

DIPLOMACY

Nation pledges economic help for Nigeria

By LI XIAOKUN
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China vowed on Tuesday to help Nigeria end three bottlenecks containing the biggest African economy's industrialization and agricultural modernization.

President Xi Jinping made the remarks when meeting with his Nigerian counterpart Muhammadu Buhari, who is leading a delegation of 12 ministers, six governors, 35 high-ranking officials and 160 entrepreneurs on his first visit to China since taking office last year.

Buhari is trying to diversify his country's economy, which faces new challenges arising from the fall in oil prices. Nigeria is Africa's biggest oil and natural gas producer.

Xi said during the meeting at the Great Hall of the People: "The development strategies of our two countries fit each other, and our economies are highly complementary. We have huge potential for cooperation."

He proposed helping Nigeria to end bottlenecks affecting infrastructure construction as well as a lack of talent and capital.

The two presidents agreed to deepen cooperation in areas including oil refining, mineral exploration and agriculture.

At a signing ceremony held after the meeting, China's ICBC and Nigeria's Central



President Xi Jinping and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari greet primary school students after reviewing an honor guard during a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. WU ZHIYI / CHINA DAILY

Bank signed a mandate letter regarding Chinese cooperation and renminbi transactions.

Nigeria was the first African country to include the Chinese currency in its foreign exchange reserves.

Lin Songtian, director-gen-

eral of the Foreign Ministry's Department of African Affairs, said the deal was "a big one", without giving details.

Another five agreements were signed covering areas ranging from production capacity to aviation cooperation.

Lin said, "This is an important visit in the history of China-Africa relations." He said the two nations' foreign ministers will hold a reception on Wednesday to celebrate the 45th anniversary of diplomatic ties, a rare arrangement during the visit

of a foreign leader.

"Nigeria is seeking to enhance mutual economic cooperation with China through the visit to help accelerate Nigeria's industrialization and agricultural

SEE "VISIT" PAGE 3

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Philippine 'hypocrisy' condemned

Beijing hits out at Manila for upgrading work on illegally occupied territory

By AN BALJIE and WANG XU

The upgrading of a military airport in the South China Sea by the Philippines reflects the country's "hypocrisy", a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Tuesday.

A case launched by Manila at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague is also a "sheer political provocation under the guise of laws", the spokesman said.

The Philippines is attempting to strengthen and enlarge its illegal occupation of Chinese territory by upgrading facilities, including an airport, on Zhongye Island, spokesman Lu Kang said in response to a question from China Daily at a regular news conference.

Zhongye Island belongs to China's Nansha Islands but has been illegally occupied by the Philippines since the 1970s, Lu said.

A source close to the situation said the Philippine Air Force has used several transport planes to carry substantial amounts of construction material and various types of fuel to the strategically placed island.

The source said this indicates that the Philippines is prepared to restart an upgrading process. Manila said in 2014 and last year it had halted upgrading work at the airport on Zhongye Island.

In January 2013, the Philippines unilaterally initiated an arbitration case against China in The Hague regarding its disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea. A ruling by the arbitration court is expected later this year.

Lu said, "This has clearly exposed the hypocrisy of the Philippines, since its words are not matched by its deeds." Lu added that the Philippines is attempting to legalize its illegal occupation through a verdict from the arbitration court.

Lu urged Manila to stop all activities "offending China's territorial sovereignty and interests", and return "to the right track of settling disputes through bilateral negotiations".

Philippine Ambassador to China Erlinda F. Basilio declined to comment.

China says the Philippines has occupied Chinese territory in the South China Sea illegally since the 1970s, including Zhongye Island, where Manila has carried out large-scale construction of military and civilian facilities, including airports, ports and barracks.

In January, reports said Manila was planning to install a \$1 million satellite-based system on the island to track flights.

Xu Liping, a senior researcher of Southeast Asia studies at the Chinese Acade-

Dispute timeline

- Since 1970s:** Philippines seizes eight islands and reefs belonging to China's Nansha Islands.
- May 1999:** Philippine ship becomes grounded illegally on China's Ren'ai Reef, reporting a mechanical problem. Manila has refused to remove it.
- April 2012:** Philippines sends military vessels to harass Chinese fishing boats and fishermen operating in waters off China's Huangyan Island. The fishermen are badly treated in what becomes known as the Huangyan Island Incident.
- January 2013:** Philippines unilaterally initiates an arbitration case regarding its disputes with China in the South China Sea.
- March 2014:** Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs issues a public statement declaring its occupation of Ren'ai Reef due to the presence of its grounded ship since 1999.

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my of Social Sciences, said the Philippine presidential election on May 9 might lead to Manila provoking Beijing on maritime issues.

"On the one hand, the Philippines claims it will resolve the South China Sea issue through peaceful measures, while on the other, it is strengthening military facilities in the region," he said.

The location of Zhongye Island is important, as fighter jets taking off from there can overfly China's Nansha Islands, he said.

Last month, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China will not accept "tainted" arbitration.

Wang also said that in 2006 China had exercised its right under Article 298 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea by making a declaration excluding compulsory arbitration.

By not accepting the arbitration case, the Chinese government is acting entirely in accordance with the law, whereas the Philippines' behavior is unlawful, unfaithful and unreasonable, Wang added.

Zhang Yunbi contributed to this story.

Contact the writer at anbaijie@chinadaily.com.cn

AUTO INDUSTRY

Robot cars put to the test over long distance

By YAN DONGJIE in Beijing and TAN YINGZI in Chongqing

A Chinese auto manufacturer began a long-distance road test on its two self-driving cars on Tuesday.

The test showcases the country's ambition to chase international competitors in a red-hot industry that already boasts names such as Google, Audi, Toyota and BMW.

The two cars, manufactured by Changan Automobile in Chongqing, are scheduled to travel 1,900 kilometers from Chongqing to Beijing. The journey is expected to take five days.

A news release by the company said the test cars will run on highways at speeds of 80 to 120 kilometers per hour. A speed of 150 km/h was reached in previous tests.

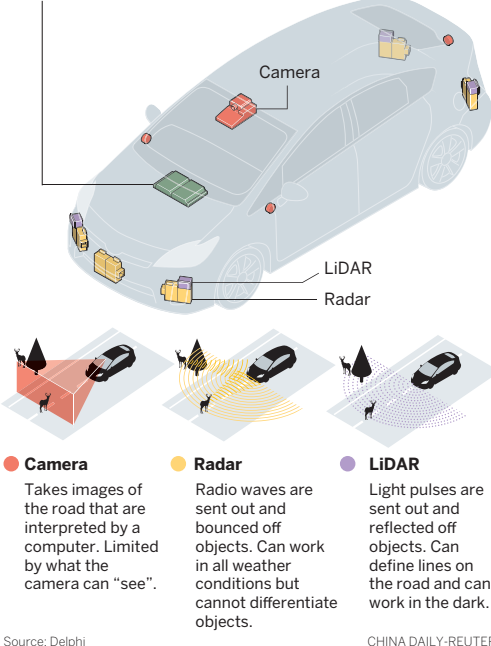
This is the second-longest distance for such a test in the world, falling short of Audi's coast-to-coast test in the United States that covered 5,000 km last year, Changan said.

How self-driving cars see the road

The vehicles rely on sensors to plot their course and avoid accidents.

Multi-domain controller

Manages input from a camera, radar and LiDAR technology. With mapping and navigation data, it can confirm decisions in several ways.



Source: Delphi

CHINA DAILY-REUTERS

Zhang Xu, chief research officer at the Internet Transportation Research Center at consultancy Analysys, said, "If the test is completed with no major accidents, it will be a milestone for China's self-driving car industry, showing that our techniques are close to matching the world's best."

Although it is a self-driving test, drivers are still needed. Two licensed drivers for the

test cars take turns every two hours to ensure safety during the test.

Kong Zhouwei, an engineer with Changan who is one of the test drivers on the trip, said, "Our self-driving techniques are still some way from being driverless in the true sense, but we are continuing to adopt mature techniques

SEE "ROBOT CARS" PAGE 5

CULTURE

China, UK showcase best books in London

By LI WENSHA and FU JING in London

China and the UK are among more than 110 countries displaying their best books at the London Book Fair this week.

Publishers from both countries are marking the 400th anniversaries this month of the deaths of playwrights Tang Xianzu and William Shakespeare.

A specially commissioned Chinese play combining Tang's *Peony Pavilion* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was being performed in Chinese and English on Tuesday, the opening day.

A mini performance space based on Shakespeare's Globe Theatre has been set up at the Olympia exhibition center in London. Shakespearean actors from around the world will perform extracts of works in six languages — Chinese, Spanish, Polish, Hindi, Arabic and English — in recognition of Shakespeare's global influence.

Celebrating its 45th anniversary, the London Book Fair is a global marketplace for the negotiation of rights, sales and distribution of content across print, audio, TV, film and digital channels.

Wang Jihui, a professor of English at Peking University,

said the two legendary writers can help people to understand both countries' civilizations.

Wang also said there is a shortage of understanding and cultural exchanges between China and the West, and urged the latter to take a more active approach, particularly in view of a Chinese-UK commitment to strengthen their partnership.

As part of the 400th anniversary celebrations, a delegation from China Publishing Group Corp headed by company vice-president Li Yan visited Bohunt School in Hampshire, southern England, where CPG donated books.

Last year, the school was invited to take part in a BBC documentary, *Are Our Kids Tough Enough?* The broadcaster invited five Chinese middle school teachers for a month of Chinese-style teaching at the school, triggering debate on educational differences.

CPG brought along more than 100 books, including bilingual texts of Shakespeare and Tang, Chinese textbooks, reference works, books for adolescents and works on Chinese history and culture.

Wang Mingjie and Song Wei contributed to this story in London.

In the news

NATION

Fatal ending

Dozens of Arctic foxes and raccoon dogs are found dead in a Beijing village just days after being released into the wild. >p5

SPORTS

Fergie floored

Danny Willett's Masters victory costs Alex Ferguson \$11,000 after the legendary soccer manager backs Jordan Spieth to win. >p23



WORLD

Impeachment call

A Brazilian congressional committee recommends impeachment of President Rousseff, setting the stage for a crucial vote. >p11

Looking ahead

Events and stories coming up in the next few days

Briefing on import, export figures

The State Council is scheduled to hold a media briefing today at the State Council Information Office. Huang Songping, spokesman for the General Administration of Customs, is expected to discuss details related to the country's import and export figures for the first quarter. The event is open to reporters from home and abroad.

Helping to fight religious extremism

From September, the China Islamic Institute in Beijing plans to enroll more students, as part of efforts to educate Islamic leaders who can help followers stay away from religious extremism. China Daily will interview the students and teachers, including their views on the terrorist attacks in Europe carried out by religious extremists, and provide in-depth stories in the days ahead.

Cruises to Xisha Islands roll out



Starting today, the cruise vessel *Beibu Gulf Star* is set to launch voyages to the Xisha Islands to promote cruise tourism on the South China Sea, Xinhua News Agency reported. The new ship will sail from Sanya, Hainan province, to Yongfu Island, four or five times every month, offering 300 passenger berths as well as catering and entertainment facilities. The Xisha Islands, along with the Zhongsha and Nansha island groups and 2 million square kilometers of surrounding waters, are administered by China's southernmost and youngest city, Sansha, which was established in July 2012.

Major platform for oil industry

The 17th China Oil Trading Conference is scheduled to be held from today till Friday in Beijing. More than 400 specialists and entrepreneurs are expected to attend the event and discuss major industry issues, including the challenges brought by petroleum quality upgrades and current pricing mechanisms.

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People: Woman runs business in her 70s



Cheng Shilian lives with her daughter-in-law in Niujiaochong village, Anhui province. Two years ago, her only son died of cancer and left debts of more than 200,000 yuan (\$30,900). Last year, her daughter-in-law was diagnosed with breast cancer. To pay the debts, Cheng, in her 70s, set up a tea garden. But she had no experience planting tea trees and the saplings died. She finally succeeded after learning the skills needed to look after tea seedlings, and her 30,000 tea plants were sold out. This year, Cheng aims to use a 0.27 hectare field on a hilltop. Visit our website to read more about her.

Travel: Global blossoms at major floral show

The Marco Polo Flower World, a major floral event in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, is lining up various species of flowers from across the globe for its opening on April 18. Designed by leading Dutch landscape architect Niek Roozen and his team, the event also boasts China's largest flower field. The park is divided into seven sections, each with a specific theme.



Society: Restaurant workers in traditional garb

A restaurant in Luoyang, Henan province, has required all its employees to dress up in traditional costumes to promote Chinese culture and offer "something unique" in its service, according to local media reports. Visit our website to view images of the workers.

Photos: World tourist spot Basum Lake in Tibet



Basum Lake, located 50 kilometers from Gongbo'gyamda of Nyingchi prefecture, the Tibet autonomous region, is listed by the World Tourism Organization as a world tourist spot. Visit our website to view beautiful scenes of the lake.



Buzzword: Paleolithic diet

The "paleolithic diet" — also called the paleo diet, cave-man diet or stone-age diet — is based mainly on foods presumed to have been available to Paleolithic humans. It includes vegetables, fruits, nuts, roots, meat and organ meats, while excluding foods such as dairy products, grains, sugar, legumes, processed oils, salt, alcohol and coffee.

Scan it!
Read more on chinadaily.com.cn

Hot topic

During the Wuhan Marathon in Hubei province on Sunday, more than 4,300 out of 20,000 runners received medical assistance, Chutian Metropolis Daily reported.



I took part in a marathon during college, without any training and guidance. Those are needed for people who don't exercise much."

Wei Junhao, media company employee in Zhengzhou, Henan province

"My first marathon was the Hengshui one in Hebei province last year. It required participants to submit the proper medical certification."

Lin Dong, civil servant in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province

"People who want to run marathons should include an exercise plan to prepare for the challenge."



Du Dawei, founder of long-distance running club in Hefei, Anhui province

"Pre-exercise warmups and post-exercise stretching can help reduce accidents and injuries during marathons and allow runners to enjoy the experience more."



Yu Yan, gym trainer in Chongqing

COMPILED BY CHINA DAILY



Candid camera: Welcome home

Grey herons nest in a scenic spot in Liu'an, Anhui province, on Tuesday. TAO MING / XINHUA

Looking for the real Chinese consumer



Andrew Moody
SECOND THOUGHTS

We are always told journalism is about the search for truth.

With this in mind, I was interviewing a woman at The Place shopping complex in Beijing about why she had just bought a packet of Marks and Spencer's Deliciously Nutty Crunch, instead of a cheaper brand or, indeed, why a Western breakfast cereal at all since she was Chinese.

I pride myself on incisive questioning. I wasn't being unnecessarily prurient, however, since all this had a purpose. The behavior of Chinese consumers has again recently been in the spotlight.

McKinsey & Co, the management consulting firm, has just published its 2016 China Consumer Report, The Modernization of the Chinese Consumer, which concluded that despite the economy slowing down, consumers

remain almost as willing to spend as they were four years ago.

It came out at the same time as the estimable Jeffrey Towson, professor of investment at Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, wrote an article about Chinese consumer behavior being emotional and increasingly difficult for companies to predict.

He wrote it, apparently, just as he was boarding a short-haul flight at Oslo airport on his LinkedIn profile and by the time he had landed the article had had 27,000 hits.

Westerners already have a particular view about Chinese consumers. They see images of them pressing their noses against the door as the Boxing Day sales get underway in London.

There is also the apocryphal story of the rich Chinese businessman pouring Coca-Cola into expensive fine wine. I say apocryphal since there is no evidence any such incident took place. The Chinese that I know who take an interest in wine are in my experience very

knowledgeable but that is a debate for another time.

My mission this time was to get a sense as to whether there was any real difference between Chinese consumers and their Western counterparts. Such information is important because the size and the scale of spending of the Chinese middle class is now one of the global business megatrends.

It is now the holy grail of those sitting in boardrooms from New York to Tokyo, Frankfurt and London. How they can pick up on the latest seemingly erratic trends prompted by a South Korean it movie or the endorsement of a Chinese actress has to be guesswork at best.

One strategy that won't work anymore is trying to offload onto the Chinese market last year's product lines. In fact, companies now do the opposite with Apple Inc and major carmakers now doing launches of new products first in China.

Eden Yin, senior lecturer in marketing at Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge, has a

somewhat acerbic view of the Chinese consumer. He says Chinese consumers shop because they are basically bored and it is one of the only activities that actually interests them, whereas Americans like the outdoor life and the British like reading.

I could point to many Britons who have never read a book in their lives but that is another story.

Back, however, to the woman who bought the Deliciously Nutty Crunch. Was it the crunchy toffee flavor that won her over?

Sadly, I never got to know because The Place's slightly oversensitive security guards seemed to think such questions were too probing and truth-seeking for a Tuesday afternoon.

Contact the writer at andremooddy@chinadaily.com.cn

Scan it!
Check out an audio version of this article.



This Day, That Year

Item from April 13, 1992, in China Daily: These students use special glasses to exercise their eyes as a way to maintain good eyesight. ... A nationwide campaign to improve the physical health of all students will soon be launched in China.

The Ministry of Public Health and the State Education Commission are jointly working out a program in schools to curb such com-

mon physical ailments as near-sightedness, parasitic diseases, anemia, malnutrition and tooth decay.

The fitness levels of Chinese students have recorded slight improvements in the past five years, following years of decline, according to the Ministry of Education.

A ministry survey of students aged 7 to 22 in urban and rural areas in 2014 found

improvements in fitness and lung capacity. But poor eyesight remains a major challenge, in part from the pressure of academic studies and exams.

In recent years, authorities have rolled out measures to help plug the fitness gaps. In October 2014, the State



This class uses special glasses to exercise their eyes as a way to maintain good eyesight. Students can expect more drills and tests as a nationwide drive to improve physical health.

Council issued a plan to develop sports in schools nationwide, requiring at least one hour of physical activity as part of classes.

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APRIL 13-14

weather

TRAVELER'S FORECAST

LOW/HIGH TEMPERATURES, IN DEGREES CELSIUS, AND EXPECTED CONDITIONS

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Snow

Storm

Thunderstorms

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

ASIA-PACIFIC-MIDDLE EAST

AMERICAS

Abu Dhabi

Bangkok

Colombo

Dubai

Hanoi

Islamabad

Jakarta

Karachi

Kuala Lumpur

Manila

Mumbai

New Delhi

Pyongyang

Riyadh

Seoul

Singapore

Sydney

Teheran

Tokyo

Wellington

Yangon

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CHINA

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Guangzhou

Guilin

Harbin

Hefei

Hohhot

Hongkong

Jinan

Kunming

Lanzhou

Lhasa

Lijiang

Macao

Nanchang

Nanjing

Nanning

Qingdao

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Yantai

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CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Xi says protecting relics a priority

President calls for perseverance in safeguarding heritage; Premier Li stresses traditional values

By WANG KAIHAO wangkaihao@chinadaily.com.cn

China's top leadership has reiterated its staunch determination to intensify protection of the nation's cultural heritage.

Cultural relics and heritage impart the brilliance of China's civilization, culture and legacy, and they bond Chinese people together with the strong ethos they embody, President Xi Jinping said.

However, he said in a guideline statement released on Tuesday, the responsibility is great and the path will be long.

He put a priority on cultural relic protection and stressed the importance of perseverance in the protection work.

Premier Li Keqiang, meanwhile, emphasized that cultural relic protection is important because the traditional values that the relics embody continue to resonate in modern China, and they elevate social morals and

boost social development.

Vice-Premier Liu Yandong, who presided over a national cultural heritage conference in Beijing on Tuesday, relayed Xi's and Li's emphasis on relic protection to conference participants.

Liu said the nation's cultural heritage work made great progress during the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-15) period. For example, China now has 4,510 registered museums, an annual increase of about 300. Additionally, an average of 26,000 exhibitions were organized every year during that time, attracting more than 700 million visits every year.

About 140 billion yuan (\$21.7 billion) in public funds was allocated to cultural heritage protection from 2011 to last year, according to the Ministry of Finance.

Nevertheless, problems still exist. About 44,000 cultural heritage sites disappeared during the late 1980s and 2011. Half of the counties in China



A cultural relic restoration specialist checks the stone texture condition of a Guanyin statue at the Dazu Rock Carvings site in Chongqing in March 2014. LIU CHAN / XINHUA

do not have professional cultural relics protection administrations.

The vice-premier underlined the importance of improving the quality of Chinese museums and their exhibitions. She also noted that only 38 colleges in China have museum-related majors, and only seven have majors related to relic restoration.

Liu told the conference that non-government efforts to protect cultural heritage should be

more actively sought.

Li Xiaojie, head of the China Cultural Relic Protection Foundation, said: "Social efforts should take the jobs that are currently difficult for governments to do. Governments can still offer guidance, but it is more efficient for the whole of society to gear up for the work."

For instance, the foundation, China's only State-level non-profit devoted to cultural relic protection, is planning a trial program in Zhejiang province

to improve the restoration of privately owned property in traditional villages. Half of the capital will be provided by the foundation, with the rest to be raised by the property owners.

"Protection of cultural heritage doesn't have to conflict with urban construction," said Wang Wei, director of the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"Establishment of archaeological relic parks in recent years is an attempt to combine the two," Wang told the conference.

He added that Chinese professionals should more frequently go abroad to take part in international cooperation projects.

"While the US, Europe and Japan are active in such projects, China is often absent," he said.

"Some scattered projects are undertaken, but the country needs national-level strategic guidance to lead more expertise overseas to reflect our deserved status in the world as a culturally abundant ancient civilization."

BUSINESS

Li: Central govt to decide local share of new tax

By HU YONGQI huyongqi@chinadaily.com.cn

The central government will determine a reasonable share of revenue for local governments from the value-added tax, which will replace the business tax nationwide next month, Premier Li Keqiang said on Monday.

Li was speaking to heads of government of 20 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions at a meeting while soliciting opinions on how to divide the expanded VAT.

