

**CHINA'S PERSONNEL RESHUFFLE
IN THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC**

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Executive Summary

1. The COVID-19 epidemic broke out in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, in December 2019. In its early stage, the Chinese authorities did not take it seriously, leading to its rapid spread to other provinces and overseas when thousands travelled during the Spring Festival.
2. China designated several senior cadres at the central and reshuffled local party and government branches to control the spread of the virus and portray itself as a responsible power to the international society.
3. At the central level, a guiding team was sent to the epicentre Hubei immediately after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has set up a new leading group. Although Chinese President Xi Jinping prioritised controlling virus transmission, only two of the 10 leading cadres were from the medical system.
4. The CCP also reshuffled local committees to implement tough public health measures. On the same day, it appointed new Hubei and Wuhan party chiefs who initiated a series of strict control policies soon afterwards.
5. Local supervision authorities, the Committee for Discipline Inspection (CDI) and Supervisory Committee (SC), also provided their support in the crisis by strengthening inspection and regulation to enhance officials' work performance.
6. The CDIs and SCs, both in Hubei and other places, reported 168 cases of typical misconduct involving 99 officials who did not perform their duties or were implicated in malpractices during the first month of Wuhan's shutdown.
7. Local party branches or government departments were hotbeds of misconduct. Hubei and Zhejiang in particular were making stringent efforts at regulating local officials.

8. The supervisory authorities had imposed 123 penalties on 168 officials, including 95 party discipline penalties by the CDIs and 28 administrative ones by the SCs. The top two forms of party penalties were warning and serious warning while the removal of position ranked first for administrative ones.
9. Particularly in Wuhan, local authorities had processed 385 cases and 620 officials for misconduct in the epicentre. They also played a role in maintaining social stability and investigating special cases that received wide social attention, leading to possible collective events.
10. The personnel reshuffle for combating the COVID-19 epidemic will have significant impact on Chinese politics in recent months. Further personnel adjustment at the local level is likely.
11. The reshuffle is also reflective of inherent problems in the authoritarian state, such as the effects of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign and power consolidation on the work performance of public servants.