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## China's parliament names Xi Jinping ally Li Qiang as new premier

### *Китайський парламент призначив союзника Сі Цзіньпіна Лі Цяна новим прем'єр-міністром*

*Китай призначив Лі Цяна, близьку довірену особу президента Сі Цзіньпіна, наступним прем'єр-міністром країни, поставивши його номінально на чолі другої за величиною економіки світу, яка зараз стикається з одними з найгірших перспектив за останні роки.*

*Ц. Лі буде доручено відродити мляву економіку Китаю, яка все ще відновлюється після пандемії. Йому також доведеться боротися зі слабким світовим попитом на експорт, скороченням робочої сили і старінням населення. Економіка Китаю в 2022 р. зростає лише на 3 %, і в день відкриття парламенту Пекін поставив скромну мету зростання економіки на рівні близько 5 % до 2023 р., що є найнижчою метою майже за три десятиліття.*

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/11/china-parliament-names-xi-jinping-ally-li-qiang-as-new-premier>

New premier Li Qiang, 63, a close confidant of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, faces the task of reviving China's flagging economy.

China has named Li Qiang, a close confidant of President Xi Jinping, as the country's next premier, placing him nominally in charge of the world's second-largest economy, which is now facing some of its worst prospects in years.

Li was nominated by Xi and appointed to the position with no dissenting voices at Saturday morning's session of the National People's Congress, China's ceremonial parliament, in Beijing. He replaces outgoing premier Li Keqiang.

The 63-year-old received votes from nearly all the more than 2,900 delegates who voted. The rubber-stamp confirmation of Li's position came a day after Xi, 69, secured an unrivalled third five-year term as president, setting him up to possibly rule for life and confirming him as the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong.

Li is best known for having enforced a brutal "zero-COVID" lockdown in Shanghai last spring as party boss of the Chinese financial hub. In doing so, he proved his loyalty to Xi in the face of protests and complaints from residents over their lack of access to food, medical care and basic services.

Li came to know Xi during the then-future president's term as head of Li's native Zhejiang, a relatively wealthy southeastern province now known as a technology and manufacturing powerhouse.

China's former Premier Li Keqiang shakes hands with newly elected Premier Li Qiang as China's President Xi Jinping looks on during the fourth plenary session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China on March 11, 2023. GREG BAKER/Pool via REUTERS

China's former Premier Li Keqiang shakes hands with newly elected Premier Li Qiang as China's President Xi Jinping looks on during the fourth plenary session of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China on March 11, 2023 [Greg Baker/pool via Reuters]

Prior to the pandemic, Li built up a reputation in Zhejiang and Shanghai as friendly to private industry – even as Xi enforced tighter political controls and anti-COVID curbs – as well as having more control over e-commerce and other tech companies.

As premier, Li will be charged with reviving China’s sluggish economy still emerging from the pandemic. He will also have to tackle weak global demand for exports, lingering US tariff hikes, a shrinking workforce and an ageing population.

China’s economy grew by just 3 percent last year and on the opening day of parliament, Beijing set a modest 2023 growth target of about 5 percent, its lowest goal in nearly three decades.

Li’s top task this year will be beating that target without triggering serious inflation or piling on debt, Christopher Beddor, deputy China research director at Gavekal Dragonomics, told the Reuters news agency.

“The leadership has already accepted two years of exceptionally weak economic growth in the name of COVID containment. Now that containment is gone, they won’t accept another,” Beddor said.

Li will now make his closely watched debut on the international stage on Monday during the premier’s traditional question-and-answer session with the media after the parliamentary session ends.

The appointment of Li is just one of a slate of loyalists that Xi is placing in key positions amid China’s biggest power reshuffle in a decade.