The expansion of the VAT will encourage businesses to invest effectively in equipment and technological upgrading, the premier said, because the tax is levied on the difference between revenue and cost.

Li said local governments cannot unreasonably intervene with corporate operations and obstruct enterprises' cross-regional activities to collect more tax revenue.

Local governments now get about 40 percent of their revenue from a tax levied on businesses' income, according to the State Administration of Taxation. Beginning on May 1, it will be replaced by the VAT in all sectors as part of national tax reform.

The new VAT will cut local governments' revenue if the proportion is not changed. The 20 provincial-level regions reported an estimated tax reduction this year of 1.7 billion yuan (\$263 million) to 13 billion yuan.

Currently, the central government gets 75 percent of the VAT revenue and local governments collect 25 percent. That proportion is expected to be adjusted to 50-50 in the new VAT, media have reported.

I hope the central government will continue the favorable policy to leave all taxes for the use of Tibet."

Losang Jamcan, chairman of the Tibet autonomous region



Local governments would likely get double their current share to compensate for the income reduction caused by the tax replacement, experts said.

At the meeting, governors from western China provinces such as Qinghai, Gansu and Guizhou called for more funds from the central government to go to less-developed areas in the central and western part of the country.

Losang Jamcan, chairman of the Tibet autonomous region, said the VAT will bring 1.7 billion yuan less in tax for local governments, accounting for 9 percent of total taxation.

"I hope the central government will continue the favorable policy to leave all taxes for the use of Tibet to support our social and economic development," the chairman said.

Visit: Grain security is top concern

FROM PAGE 1

modernization," he said.

Nigeria has a large land area but is still seeking grain security, Lin said, adding that this will be a priority for cooperation between Beijing and Abuja.

Buhari told Xinhua News Agency before the visit that China has the technical and financial capacity, the development experience and the goodwill to help Nigeria.

"So, really, this is an opportunity Nigeria cannot afford to lose," he said.

Buhari said Nigeria is ready to expand industrial development, especially in the manufacturing and textile industries, and to speed up infrastructure construction, which presents huge opportunities for both countries.

Nigerian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Audu Ogbah told a forum in Beijing on bilateral production capacity and investment cooperation: "Nigeria has a large amount of arable land. We expect China to bring agricultural machinery."

Nigerian Minister of Defense Mansur Dan Ali said his country will wage a long-term fight against terrorists to ensure the security of all foreign-invested companies in Nigeria.

Wang Yanfei and Xinhua contributed to this story.



Tall order

A replica of a giraffe attracts visitors on Tuesday to a Namibia tourism promotion booth at the China Outbound Travel & Tourism Market exhibition in Beijing. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

PUBLIC HEALTH

Inspection set on food safety enforcement

By CAO YIN caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

China's top legislature will inspect enforcement of the new food safety law in 10 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions from mid-April to the end of May.

Legislators from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress will check the food safety situation in such places as Tianjin, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Heilongjiang province after some recent scandals, such as fake-brand baby formula, triggered public outrage.

Zhang Dejiang, the top legislator, said on Tuesday that five teams will conduct the inspection, keeping safety foremost on people's minds and supervising the effectiveness of the law, which took effect in October.

In the baby formula case, Shanghai police arrested nine people suspected of being involved in the production and sale of milk



A safety inspector checks food products at a supermarket in Hefei, Anhui province, in February. ZHANG DUAN / XINHUA

powder that was packaged with fake brand labels, Xinhua News Agency reported on Sunday.

The police investigated the case after receiving reports in September, and they caught the suspects and seized about 1,000 cans of milk powder, more than 20,000 empty cans and 65,000 fake brand trademarks, from Dec 9 to Jan 7, Xinhua said.

Six of the suspects have

been transferred for prosecution, it added.

"Making people confident while eating has been a key issue among legislators, and we've increased efforts in updating food work systems and providing the strictest supervision in the industry," said Zhang, the committee's chairman.

"The new law has been revised for more practical enforcement, and awareness

of the law will be enhanced in government departments," said Zhang, who also is the inspection leader.

The inspection will review law enforcement at every step of the food production process. It will look at such things as whether local governments provide special funds for food safety supervision and how food enterprises train employees for safety management, according to a committee statement.

Vice-Minister of Public Security Huang Ming said that authorities have cracked 15,000 cases involving food safety and arrested more than 26,000 suspects since the law took effect.

The China Food and Drug Administration also said that it is accelerating the development of rules to help governmental departments effectively implement the law.

In addition, more food sample checks have been developed, especially regarding baby-related food, the administration said.

INNOVATION

Technological ties with Israel to grow

By HU YONGQI huyongqi@chinadaily.com.cn

China will inject new impetus into cooperation with Israel on technological innovation, Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday.

Li, who met in Beijing with Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, speaker of the Israeli parliament, said China will develop a mechanism for cooperation as next year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Edelstein said he was the first Knesset speaker to visit China in 20 years.

China-Israel trade volume increased last year amid weakening global trade, showing great potential for bilateral cooperation, Li said.

Innovation has been a key area for bilateral relations. Last month, Vice-Premier Liu Yandong visited Israel for the second meeting of the China-Israel Joint Committee on Innovation Cooperation.

Zhu Feng, a professor of international relations at Peking University, said Israel is known for its technology, including that used in growing fruits and vegetables in desert areas.

Moreover, he said, Israel focuses on promoting technological innovation, which is in line with China's national strategy that aims to create new technologies and business models for economic restructuring.

(Israel) will strengthen exchanges with the Chinese government, legislature and enterprises."

Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, speaker of the Israeli parliament



Edelstein met with his Chinese counterpart Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, on Monday.

Premier Li said the exchanges between both legislatures can promote the understanding between the Chinese and Israeli people.

Edelstein said that Israel "will strengthen exchanges with the Chinese government, legislature, enterprises and academic circles to boost economic growth and innovation".

Profile

Nigerian President Muhammad Buhari was born on Dec 17, 1942, in Daura in northern Nigeria. He began his military career by enrolling in the Nigerian Military Training College in 1961 and later attended military colleges in Britain, India and the United States. Buhari served as governor of Nigeria's North-Eastern State, federal commissioner for petroleum and natural resources, chairman of Nigerian National Petroleum Corp and army division commander in the 1970s and 1980s. He was Head of State of Nigeria from 1983 to 1985. Buhari won the presidential elections in March last year and was sworn in two months later.

XINHUA

AUSTERITY

Golf ‘OK’ for govt officials if they pay

By CHINA DAILY

Can officials play golf while the nation steps up efforts to clamp down on corruption and promote austerity?

The answer is yes — if they pay out of their own pockets.

Playing golf itself is not a wrongdoing, the Discipline Inspection and Supervision News, the flagship newspaper of the Central Commission for Disciplinary Inspection, said on Tuesday.

14,000 yuan

Value of a prepaid golf card accepted by Lin Chunsong, former deputy mayor of Wuyishan, Fujian province

However, government officials will be subject to punishment if they accept membership cards illicitly, including through sports clubs, resorts or entertainment establishments. Other activities like using public money to play golf, or playing during office hours, also violate discipline rules, according to Si Xiaojian, deputy director of the investigation department of the anti-graft commission in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

The paper cited the example of Lin Chunsong, former deputy mayor of Wuyishan, Fujian province, who accepted a prepaid golf card worth nearly 14,000 yuan (\$2,170) from people whose interests were under his sphere of influence.

A nationwide campaign against corruption and the “eight point rules”, usually referred to as austerity rules, were introduced in December 2012.

The rules aim to reduce bureaucracy, extravagance and undesirable work practices among Party members. With clauses focusing on various forms of corruption, such as banquets at public expense, unnecessary travel and meetings, and unauthorized use of government cars, the rules have played a significant role in the anti-corruption campaign.

TRANSPORTATION

Shenzhen to set rules for express vehicles

Massive increase of electric tricycles ‘threatens road safety, worsens urban traffic’

By QIU QUANLIN in Shenzhen
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Traffic authorities in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, will specify measures for the use of electric tricycles by express services, following the drafting of national technical requirements for the vehicles, according to a local officer.

“Electric tricycles for express delivery services can be used on designated roads at specified times if they meet the national technical requirements,” said Xu Wei, head of the Shenzhen traffic police.

The State Post Bureau published a draft of the national electric bicycle requirements on Monday for public review.

The draft specifies that delivery tricycles can be no more than 1 meter wide, 3



A traffic warden intercepts an electric tricycle in Beijing on Monday. The capital imposed a ban that bars electric bikes and tricycles from 10 roads, including Chang'an Avenue and some of its connecting roads. Drivers will be fined 20 yuan (\$3.10) for using the roads, and their vehicles will be seized if they refuse to pay the fine. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

meters long and 1.4 meters high, with a maximum payload of 180 kilograms, excluding the driver.

The maximum speed is 15 km/h. Tricycles used for deliv-

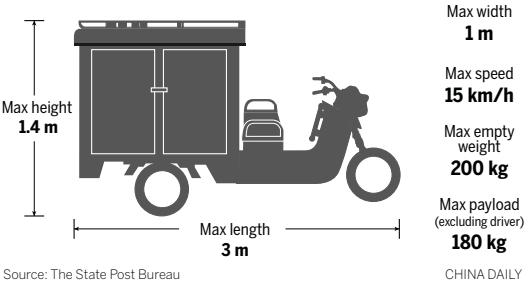
ery services should have a sign in front reading “express”, according to the draft.

The country’s booming e-commerce has led to a rapid expansion in the express

delivery industry nationwide, especially in big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen.

However, the massive growth of electric tricycles —

Proposed specification for electric tricycles used for express delivery services



especially ones that are unlicensed or have substandard technologies — threatens road safety and worsens urban traffic, according to the draft.

Shenzhen was put in the spotlight recently after local traffic authorities launched a campaign to crack down on illegal electric bikes and tricycles.

During the campaign, which ended on April 5, some 18,000 unlicensed or illegal electric bikes and freight tricycles were confiscated, with only 60 belonging to delivery workers,

according to the traffic police authority.

“The action mainly targeted illegal electric bikes that ferried passengers, rather than the express delivery industry,” said Xu.

According to Xu, local police will add 5,000 tricycles to the existing quota of 13,000 registered electric bikes and freight tricycles for express delivery use.

Additionally, the local authority will introduce a mobile management system in late April in which a QR code listing delivery contents will be installed on electric tricycles.



Double vision

Twenty-six pairs of twins take a group photo at Lushan International Experimental School in Changsha, Hunan province, on Monday. Twins are generally assigned to the same class unless parents request otherwise, said Deng Zhigang, the principal, and are required to wear different shoes or other items, such as hair pins, so that teachers can identify them correctly. HE WENBING / FOR CHINA DAILY

HEALTHCARE

Money may be best medicine for rural doctor shortage

By WANG XIAODONG
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Doctors working in rural areas in Beijing will get a big raise — in some cases more than triple their current subsidies — under a measure by the municipal government to ease a shortage of healthcare resources.

Of Beijing’s 3,919 villages, 847 have no medical or healthcare services. The gap has created many inconveniences for residents, Mao Yu, deputy director of Beijing Municipal Commission of Health and Family Planning, said on Tuesday.

Besides the shortage of doctors, more than 90 percent of the doctors in Beijing’s rural areas are more than 50 years old. Young doctors are scarce, he said.

Experts say younger doctors typically have more up-to-date education and skills.

To bridge the health gap between its urban and rural areas, the city has decided to invest more resources in outlying areas, including training and attracting more doctors, Mao said.

Government subsidies for doctors in rural Beijing will increase to 3,500 yuan (\$540) a month from the current 1,600 yuan before the end of year, and those working in more mountainous areas may receive an additional subsidy of 500 to 2,000 yuan, Mao said.

This means some doctors could have an average salary of up to 5,500 yuan a month, he said.

“The policy is meant to encourage doctors to work in mountainous areas, where

conditions are harsher,” Mao said.

Li Hongna, an official at Beijing’s Finance Bureau, said subsidies for doctors in rural areas will increase in the future in light of factors such as inflation.

Yao Xiujun, a publicity official at the Beijing Municipal Commission of Health and Family Planning, said that, unlike doctors at public hospitals in cities, most rural doctors are involved in other income-generating activities, such as farming or other business, so they may not be reliant on government wages.

Over the next decade, China will undertake a series of measures to improve health resources in rural areas, including producing and training more qualified doctors and improving their welfare and social security,

according to a guideline released by the State Council, China’s Cabinet, last year.

The number of registered doctors working in rural areas in Beijing was about 4,600 at the end of 2014, according to the city’s health commission. More than 4,200 such doctors will be added in the future, Mao said.

Health authorities will introduce doctors to rural areas through a number of means, including the recruitment of retired city doctors and medical graduates, cooperating with medical colleges to train staff and encouraging major hospitals in cities to share doctors with rural areas, he said.

The municipal government will also improve medical and health institutes in rural areas to ensure that all villages are covered by medical and healthcare services, Mao said.

WEATHER

El Nino brings dire warnings of floods

By XU WEI
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Flood control authorities issued alerts for more than 40 rivers in southern China as weather forecasters warned of more heavy rainstorms likely to bring floods in coming days.

“The amount of rain in the area will be far above the same period in previous years,” the China Meteorological Administration, the State forecaster, said in a news release on Tuesday.

Torrential rains in South China have so far resulted in the flooding of small and medium-sized rivers in six areas, including Hunan, Jiangxi and Guangdong provinces, and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, according to Yang Kun, a news officer at the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters.

“Water levels in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze, as well as Dongting and Poyang lakes, are 1.5 to 2 meters higher than the average level in previous years,” he said.

He added that water storage in reservoirs and lakes

in the middle and lower Yangtze basin are 20 percent higher than the same period in previous years.

The forecaster said a new round of storms began on Tuesday in some areas, with another wave expected to hit central and southern China on Wednesday. Some areas in Jiangxi, Fujian and Guangxi are expected to see total precipitation of between 70 and 120 millimeters.

Looking further ahead, the forecaster predicted another series of strong storms through Monday. Total precipitation could reach 100 to 250 millimeters in parts of the region, it said.

Liu Ning, secretary-general of the headquarters and vice-minister of water resources, said during an inspection trip last month that it was highly likely the Yangtze area will see major flooding this year as a result of the strongest El Nino in history.

In a statement on the website of the Ministry of Water Resources, Liu said the situation this year is similar to 1998, when massive flooding along the Yangtze, Songhua and Nenjiang rivers claimed thousands of lives.

Briefly

BEIJING Programs to show institute’s growth

A series of documentaries showing the exchange of Chinese language and cultures with the Western world will premiere on China Central Television’s documentary channel on Thursday. Produced by Hanban, or the Confucius Institute Headquarters, the documentaries will tell stories about how the Confucius Institute, during the past decade, played a role in accelerating exchanges between China and other countries. The history and development of some other countries’ global language and culture insti-

tutes, such as the British Council of the United Kingdom and Goethe Institut of Germany, will also be shown in the documentaries.

HAINAN Three dead in shipwrecks

The death toll from shipwrecks in stormy seas off the island province of Hainan has climbed to three, while five people remain missing. The accident occurred when six fishing boats capsized at 2 am on Monday, said a spokesman with Hainan’s Yangpu marine rescue center. More than 50 vessels and a helicopter are searching the area.

EDUCATION

Top schools give chances to rural poor

Fudan University smooths way for students from remote areas to apply for admission

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
 zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Poor students benefit
Thousands in rural areas helped by program allowing access to elite universities

Students in remote or impoverished rural regions who are in their final grade in high school will no longer need to make the long journey to Shanghai for written tests and interviews to secure a place in prestigious Fudan University. Instead, they need only submit materials online and take the college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, near home. If they score 50 points higher than the provincial minimum for a first-tier university, they may receive an offer from Fudan.

“We are endeavoring to lighten students’ economic burdens and help them fulfill their dreams of enjoying the country’s highest quality educational resources at low cost,” said Ding Guanghong, assistant to the president of Fudan.

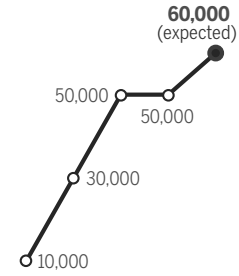
The Ministry of Education kicked off a national program in 2012 to enroll top high school graduates from the poorest rural regions in 95 elite universities. The program is to assist in the fight against poverty.

Roughly 60,000 top rural students nationwide will benefit from the program this year. The figure was 10,000 in the first year and has risen every year since.

Candidates who want to compete for a spot at Fudan through the program need to submit materials online before April 25 including academic ranking, evidence of school performance, strong points in subjects and spirit of innovation and potential. Fudan will release the list of qualifying students in late May. Performance in the *gaokao* will be key, according to the admission rules.

“Through the program this year Fudan will recruit 400 students, accounting for 13 percent of the total quota, which is quite high,” Ding said.

Thanks to the program, the ratio of students from



Source: Ministry of Education
SU JINGBO / CHINA DAILY

rural areas in Fudan increased from 10.4 percent in 2012 to 18 percent in 2014. Students from central and western areas rose from 35.9 percent in 2012 to 43.7 last year, university figures show.

New recruits will also receive an opportunity for fully paid overseas exchange programs to attend world-class universities including the University of California, Berkeley, the Free University of Berlin and the University of Hong Kong.

Ding said the top rural students outperformed their counterparts from cities academically.

“For example, students who enrolled at Fudan through the program in 2014 had an average GPA of 3.21 in the spring semester of 2015,” Ding said. “The average GPA of all students was 3.05.”

Peking University and Tsinghua University recently released their own admission rules for the program. Candidates who want to compete for a place at Peking University first need to submit materials online and participate in a three-day test at the university in June.

Students interested in Tsinghua University also need to hand in materials online and take exams in mathematics, physics, reading, presentation and physical fitness.



Buddha treasure

People admire valuable relics said to be connected to Gautama Buddha at Shixiang Temple in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. The relics were removed from Taiwan and will be housed permanently in the temple.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Freed animals fail to survive in wild

By CHINA DAILY

A few days after being set free in the wild, dozens of raccoon dogs and Arctic foxes were found dead in Beijing’s Huairou district, according to the Beijing Evening News.

A preliminary investigation suggested that the animals had been bred for their fur but were purchased and deliberately freed.

Two witnesses said about 300 to 400 foxes and raccoon dogs were released from trucks on March 27. In the following days, local villagers reported that their poultry had been “harassed” and killed as the dogs and foxes sought food.

To prevent further financial losses, the local forest authority sent out 30 officers to catch the dogs and foxes on Saturday. So far, 80 have been found. Of those, 40 had died because they were incapable of surviving in the wild, the authorities said. The rest were sent to a wild animal rescue center in Beijing.



Two hungry foxes in Huairou district of Beijing are fed on Saturday after they were set free. They are incapable of surviving in the wild, experts say.

According to the Huairou Forestry Bureau, advance approval is required before setting living things free in the wild, including mammals, birds or turtles. Neither the municipal forestry bureau nor the district bureau received any application for a large-scale release, they said.

Even though the police are still looking for the responsible parties, it is believed likely the incident was driven by

goodwill. Some people believe it’s morally right to buy caged animals and then set them free. There is even an underground industry that derives profits from such feelings, according to the authorities.

Kong Lingshui, the law enforcement team leader at the Beijing forestry authority, said he once monitored an activity in the city’s Changping district in which partici-

pants paid 530 yuan (\$82) to set animals free.

“The foxes released in March were purchased outside Beijing,” Kong said. “They don’t know how to hunt for food in the wild. And after being set free the majority of them will die,” Kong said.

“Setting animals free without doing an investigation could also have a negative influence on the ecological balance. If foxes don’t have natural enemies here, the number of foxes will grow very fast and threaten other species. That’s the reason why an application is needed before doing this,” he said.

Kong told the newspaper that in recent years many birds, snakes and bullfrogs were bought and set free by people.

“Many snakes were bought in the warm southern part of China and they cannot live in cold Beijing,” Kong said. “Setting free captive species is something that needs scientific guidance.”

Endangered shark sales spark outcry

By LIU XIAOLI and HUANG YIMING in Haikou

Photos of endangered hammerhead sharks on sale in a fish market in the Hainan resort city of Sanya have triggered an outcry among netizens.

The pictures were circulated on WeChat on Saturday. Authorities in Sanya are investigating.

A netizen named Jiaxuan YoYo said she had spent several months’ savings on a wildlife-watching cruise just to get a glimpse of hammerhead sharks in the wild and was appalled to see them on sale at a fish market.

Many believe the sharks were killed for their fins.

About 100 juvenile scalloped hammerheads were being sold for 30 yuan (\$4.60) per kilogram in the Sanya fish market on Saturday, local

media outlet Hineews reported. Their fins are often used for dishes such as shark fin soup, an expensive delicacy in Chinese cuisine.

Scalloped hammerheads have been listed as endangered under the Convention on International Trade Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, to which China is a member.

However, weak awareness of this protection among fishermen means they continued to catch hammerheads to harvest their fins.

Liang Yapai, a 65-year-old retired fisherman in Sanya, told China Daily that he used to sell the fins of sharks he caught in the South China Sea for hundreds of yuan each.

“It was a lot of money at that time, but I never did it again once I found out the sharks were protected wild animals,” he said.

Fellow fisherman Fu Cefa said he had only caught scal-

“Trader and buyer will be punished if it is confirmed to be shark meat.”

Duan Deyu, deputy director of Sanya’s ocean and fisheries bureau

loped hammerheads twice but admitted that he was not always sure which species he had caught.

Duan Deyu, deputy director of Sanya’s ocean and fisheries bureau, said the shark meat that was on sale in the market had been confiscated. One buyer had been identified and the incident was under investigation.

“We have asked experts to

help us identify the meat, because it has been cut into several pieces,” Duan said.

“We are still searching for the fisherman and the trader responsible. The fisherman, trader and buyer will be punished if it is confirmed to be shark meat.”

