 1981. The lengthy declaration called for upholding "the correct view of party history", said official news agency Xinhua, adding that the party has "written the most magnificent epic in the history of the Chinese nation for thousands of years".

"The Party Central Committee called on the entire party, the entire army and people of all ethnic groups to unite more closely around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, to fully implement Xi Jinping's new era of socialism with Chinese characteris-

tics," the Xinhua readout read.

This year's closed-door plenum paves the way for the 20th party congress next autumn, at which Xi is widely expected to be handed a third term in office, securing his position as China's most powerful leader since Mao. Analysts say the resolution will help Xi shore up his grip on power by setting in stone his vision for China and diminishing the role of previous leaders.

The "thought" of Xi "is the epitome of Chinese culture and soul," the text reads, saying that his presence at the "heart" of the ruling party "is of decisive importance... to promote the historic process of the great renewal of the Chinese nation".

'Xi Thought'

Xi's tenure has been marked by a sprawling anti-corruption crackdown, repressive policies in regions like Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, and an increasingly assertive approach to foreign relations. He has also created a leadership cult that has quashed criticism, stamped out rivals and dissent and introduced his own political theory—dubbed "Xi Jinping Thought"—to school students.

State TV's evening news broadcast said Xi's resolution was of "wide-ranging historical significance", showing footage of Xi addressing



BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping is seen in a big screen during an evening news program in Beijing yesterday, as top Communist Party leaders wrapped up a key meeting by passing an important resolution on the country's past, state media said, which is expected to cement President Xi Jinping's grip on power. — AFP

rows of delegates in the Great Hall of the People in front of red flags and the Communist symbol.

The first such resolution on the party's history passed under Mao helped him cement his author-

ity over the Communist Party four years before it seized power. The second, adopted under Deng, saw the regime adopt economic reforms and recognise the "mistakes" of Mao's ways. — AFP

China's Xi warns of 'Cold War-era' tensions in Asia-Pacific

WELLINGTON: Chinese President Xi Jinping warned against a return to Cold War-era divisions in the Asia-Pacific yesterday as tensions mounted over the security of Taiwan. In the run-up to an anticipated virtual summit with US President Joe Biden as early as next week, Xi said countries in the region must work together on common challenges, from the COVID-19 pandemic to trade.

"Attempts to draw ideological lines or form small circles on geopolitical grounds are bound to fail," he told a virtual business conference on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit hosted by New Zealand.

"The Asia-Pacific region cannot and should not relapse into the confrontation and division of the Cold War era." Xi's call came hours after China and the United States announced a surprise pact to accelerate climate action at a summit in Glasgow where countries are trying to agree on measures to curb the warming of the Earth. The Chinese leader did not mention the US deal directly but said "all of us can embark on a path of green, low-carbon sustainable development". "Together, we can usher in a future of green development," he said. The Chinese and US leaders will hold virtual talks "soon", according to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Some reports say the meeting will take place as soon as next week.

'Critical historical juncture'

But while the Biden administration has identified climate as a key area for potential cooperation with China, tensions have soared over their rival visions for the Asia-Pacific region, notably

Taiwan, a self-ruling democracy claimed by China. Beijing has ramped up military activities near Taiwan, with a record number of planes crossing into the island's air defence identification zone in early October.

Secretary of State Blinken on Wednesday underscored US military support for Taiwan. "We will make sure that Taiwan has the means to defend itself because the purpose here is never to get to that point where anyone is actually trying to disrupt the status quo by force," he told an event hosted by The New York Times.

Biden's national security advisor Jake Sullivan said the United States and China had the choice not to return to Cold War-era divisions. "China has a different value system. It has different interests. And that's part of what the ongoing competition will be about," Sullivan said in an online address to Australia's Lowy Institute yesterday. "But there's no reason that that competition has to turn into conflict or confrontation. And that is what responsibly and collectively we need to manage as we work in the years to come."

'Translate consensus into actions'

Besides its position on Taiwan, China also claims almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade pass annually, rejecting competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Against that backdrop, the United States, Britain and Australia announced in September that they had formed a new alliance—AUKUS—under which Australia will acquire nuclear-powered submarines using US technology. Although delivery is years away and China was not specifically named, the announcement angered Beijing and separately sparked a furious row with France which saw its deal to sell Australia conventional submarines torn up. Sullivan said the AUKUS alliance showed that the United States trusted Australia with its most sensitive technology. "And we believe even more importantly, in our collective, combined capacity to produce greater stability, security and deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region," he said. —AFP

Hong Kong's 'Captain America' protester jailed over slogans

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong man known as "Captain America 2.0" for carrying the superhero's shield at protest rallies was sentenced to more than five years in jail yesterday for chanting slogans promoting Hong Kong's independence from China.

Ma Chun-man, a 31-year-old food delivery driver, was convicted last month by a judge of trying to separate the city from China by chanting slogans and displaying placards, as well as through interviews with reporters. It is the third national security case to come to trial since Hong Kong authorities began wielding a sweeping new law to snuff out dissent.

China imposed the national security law on the city last year in response to massive democracy protests, a move that has brought mainland-style speech curbs to the once outspoken business hub. Hong Kong's first national security trial took place in July when former waiter Tong Ying-kit was sentenced to nine years in jail for terrorism and secession after he rode his motorbike into police while flying a protest flag.

But the latest trial is more of a legal weathervane because—much like the vast majority of upcoming national security trials—the offences do not involve a violent act and revolve instead around what someone has said. Stanley Chan, one of the judges specially chosen by the government to try national security cases, said Ma's offence was no less serious than Tong's. "It's hard to guarantee that other people incited by him won't become another Ma Chun-man," the judge said. "Whether he used violence, whether he defied the law enforcers, whether his ideas got others' recognition — all these are not important," Chan added. —AFP