

《Premier praises question voted most popular by netizens》

Premier Li Keqiang faced a new style of questioning when a China Daily reporter raised the issue voted most popular in an online survey which attracted about 25 million people, during a press conference on Wednesday.

More than 10 million Internet users voted for a question about boosting the national network system of medical insurance.

Li said online voting is a good way to identify issues people are concerned about as well as helping the government improve its work.

He also admitted he had heard about medical insurance problems previously. "Some seniors move to another province living with their children and looking after grandchildren. They paid medical bills when sick, but have to go back to their hometown for medical insurance due to the present policy," said Li.

"Many specific small problems in medical insurance may be a huge challenge to a family or individuals when they are sick," he added.

Li pledged to realize real-time public medical insurance settlement in two years.

The State Council website launched an event in conjunction with 10 news websites, including China Daily, to collect questions for the Premier through the Internet at the end of January, receiving tens of thousands.

China Daily, in partnership with toutiao.com, sifted through them and selected 10 of top concern, launching the survey from March 2, a day before the top advisory body began its annual session.

Until now, 24.86 million have participated on diverse platforms including toutiao.com and its app.

Hot topics covered issues such as the retirement system, healthcare, pensions, air pollution, income tax and food safety with the medical insurance system hitting top spot with 17.1 percent of voters.

Foreign reporters' takes

Italian reporter Rita Fatiguso from Il Sole 24 Ore said collecting netizens' questions for the Premier is a new way to express the voice of the public. She said, the annual press conference is a chance for the Premier to send information to the public, and the masses would be satisfied with his answers.

Ana Cardoso from Mozambique's Noticias said answering questions from netizens demonstrates the Premier's

willingness to communicate directly with the public and shows that the Internet has become a major channel for the government to gauge public opinion.

Monica Xu from Hong Kong's China Review News Agency said the press conference is a window for netizens to voice their opinions, and people want to hear the Premier's responses to public concerns, issues concerning government policies and solutions to the problems.

Top 10 issues Chinese netizens asked the Premier about and the votes they received

1. Postponing retirement age in a flexible way 6.51 percent
2. Cutting hospitals' dependence on commission from drug and medicine sales 7.39 percent
3. Building a unified medical insurance system nationwide 17.1 percent
4. Bridging the pension gap between employees of private companies and State employees. 11.74 percent
5. Stepping up construction of low-rent housing in cities 10.33 percent
6. Realizing the withdrawal and use of housing provident funds across cities 8.78 percent
7. Cutting the number of smoggy days 9.09 percent
8. Exploring the compensated withdrawal mechanism of rural homesteads 8.33 percent
9. Levying individual income tax based on family revenue 7.86 percent
10. Ensuring the food and drug safety 12.88 percent