Fish market inspections will be stepped up and the government will do more to raise awareness among fishermen, Duan said.

“We are now putting together a pamphlet with an NGO that will feature images and descriptions of endangered and protected wild species. The pamphlets will be distributed to fishermen as soon as possible. And we will send guides to fishing boats to help improve fishermen’s awareness of wildlife protection,” Duan said.

Contact the writers at liuxiaoli@chinadaily.com.cn

LAW

HK youth told not to agitate for separation

By TIMOTHY CHUI and LUIS LIU in Hong Kong

It is the responsibility of both the government and the community to educate misinformed youths about China’s sovereignty over Hong Kong, the chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Leung Chun-ying, said on Tuesday.

Leung told reporters before a Tuesday Executive Council meeting that the region’s Basic Law says Hong Kong’s economic system and way of life will remain unchanged until 2047, there is no time limit on China’s sovereignty.

Leung’s remarks came in response to the notion of a poll on independence sought by student activists and opposition political figures. He said young people must be clear about the seriousness of China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

“Establishing a party to advocate an illegal platform is an obvious action.”

Alan Hoo, chairman of the Basic Law Institute

During an address at the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents’ Club on Tuesday afternoon, Wang Zhenming, head of the legal department of the central government’s Hong Kong Liaison Office, took aim at the way freedom of speech was being used to justify the poll, saying that reasonable limits on speech are boundaries that help avoid “unaffordable consequences”.

Wang said that while freedom of speech is protected by the Basic Law in the SAR and in China’s Constitution, reasonable limitations on speech are necessary and commonplace in other countries and regions.

Wang, who is dean of the Tsinghua University School of Law, referenced the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal’s 1999 ruling in a flag-burning case that freedom of speech was not unlimited.

Wang said suggestions by independence agitators would create conflict and social instability — not to mention that the very prospect of independence was not achievable.

Basic Law Institute Chairman Alan Hoo said advocating for Hong Kong independence may violate Crimes Ordinance provisions regarding treason, sedition and incitement.

Hoo said the stated goal of Demosisto, one of the parties organized by student activists, was to decide Hong Kong’s future through a referendum, which may violate the law.

“Establishing a party to advocate an illegal platform is an obvious action,” Hoo cautioned. “One cannot pretend it is merely freedom of expression.”

Contact the writers at tim@chinadailyhk.com

Robot cars: Dangers remain along the route

FROM PAGE 1

for mass-produced vehicles after developing, experimenting and road testing.”

The two cars will run mainly on highways where driving conditions are easier than those on urban roads.

But dangers remain along the route, such as drivers suddenly cutting in, stray animals

and falling stones, which the vehicle sensors need time to acknowledge. Bad weather can also add to the difficulties.

Auto and IT companies globally have been making great efforts to develop self-driving cars equipped with vehicle sensors, cameras and radar.

In China, Guangzhou Automobile Group, Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp and

BYD, as well as Alibaba and Baidu have announced their involvement.

According to a survey released by the World Economic Forum in November, 76 percent of Chinese said they would not mind riding in a self-driving car, higher than the global average of 58 percent.

Wang Xiaojing, chief engineer at the Ministry of Trans-

port’s Highway Research Institute, said, “The Chinese government is cautious but positive on developing such technology, and a specialized testing environment is being established.”

This is why Changan has come up with an ambitious plan.

Tan Benhong, executive vice-president of the compa-

ny’s General Research Center, said the State-owned firm plans to start producing self-driving cars by the end of 2018 when “people can see all the tested techniques on mass-produced cars”.

After the test, the two cars will be on show this month in Beijing at Auto China.

Chongqing Daily contributed to this story

Contact the writer at yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn



According to a survey in November, 76 percent of Chinese said they would not mind riding in self-driving cars, the subject of intensive development efforts by auto and IT companies

CUI LI / FOR CHINA DAILY

SOCIAL MEDIA

Pushy parents provoke child-vote backlash

Users of instant-messaging platforms are becoming increasingly annoyed by frequent messages canvassing online support for children in competitions, as **Tang Yue** reports.

In China, there are usually two reasons people receive messages from friends and relatives from whom they haven't heard for a while.

The first revolves around New Year greetings, which are always welcome. The second reason is often less palatable, however; people are increasingly contacting long-lost friends, or even casual acquaintances, and urging them to cast online votes for their children or grandchildren in competitions.

The practice, which has been growing rapidly, has now reached the point where people are becoming jaded, frustrated and annoyed. In short, they are sick and tired of voting.

The results of a recent survey conducted by the Jinhua Evening News in East China's Zhejiang province show that 94 percent of 384 respondents had been asked by friends or relatives to cast votes online for their children.

The contests range from the "cutest baby" to dancing competitions, but in many cases the people receiving the messages haven't heard from the sender for a long time and have never met the child involved.

'Canvassing parents'

Li Liang is what is known as a "canvassing parent". Two weeks before Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, which fell on Feb 8, Li's wife entered their 4-year-old daughter in a "New Year's Kid" contest for children age 14 or younger in Dalian, a city in the northeastern province of Liaoning.

Like most of these contests, the child's ranking was based entirely on the number of online votes they received. As a reward, photos of the top 10 children were printed in the Dalian Evening News on Chinese New Year's Day.

Li, who also has a 1-year-old son, was too shy to bother his friends by messaging them individually. Instead, he posted a message on the homepage of his public account on WeChat, a popular instant-messaging and social-networking platform.

"To be honest, I don't like this kind of activity. The organizers are taking advantage of the parents' love for their children for commercial purposes. But still, I hope you can spend a minute checking the photo of my daughter and voting for her," Li wrote, when he posted the link to the voting site.

To vote, people usually have to first subscribe to the organizer's public WeChat account, which quickly results in a flood of unsolicited messages and ads.

In the case of Li's daughter, nicknamed "Little Pomegranate", the competition involved two rounds.

The preliminary round was sponsored by a children's art school, while the final was sponsored by a company that provides consultations and services for parents.

Thanks to the efforts of Li and his wife, Little Pomegranate attracted 266 votes in the first round and was ranked 13th. After the preliminary round, her grandparents joined the canvassing team in a bid to ensure that she made the top 10 in the final.

"They contacted almost every single person they've ever known, all over China, and asked them to vote for their granddaughter," said Li, who works for a shipping company.

The girl eventually received 1,268 votes, well beyond Li's expectations, but her ranking remained the same as during the first round so Little Pomegranate's photo wasn't printed in the newspaper, much to her disappointment.

Adverse affects?

Although the competitions may appear to be harmless fun, some education professionals are concerned that they could have an adverse effect on children.

Chu Zhaohui, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Education Sciences, voiced concerns about the long-term impact.

"It actually sends a message to children that what really counts is not who you are or how hard you work, but how many social-networking resources your parents have," he said.

Moreover, helping children to win titles they

94 percent

of 384 respondents to a recent survey conducted by the Jinhua Evening News had been asked by friends or relatives to cast votes online for their children.

70 percent

of respondents didn't agree with parents canvassing for their children, according to the survey.

“It feels as though parents are using their babies as tools to win glory for themselves, rather than truly respecting their kids’ dignity and nature.”

Li Hongyan, mother of an 11-year-old girl and an 18-month-old boy in Beijing

I really regret taking part in these activities and feel sorry for inconvenience I caused my friends. I will never put my child in a contest like that again.”

Li Liang, father of a 4-year-old girl and an 1-year-old boy in Dalian, Liaoning province



LI MIN/ CHINA DAILY

FIRST PERSON | JIN ZHEN

I feel obliged to help my little brother

Jin Zhen, a 22-year-old college student from Jiangxi province, has voted about 200 times for her 12-year-old brother's entry in a calligraphy contest.

Last month, my mother told me my brother, a fifth-grader, had entered a calligraphy contest, and she asked me to canvass for him.

As a college student, I know that competitions based on online voting are unfair because everybody canvasses for their own children, and the rankings don't really reflect the quality of the work on show.

But he is my only sibling and I felt obliged to help him. I know I can buy votes online, but it's wrong and I don't want to spend money doing it.

Instead, I discovered a loophole in the system that allowed me to vote for my brother multiple times, but I'd prefer not to say how it works. I voted about four days in a row, and helped keep my brother in seventh place. He got about 300 votes.

Only the top three entrants receive prizes. I could have boosted my brother's ranking, but I didn't. I don't think his work merits a higher place.

In other words, I didn't want to give him an unfair advantage, instead I just wanted to ensure that he had a reasonable result.

I also checked the other children's calligraphy. Some were really nice, but they only garnered a couple of votes, or sometimes no votes at all. Perhaps their parents don't want, or don't know how, to canvass for them.

It's so unfair that I decided to give one vote to all the kids with no votes, and a few more to those whose work I truly appreciated.

I am majoring in telecommunications engineering. I lied to my brother and told him that I was able to hack the system and get him as many votes as I wanted, but in truth, the work of some of the other students really was better than his this time.

As such, I don't want to help him win unfairly, and I told him not to feel sad about not winning a prize.

He was silent for a while and then he cried. He said, "Don't worry about me, sister. Will you get caught by the police? Don't vote for me anymore. Don't do anything illegal."

JIN ZHEN SPOKE WITH TANG YUE.

don't really deserve is also likely to give them an unhealthy self-image: "Placing an artificial halo around a child's head will put too much pressure on him or her, and could prevent a child from discovering their own self and fully realizing their potential."

Safety concerns

Similar concerns were expressed in March, during this year's meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

Tang Sulan, a member of the CPPCC's National Committee, proposed a ban on online competitions featuring minors to prevent future psychological issues.

She was also concerned that public disclosure of a child's personal information and publication of photos poses a potential risk to the child's safety.

Li Hongyan, the mother of an 11-year-old girl and an 18-month-old boy in Beijing, said she has never canvassed on behalf of her children.

Although on the surface the children are competing among themselves via their parents' social networks, the competitions are also about parents seeking a "sense of victory" for themselves, she said.

"It feels as though parents are using their babies as tools to win glory for themselves, rather than truly respecting their kids' dignity and nature."

However, despite her antipathy to the contests, she has twice voted for the babies of close friends because "it would be embarrassing to say no".

The frustration and annoyance generated by the constant stream of requests have led some people to post jokes online mocking the practice.

One of the best-known goes like this: "Please vote for my baby. No 157." "OK. I've voted. No 175." "No, it's No 157."

"I voted for 175 on purpose because No 157 is not cute at all."

When friends asked Li Kang to vote for their child's work in a drawing competition, he agreed to help. The graphic designer from Cangzhou, Hebei province, who has studied art since childhood, opened the link and reviewed the entrants' work.

In his opinion, the top-ranked painting was not very good, but it garnered more than 2,000 votes, while a child he regarded as "very talented" gained just 24 votes.

"I was worried that the boy would feel bad about himself. It is too cruel," he said.

The following day, Li Kang phoned the kindergarten the child attended, and pretended to be his uncle so he could speak with him.

"I said 'I just want to tell you that the spaceship you drew was really good'. The cute kid giggled and replied, 'Actually it was a whale,'" Li Kang said.

According to the Jinhua Evening News survey, while 70 percent of respondents didn't agree with parents canvassing for their children, 26 percent said they would vote if asked, and 60 percent said they would consider voting, depending on their relationship with the child's parents.

Of those who have voted, 8 percent did so because they thought the children were "really great", while 66 percent voted to "give face" to friends. A further 21 percent ticked the box to facilitate an exchange of votes.

"Every parent thinks their baby is very cute, probably the cutest in the world, so I don't see the point of selecting the cutest one at all," said Lin Xiangzhen, the mother of a 2-year-old girl in Haikou, Hainan province.

"I am especially annoyed by people who offer *hong bao* — red envelopes that contain electronic money — on WeChat groups while canvassing for their babies. I always think, 'are you buying my votes for your baby?'" said the vocational school English teacher.

'Acquaintance society'

Yang Yiyin, a social psychology researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said canvassing for minors among friends and relatives is in line with China's traditional "acquaintance society", in which behavior is guided by kinship and emotion rather than reason and law.

"Compared with the West, respect for the rules and the spirit of an agreement are not deep-rooted in China. People feel it's natural to help their friends and relatives, regardless of the legitimacy, especially when it only takes a minute. If you don't vote, you are considered stubborn," she said.

Not all the votes are the result of the acquaintance society, though. Hundreds of independent vendors on Taobao, China's major online-shopping platform, offer voting services at about 0.5 yuan (8 cents) per vote.

Li Liang said professional voters were probably involved in the final round of the "New Year Kid" contest in which Little Pomegranate took part.

"I just ate breakfast, and then discovered that one kid had already gained another 500 votes. I don't believe any parent can convince so many people in such a short time," he said.

His family held a meeting and decided that they wouldn't employ professional voters.

"It is not that we can't afford it, because it's not a lot of money," said Li Liang. "Chinese parents will do anything for their children, but this has definitely gone too far. I know that if we did that (employ professional voting services), we would probably consider the same means next time, and that would have a very bad impact on the children."

"I really regret taking part in these activities and feel sorry for inconvenience I caused my friends. I will never put my child in a contest like that again."

Contact the writer at tangyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Policy review

Editor's Note: China is committed to promoting gender equality, but woman scientists still account for a small proportion of the country's 70 million or so "scientific and technological workers". In this Policy Review page, we present readers with some of the challenges facing woman scientists as they still suffer from social bias against their academic ambition.

Enough, or not enough? China's labor question

By WANG YIQING wangyiqing@chinadaily.com.cn

China still has an abundance of rural work force and has yet to reach a turning point towards a labor shortage, according to a research team from Henan University of Economics and Law.

The Lewis turning point is a term used in economic development to describe a time when there is no longer abundant labor supply, pushing up a country's general wage level.

Many economists, such as Liu Shijin, former deputy director of the State Council's Development Research Center, have argued that China has already reached this turning point.

But according to a team led by Fan Ming, deputy director of the Research Academy of Henan University of Economics and Law, the country still has an abundant supply of labor, which can be released from the farm sector.

China's Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2014 shows that in 2013, 62.4 percent of the rural labor force was working in the country's primary sector.

In Central China, where the levels of industrialization and urbanization are low, the proportion of the rural population that still farms to make a living is much higher, according to Fan's research.

But the agricultural labor force, which accounts for 33.6 percent of the overall national labor force, can only produce about 10 percent of the country's GDP.

Based on three national surveys conducted since 2010, Fan and his team have concluded that China still has a surplus of rural labor because crop yields did not change in the years surveyed, despite variations in the work-force.

He argues that the shortage of migrant workers in many eastern regions, which is oft-cited as evidence of the Lewis turning point alongside ever-increasing wages, is due to a "mismatch of labor supply and demand".

His team's survey of 7,400 rural residents and migrant workers in 14 central provinces and regions found that a majority were unwilling to work in the eastern cities.

They preferred to work near their hometowns, Fan said, adding that job opportunities have increased in these regions in recent years as they have become more industrialized.

"To solve this problem, the authorities should reform the national urban and rural household registration system on a large scale," Fan said.

"As long as the big cities 'reject' the rural population, the shortage of migrant worker can hardly be solved even though there is plenty of surplus labor in the rural areas."



Barriers still exist for women to lead in key research

Bias and old habits still refuse to go while hardware improves, female college students increase

By CHENG YINGQI chengyingqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Women's numbers may have sharply increased on university campuses and in graduate schools in recent years, but they are yet to become a force when it comes to higher studies in science and large government-sponsored research projects.

While their growing base number as science students does help, they still have to overcome the 2,000-year-old social bias against women and make smart choices for themselves and their families.

The winning solution for women still seems to be in "getting either a good husband or a good assistant", says Li Peng, a woman professor at the School of Life Sciences of Tsinghua University, one of the country's top universities for science and technology. And since that is not covered by government grants or the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), the change has to be brought about by women themselves.

The number of women applying for higher science and technology courses has been continuously increasing since the early years of reform and opening-up. In fact, more women than men have been enrolled in general colleges since 2009, according to Ceiea.com, an information website affiliated to Ministry of Education.

The dominant numbers of female students expanded from language and arts colleges to business administration and theoretical science schools, and then to engineering and technology majors, or what were referred to as the "monks' community" until the beginning of this century.

In 2015, women made up 40 percent of the undergraduate students in Guangzhou-based South China University of Technology.

"Science is a world where you achieve your goal through wisdom, or by setting your mind free, and that's a kind of charm you don't experience elsewhere," says Li, the Cornell-trained biology professor.

According to a white paper on gender equality, published by the State Council, or China's

“Back in the 1970s and 1980s, traveling with a male colleague could be a difficult proposition.”

Jin Feng, a specialist in electromagnetics in Shanghai Engineering Center for Microsatellites

40 percent

undergraduate students in Guangzhou-based South China University of Technology in 2015 were women

36.9 percent

PhD candidates in China in 2014 were women, according to a white paper on gender equality published by the State Council

Cabinet, in 2014 women made up 52.1 percent of the undergraduate students, 51.6 percent of the post-graduate students, and 36.9 percent of the PhD candidates in institutions of higher learning.

And figures from China Association for Science and Technology show that by the end of 2013, women accounted for nearly 39 percent of the 70 million or so "scientific and technological workers" in the country.

At the Shanghai Engineering Center for Microsatellites, one-fourth of the research staff in Jin Feng's department are women. Jin, a specialist in electromagnetic and microwave technologies, says that not many years ago, the department lacked even the basic necessities for women to take up research projects.

"Back in the 1970s and 1980s,

traveling with a male colleague could be a difficult proposition. Some places did not even have a lavatory for women," Jin said. That, fortunately, is no longer the case.

While the material conditions and facilities can improve fast, ideas and habits don't, Jin laments. "Some people believe women aren't suited for science because they tend to be emotional, oblivious of the fact that women can be particularly strong in details."

Going by international standards, however, China does not occupy a leading position in tapping the talent of potential woman scientists. A report published by the Academy of Science of South Africa in October 2015 — arguably the first comprehensive global survey of science academies and gender relations — women account for only 12 percent of the total members in 69 national science academies; their proportion was as low as 6 percent in mathematics and 5 percent in engineering.

The national science academies of South American and African countries have the highest percentage of woman members, ranging from 19 percent to 27 percent. European countries and the United States rank in the middle with 10 percent or more woman members.

Despite having a large number of female college students and research workers, China is in the lower range in the survey, with a mere 6 percent of its top-level researchers being women.

Wang Zhizhen, a biophysicist and member of the prestigious Chinese Academy of Sciences, argues that such a situation prevails not because women are less competent or intellectually less qualified, but because they "tend to be affected more easily by social and cultural factors".

In contrast to female students comprising the majority in colleges, Wang says, women account for only 8 to 10 percent of all professors and are leading only 5 percent of the national research projects.

It is still difficult, it seems, for China's woman scientists to find both an understanding husband and a supportive environment in the workplace.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Broadband connections to boost rural online commerce

By HU YONGQI huyongqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Rural areas will be the next battlefield for e-commerce giants as the State Council, China's Cabinet, looks to promote online shopping by providing faster internet connections to remote locations.

The government will invest more money in establishing rural broadband networks, which in turn will facilitate the exchange of industrial products and agricultural goods between urban and rural areas, according to a statement issued by the State Council's executive meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang last Wednesday.

It is part of a program that aims to integrate the internet with the logistics sector, thereby reducing costs, increasing profits, stimulating consumption and boosting employment, the statement said.

E-commerce giants such as the Alibaba Group Holding, JD Inc and Suning Electronic Materials Company are expanding into rural areas as the market in first- and second-tier cities becomes saturated.

The exchange of goods and services between cities and villages in China is traditionally quite expensive, compared to developed economies, due to the vast differences in rural and urban development.

Urban residents, worried about food safety, thirst for uncontaminated food from the countryside, while farmers go to great pains to sell their fruits, vegetables and meat in the harvest season.

The situation has gradually improved since domestic reform and opening-up policies began in the early 1980s, liberalizing the market and giving rise to more players that can participate in rural businesses. But more progress is needed.

In the internet era, online shopping can be a good means to bridge the rural-urban gap and make it easier for the exchange of products and services between these areas, especially with the rise of mobile internet in recent years.

22.4 percent

online shoppers in China live in townships and villages, according to CINIC report

cially with the rise of mobile internet in recent years.

The expansion of internet usage in rural areas will facilitate the sales of agricultural goods and increase the incomes of farmers. Looking at the bigger picture, it will also enrich cities' supply lines and stabilize market prices.

However, China only ranks 91st among more than 200 countries around the world in terms of broadband speed,

and internet access in the country's rural areas is more sluggish than the cities. Thus comes this new policy to provide more funds for rural Internet infrastructure and broadband connections.

According to the latest report by the China Internet Network Information Center, in 2015, 195 million of China's Internet users lived in rural areas, accounting for 28.4 percent of the country's total. The number of rural netizens saw a year-on-year increase of 9.5 percent last year, almost double the increase in urban internet users.

As of last year, more than 600 million people lived in China's rural areas and at least

405 million of those are potential internet users and online shoppers. This is 50 percent more than the population of the United States.

China Post used to dominate mail delivery in rural areas as the company benefited from its nationwide network that reaches even the most far-flung places. This monopoly has been broken as express delivery companies eye the potential that rural areas present.

The 11 key measures publicized by the central government last year were regarded as a boost for rural online shopping and express delivery companies are setting up branches in rural areas where

the transport network is less efficient.

In East China's Anhui province, for example, express delivery companies have set up branches in all of Yuexi county's townships and goods from Beijing can now be delivered in two days, a 1,200-km journey that used to take two weeks.

According to the CINIC report, online shopping shows great potential in rural markets as 22.4 percent of online shoppers live in townships and villages. This number is growing fast and rural residents may outnumber urban buyers within 10 years, necessitating the buildup of broadband infrastructure.

