《关注两会》

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The once-a-year meeting of China's national legislature kicks off Wednesday with all eyes on China's growth-target projections and military-spending plans.

The gathering of the National People's Congress at Beijing's Great Hall of the People usually doesn't generate much drama by itself. As the congress put it in a guide for reporters, "no new laws or major law amendments are expected to be put before the legislators this year, and there will be no outstanding personnel changes for voting."

Still, the congress — which goes by the English shorthand NPC — provides China's top leaders with a platform to sketch out their economic and policy goals for the year. Some of them appear at rare – if carefully managed – press conferences. Enterprising reporters might even catch key officials as they come and go from meetings or duck out for bathroom breaks.

Some major points of interest will be:

China's economic growth target for 2014: Last year, China held fast to a growth target of "about 7.5%," then just eked past it with 7.7% growth for 2013. Most economists believe Beijing will stick to the 7.5% rate but that it will become harder meet that target as the country's economy matures.

China's military spending: Last year China increased its defense budget by 10.7% amid rising regional tensions with Japan and with Southeast Asian national over their overlapping South China Sea claims. This year tensions have heightened even further after Japan's prime minister visited a controversial shrine. Another ramp up would be further signs of China's desire to flex its muscles regionally.

Financial reform: Any hints that China will ease capital controls, liberalize interest rates or make its currency more freely convertible. Experts don't expect broad moves from the NPC.

Social services: China may ramp up spending to address growing public demands for health care, better education, bigger pensions and other services.

Corruption: Chinese leaders are in the midst of a broad-ranging campaign against graft and waste. Austerity for officials is likely to be a message reinforced repeatedly. In the past, Chinese have combed online news photos of delegates pointing out their expensive clothes and accessories. This year they've been instructed to eschew fancy banquets and tchotchkes.

National security: Don't expect it to be on the formal agenda, but leaders might let something slip following the deadly weekend knife attack in Kunming.

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