EDITORIAL

Manila’s move shows it is the real provocateur

The Philippines is resuming work on upgrading a military airport on an island it seized from China, a move that again displays its expansionist nature and belies its self-assumed image as a victim in the territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

It is also a slap in the face for certain countries that always accuse Beijing of taking provocative steps while turning a blind eye to Manila’s provocative moves.

The Nansha Islands in the South China Sea have been Chinese territory since ancient times, as proved by historical and international documents.

However, the Philippines started to use military force to seize the Nansha Islands, one by one, in the 1970s. So far eight Chinese islands, including Zhongye Island — where it intends to upgrade its military airport — are in the Philippines’ hands.

Over the years, Manila has tightened its grip on the Chinese islands it has illegally occupied, by relocating civilians there, building military facilities, such as airports and docks, and most recently, installing a flight-tracking system on Zhongye.

It is such unilateral actions that have sparked and fueled the tensions in the South China Sea.

The Philippines has even been brazen enough to stage the farce of a villain suing his victim by seeking arbitration of its territorial disputes with China at the international tribunal in The Hague, which China, as is its right, does not accept.

The move is a political provocation under the cloak of international law, and Manila would not have staged such a stunt without the connivance and encouragement of its ally, the United States, which is more than happy to use the Philippines as a pawn to contain a rising China.

The US and some of its allies, although not directly involved in the South China Sea disputes, have singled out China as a threat to regional peace and stability. They have pointed accusing fingers at the country for its countermeasures to safeguard its sovereignty, and its construction of facilities on its islands for navigation and meteorological observation purposes.

Such partiality runs counter to the pledge not to take sides in territorial disputes in the region, and emboldens the Philippines and other parties to go further in challenging China’s sovereignty.

China has always opposed the Philippines for its illegal occupation of its islands, and any construction projects on them will not consolidate Manila’s illegal claim to sovereignty. Instead, they will strengthen Beijing’s resolve to protect its maritime territory from further encroachment.

TO THE POINT

Negative list for investment

The volume of foreign capital used nationwide was \$11.76 billion in March, a decline of 6.1 percent year-on-year, while the first-quarter volume was \$29.48 billion, a decline of 2.8 percent, according to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce.

Despite emerging signs that foreign investment is shifting to high-end manufacturing and the service sector, the continuous decline in inbound foreign capital is still cause for concern and underscores the need to make institutional improvements to facilitate the inflow of foreign capital.

The “positive list” management model of local governments’ different preferential policies that prevails in China has erected some “glass walls” to the entry of foreign investment in numerous fields.

China should provide a revised negative list for US investment in preparation for the China-US Bilateral Investment Treaty talks, according to US trade representative Michael Froman, and the country should accelerate drawing up a negative list and submit it to the United States as soon as possible.

The publication of such a negative list will offer a transparent and predictable institutional environment to assure foreign investors of the areas they can invest in.

If such an investment treaty is reached with the US and broad institutional changes for foreign investment are initiated, China would greatly lower the investment costs for inbound foreign capital and more effectively combine foreign capital with domestic talent, thus pushing forward the transformation and upgrading of the Chinese economy.

In the face of the gradual decline in its demographic advantage and rising manufacturing costs at a time when its society is rapidly aging, China should use the negative list system to channel foreign capital into areas that promote the transformation of its manufacturing sector from Made in China to Created in China.

— BELJING NEWS

LUO JIE



OPINION LINE

Heavy pollution of underground water requires immediate actions

ON MONDAY, an official at the Ministry of Water Resources responded to a recent report suggesting that more than 80 percent of the water in China’s aquifers is too polluted for human consumption by asserting China’s deep underground drinking water sources are safe. Beijing Youth Daily commented on Tuesday:

That more than 80 percent of China’s underground water sources are said to polluted, does not come as a surprise, as most believe that not only shallow ground-water, but also the water extracted from deep underground for human consumption, have fallen prey to serious contamination.

Keeping the deep underground water sources from being contaminated is already challenging and requires strenuous efforts, never mind treating water that has been polluted. And the nation’s water will not be able to cleanse itself, because the threshold for so-called self-recovery has already been crossed.

In other words, no one is immune from the increasingly severe water pollution. For all departments concerned, the top priority should be to resolutely halt the illegal discharge of heavy metals and organic pollutants, regardless of the behind-the-scene power for money exchanges that may seek to deter their efforts.

The polluters who have always managed to exploit the loopholes in supervision deserve due punishments including being excluded from the market. Supervisors

at all levels have to shoulder their responsibilities to keep industrial polluters and their illicit businesses at bay, instead of turning a blind eye to such misdeeds, and hold all officials concerned accountable.

Long-term management and targeted measures are also needed to curb the groundwater contamination. The Water Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan, which was issued by the State Council a year ago, pledges to keep the “tightest-ever” rein on the management of the water resources in the country, but it fails to include deep underground water, which can affect the shallow water resources as well.

It is time for the relevant authorities to face up to the fact that many Chinese residents, be they urban or rural dwellers, have very limited access to uncontaminated water, due to the loose enforcement of the regulations on discharges of industrial waste.

Apart from informing the public of the severity of the groundwater pollution, they are obliged to make concrete efforts to end the extensive development mode, which has caused great damage to the environment and people’s health.

Not all officials can retire early on a high pension

SOME CIVIL SERVANTS in their 50s in Central China’s Hunan province have applied for early retirement. According to the Civil Servant Law, officials retiring early can enjoy a higher pension than their salary. Shenzhen-news.com commented on Monday:

The economic slowdown, tightening government budgets, and strict requirement for Party members to abide by the Party’s rules, along with the on-going anti-corruption campaign, have all added to the pressure and workload of grassroots civil servants.

But not all of the applications for early retirement in Hunan will be approved, as approval is conditional. The applicant must have served in the government for more than 30 years, or at least 20 years for those who are within five years to the retirement age. And the final result is determined by the higher authority’s examination and evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

The government must be prudent in its approval of

early retirement, and it should make the whole process transparent for public supervision.

If the applicants try to dodge the probe into their pasts, their applications for early retirement should be taken as an important clue for further investigation, as they may be seeking to avoid being punished for corruption by retiring.

And if the applicants have not shown a due sense of dedication to fulfill their responsibilities, they should not be granted a pension higher than their previous salary. Indeed, their pensions should be reduced to spur other officials to be more efficient and diligent.

Insurance ought to cover psychotherapy

A 36-YEAR-OLD paraplegic patient in Zhengzhou, capital of Henan province, Central China, spent all his savings to hire someone to kill him. But after being stabbed a dozen times by the “murderer” he had hired, he was still alive and called for help. As a result of the attack he has lost the movement and feeling he had in his upper body. The Beijing News commented on Tuesday:

A paraplegic’s life can easily become dehumanizing, because there is also no privacy for the patient in terms of bodily functions and their inability to participate in many social activities. They may have no close friends, and few have the opportunity to enjoy hobbies. Most of them even suffer some kind of discrimination.

Although people have been caring for him, the man still found his life unbearable.

Psychological help is even more important than treatment and basic life care for people severely disabled in an accident.

In the United States and other developed countries, such patients are usually offered psychological help and counseling to help them to face life and find the courage to carry on.

In China, the cost of psychiatric treatment is too expensive. Almost every year, there are calls for psychotherapy to be included in the basic medical insurance, but that is yet to happen.

Supporting measures related to mental health should be put on the agenda of local hospitals as soon as possible.

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HOT WORDS

Innovative strategic partnership

创新战略伙伴关系

(chuàngxīn zhànlüè huòbàn guānxì)

China and Switzerland have agreed to formulate a Sino-Swiss innovative strategic partnership to promote the common development and prosperity of the two countries.

The agreement was reached in Beijing on Friday, when Chinese President Xi Jinping met

his Swiss counterpart Johann Schneider-Ammann during the latter’s state visit to China.

It is expected the newly established innovative strategic partnership will inject new vitality into bilateral cooperation.

Xi said that Switzerland was one of the earliest Western countries to establish diplomatic ties with the People’s Republic of China, and he praised the sound development of Sino-Swiss relations in recent years.

The two countries have jointly cultivated a cooperative spirit featuring equality, innovation and win-win, Xi said.

He also suggested the two sides enhance their strategic consultations, increase mutual understanding and trust, and outline major

areas of cooperation, so as to effectively implement the new partnership.

It is the first time China has established an innovative strategic partnership with any other country, demonstrating the great importance China has attached to innovation.

Despite its small size, Switzerland has been one of the most innovative countries with its per capita patents ranking the second in the world, next only to Japan. The country also boasts many world-known enterprises in high-end manufacturing, ecological and environmental protection.

The new partnership is expected to set an example for international cooperation in innovation.

The opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily

“ I don’t think we’ll see either a big devaluation or a market-driven large depreciation of the renminbi this year.”

Nicholas Lardy, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, talking about the Chinese economy at a seminar on the prospects of the global economy on Monday.

PENG CHUN

China demise theory wrong and unhelpful

Predicting the end of China has now become a fad. In the past quarter century or so, at least three rounds of “death notifications” on China have been issued: first at the turn of the 1990s and then in the early 2000s, most famously epitomized by Gordan Chang’s eye-catching book, *The Coming Collapse of China*. Last year, veteran China watcher David Shambaugh joined the rank with his op-ed in The Wall Street Journal, warning about “the coming Chinese crackup” and claiming the “endgame of communist rule in China has now begun”.

Unsurprisingly, a sudden U-turn by the prominent Sinologist known for his moderate views sparked an international debate on “China’s future”, which is exactly the title of his new book. This time extended arguments are supplied, many of which are more nuanced than the shorter commentary. Nonetheless, the key theme remains: China is on the verge of demise.

To be fair, unlike Chang’s much more blunt forecast which proved utterly wrong not once but twice, Shambaugh has been making his case in a smarter way. He avoids to a large extent the embarrassment of being proved wrong. Yet he falls prey to what can be called the trap of “collapsism”, which suffers from two symptoms.

First, the central tenet of Shambaugh’s case for China’s fall focuses on the political, by which he means the one-party rule. For example, in *China’s Future* he argues that innovation — which he considers the key to China’s economic future — can only take off when “substantive political liberalization” takes place. By putting all eggs in the political basket, Shambaugh underestimates, if not dismisses, China’s social dynamism and political system’s responsiveness to societal changes. In this sense, his “collapsism” places inadequate confidence in both the Chinese people and State.

Facts speak otherwise. For instance, the contracting-out system of rural land in China was famously initiated by a group of farmers in a remote village in an eastern province, which turned out to be one of the most successful policy innovations in the 20th century. It started bottom-up illegally but the State was quick to give it consent at first, then approval and finally assurance and support. Since the 1990s the contract period has been extended twice, from 15 years to 30 years to unspecified long term, and a specific law passed for the system. This is but one

example of social dynamism and State responsiveness in the 30-odd years of China’s reform. Nevertheless, it is enough to show Shambaugh is absolutely correct in directing our attention to the Chinese political system when it comes to pondering the country’s future — it is just that in overdoing so, he turns to be a victim of his own success.

The second symptom of Chinese “collapsism”, Shambaughian or otherwise, is that it relies on an over-simplified yet long-entrenched dichotomy between authoritarianism and democracy. The associated verdict is simple: democracy lives while authoritarianism dies. There are two problems with this dichotomy.

First, Shambaugh’s analysis is blind to the fact that there is a vast terrain of gray areas between the two. In his new book, he suggests China is approaching a roundabout with four choices ahead: hard authoritarianism (which in his view is the current path), soft authoritarianism, neo-totalitarianism and semi-democracy. With the first two paths, Shambaugh predicts decline, atrophy and collapse. For the latter two, successful reform transition. While he is right in conceptualizing regime types more or less along a spectrum, his analytical framework is still too schematic. The analogy he uses is telling: a roundabout. You either turn this way or that. And you turn quickly. This is in direct contrast with the analogy of gray zones. Shambaugh has thereby downgraded a complex process of exploration and experiments into a seemingly straightforward multiple-choice question. Along the way, a false sense of clarity and simplicity is gained at the expense of a sound grasp of the necessarily convoluted reality, which is exactly what China and the world need today. Therefore, instead of treating this moment or indeed any other moment as the breaking point for either-or choices, as Shambaugh has done, we should better keep muddling through. It may not look elegant. But it works.

The second problem of the authoritarianism versus democracy paradigm, on which Chinese “collapsism” is based, is that it masks more than it reveals under each of these labels. It is interesting to note that when international media cover the multi-faceted crises that Europe faces, words such as stagnation, decline or even decay are frequently used, but rarely the word “collapse”. When it comes to China, however, even if very similar problems

are under discussion — be it economic slowdown or social disparity — regime crackdown/crackup seems to be the natural choice of term. Such “discriminatory” treatment is not conducive to understanding either China or the West.

By using the authoritarian tag, China watchers neglect the contrary trends, or at best underestimate their significance and implications. For instance, over the years, China has been ranking bottom in all sorts of international indices in terms of transparency. Yet anyone living in China can tell that government openness is on the rise with more and more information being put online. Government responsiveness is increasing, too. The ill-designed stock market circuit breaker mechanism was removed just days after being put in place, accompanied by the stepping down of the securities authority chief and a public apology from a deputy chairman. The National People’s Congress, the top legislature, is more minutely scrutinizing the government, as evidenced by the annual query on the budgeting by the Finance and Economics Committee at the NPC session.

All this is the reverse of authoritarianism, which foreign observers refuse to acknowledge. In contrast, under the label of “democracy”, deep-level structural pitfalls in many countries tend to be brushed aside hastily as epiphenomenal, wasting valuable opportunities of systematic overhaul again and again. Fortunately or unfortunately, there is no one shouting out “the coming collapse of Europe” or predicting the United States’ demise is likely to be “protracted, messy and violent”.

Let’s be clear: no one is trying to boast the China miracle or trumpet the China model. There is no established model since China is still in the process of reform and transformation. For every little progress, there awaits a bigger challenge. Complacency has no room here. Nor has “collapsism”. Because “collapsism” unduly rejects the resolution, confidence and dynamism in both the Chinese nation and State to face up to the mounting challenges that have been nicely listed out in Shambaugh’s book. But be alerted: his diagnosis is inaccurate and his prescription unhelpful.

The author is a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Law, Peking University.

XIN ZHIMING

Tax policy won’t derail online retail sector

China’s new taxation policy targeted at imported goods sold on e-commerce platforms has drawn a lot of complaints from dealers as well as consumers, but it will not prevent the industry from expanding at a fast pace.

Last month, the government announced higher taxes would soon be imposed on most products imported by domestic e-commerce companies. On April 7, the Ministry of Finance unveiled a list of more than 1,100 imported items targeted by the new tax policy. Not surprisingly, many believe the move will deal a heavy blow to domestic e-commerce players since consumers will be forced to pay more for shopping online.

The new tax policy will, no doubt, make imported products more expensive on e-commerce platforms, including baby formula, home appliances and clothes and shoes. But given China’s fast expanding middle class and high-income groups, the ripple effects of the policy will soon fade as online shopping, especially those for imported products, continues to increase in China.

The new tax policy has its share of defects, though. For example, policymakers said the policy will create a level playing field for online and offline retailers of imported goods — as online sellers enjoyed preferential tax rates — but it has been implemented too hastily for e-commerce companies to prepare for the necessary procedural changes.

The authorities announced a month ago that a new tax policy would be adopted, but the Ministry of Finance released the “positive list” — list of goods allowed to be imported and subject to the new tax policy — on April 7, just one day before it was formally implemented, leaving almost no time for e-commerce platforms to update their online product information and adjust their stocks. Therefore, the move has aroused complaints from many e-commerce players.

Procedural defects aside, the move will re-shape the industrial landscape since the main players, which enjoy financial advantage, will consolidate their positions because they have capability of absorbing the rising costs. Small players, which are more cost-sensitive, may find it difficult to operate.

The trading of imported goods, however, will not be seriously affected given the strong demand from the rising numbers of well-off consumers in the country. According to the Boston Consulting Group, the number of households with a monthly income of 12,000 yuan (\$1,855) to 22,000 yuan in China may increase by 100 million in the next decade.

And a report issued by investment bank Credit Suisse in 2014 said the average net assets of people on the Chinese mainland have increased rapidly from \$5,670 to about \$21,300 and the number of the middle class people with an asset of \$10,000-\$100,000 has doubled since 2000.

No matter which criterion one uses, it is indisputable that Chinese people’s individual wealth has been increasing fast in recent years, fundamentally changing

their consumption behavior and the business landscape as well.

Chinese people are willing to pay more to get better quality products and services thanks to their rising incomes. And recent food scandals have made them more resolute in their decision to purchase imported products, such as baby formula, on e-commerce platforms if they can afford to pay for them.

The Ministry of Commerce estimates the value of China’s cross-border e-commerce trading will reach 6.5 trillion yuan this year, increasing to 8 trillion yuan in 2017. And although the extra 10 percent tax experts say online buyers of imported goods will have to pay may not be a small amount, it is not enough to derail the high-rate growth of the e-commerce industry.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Obstacles to railway deal must be ironed out for region’s benefit



WANG HUI

The author is deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily Asia Pacific. jasmine@chinadailyhk.com

The latest twists and turns in the mega railway project between China and Thailand have triggered concerns in both countries. Such an undesirable scenario may be normal for an ordinary business deal, but the railway cooperation between the two countries deserves more prudence and sincerity as it is based on the premises of reciprocity and win-win outcomes.

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha made a surprising announcement last month that Thailand would solely finance the construction of the first phase of a railway line linking China to Thailand, the track from Bangkok to the central Thai town of Nakhon Ratchasima, instead of seeking financial assistance from China as planned.

According to media reports quoting Thai Transport Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith, the issues of contention include the interest rate at which China was offering to finance the deal and the total cost of the investment.

At a news conference last month, Arkhom suggested that the interest should be reduced from 2.5 to 2 percent, alleging that since the approximately \$5 billion project is a venture between governments, China should have offered a loan at what he described as a “friendly rate that takes into consideration relations between China and Thailand”.

The two sides also cannot see eye to eye with each other about the total invest cost, with Thailand’s estimation much lower than those of the Chinese.

True, terms of loans and the cost are important factors that both sides should carefully consider and any agreement needs to accommodate both sides’ interests and concerns.

The Thai authorities need to be reminded that they should take into consideration the broader picture of bilateral relations before they make any unilateral decision on the joint railway project.

But openly declaring that one is going it alone, is not good business practice, let alone for a bilateral cooperation project like the China-Thailand railway.

The Thai authorities need to be reminded that they should take into consideration the broader picture of bilateral relations before they make any unilateral decision on the joint railway project.

The bilateral railway project is widely regarded as a barometer of the ties between Beijing and Bangkok. The latest turn was perceived by some in the world arena as a setback to both the project and bilateral relations.

Under such circumstances, the two governments, enterprises and companies on both sides that are directly involved in the railway project in particular, need to shore up a stronger cooperative will as well as greater sincerity to steer clear of the predicaments standing in the way of what is meant to be an important part of an ambitious regional network of railways.

The 250-kilometer railway is seen as part of an ambitious network linking Bangkok with Kunming in Southwest China’s Yunnan province, through Laos in the north and connecting Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore in the south.

Obviously, upon completion, the countries involved will all benefit from such regional arteries, and Thailand, sitting in the hub of the network, is expected to be able to benefit perhaps the most.

Under the backdrop of a rising trend that promotes regional connectivity, in which both China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations members have been staunch advocates as well as active participants, the China-Thailand railway project will certainly contribute to that irreversible trend.

Yet, the new uncertainties that have emerged in the China-Thailand railway project show different countries may have different expectations when they respond to China’s overtures. Besides, there are other competitors and even meddlers who are looking to put a spoke in the wheels.

All this could pose a challenge to the smooth implementation of China’s strategy.

To avoid a lose-lose scenario, patience, a sober mind and the spirit of cooperation is key to ironing out obstacles and reaching an agreement that could deliver a win-win result for both sides. Self-calculation should also give way to the larger picture of regional integration and interconnectivity.



Monster snake

Members of the Malaysia Civil Defense Force pose with a python that was caught near a tree at a construction site in Penang, outside Kuala Lumpur. The python, one of the longest captured in Malaysia, died on Sunday after laying an egg, authorities said on Tuesday. The snake measured 7.5 meters and weighed 250 kilograms.

MALAYSIA CIVIL DEFENSE DEPARTMENT VIA AFP

LAW

‘Stairway to Heaven’ cleared by judge for trial in copyright case

Legendary rock band Led Zeppelin accused of stealing opening notes from *Taurus*, a song performed by Spirit

By ASSOCIATED PRESS in Los Angeles

A trial is needed to determine if Led Zeppelin’s *Stairway to Heaven* copies its opening notes from a song performed by the rock band Spirit, a federal judge has ruled.

US District Judge R. Gary Klausner ruled on Friday that lawyers for the trustee of late Spirit guitarist Randy Wolfe had shown enough evidence to support a case that *Stairway to Heaven* copies music from the Spirit song *Taurus*.

Taurus was written by Wolfe in either 1966 or 1967, years before Led Zeppelin released *Stairway to Heaven* in 1971. Klausner wrote that while

the songs have some differences, lawyers for Wolfe’s trustee may be able to prove they are substantially similar.

Led Zeppelin and Spirit performed at some concerts and festivals around the same time, but not on the same stage. Klausner wrote that the evidence presented so far represented a circumstantial case that Led Zeppelin may have heard *Taurus* performed before *Stairway to Heaven* was created.

After-hours phone and e-mail messages sent to Helene M. Freeman, Led Zeppelin’s attorney, were not immediately returned. Experts hired by the band contend both *Stairway to Heaven* and *Taurus* use notes that have been

45 years

ago Led Zeppelin released *Stairway to Heaven* and it has remained a favorite among fans, but especially with budding guitarists.

used in music for centuries.

Francis Alexander Malofiy, attorney for Wolfe’s trustee Michael Skidmore, praised the ruling. He said while many copyright cases are an uphill battle, Klausner’s ruling brings his client one step closer to getting Wolfe credit for helping create one of the most recognizable song introductions in rock history.

Skidmore was able to overcome statute-of-limitations hurdles to sue over *Stairway to Heaven* because the song was remastered and re-released in 2014.

A jury trial is scheduled for May 10 in Los Angeles. Klausner’s ruling removed Zeppelin band member John Paul Jones from the case. Bandmates Robert Plant and Jimmy Page remain defendants in the case.

A trial would represent the third time in recent months that a Los Angeles federal jury has heard a copyright-infringement case involving a hit song. In March 2015, a jury found that Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams had copied a Marvin Gaye song to create their 2013 hit, *Blurred Lines* and awarded Gaye’s children \$7.4 million. A judge trimmed the award, and the verdict is under appeal.

Later in the year, another jury was empaneled to determine whether the Jay-Z hit *Big Pimpin* copied the work of an Egyptian composer, but a judge ruled in the rapper’s favor before deliberations began.

AUSTRALIA

New banknote labeled ‘vomit-like’, ‘hideous’

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE in Sydney, Australia

It may be the smallest-denominated Australian dollar banknote, but a new design for the Australian \$5 bill attracted an outsized amount of criticism when it was unveiled on Tuesday, with detractors calling it “hideous” and “like vomit.”

The note, which will replace its more bland predecessor from September 1, features a yellow Prickly Moses wattle flower and a colorful Eastern Spinebill native bird.

“Each banknote in the new series will depict a different species of Australian wattle and a native bird within a number of the elements,” Reserve Bank of Australia Governor Glenn Stevens said in a statement.

“The designs are the culmination of a process of extensive consultation with subject-matter experts and the cash-handling industry, as well as qualitative research involving focus groups.”

But critics — from social media users to bird-lovers — were quick to express their disdain.

“Our new fivers look like vomit,” one user wrote on Twitter, while another quipped: “A thousand monkeys with a thousand versions of Photoshop could never come up with something as hideous as the new Australian \$5 note.”

Some questioned why the same

portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, which was drawn from photographs commissioned by the central bank in 1984, was used rather than a recent image of Australia’s head of state.

“New Australian \$5 note really knocks years off the Queen,” tweeted Joanna Hall.

The bill even managed to raise the ire of bird lovers.

“It’s way off in terms of coloration,” said Birdlife Australia’s migratory shorebird program manager Dan Weller, although the bird’s shape and markings were fairly accurate.

“The way it’s been shown on the note, the only two colors that are right on there are the black and the white.”

Eastern Spinebills — found on Australia’s east coast — have red eyes, black heads, gray wings and tails, white throats, and chestnut-colored undersides.

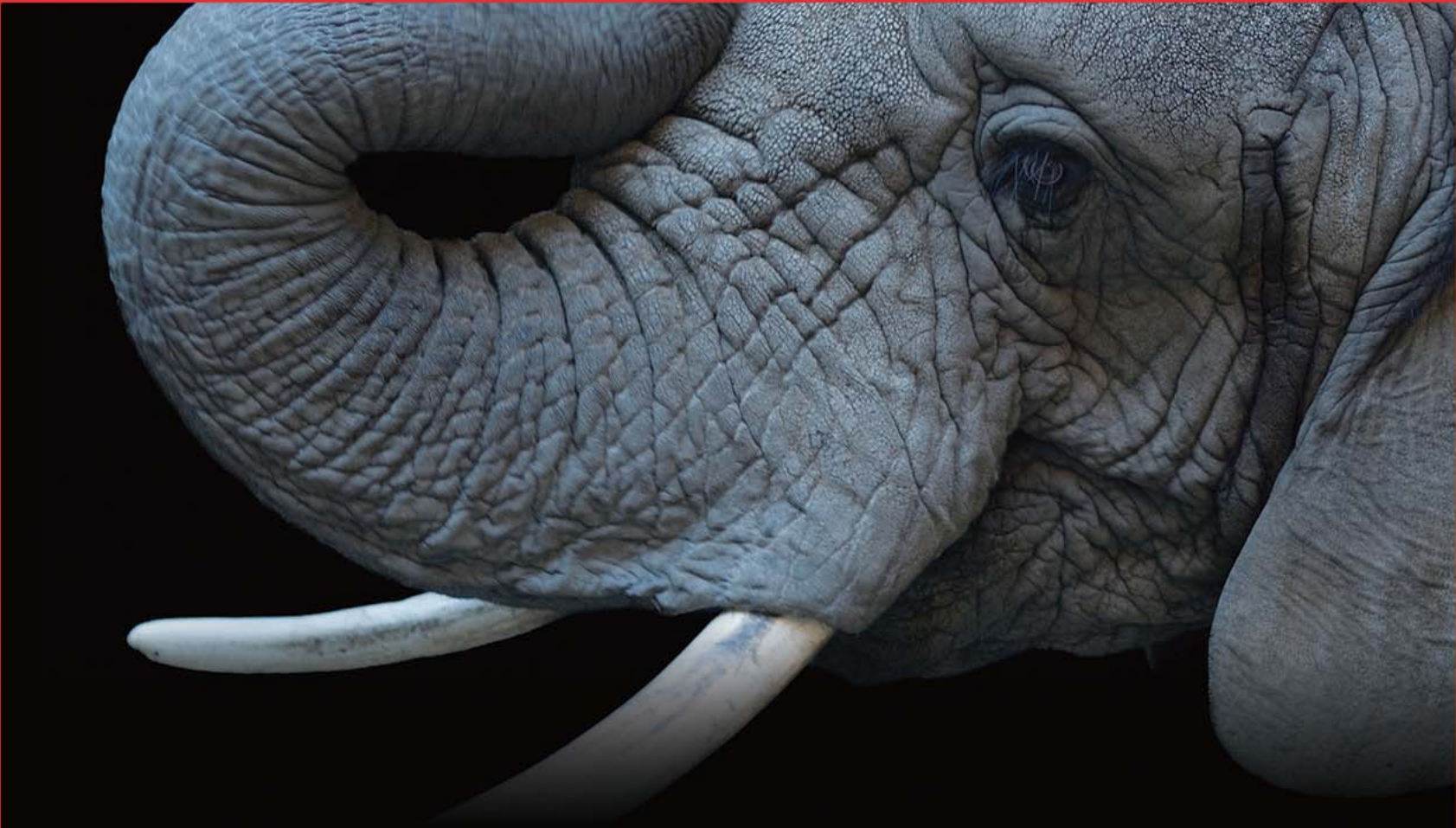
But the new bill gives them a bluish underside with a bright blue, yellow, purple and pink wing.

One Twitter user tried to cash in on the lack of support for the new note, tweeting: “I like the new Australian \$5 note. For those who hate it, feel free to hand the notes over to me #altruistic.”

The bill is being introduced to mark the 50th anniversary of the nation’s conversion to decimal currency.



Australians have taken to social media and the airwaves to express their displeasure with the country’s new \$5 note. RESERVE BANK OF AUSTRALIA



I AM NOT A TRINKET

Tens of thousands of elephants are killed every year for their ivory tusks, which are made into everything from knickknacks to souvenirs. Find out what you can do to stop wildlife crime.



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BRAZIL

Battle for last votes to seal fate

Two-thirds majority, or 342 deputies, will be needed to send the case to Senate for impeachment trial

By AGENCIES
in Brasilia, Brazil

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff's fate rested on Tuesday on the loyalties of the about 100 or so congressional deputies yet to declare how they will vote in a looming impeachment showdown.

In a ruthless and complex contest, supporters and opponents of Brazil's first female president raced to amass the magic number that will make history when the lower house of Congress votes in a week's time.

A congressional committee voted in a nonbinding measure to approve impeachment late on Monday. It gave a taste of the bruising struggle, with deputies yelling and coming close to blows in a daylong debate.

The full house was expected to start voting on Sunday or Monday.

This time, a two-thirds majority, or 342 deputies, will be needed to send Rousseff's case to the Senate for impeachment trial.

Anything less and Rousseff — accused of fiddling accounts to mask the dire state of the government budget during her 2014 re-election — will have won.

The latest survey of the 513 deputies in the lower house by Estadao daily on Monday showed 298 in favor, still short of 342. The count showed 119 opposing impeachment.

That left the result in the hands of the 96 deputies still undecided or not stating a position.

After winning Monday's skirmish in the committee — where only a simple majority was required to win — opponents of Rousseff declared they were on a roll.

"It was a victory for the Brazilian people," said opposition deputy Jovair Arantes, predicting that the result would carry with "strong" pro-impeachment momentum into the full chamber's vote.

But pro-government deputy Silvio Costa said he was also confident. "The opposition is very arrogant" after Monday's committee victory, he said, not-



Members of the impeachment committee celebrate after voting on the impeachment of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff in Brasilia, Brazil, on Monday. UESLEI MARCELINO / REUTERS

Vice-president criticized over leaked audio message

Brazilian Vice-President Michel Temer, who was caught in a leaked audio talking as if President Dilma Rousseff had already been impeached, was criticized by government officials on Monday.

Temer rehearsed a speech to the nation, making it appear as if Temer considered the impeachment of Rousseff a foregone conclusion.

Temer said that the audio message was an answer to inquiries of political allies about what he would do if he takes over, adding that he sent the message to the wrong person, and it reached the press.

Jaques Wagner, chief of staff of Rousseff's presidential office, said Temer was a dissimulated sponsor of the impeachment

against the president.

The audio message shows that Temer forgot his institutional role, Wagner said.

"The records revealed today show that the vice-president, without any problems, forgets his institutional role, despises the ritual of his position and openly sponsors a dissimulated coup," Wagner said.

"But no coup will produce national union, as it is an offense to democracy," Wagner said.

Government Secretary Ricardo Berzoini said the leak evidenced the "coup-like" character of Temer, and the message left him "flabbergasted".

"This audio shows the coup-like character of the vice-president. He transformed the process in an



Michel Temer, Brazilian vice-president

indirect election, to get votes in favor of the impeachment," Berzoini said.

Temer of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, a partner of the ruling coalition, said in the rehearsal: "Now that the Chamber of Deputies has decided by a significant vote to authorize the start of the impeachment process against the president, the great mission, as of this

moment, is the pacification of the country, the reunification of the country."

By the time of the rehearsal, a congressional impeachment committee had yet to decide whether to proceed with the impeachment.

The committee voted later on Monday to go ahead. A full-chamber vote would take place on Sunday. Two-thirds of the chamber would have to vote in favor for the motion to move on to the Senate for a final decision.

Temer has been regarded as the mastermind behind the PMDB's announcement last month to leave the ruling coalition, a key move toward the impeachment of Rousseff.

XINHUA

JAPAN

Govt may release tritium from nuke plant into ocean

By ASSOCIATED PRESS
in Tokyo

To dump or not to dump a little-discussed substance is the question brewing in Japan as it grapples with the aftermath of the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima five years ago. The substance is tritium.

The radioactive material is nearly impossible to remove from the huge quantities of water used to cool melted-down reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, which was wrecked by the massive tsunami in northeastern Japan in March 2011.

The water is still accumulating since 300 tons are needed every day to keep the reactors chilled. Some is leaking into the ocean.

Huge tanks lined up around the plant, at last count 1,000 of them, each hold hundreds of tons of water that have been cleansed of radioactive cesium and strontium but not of tritium.

Ridding water of tritium has been carried out in laboratories. But it's an effort that would be extremely costly at the scale required for the Fukushima plant, which sits on the Pacific coast. Many scientists argued it isn't worth it and said the risks of dumping the tritium-laced water into the sea are minimal.

Their calls to simply release

Any exposure to tritium radiation could pose some health risk."

Robert Daguillard, spokesman for the US Environmental Protection Agency

the water into the Pacific Ocean are alarming many in Japan and elsewhere.

Rosa Yang, a nuclear expert at the Electric Power Research Institute, based in Palo Alto, California, who advises Japan on decommissioning reactors, said the public angst is uncalled for. She said a Japanese government official should simply get up in public and drink water from one of the tanks to convince people it's safe.

But the line between safe and unsafe radiation is murky, and children are more susceptible to radiation-linked illness.

"Any exposure to tritium radiation could pose some health risk. This risk increases with prolonged exposure, and health risks include increased occurrence of cancer," said Robert Daguillard, a spokesman for the US Environmental Protection Agency.

THAILAND

Drunken drivers to serve in morgues

By AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE
in Bangkok

Drunken drivers in Thailand will be sentenced to community service in morgues, authorities said on Tuesday, stepping up efforts to combat the country's appalling traffic safety record. The government hopes the morbid rehabilitation plan will ram home the message that drunken driving kills and help to cut traffic-related deaths in a country with the world's second most dangerous roads.

Nontajit Netpukkana, a senior official at the department of probation, said Thailand's Cabinet had approved their morgue proposal.

"We originally had community services at hospital wards (for offenders)," he said.

"But we think the intensity that comes from working in a morgue will help give those doing community service a clearer picture of what happens after accidents caused by drunken driving," he said.

The announcement coincides with Songkran, an annual three-day festival that kicks off on Wednesday and marks the Thai New Year.

It is celebrated with water throwing, partying and, more often than not, heavy drinking — a lethal combination given many

24,000 people

die each year in Thai road traffic accidents, the World Health Organization estimates.

make long journeys to their hometowns to celebrate with family.

Each year hundreds of people are killed on Thailand's roads during the Songkran week.

It is one of two periods dubbed the "Seven Deadly Days" by the government and media — the other being Western New Year.

Only better than Libya

But while attention tends to be focused on those two holidays, each week brings carnage on Thailand's roads.

Despite its relative wealth and infrastructure, the kingdom has the second most dangerous roads in the world in terms of per capita deaths.

The World Health Organization estimates about 24,000 people die each year in Thai road traffic accidents.

Only Libya records a greater number of fatalities per capita.

During last week, 380 people had died on the roads and more than 3,300 were injured, the highest toll in five years.

UNITED STATES

Plump dog loses weight and 'Fat Vincent' tag

By REUTERS in Houston, Texas

A morbidly obese Texas dachshund once dubbed "Fat Vincent" because his belly was so large it hit the ground when he walked, has found its way out of animal shelter care by dropping half its body weight, on track to become healthy enough for a new owner.

The 7-year-old canine with a love for fast food weighed a whopping 38 pounds (17.24 kilograms) with a body mass index of more than 60 percent body fat in September when he was surrendered to a Houston animal shelter after his elder-

ly owner died. His ideal healthy weight is around 16 pounds.

Now dubbed "Skinny Vinnie," the dog weighs 17.5 pounds due to a healthier diet, swimming with a life jacket in a pool and long walks, Anderson said, adding his fast food craving comes to life every time she goes to a drive-through window of a national coffee house chain.

"He hops over to the driver's seat, sticks his head out the window and waits for the order," said Melissa Anderson with K-9 Angels Rescue in Houston.

"He is always disappointed when the coffee arrives, but he never gives up hope."



A formerly morbidly obese dachshund once dubbed "Fat Vincent" weighed 17.24 kilograms, has now been called "Skinny Vinnie" due to a healthier diet. MELISSA ANDERSON / REUTERS



Briefly

NEPAL

At least 13 dead after bus veers off road

At least 13 people were killed and another 26 hurt when a bus slipped off a mountain gravel road and rolled down a hill for nearly 200 meters on Tuesday, a police officer said. Police said the bus plunged off the narrow road near Barkhetar, about 200 kilometers east of the capital, Kathmandu. Villagers and police

officers from nearby villagers were at the crash site but the wreckage was trapped between trees on a steep slope, making it difficult to pull out survivors.

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban announce spring offensive

The Taliban announced the start of their spring offensive on Tuesday, pledging to launch large-scale offensives

against government strongholds backed by suicide and guerrilla attacks to drive the government from power. The announcement came just days after US Secretary of State John Kerry visited Kabul.

INDIA

Seven surrender after temple fire

Seven people who fled after a weekend fire killed at least 116 people at a southern Indi-

an temple where they are board members have surrendered to police to face prosecution, police said on Tuesday. Local police officer Gupakumar said the seven people were taken into custody late on Monday after a two-day hunt by police.

FRANCE

Protesters damage businesses; 2 injured

Paris police said protesters

angry over a labor reform damaged stores and restaurants and injured two police officers during a rogue overnight march. Thousands of people have been gathering for the past 11 nights at the Place de la Republique to express frustration at a bill extending the workweek and making layoffs easier. The fledgling Occupy-style movement has expanded to include a range of grievances and visitors from other cities and countries.

BELGIUM

Two new attack suspects charged

Belgium has charged two more men with terrorist offenses over alleged links to the rental of a property thought to have been used as a safe house before the Brussels attacks, prosecutors said on Tuesday. They identified the two men charged as Ismail F., born in 1984, and Ibrahim F., born in 1988 and did not say when they were detained.

UNITED STATES

Turtle smuggler faces sentence

Prosecutors in Michigan are seeking a five-year prison sentence for a Canadian man named Kai Xu who said he smuggled more than 1,000 turtles to help pay for his college education. In 2014, he was caught at the Canadian border with 51 turtles taped to his legs.

AP—REUTERS—AFP

QINGDAO'S FINANCIAL INDUSTRY THRIVING AFTER REFORMS

Sector slated to grow by 15 percent in Q1



Qingdao, a coastal city in East China, is becoming a key financial hub. PHOTOS BY ZHANG JIANHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: Qingdao has been reaching out to build partnership and signed cooperation agreements with the world's leading financial centers, such as Singapore, London and Shanghai. The city's attractive environment appeals to investors. The city's skyline shows its fast growth.



By ZHUAN TI
zhuanti@chinadaily.com.cn

By the end of last year, 34 foreign-invested banks had branches in Qingdao, accounting for 90 percent of the province's total number of foreign financial institutions.

"Qingdao is a thriving city and its financial market is appealing," said Gao Feng, president and chief country officer of Deutsche Bank China. "We believe its business environment will enable us to gain tremendous success in this city."

Many financiers like Gao said they see tremendous prospects in the city's financial sector because of the city's geographic advantages, strong industrial foundation, government support and preferential policies.

Officials believe the financial sector will grow by 15 percent in the first quarter of this year.

In February 2014, Qingdao gained approval from the State Council to build the Qingdao Wealth Management Financial Comprehensive Reform Pilot Zone. Since then, city officials have poured in efforts to develop the city's financial sector.

Li Qun, Party chief of Qingdao, said he and other city officials will make "all-out efforts to achieve the goal of creating a wealth management sector in China with a significant international presence".

The city has formed a leadership group, headed by Qingdao Mayor Zhang Xinqi, to establish a development plan for its financial industry.

Officials at all levels are reportedly learning about the industry and gaining insights from attending high-level financial events.

Taking the reins

As a national pilot zone, the city has taken the lead in China's financial policy reforms.

It has implemented 35 new financial reform policies, including mortgage plans to benefit small and medium-sized high-tech companies with loan financing, pilot programs for qualified foreign and domestic partners, allowing overseas investors to convert foreign currencies into yuan for private equity investments in China and raising funds for overseas investments.

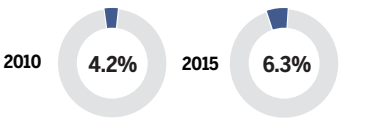
In June 2015, Qingdao became the first pilot city to allow its companies to obtain loans in renminbi from South Korean banks.

Guo Qiang, general manager of Sinopal, a local company specializing in electrical machine research and development and the first company to try the financing channel, said the reform allows the company access to low-cost financing.

The interest rate for loans in renminbi is about 4.5 percent in China, while the interest rate ranges from 3.8 percent to 4 percent from South Korean banks.

MAJOR PROGRESS IN QINGDAO'S FINANCIAL REFORM

Financial sector's contribution to city's GDP



Added value of the sector



Number of foreign financial institutes

End of 2015: **34**, accounting for **90 percent** of total number in province

Number of wealth management institutes

End of 2015: **11** banks that managed up to **70 billion yuan** in their private banking businesses

Cross-border renminbi loans by South Korean banks

The city was approved to become the first city on a trial basis to conduct cross-renminbi loans in China. In Qingdao, it is legal for Chinese companies to borrow renminbi from South Korean banks.

To date, **25** local companies are doling out cross-border renminbi loans for a total value of **2.65 billion yuan**.

Financial reform experimental zone

To date, **35** pivotal and experimental innovative policies on financial reforms have been approved.

More than **300** companies have gained listings on the Qingdao Blue Ocean Equity Exchange. The total actual financing value is **2.7 billion yuan**.

In the city's Jinjialing, a pivotal area of financial reforms, mutual fund companies run more than **170** mutual funds at a combined value of **100 billion yuan**.



Since 2014, Qingdao has hosted a number of high-end financial forums, attracting top-notch financial executives and experts to participate. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Twenty-five companies in Qingdao have obtained loans in renminbi from South Korean banks at a total contract value of 2.65 billion yuan (\$407.9 million). Thus far, 2.33 billion yuan in loans have been loaned out, helping save a combined financing cost of 53 million yuan for enterprises.

Officials said financial reforms have spurred rapid growth in profits for the financial industry, in the number of financial institutions and allowed

the stock market in Qingdao to surge.

In 2010, the financial industry contributed to 4.2 percent of Qingdao's gross domestic product. By 2015, that grew to 6.3 percent. In 2015, profits generated from the financial sector amounted to 58.8 billion yuan, 2.5 times higher than in 2010.

By the end of 2015, there were 221 financial institutions operating in Qingdao.

There are nearly 500 financial com-

panies in various forms, including funds and asset management companies.

It has attracted 11 banks to set up private banking branches for a combined asset value of 70 billion yuan.

Asset-trading platforms have sprung up in the city, including the Qingdao Over-the-counter Clearing House, the Qingdao International Marine Property Exchange Center, Haier United Credit Asset Trading Center and the Arts Exchange Center.

More than 300 companies have been listed in the Qingdao Blue Ocean Equity Exchange, a regional equity trading market.

The market's total transactions for the past year exceeded 10 billion yuan, raising more than 2.7 billion yuan for companies. It has also begun cooperation with South Korea's Kosdaq market.

Wang Daoyun, chairman at the Blue Ocean Equity Exchange, said "the exchange has become a 'holy destination' for startups. Although my workload is heavy, I am thrilled to see these promising companies grow rapidly after getting funded at our platform."

The city's achievements have recently been recognized by Z/Yen Group, a London-based research institution. Last week, it released the Global Financial Centres Index, with Qingdao ranked 79th among the world's leading financial centers, the first time Qingdao has been listed among the top 100.

The booming financial industry is helping Qingdao buffer the overall slowdown in the Chinese economy, Li Qun said.

Help for SMEs

In 2015, the city's GDP reached 930 billion yuan, a 8.1-percent rise from 2014. Its service industry grew 9.4 percent to 491 billion yuan, or 52.8 percent of total GDP.

Li Qun said Qingdao's economy has historically been dominated by large enterprises such as Haier and Hisense, but the rise of the financial and asset management sectors could help funnel funding to its small and medium-sized enterprises.

"The economy could only be sustainable and dynamic when its industrial giants and SMEs reach a balance. Small businesses must be allowed to grow vibrantly. I am proud to say that the financial sector has proved to be the remedy to this transition."

Picturesque base

Adjacent to the picturesque Laoshan Mountain, Jinjialing was chosen as the core area for the national wealth management reform pilot zone in Qingdao.

Over the past two years, it has gained tremendous growth momentum in its aim to be among China's leading financial districts. It has attracted more than 170 funds, rais-

ing more than 100 billion yuan.

Wang Zhengrong, general manager of Shandong Financial Asset Management Qingdao, recently moved into his new office in the CMB Tower in Jinjialing.

"Many financial institutions are swarming to build operations in the area for its natural environment, infrastructure, preferential policies and the atmosphere of dynamic growth in finance," he said, pointing to a number of high-end office buildings beyond his window.

In 2014, Qingdao's first independent insurance company, Qingdao Zhonglu Insurance, opened for business in Jinjialing.

The Lanhai Equity Exchange, which has been operational since April 2014, is dedicated to developing a multi-tier capital market in the area. Qingdao Rural Commercial Bank opened their headquarters in Laoshan with registered capital of 5 billion yuan, while CITIC Securities has invested 3 billion yuan in the area.

Five equity funds operate with a combined capital of 27 billion yuan in the zone. The concentration of financial institutions has brought remarkable economic growth to the area.

Through the first two months of this year, tax revenue generated from the financial sector in Jinjialing reached 740 million yuan; total loans and deposits in local banks hit 342 billion yuan and 280 billion yuan respectively, increases of 2 percent and 4 percent from the same period last year.

Total transactions in local stock exchanges reached a 400-billion-yuan record. Premiums in the insurance industry achieved 340 million yuan and deposits in local trusts reached 157.1 billion yuan.



What they say

Editor's note: Banking and government officials and company executives say they are full of confidence in Qingdao's rapid growth in the financial sector; *China Daily* reports.

"After two years of operation, the Qingdao Wealth Management Financial Comprehensive Reform Pilot Zone has displayed great market concentration effects, far exceeding our expectations when making the original development plan."

Pan Gongsheng, vice-governor of the People's Bank of China

"There is no other city in China that can compete with Qingdao in developing the wealth management sector and its city planners have great vision for making it as a key differentiator for future growth. I am very excited to see its fast progress. A number of asset management education programs are underway and all the functions of the sector are in place."

Ma Weihua, former president of China Merchants Bank

"The rising demand for wealth management is a reflection of success and economic stability. The city government will accelerate financial reforms and strengthen financial risk prevention capabilities to optimize financial resources and leverage wealth management to grow the manufacturing and service sectors."

Liu Mingjun, vice-mayor of Qingdao

"Qingdao places great emphasis in reforming the financial sector. ... I was very impressed

by the leadership's support for the Qingdao branch of the People's Bank of China."

Xin Shuren, director of the People's Bank of China's Qingdao branch

"Qingdao is a thriving city and its financial market is appealing. We believe its business environment will enable us to gain tremendous success in this city."

Gao Feng, president and chief country officer of Deutsche Bank China

"More finance companies are locating their homes in Jinjialing, the city's cluster of wealth management firms. To date, a powerful lineup of banking, securities, options, insurance, trust and mutual fund companies has taken shape."

Wang Rongtao, general manager of the Qingdao branch of Shandong Financial Asset Management Co



BUSINESS

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中國日報 CHINA DAILY » CHINADAILY.COM.CN/BUSINESS Wednesday, April 13, 2016

DEALS

Alibaba buys stake in Lazada for \$1b

Online shopping major has large and growing consumer base outside China

By GAO YUAN
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Alibaba Group Holding Ltd has taken a controlling stake in Southeast Asian online shopping major Lazada Group SA for roughly \$1 billion.

The acquisition will beef up the Chinese internet giant's presence in one of the world's most-populated areas where e-commerce is booming.

Alibaba will spend about \$500 million to buy newly

issued equity in Lazada and the rest will be spent on acquiring shares from existing holders such as British retailer Tesco Plc.

"(The acquisition) is expected to help brands and distributors around the world that already do business on Alibaba's platform, as well as local merchants, to access the Southeast Asian consumer market," said a joint statement released by Alibaba and Lazada.

Michael Evans, president of New York-listed Alibaba, said the buyout is in line with the company's globalization strategy.

"With the investment in Lazada, Alibaba gains access to a platform with a large and

growing consumer base outside China," according to Evans.

Max Bittner, CEO of Lazada, said the transaction will help the Singapore-based company to build its consumer base and "rapidly improve" services by leveraging the Chinese company's technologies.

Lazada operates retail sites in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The six countries have a combined population of about 560 million, nearly twice that of the United States. Approximately 200 million in the region use the internet, according to Internet Live Stats.

Cao Lei, director at Hangzhou-based China E-Commerce Research Center

“The results for Alibaba's US investments are mixed due to complicated reasons from the investment targets.”

Cao Lei, director at Hangzhou-based China E-Commerce Research Center

E-Commerce Research Center, said overseas expansion is becoming a key strategy for Alibaba and Southeast Asia could be the company's next focus.

"The region is close to China, so Alibaba will be able to use its logistics capability in those countries. The high density of population will also help the e-commerce business quickly expand," said Cao.

With only 3 percent of the region's total retail sales conducted online, Southeast Asia is expected to offer tremendous growth potential, said Alibaba.

The cash-rich company is the biggest spender on overseas acquisitions compared with other Chinese e-com-

merce players.

From a Hong Kong-based newspaper to the broadcasting right for rugby games, company founder and Chairman Jack Ma is investing in a wide spectrum of sectors amid discussions China's demand in online shopping is hitting a ceiling.

In the e-commerce segment, Alibaba took in shares of the US group-buying platform Groupon Inc and a number of small-time shopping sites.

"The results for Alibaba's US investments are mixed due to complicated reasons from the investment targets. It rarely makes e-commerce-related investment in the Southeast Asian region, which the company may put a little more

attention on," according to Cao.

Ma's most prominent investment in the region was a year ago when Alibaba paid \$249 million for a minority stake in Singapore Post Ltd, the city-state's key postal service.

More than 80 percent of Alibaba revenues by the end of last year were generated from the Chinese retail marketplace, according to the company's latest financial results.

Alibaba is trying to unlock demands from the mobile and rural sectors to grow its business, on top of its overseas expansion.

Meng Jing contributed to this story.

POLICY

Blackmores downplays tax change on goods sold online

By BLOOMBERG

The head of Blackmores Ltd, the Australian vitamin maker whose shares are heading for the steepest two-day drop since 1987, said investors are overreacting to China's tax changes on imported goods bought online.

Chinese authorities last week announced a list of products that will be subject to new e-commerce tax rules, amid an overhaul of its system aimed at making levies on products posted to shoppers from overseas more comparable with rates paid locally. Blackmores fell as much as 19 percent in Sydney on Tuesday.

"People assume the worst," Chief Executive Officer Christine Holgate said on Tuesday in Beijing. "There is nothing on those lists today that I can see that gives us any concern."

Blackmores soared more than 500 percent last year as its profit jumped on demand from Chinese buyers willing to pay a premium for goods made Down Under. Other Australian niche exporters have also tumbled since the tax changes were unveiled, with Bellamy's Australia Ltd, which makes organic baby formula, falling 8 percent on Tuesday.

The Chinese government said in March it would remove a so-called parcel tax that was previously levied on imports sold online. Rates ranged from 10 percent on food and infant items that came into the country through free trade zones to 50 percent on cosmetics and alcohol.

Instead, it will charge value-added and consumption duties that are currently imposed on most products sold in China but with a 30 percent discount, according to a Ministry of Finance statement.

"Historically, there have been two different import methods: Personal use articles subject to the postal tax and the trade of goods subject to duties and consumption tax," Dolly Zhang, director of indirect tax and business advisory services for Deloitte China in Shanghai, said last week. Now there's effectively a third category.

MANUFACTURING



CRRC seeks more US railcar deals after landing Chicago order

By DU XIAOYING
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High-speed locomotives maker China Railway Rolling Stock Corp is eyeing contracts in more cities in the United States, including New York, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, after winning a \$1.3 billion railcar deal in Chicago last month.

"New York is the most dynamic city in the world. It would be even better if the city's subway replaces its trains with CRRC's ones, like Boston and Chicago," said Yu Weiping, vice-president of CRRC, in New York on Monday.

CRRC is also bidding for a subway project in Los Angeles and a double-deck train contract in Philadelphia, Yu was quoted as saying by Bloomberg on Tuesday.

Chicago Transit Authority last month ordered 846 railcars from CSR Sifang America, a unit of CRRC, its second US deal in 18 months.

"The project is the largest track-vehicle purchase in the history of Chicago and China's largest subway train

export to the developed countries," Yu said, adding that the products made by CRRC have been approved by the United States on aspects of technology and quality.

According to CRRC, international sales in 2015 rose 66.9 percent year-on-year, with a gross revenue of 26.57 billion yuan (\$4.113 billion).

Last year, CRRC started several high-speed train projects, including China-Laos, China-Thailand, Hungary-Serbia, Russia, Jakarta-Bandung in Indonesia and the Pacific-Atlantic Railway.

Yu said the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain and Serbia have also placed orders with CRRC in the past two months and Philadelphia sent a bidding invitation last week.

Explaining the reasons of winning bids overseas, Yu said its products have advantages on technology, quality, price, delivery, service, performance and social responsibility.

Last year, two trainmakers CSR Corp and China CNR Corp were merged to form CRRC to better compete with

“The world's rail-transport market is not as hot as in the past years, just like the global economy.”

Yu Weiping, vice-president of CRRC

Germany's Siemens AG and France's Alstom SA.

China, home to the world's biggest high-speed rail network, has identified the sector as one of 10 focus industries in a blueprint for economic development.

A \$567 million Boston deal that CNR won before the merger in 2014 was China's first major rail contract in North America. Its proposal was 50 percent cheaper than the Canadian giant Bombardier Inc's bid.

While CRRC is still committed to double its overseas

sales to as much as \$15 billion by 2020, it is also feeling the headwinds as the global economy weakens, Yu said.

"The world's rail-transport market is not as hot as in the past years, just like the global economy," said Yu. "Infrastructure construction needs money. The general demand is falling."

Zhou Mi, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that every country is working hard to improve their economic conditions through measures such as construction of infrastructure, which gives companies like CRRC business opportunities.

Zhou said expanding of equipment manufacturing overseas is China's goal and high-speed train fits into that strategy.

"China's companies should strengthen their advantages, the government should not take care of everything and let the market decide," he said.

Bloomberg contributed to this story.

TECH

Robots take up role in equity investment

By FAN FEIFEI
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It was difficult to imagine just 10 years ago how a robot could help you select projects instead of financial advisers when managing money, but nowadays artificial intelligence technology is being increasingly used in investment and wealth management services.

Internet-based equity financing and investment service provider InnoTREE Co Ltd on Tuesday launched a service using robots to offer equity investment advice to investors.

Ma Chao, founder of InnoTREE, said: "The robot could first establish a database, which covers the investment and financing information of more than 130,000 startups, and then track and analyze the daily operation situation of these startups or their projects."

Ma said the robot will analyze the business model of these projects, categorize and evaluate them, and finally select the startups that are worth making investments in through its modeling and calculation.

"The workload of a robot each minute is equivalent to the workload of an experienced analyst working for 40 hours. Its cognition level is same as an investment manager with three to four years of investment experience," said Teng Fang, co-founder of the company.

It is the first time that robots are being applied in the equity investment market.

Yi Jigang, president of Orient Jiayi Investment, a Beijing-based private equity firm, told China Daily that the amount of equity invest-

ment is very small, but has huge development potential.

"AI technology will make the equity market more effective and efficient," Yi said.

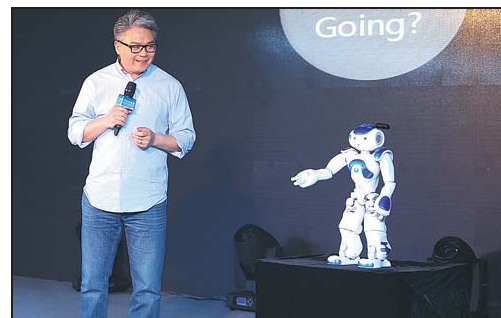
"AI technology won't shock the investment industry but promote it. People could make use of the technological achievements to devote more time and energy do other higher-level business, and improve working efficiency and value by virtue of advanced machine tools," Yi added.

Another Beijing-based internet finance company, Jimu.com, said earlier this month it was going to launch a service using robots to offer wealth management advice to clients.

It is possible that the machines will be able to calculate investment risk, predict investment yield and offer customized financial advice through deep learning and analyzing huge amounts of data, said Dong Jun, the company's chief executive officer.

Yang Fan, a researcher at Beijing-based internet consultancy Analysys International, told China Daily that "AI technology could only play an auxiliary role in the equity investment market as a huge pool of fake information exists in the market and the machine couldn't identify its authenticity."

Yang said that AI technology will not fully replace humans, but may help humans by doing low-efficiency and trivial jobs, which could save time and energy for humans to do more creative work, adding some high-risk equity investment should still be done by humans.



A robot capable of offering investment advice interacts with Teng Fang, the co-founder of InnoTREE, in Beijing on Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Talking business

Make wind power pledges more than hot air

By GAO JIN'AN

From excitement to a sort of disappointment, this all happened to me in a matter of just two weeks.

On March 16, the annual session of the country's top legislature concluded in Beijing, with the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) being endorsed. A section of this ambitious plan focuses on energy upgrading, vowing to increase the share of renewable energy in total consumption, including wind power.

It seemed to me that with an expected reduction in coal use, which now stands at 64 percent of the total, we might see fewer smoggy days and the bright and clear days would soon be on the horizon.

However, at the very end of that month, March 31, a piece of bad news came as a shock, somehow dashing my hopes for fresh air and blue sky.

Qin Haiyan, secretary-general of the wind power committee of the Chinese Renewable Energy Socie-

ty, said about 15 percent of wind power in the country was wasted in 2015 because a chunk of electricity from wind farms, built with billions of yuan in investment, could not be supplied to the power grid system due to restrictions imposed by some local authorities. The amount was about 33.9 billion kilowatt-hours, translating into direct losses of more than 18 billion yuan (\$2.78 billion).

At some wind farms in Gansu and Heilongjiang provinces and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region where wind power resources are abundant, as much as 60 percent of electricity generated was abandoned.

A calculation showed that from 2010 to 2015, electricity generated by wind farms but abandoned amounted to about 100 billion k/h, equivalent to the combined 2015 amount of power generated by the Three Gorges and the Gezhouba hydropower plants on the Yangtze River, two of the largest hydroelectric projects in China and the world.

Why so, when the country has



Workers with the power supply company in Chuzhou, Anhui province, check the transmission network under the State Grid before it is connected with a local wind power farm. SONG WEIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

embarked on the road of green development?

At the Paris convention on climate change in December 2015, China announced plans to bring its share of non-fossil energy in its total energy consumption to about 20

percent by 2030. The new five-year plan also vows to promote, among other clean and renewable energies, the development of wind power.

But the road to this goal is not easy. At the end of last year, wind power accounted for merely 3 percent

of the country's electricity generation capacity. According to Qin's estimates, to meet the renewable energy goal, China needs to have at least another 250 million kilowatts of wind power capacity installed by then, and the installed capacity at the end of 2015 was 128 million kilowatts. The National Energy Administration has planned the construction of an additional 30.83 million kilowatts of wind power capacity this year.

However, some local governments, for regional or short-termed benefits such as nicer looking GDP figures and employment statistics, still preferred coal-fired power plants and restricted the access of wind power to the grids, hurting not only the wind farms, but also enthusiasm in wind power investment and development of the wind power industrial chain.

As early as in 2006, China adopted the Law on Renewable Energy, which mandates the role of new energy in green development and offers a legal framework for access

of wind power to the national grid systems. That seems to remain as pledges on paper.

In some regions, the law and national policies on renewable energy are not well enforced, thus creating hurdles for the development of the new-energy sector. The road to green development, however, not only calls for the removal of such obstacles, but also good coordination among all regions.

The wind power committee of the Chinese Renewable Energy Society has decided to take administrative or even legal action against some local governments in order to clear the hurdles for wind power industry growth. Let's hope such action would work wonders.

To build a better environment and follow the road of green development, I'd like to borrow a line of the lyrics of Bob Dylan's song, the answer is blowing in the wind, or at least, part of the solution.

Contact the writer at gaojin@chinadaily.com.cn

What's news



GOVTS & POLICIES

World Bank: Nation to grow 6.7% this year

The World Bank expects China's economic growth to slow to 6.7 percent in 2016, the bank said in a report on Monday. The projection is on par with its last estimate in January. The bank has kept its projection for 2017 at 6.5 percent. "China's orderly transition to slower but more sustainable growth has continued despite some volatility in financial markets," according to the East Asia and Pacific Economic Update, which is published by the bank twice a year. The growth deceleration was especially pronounced in the real estate and manufacturing sectors. Excess capacity has been a drag on a wide range of industries, while service sector remains robust, the report noted.

Yuan 'unlikely to depreciate largely'

The yuan is unlikely to see a large depreciation this year despite slowing economic growth and weak exports, a US expert said. "I don't think we'll see either a big step devaluation or a market-driven large depreciation of the RMB this year. I don't accept the argument that the (Chinese) currency is significantly overvalued. I don't accept the argument that China has lost the competitiveness," Nicholas Lardy, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and a leading expert on China's economy, said at a seminar on global economic prospects.

Underground banks brace for crackdown

The country will step up its crackdown on underground banks this year as the economic slowdown and market volatility have sparked a wave of capital outflows, according to a senior official with the State Administration of Foreign Exchange. Transactions by underground banks topped 1 trillion yuan (\$154.7 billion) last year and police, the central bank and the SAFE uncovered one case involving transactions totaling \$64 billion.

Bank card consumer confidence rebounds

Consumer confidence rebounded in March as bank card users spent more on hotels, entertainment, transportation, medical services and education, an index showed. The Bank Card Consumer Confidence Index, compiled by Xinhua News Agency and China Union-Pay, a national bank card association, edged up 0.49 from February to 81.08 last month, reversing a 1.67 month-on-month drop registered in February. A report released along with the index attributed the rebound to rising consumption of daily necessities.

Rail freight volume down 9.4 percent

The volume of freight carried on the railways dropped during the January-March period as economic activity remained subdued, official data showed. Railways transported 788 million metric tons of cargo in the first quarter, down 9.43 percent year-on-year, according to data from China Railway Corp.



Business aviation show takes off

A worker prepares a business aircraft at the Asia Business Aviation Conference and Exhibition, which opened on Tuesday at Shanghai's Hongqiao Airport. The three-day show is expected to bring together more than 8,500 business aviation leaders, entrepreneurs and other decisionmakers. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY



COMPANIES & MARKETS

Yuan strengthens against US dollar

The central parity rate of the renminbi strengthened 33 basis points to 6.4616 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trading System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent

from the central parity rate each trading day.

CGN plans regional office in Malaysia

China General Nuclear Power Corp, the country's largest nuclear operator in terms of capacity, plans to set up its regional headquarters in Malaysia to push business in the Southeast Asian countries, CGN said on Tuesday. The nuclear giant has become the biggest foreign direct investor in Malaysia after it completed an equity purchase deal with Malaysian energy company Edra Global Energy to buy 13 clean-energy projects in Malaysia, Egypt, Pakistan and United Arab Emirates.

Didi partners with Lyft for its network in US

China's largest mobile transportation service provider Didi Kuaidi launched on Tuesday a ride-hailing service in the United States through collaboration with Lyft Inc. From this week, Didi Kuaidi's Chinese users traveling to the US will be able to request rides using the Didi Kuaidi app to access the driver network of Lyft, the second-largest ride-hailing app in the US, in almost 200 major cities, including San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York. Didi Kuaidi said Lyft users will be able to use similar services from Didi Kuaidi's network when roaming in China in the second quarter.



AROUND THE WORLD

EU invests in 50 innovative SMEs

The European Commission has announced that it had selected 50 small and medium-sized enterprises from 14 countries for the latest round of funding from Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 is the framework program for research and innovation of the European Union. Projects run by these companies would each receive up to 2.5 million euros (\$2.85 million) to bring their newly designed products to the market.

Eurozone household savings rate stable

The household savings rate in the eurozone was 12.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015, compared with 12.5 percent in the previous quarter, figures indicated. Meanwhile, the household investment rate in the eurozone was 8.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015, compared with 8.3 percent in the third quarter of 2015.

Singapore home prices edge higher in March

Resale prices of Singapore's non-landed private homes edged up 0.3 percent in March compared with the previous month, according to a flash estimates released by Singapore Real Estate Exchange on Tuesday. Resale prices in the Outside Central Region increased 1.3 percent, resale prices of units in the Rest of Central Region went up 0.1 percent, while those in the Core Central Region fell 1.7 percent.

CHINA DAILY-AGENCIES

MANUFACTURING

Shenyang company offers world's first smart machine tool

By LIU CE in Shenyang and SIVA SANKAR in Beijing liuce@chinadaily.com.cn

Shenyang Machine Tool Co Ltd, China's leading manufacturer of numerical controlled machine tools and machinery equipment, has launched i5M8, the world's first integrated smart machine toolmaker.

The Monday launch at the

ninth China CNC Machine Tool Fair in Shanghai is a new product of the i5 series, which has won two deals worth 1 billion yuan (\$154 million) from Shenzhen-based firms.

The two firms plan to use the machine tool to produce phone shells and peripheral components for famous brands such as Xiaomi and Huawei.

Ma Shaoyan, sales manager

of Shenyang Machine Tool, said more than 100 companies expressed interest in the sophisticated machine tool. "What's more, 38 of them have expressed their intent to buy the machine."

The toolmaker is expected to be used primarily in aerospace, automotive, consumer electronics and other industries that require high-precision

parts like valves and pumps.

Toolmakers such as i5M8 are expected to find wide applications in the consumer electronics industry. So far, Japanese companies such as Fanuc dominated the segment of toolmakers.

The M8 series is the result of much research and development, according to Shenyang Machine Tool. It is capable of intelligent programming, graphic diagnosis and simulation, and online analysis.

It is also versatile. It can custom-produce a variety of machine tools to exacting specifications, to meet the needs of different companies.

For example, it can make gadget parts with a machining precision of 0.003 mm, equivalent to 1/25th of a human hair's width.

i5M8 can not only produce

eight different models of a tool but make them in three-, four- or five-axis format, said Guan Xiyou, president of the company. "It's unique feature is multi-usage, it's like a wild card."

This could mean companies that hitherto needed eight to 10 such toolmakers, could now do with just two to three units of i5M8, saving on costs, labor and factory floor space.

The intelligent platform allows users to monitor its functioning on smartphones or other smart devices, Guan said.

Zhu Sendi, a consultant with the China Machinery Industry Federation, said: "The i5 series has introduced a new dimension in machine tool manufacturing. It has made toolmaking an internet-based technology. That's smart innovation."

Shenyang Machine Tool developed the i5 smart numerical control system in 2007 by investing 1.15 billion yuan.

The i5 broke the monopoly of companies such as Siemens and Fanuc over machine tool motion control systems, and demonstrated that numerical controlled machine tools could have a "Chinese brain".

"i5 proved to be a game-changer. Customers don't have to buy a machine tool outright. They can rent one or more of them. That way, they could stay asset-light, which is what many small companies try to be these days," Guan said.

Some 80 percent of i5 users, all Shenyang Machine Tool's clients in the Pearl River Delta area, rent the toolmaker at an average cost of about 10 yuan per hour.

Guan said: "From being a traditional manufacturer, Shenyang Machine Tool is transforming itself into an industrial service provider."

Zhu agreed. "It's a creative transition from selling tools to selling services. However, not every factory in China can organize production along those lines now. If most of the users accept this new way of production, it would be a revolution for the industry."

The company's new business model is marked by leasing of machine toolmakers and its smart factories.

In 2014, it established its own leasing firm to provide intelligent machine tools for use by medium and small companies, allowing the latter to pay for the service by either the duration of the use or output.



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LEISURE

BUOYED BY AFFORDABLE LUXURY

Makers of yachts, kayaks and inflatable boats are popularizing water-based recreational activities as healthy lifestyle options

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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The business of yachts, kayaks and boats in China is finally coming of age after two decades of hard work.

The period was marked by education of the market and access to overseas markets. Now, the business segment is on the path of healthy development with focus on introduction of more affordable products to a wider group of consumers.

But, this year could yet prove extremely critical. For, the number of boat shows in China has been halved to 24 as such events were getting a bit out of sync with current market and social trends.

So, the 21st China (Shanghai) International Boat Show, which unfolded on April 7, featured more affordable water sports facilities.

While yachts still remain rich people's pastime, kayaks' popularity among the young and upwardly mobile is rising.

Hangzhou Winner Kayak Manufacturing Co Ltd has been serving this relatively new segment since 1995. For long, exports were its mainstay, contributing 95 percent of annual sales revenue. Its customers are based mainly in North America, Europe and Australia, and its distribution offices are in Canada and Germany where water sports are popular.

China presents many challenges to water sports. The quality of waters in many parts of China is considered imperfect for such activities. Then there are difficulties like ordinary private-sector sports management skills and inadequate storage facilities for water sports equipment like kayaks. That's not all. Even if consumers are willing to spend money to have a high-quality lifestyle, quick or timely delivery of things like kayaks has not exactly been the hallmark of Chinese manufacturers.

But all that may change now, according to Hangzhou Winner Kayak. The company sees a slow but discernible rise in interest in water-based activities among lifestyle-conscious Chinese consumers. In response, the company has moved its headquarters from Ningbo to Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang province, to be closer to its potential customers and distribution network.



Models pose at the opening of the 21st China (Shanghai) International Boat Show, which was held from April 7 to 10.
YANG YI / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Kayaks are very affordable now for ordinary consumers. One can get a good kayak for about 1,000 yuan (\$154) to 2,000 yuan. Maintenance is also easy. The user only has to wipe it dry and clean each time and the kayak can be in a good shape for 10 years. It is really economical, compared with bigger fishing boats, let alone luxury yachts that cost more than 10 million yuan apiece," said Mei Yuan, sales manager of Winner Kayak.

In China as elsewhere, yacht buyers tend to be affluent company owners, the so-called rich second generation, she said. They buy yachts to entertain their customers or show off their wealth.

But most kayak users are young people who love outdoor activities. "As passion for sports and health rises among the Chinese, the number of kayak users will likely rise. Now is the time to invest in this sector," said Mei.

She may well have a point. This year's boat show saw a number of inflatable boats. Bigger ones (length: 3.6 meters; width: 1.74

meters) retail for about 7,000 yuan each.

Weihai Noah Yacht Co Ltd participated in this year's boat show and demonstrated its inflatable boats. According to Gao Wei, sales manager of the company, outdoor activities such as weekend fun on inflatable boats represent a "cool and chic" lifestyle.

And they present a good business opportunity, you may want to add. Weihai Noah Yacht's 2015 turnover rose 30 percent on the back of robust domestic sales, a contrast to the past when exports reigned supreme.

"For some of our inflatable boats, the bottom is made up of three aluminum alloy boards. The body of the boat is inflatable. Therefore, the user can easily pack the boat in the trunk or into a fishing bag. Most of our users have bought it for the purpose of fishing. Unlike the bigger boats, the most attractive point of inflatable boats is the price. Of course, there is no trouble of maintenance or management," she said. Apart from water sports, inflata-

ble boats are used as lifesaving equipment by rescue teams, given their suitability for narrow waters and low price, said Gao.

To cater to Chinese consumers' increasing demand for affordable water recreation facilities, the organizer of the boat show, Shanghai UBM Sinoexpo International Exhibition Co, has created an outdoor experience area.

Interested consumers can try out kayaks and inflatable boats before buying. Gao Haiyan, director of the high-end business department of the exhibition company, said the boat show's objective is to introduce healthy lifestyle options like boating to Shanghai. The idea is not to hype up luxury.

Yang Xinfu, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry, said the event demonstrates water-based recreation as part of modern lifestyle. The focus is not on mere display of yachts and other water sports equipment. "We should fully recognize the fact that Chinese consumers can now enjoy the same



A man seen flyboarding, one of China's popular water sports, in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. TAN KAI XING / FOR CHINA DAILY

quality of life as people in developed countries."

The spillover effect of all this is that even luxury yacht companies are celebrating the advent of affordable water recreational facilities in China. In the yacht industry, about 2 percent of the existing boats are luxury yachts.

Chen Gang, chief representative of Italian luxury yacht company Ferretti in Shanghai, said he would like to see that ratio dropping further in the Chinese market. Only then, every brand would be able to see better growth, helping the overall industry to post a healthy growth rate as well.

ENTERTAINMENT

Fun on water turns non-elitist

By **SHI JING**

For long, gleaming luxury super-boats have been a recurring theme at boat shows in China. The 21st China (Shanghai) International Boat Show earlier this month, however, proved to be a game-changer.

Audiences were treated to sights of colorful, affordable inventions that promise to make water-based recreation a fun activity for common folks.

For instance, Beijing Bonna Yachting displayed a variety of inflatable boats, including towable tubes, floating lounges and boards.

According to Zhang Zhiyong, general manager of the company, inflatable towable tubes have become increasingly popular in the China market, particularly among beach-side amusement facility operators and yacht clubs.

These tubes, costing between 2,000 yuan (\$309) and 3,000 yuan each, can be used in various environments like lakes, rivers and seas.

Not just inflatable tube manufacturers, even beach operators appear set to see brisk business. "It's a highly profitable business. Beach operators and yacht clubs charge at least 150 yuan per person for a four-minute tube ride. That's a better option for yacht clubs whose bigger, expensive vessels like yachts and big boats are found anchored



A group of tourists enjoy a ride on an inflatable boat made by Beijing Bonna Yachting. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

at harbors and marinas for long periods of time, doing nothing, for want of customers. Since the tube needs to be hitched to the rear of a boat, the clubs can make full use of their existing yachts and make money from quick, short tube rides."

Floating lounges have also gained in popularity. They can be used in swimming pools or placid waters, based on the concept that a floating lounge is a sofa-on-water made for a comfortable chat with friends over chilled beverages.

What's more, it is suitable for children too. Zhang Chenmei, 38, a senior analyst at a Shanghai-based energy consultancy firm, has just bought a small floating lounge for her five-year-old daughter from an

overseas e-commerce platform.

"I have seen people having great fun on these floating lounges in Australia. My daughter has also tried it at a recreational park in Shanghai and enjoyed it much. So, I have bought one for her. We'll use it in Shanghai or whenever we travel to a seaside city. As long as there are companies selling such products in China, it will save me the trouble of shopping on overseas platforms and waiting for the long delivery time," Zhang said.

Clearly, the trend is towards products for individuals. Beijing Bonna used to supply engineering equipment to firms dealing in big-sized boats. Now, as demand rises for smaller boats, the company has quickly changed gears and adapted

to the market for affordable products.

"Luxury yachts were targeted at a specific market. But the government's anti-extravagance campaign has made sales of these luxury boats and related equipment increasingly difficult. So, selling these more affordable products seems a right choice now," he said.

Chen Xiao, director of the Asia Pacific Tourism Organization, said recreational boats are no longer niche luxury products in China but mass consumer goods. This change in consumers' concept of a modern lifestyle can be attributed to the Chinese economy becoming more developed and connected to the international market, he said.

TRAVEL

Living aboard to dive, enjoy high-end voyages

By **SHI JING**

China's yachting industry, like other businesses, is tapping the internet for faster development.

Sanya Visun Royal Yacht Club signed a strategic partnership on April 7 with short-term rental online platform Tujia.com, in the hope of developing the so-called "live aboard" business in China.

The new segment is devoted to diving aficionados who prefer to live aboard a vessel like a yacht or a boat and set sail for high-end entertainment voyages.

Such diving enthusiasts hire customized boats that meet all their eating and accommodation requirements.

On a typical trip lasting several days, the boat operators ferry their customers to different diving spots each day. Most of these trips are organized near islands, far away from harbors. For, only at such places could divers see beautiful sea creatures and magnificent underwater scenery.

Thailand, Maldives, Indonesia and the Red Sea are among the popular destinations for live-aboard trips, said Lu Zifeng, a senior diving coach currently based in Malaysia.

Shang Ying, vice-president of Tujia said, "demand for sailing has been rising among Chinese consumers. But the industry has not seen related policies catching up to be in sync. As an online travel and rental platform, we started with cooperation with yacht clubs. We want to evolve a standard and a process for providing live aboard services to our registered users. The live-aboard business provides more fun ways of using existing yachts."

“Demand for sailing has been rising among Chinese consumers.”

Shang Ying, vice-president of Tujia.com, an online lodging service platform

Towards the end of 2015, Tujia rolled out a yacht trip service to celebrate the onset of 2016. Consumers could throw a party on the boats and set sail from the Gulangyu Island in Fujian province. They could retire to a convertible at night although the usual practice is to live aboard the boat or yacht in every sense of the phrase.

Gan Xuejin, executive vice-president of Shanghai Sun Holiday Group, said the yacht industry is working with travel and financial services industries to develop and offer more boating products and services.

"Companies have to work together as water-based recreation comes of age and gets closer to the mass market. A growing number of holiday groups are now working with yacht companies to create a Chinese eco-tourism alliance. We are trying to build a new lifestyle business that connects travel, property, recreational holiday, health and wellness segments in the Yangtze River and Pearl River Deltas, Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province. This should help enrich the industry and meet Chinese consumers' demand," he said.

INVESTMENT

JD comes to the rescue of startups

E-commerce firm's platform helps new technology companies secure funding

By MENG JING
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More startups are expected to secure capital from the equity crowdfunding platform of JD.com Inc as the Chinese e-commerce major expands its internet financing business. JD Finance, the online finance arm of the Nasdaq-listed JD, China's second-largest e-commerce player, said on Monday that it has helped 89 startups secure 1.1 billion yuan (\$170 million) in funding since it launched its equity crowdfunding platform about a year ago.

As many as 23 startups out of the 89 are preparing to go public on the Beijing-based National Equities Exchange and Quotations, better known as the New Third Board, said the company at a media event in Beijing.

Jin Lin, vice-president of JD Finance, said many people said it is the "winter of capital" because the slowdown of China's economic growth has made it more difficult for startups to raise fund.

"As a matter of fact, high-quality projects are still in high demand. Investors are



A JD Finance stand at a finance expo in Beijing. SHA LANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Investors are still competing to make investment as long as they find good projects with promising future."

Jin Lin, vice-president of JD Finance

still competing to make investment as long as they find good projects with promising future," he said.

The platform, which is designed to match entrepreneurs who need funds and

investors, is not the first equity-based crowdfunding platform in China, but JD Finance aims to make it one of the country's largest.

Liu Qiangdong, chief executive officer of JD, said earlier

1.1 billion yuan

the amount of funding JD Finance has helped 89 startups secure since it launched its equity crowdfunding platform

that the platform's goal is to support 100 companies to go public in the next 10 years.

To differentiate itself from competitors, JD Finance said it develops a "complete ecosystem for startups". Apart

from providing investment, it leverages the resources of JD group, providing startups with the parent company's capability in cloud computing, financing and marketing.

Haier Xiaoshuai, a startup producing smart projector, said its valuation was boosted by four times since it started to raise investment on JD's platform.

Ma Wenjun, founder of Haier Xiaoshuai, said his company's rapid development would not have been possible without the resources provided by JD. "For example, our products made a big splash by launching on JD's e-commerce platform. The great sales online certainly helped boost the company's evaluation," he said.

According to JD Finance, it is expected match up cash-thirsty tech firms in Silicon Valley and Israel with investors on its platform.

Sun Zhaozhao, who is in charge of the platform, said the company has found that technology-driven startups can bring more steady growth in return compared with the firms driven purely by the innovation in business models.

He said the platform has a very strict process to screen investment targets.

"Less than 2 percent of the projects seeking investment are qualified to put on our crowdfunding site after our screening," he said.

DEALS

Fish farms next on menu for New Hope

By BLOOMBERG

The billionaire chairman of New Hope Group Co, China's largest privately held agricultural company, is looking to buy fish-farming assets in Southeast Asia as part of a 10 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion) push to expand overseas.

"We plan to acquire an aquaculture company," Liu Yonghao, 64, said in an interview in Beijing. Though he declined to name any companies, Liu said targets need to be sizable and have good natural resources including light, water, land and low-cost labor. Liu's comments help highlight how Chinese agriculture firms such as New Hope and State-owned China National Chemical Corp are seeing bigger appetites for overseas assets to feed the world's largest population.

New Hope alone plans to spend 10 billion yuan in the next three to five years on high-end animal protein and food-related assets overseas, spurred by demand from the nation's expanding middle class.

"We shall go abroad and use our advantages in scale and the market to do acquisitions," Liu said.

Liu, who founded New Hope and started by selling hog feed, has since expanded operations to all kinds of animal feed and slaughtering

We shall go abroad and use our advantages in scale and the market to do acquisitions."

Liu Yonghao, chairman of New Hope Group Co



businesses along with dairy, finance, real estate, and chemicals. Today, his wealth has grown to more than \$5 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

New Hope is also looking to acquire livestock-breeding companies overseas, Liu said, citing a lack of such capabilities in China and increasing domestic demand for beef, lamb and seafood.

"Every year we spend quite a lot of money importing animals such as cattle, pigs, chicken, ducks, even seafood like shrimps," said Liu.

EQUITIES

Indexes fall as industrial stocks retreat

By BLOOMBERG

Mainland equities swung into losses, with industrial stocks leading the retreat.

The Shanghai Composite Index fell 0.3 percent. Machinery maker CITIC Heavy Industries Co led declines for industrial stocks, while brokerage Shenwan Hongyuan Group Co dropped after say-

ing its net income nearly halved in the first quarter.

The real economy faces multiple difficulties, and the nation will promote supply-side structural reforms to ensure that growth is in a reasonable range, Premier Li Keqiang was cited as saying by China Central Television.

Equities in Shanghai surged on Monday, rising the most

this month after official data showed producer prices registered their first monthly increase since 2013.

"The market has doubts about the sustainability of a pickup in the economy and needs to see more data to confirm the trend," said Wang Zheng, Shanghai-based chief investment officer at Jingxi Investment Management Co.

"Particularly after Monday's decent runup, investors are very cautious about buying shares and driving stocks higher," said Wang, who is keeping his equity position unchanged at about 50 percent of asset holdings.

China is trying to revive the economy amid uncertainty in the currency and equity markets.

0.3 percent

the decline in the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index on Tuesday

There have been increasing signs of a turnaround of late, with industrial profits breaking a seven-month run of losses, factory activity rising and the nation's foreign exchange reserves increasing for the first time since October.

Gauges of telecom and industrial stocks lost at least 0.7 percent for the biggest declines among the CSI 300's industry groups. ZTE Corp retreated 2.4 percent in Shenzhen. Daqin Railway Co, the operator of China's biggest coal transport network, lost 2 percent after saying it expects first-quarter net income to fall about 50 percent from a year earlier.

China's statistics bureau is due to release data on first-quarter economic growth on Friday.



Gainers and Losers				
		Close	Daily % Chg	
GAINERS				
Shanghai Stock Exchange				
CRED Holding Co Ltd	11.17	10.05		
NanjingInfrmsStrgEqpmnt	52.12	10.00		
Ningbo Tuopu Group Co	29.06	9.99		
Dalian Dayang Trands	30.40	9.99		
Langfang Development	16.64	9.98		
Zhongchang Marine Co	14.89	9.97		
Zhejiang Furun Co Ltd	16.37	9.87		
AnhuiHngynCIndstry&El	6.84	9.44		
Ningbo Zhongbai Co Ltd	17.27	8.14		
Xinyu Iron & Steel Co	6.65	7.43		
Shenzhen Stock Exchange				
Shenzhen Hifuture Elec	11.84	10.04		
InspurEl Info Industry	26.58	10.02		
ZhejingZhngchgngPckngMtr	16.04	10.01		
Fujian Star-net Comm	19.79	10.01		
263 Network Comm	14.66	9.98		
ShandongShandWITSc&Tch	34.18	6.85		
LandOcean Energy Svcs	10.45	5.45		
CITICGuoanInfoIndusry	22.11	5.29		
Westone Info Industry	39.41	4.76		
Shanxi Securities Co	12.38	4.65		
Hang Seng				
China Shenhua Energy	12.72	4.26		
China Merchants Intl	23.60	3.28		
Tingyi Cayman Islands	9.11	3.17		
Lenovo Group Ltd	6.04	2.72		
Want Want China	6.34	2.26		
LOSERS				
ChongqngThrGrsgsWtrCnsr	31.50	-9.95		
HarbinAir Conditioning	11.66	-8.69		
ZhejiangJhEnChmIndstry	8.26	-7.92		
Harbin Viti Electr	55.02	-6.95		
China Wafer Level CSP	36.29	-6.64		
China Hi-Tech Group Co	15.11	-6.15		
ShanghLngYnAdvtrng&Md	80.46	-5.97		
Hunan Fangsheng Pharma	48.89	-5.78		
Liaoning SG Automotive	12.20	-5.72		
BTG Hotels Group Co	20.91	-5.64		
Do-Fluoride Chemicals	81.50	-7.86		
ShaanxiLigeanceMinrlRs	26.05	-6.90		
Muyuan Foodstuff Co	56.30	-6.14		
Shenzhen Clou Electr	26.40	-5.85		
BeijingShiji Info Tech	95.61	-5.24		
PalmLandscapeArchctctre	28.39	-5.21		
Zhejiang NHU Co Ltd	20.49	-5.01		
SichuanTianqilithiumIn	160.80	-4.80		
BeijingWatertekInfoTch	23.27	-4.75		
ChongqingZhifeBlgclPrd	30.77	-4.59		
Cheung Kong Property	49.75	-1.58		
CK Hutchison Holdings	97.60	-1.36		
China Resources Land	19.74	-1.20		
China Unicom Hong Kong	9.85	-1.01		
ChinaOverseasLnd&Invst	24.00	-0.62		

Cross Currency Rates										
	USD	EUR	CNY	HKD	GBP	KRW	BRL	RUB	JPY	INR
USD		1.143	0.155	0.129	1.429	0.001	0.287	0.015	0.009	0.015
EUR	0.875		0.135	0.113	1.250	0.001	0.251	0.013	0.008	0.013
CNY	6.460	7.386		0.833	9.233	0.006	1.853	0.097	0.060	0.097
HKD	7.755	8.867	1.201		11.082	0.007	2.224	0.117	0.072	0.117
GBP	0.700	0.800	0.108	0.090		0.001	0.201	0.011	0.006	0.011
KRW	1145.870	1307.740	177.389	147.759	1633.290		327.714	17.239	10.584	17.238
BRL	3.493	3.985	0.540	0.450	4.984	0.003		0.053	0.032	0.052
RUB	66.295	75.796	10.260	8.548	94.759	0.058	19.011		0.612	0.997
JPY	108.240	123.750	16.756	13.957	154.676	0.095	31.041	1.633		1.628
INR	66.480	75.989	10.291	8.572	95.014	0.058	19.064	1.003	0.614	
CAD	1.287	1.472	0.199	0.166	1.839	0.001	0.369	0.019	0.012	0.019

International Stock Markets				
	Daily Close	% Chg	YTD % Chg	
Hang Seng Index	20,504.44	0.3		
Hang Seng China Ent Index	8,841.86	0.4		
TAIEX Taiwan Stock Index	8,531.18	-0.4		
Nikkei 225	15,928.79	1.1		
Sensex	25,109.87	0.4		
KOSPI	1,981.32	0.6		
S&P/ASX 200	4,975.65	0.9		
New Zealand 50 Gross Index	6,726.01	0.0		
Straits Times Index STI	2,810.78	0.1		
Bangkok SET Index	1,378.92	0.7		
Bursa Malaysia KLCI Index	1,714.07	-0.1		
VN-Index	579.84	0.1		
Dow Jones	17,556.41	-0.1		
Commodities				
	Close	Daily % Chg	YTD % Chg	
Brent Crude Oil (USD/bbl.)	43.48	1.5		
Gold (USD/t oz.)	1258.00	1.1		
Silver (USD/t oz.)	15.98	3.8		
Copper (USD/lb.)	2.09	0.2		
Aluminum (USD/MT)	1497.25	-0.6		
Corn (USD/bu.)	3.60	-1.4		
Wheat (USD/bu.)	4.47	-2.8		
Soybeans (USD/bu.)	9.28	1.3		
Coffee (USD/lb.)	1.26	0.7		
Sugar #11 (USD/lb.)	0.14	0.1		
Palm Oil (MYR/MT)	2645.00	-0.8		

ETFs			
EQUITY ETFs		Ticker	Daily % Change
China 50		510050	2.14
China AMC CSI 300 Index		510330	3.34
China CSI 500		510500	6.50
China SME		159902	3.23
China Universal CSI Consumer Staples Index		159928	1.28
E Fund ChiNext Price Index		159915	2.16
E Fund CSI 300		510310	1.31
E Fund CSI 300 Financials ex Banks Index		512070	1.60
E Fund Hang Seng China Enterprises Index		510900	0.90
E FUND SZSE100 INDEX FUND		159901	3.90
Fortune SGAM Xianjin Tianyi Money Market		511990	100.00
Guangfa CSI 500		510510	1.71
Guotai Shanghai Stock Exchange 180 Financial Index		510230	4.85
Harvest CSI 300 Index		159919	3.37
Huatai-Pinebridge CSI 300		510300	3.21
Shanghai SSE180		510180	2.76
SSE Pledge Urban Investment Bond		511220	99.29
Yinhua Traded Money Market Fund		511880	100.84

Data provided by

Bloomberg

SIPO calls for integrated protection

By WANG XIN
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China must establish a more integrated mechanism of intellectual property rights protection that ties in various branches of enforcement and procedures, said a senior official.

The central government has recently called for more stringent IP protection through a series of policies, said Shen Changyu, commissioner of the State Intellectual Property Office, at the China Intellectual Property Forum held in Beijing from Saturday to Sunday.

“Stringent protection is a strategic move toward China’s innovation-driven development and goal of creating a strong IP powerhouse,” he said. “It meets the needs of the country’s new stage of development.”

IP protection is a complex system ranging from patents, trademarks and copyrights to trade secrets and even new varieties of a plant species, he said, adding that it is a multi-faceted issue related to registration procedures, filings, administrative enforcement, judicial procedures, arbitration and mediation.

All these require an improved IP protection mechanism that enables stronger cooperation between the central government and local governments, and enhanced coordination between administrations and the judicial branch, Shen said.

The fields that are closely related to people’s lives such as medicine, food and the environment should be prioritized, while emerging businesses such as the internet, e-commerce and big data will also be the focus of IP protection efforts, he said.



Customs officers in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, seize counterfeited mobile phone chargers. LYU BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

IP administrations investigated approximately 87,000 patent infringements nationwide during the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-15), 10 times the number of investigations during the previous five years, according to SIPO data.

Chen Jinchuan, vice-president of the Beijing IP Court, told the forum that the court is exploring a precedent-setting judicial path and fully using the rules of evidence to better protect the rights and interests of IP owners.

Li Bin, vice-president of Sinochem Group, compared IP to the defense force of a country adding that “IP can help a company protect its captured market and also explore new business opportunities”.

One of the earliest Chinese companies to go abroad, Sinochem Group began conducting overseas mergers and acquisitions in the 1980s. Since then, its business has expanded to more than 100 countries and regions, where more than 1,200 of its trademarks have been filed.

The company has maintained a double-digit growth in annual patent filings over the past decade.

“It is the common aim shared in IP systems worldwide to respect others, protect ourselves and pursue innovation,” Li said. “IP protection is an international rule. Having a consciousness of rules and a global vision is the foundation of our IP work.”

China continued its robust

momentum in international patent applications filed through the Patent Cooperation Treaty in 2015, contributing nearly 30,000 PCT filings, an increase of 16.8 percent from a year earlier, and ranking third globally, according to the latest annual report by the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Chinese companies took four positions among the top 20 business PCT filers in the world, with telecommunication giant Huawei Technologies retaining its top ranking and ZTE taking third.

“PCT filings from China experienced a more than tenfold increase over the past decade, and its domestic patent applications have ranked first in the world for five consecutive years, which reflects

the country’s increased IP creation and awareness, and its marked rise on the global innovation landscape,” said Chen Hongbing, director of the WIPO Beijing Office.

China has been the most frequent destination in the world for international trademark filers through the Madrid system for 12 consecutive years.

“That shows that the international business community has a strong desire for the Chinese market and continued faith in China’s future economy,” Chen said.

“It also reflects that China’s business environment remains in good condition,” he said. “Even with the downward economic pressure, China has remained one of the most appealing markets.”

Samsung brings in lawyers for biosimilars push

By AGENCIES in Seoul

Samsung Bioepis Co Ltd, which aims to become a force in the fledgling biosimilar drugs industry, has filed a lawsuit against the originator of the world’s best-selling drug to stop it blocking the launch of its own version.

The unit of South Korea’s Samsung Group, along with its partner and minority shareholder Biogen, filed suit in the United Kingdom on March 24 against AbbVie Inc, the maker of rheumatoid arthritis drug Humira, which generated sales of \$14 billion last year.

It is the company’s first lawsuit against a drug originator.

Interest in biosimilars — lower-cost copies of complex biotech drugs — has soared in recent years as copies of some of the world’s best-selling prescription medicines have hit the market.

Unlike generic versions of simple chemical medicines, biotech drugs are made from living cells, so it is impossible to manufacture exact copies.

The IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics says biosimilars could save healthcare systems in the United States and Europe’s top five markets as much as 98 billion euros (\$111 billion) by 2020.

The South Korean conglomerate is hoping for big things from the unit — including a revenue target of 1 trillion won (\$872 million) by 2020 — amid sagging profits at its electronics business, Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, the world’s biggest maker of smartphones and televisions.

Success in the endeavour is seen as key for de facto Samsung Group leader Jay Y. Lee, 47, to prove himself as steward of the family-run smartphones-to-insurance empire. His father, group patriarch Lee Kun-hee, has been hospitalized since a heart attack in 2014.

Pushback

The composition patent for Humira loses its exclusivity in the US in December 2016 and in Europe in October 2018, but Illinois-based AbbVie, which earned 61 percent of its 2015 net revenue from Humira, has been filing new patents in a bid to push back sales of biosimilars.

In addition to Samsung Bioepis and Biogen, more than a dozen firms have challenged AbbVie’s strategy through patent authorities or the courts.

“We believe that AbbVie has been attempting to obstruct market entry of competing products by applying for a large number of overlapping patents around Humira, which could affect patient access to affordable medication,” Samsung Bioepis told Reuters.

“We believe competition should take place in the mar-

\$14 billion

sales of Humira in 2015

“

The first drug to hit the market takes the most market share.”

Kang Yang-ku, analyst at HMC Investment & Securities

ket, but not through such misuse of the patent system,” it added.

AbbVie told Reuters it was aware of the lawsuit filed by Samsung Bioepis and Biogen.

“As we have said, we intend to defend our intellectual property,” it said.

Samsung Bioepis, which brought its first drug to market late last year, has a pipeline of 13 biosimilars, versions of existing drugs with similar efficacy at much lower prices, and is initially focusing on six of them to get out in front of the market.

The Samsung Group has a track record of moving fast. Late to enter the smartphone market, Samsung Electronics quickly rose to become the industry leader. The group is also one of the world’s most active patent filers and has over the years tried to move beyond its image as a “fast follower.”

“The first drug to hit the market takes the most market share, so this is the right strategy to go with,” said Kang Yang-ku, analyst at HMC Investment & Securities.

There are potentially rich pickings for early movers; more than 10 blockbuster biological drugs with combined yearly sales of \$60 billion are on track to see their US and European patents expire over the next four years, according to Allied Market Research.

Biosimilars are a source of consternation for investors in drug producers, however, as the cheaper copies threaten to undercut profits for the original drug makers.

In December Bioepis began selling a biosimilar of Amgen’s arthritis drug Enbrel in South Korea, and the drug has since launched in some European markets including Germany and the UK early this year. The European Medicines Agency on Friday also recommended the Bioepis copy of another blockbuster drug Remicade for approval in Europe.

Samsung Bioepis is 91 percent-owned by Samsung Biologics, which manufactures biological drugs and is in turn mostly owned by Samsung C&T Corp and Samsung Electronics.

Garden expo to feature 300 Chinese-developed plant species

By ZHANG ZHAO
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Visitors to the Beijing Botanical Garden from April 25 to May 10 will see more than 4,000 flowers from 30 new home-cultivated breeds and 50 wild breeds intended for the 2019 International Horticultural Expo in Beijing.

The newly developed breeds include scarlet sage, marigold, petunias and maidenhair.

About 300 domestically developed plant species will be one of many highlights at the expo, said Shan Hongchen, an official with the expo’s coordination bureau, at a news conference at the Beijing Institute of Landscape Architecture last week.

The plant species at the botanical garden were bred from a research and development project on gardening techniques and the cultivation of new breeds. They were specifically developed for the expo, which was listed as a key technology project for 2016-18 by the municipal gov-



A gardener cares for flowers in a greenhouse of the Beijing Institute of Landscape Architecture.

YUAN YI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ernment in October 2015.

Jointly conducted by multiple universities, research institutions and companies in Beijing, the project aims to find ways to control the florescence of China’s traditionally famous flowers, grow wild flowers on a larger scale, develop new breeds and introduce

new gardening techniques from other countries.

Under the project, researchers will import 800 new breeds and develop 300 with Chinese intellectual property rights.

Petunias usually lasts two or three months, but at the greenhouse of the institute, a newly cultivated species of petunias

called “Jingyan” has been in bloom since December.

Gardening technicians said they have extended the florescence of the species and made it more resistant to frost, so it is better adapted to the windy, cold climate of northwestern Beijing’s Yanqing district, the site of the expo.

“Extending the florescence is no longer an unusual technique,” said Shan. “For some bulb plants, such as the tulip, we can even make them bloom whenever we want.”

Cong Richen, chief engineer of the Beijing Institute of Landscape Architecture, said urban flowers for display across the country are mostly overseas breeds.

“Domestic companies, research institutions and individuals have actually developed many new breeds over the past decade, but few of them are known to people because of problems in promotion and industrialization.”

He said one of their main tasks is to select breeds produced in China and introduce them to international visitors at the horticultural expo.

The organizer of the expo will conduct a test from late April to October, the same duration of time for the expo, by planting approximately 1,000 breeds of flowers in a 3,500-square-meter area in Yanqing to analyze how they grow.

IP scene

BEIJING Nation draws nearer to finalizing first standard on graphene

China is inching closer to adopting its first national standard on graphene material. The draft, launched on the website of the Standardization Administration of China and made available for public opinion last week, defines graphene and other related terms. The country’s proposal for an international graphene standard recently received preliminary approval from the International Organization for Standardization and is expected to be initiated in the second half of the year.

PEOPLE’S DAILY

SHANDONG Drug for chronic hepatitis B to begin mass production in Qingdao facility

A pharmaceutical drug made in China and claimed to be a cure for the chronic hepatitis B virus recently finished clinical trials and is expected to start mass-production this year at a facility in Qungdao that is due to be completed by August. As a national major new drug development project, it has cost Beijing-based Genova Biotech 15 years and a total investment of over 1 billion

yuan (\$154.7 million). The drug, Novaferon, will be priced 50-percent cheaper than imported drugs with the same function, according to the company.

HEALTH.PEOPLE.COM.CN

INNER MONGOLIA Authorities shutter hundreds of illegal websites for pirated content

The copyright authorities in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region have shut down 871 illegal websites that had pirated content last year, handing down criminal punishments to 139 people and seizing more than 50,000 pirated products. The authority cooperated with multiple other agencies to conduct joint operations against piracy in 2015. Officials said Inner Mongolia, which has a rich culture of ethnic music, dance, architecture and design, requires strict copyright protection.

CHINA NEWS SERVICE

SICHUAN Copyrights surge through 3 months of year after free registration offer

Companies and individuals in the province registered

8,262 copyrights through March after the provincial government began offering free copyright registration at the beginning of the year. The total represents a 2.7-fold increase compared with the same period last year. The government streamlined its copyright registration procedure and has encouraged companies to create high value-added industry chains by adapting copyrighted works into animation, mobile games, movies and TV dramas.

SC.GOV.CN

GUANGDONG Qualcomm, Gree subsidiary sign 3G, 4G telecom technology deal

US chipmaker Qualcomm recently signed an agreement with Zhuhai-based Ewpe, a subsidiary of Chinese household appliance giant Gree, licensing its patents for 3G and 4G telecommunications technologies to the Chinese company. The agreement allows Ewpe to manufacture and sell smartphone chips under the WCDMA, CDMA-2000 and LTE standards. Most of China’s smartphone makers have signed patent licenses with Qualcomm, including Huawei, ZTE, Xiaomi, Lenovo and Haier.

NANFANG DAILY

ANHUI Monkey King Green Tea zone gains approval from govt

The province has gained approval from the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine to establish its first demonstration zone of a geographical indication product in Huangshan. The Monkey King Green Tea, which grows on the foothills of Huangshan Mountain, was granted a GI status in 2003. Regarded as one of the top 10 teas in China, it is famous for its elegant long leaves and fragrance.

ANHUI DAILY



Huangshan workers sort Monkey King Green Tea leaves. WAN WAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Moutai special

中国日报 CHINA DAILY



The Kweichou Moutai 80 Years is a limited edition of the brand to memorize its award won during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915.

WANG ZHUANGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Purity, production assure foreigners get the right taste

By NICHOLAS BEDARD
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Taking your first sip of Moutai *baijiu* could be challenging. You take a smooth polished bottle, open the lid and smell the aroma that brings a jolt to your taste buds. Once the Moutai is poured into your glass, you are left with a crystal clear liquid ready to make whatever occasion you are at much better. As soon as it touches your lips, it's like falling in love on the first date. You can call it a shot to the heart, or simply a problem solver.

Former National Security Advisor to the United States Henry Kissinger once said, "I think if we drink enough Moutai, we can solve anything."

During the Long March from 1934 to 1935, Moutai was used to cure all kinds of wounds.

The magical drink was rewarded for its purity and state-of-the-art production at the 2015 San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

"The international award shows the rise of Moutai and the rise of China," said An Huailun, general manager for exports at Kweichou Moutai Group, adding that he is happy to see the product have a global outreach assuring that foreigners are getting a taste of Chinese culture.

The production of this spirit can be found in Southwest China's Guizhou province. Driving a few hours from the provincial capital Guiyang, you will arrive in Renhuai, a small welcoming city that holds the Moutai manufacturing plant in Maotai town. Moutai has state-of-the-art facilities where the production takes place, and the hard-working locals at the packaging plant make sure that their hard work is celebrated with others by sharing a beautiful bottle of Moutai.

A Moutai worker surnamed Liu is having a drink at a local Renhuai pub on a Friday night. Liu has been working for Moutai for five years and said he feels honored to be contributing to such a prestigious part of the Chinese culture.

"I'm very lucky to have this job and I take much pride in it," said Liu.

"Moutai is actually really good for your health, so we drink it a little bit at work, not too much, but just enough to keep us going in full spirits," Liu said.

He said working at Moutai provides a great future for him and his girlfriend as they are planning to get married and start a family.

"The company treats us very well, and we are very respected in the community. I have nothing but good things to say about Moutai," said Liu.



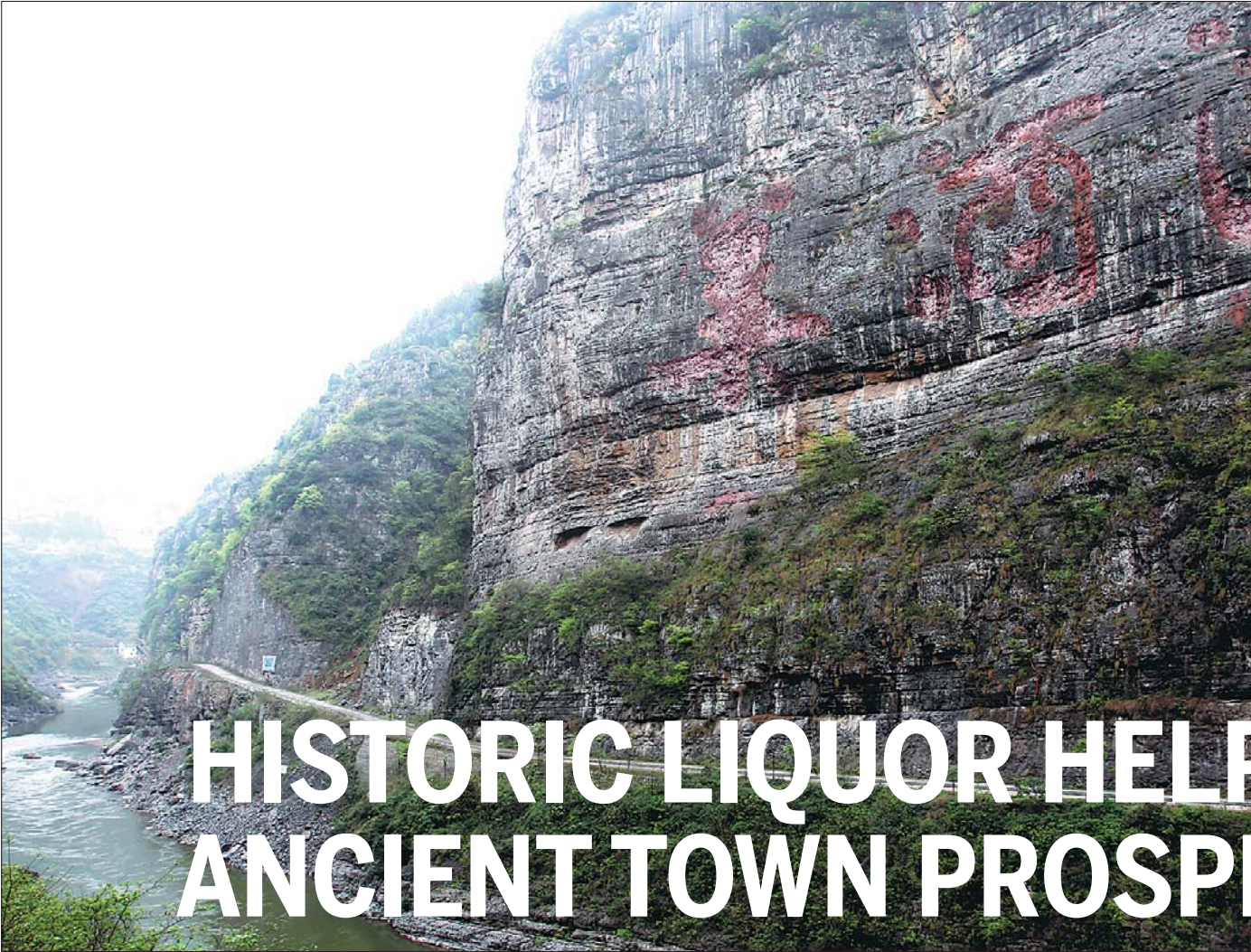
The iconic Moutai is packaged in red and white.

WANG ZHUANGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY



A foreign reporter scans the barcode on a bottle of Moutai to trace its production and quality information.

YANG JUN / CHINA DAILY



One of the secrets behind the high-quality reputation of Moutai comes from the clean, pollution-free water of the Chishui River. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

HISTORIC LIQUOR HELPS ANCIENT TOWN PROSPERITY

Traditional brewing process distills the essence of the culture

Moutai, known as the national liquor of China, is 53 percent alcohol by volume. But the drink is far from rough — it is renowned for its rich, mellow taste and "sauce-scented" bouquet.

Normally, it is enjoyed during family celebrations, business negotiations and holidays. It is also offered when foreign guests are present.

Du Kang, the god of liquor who was said to teach people how to make *baijiu*, is highly respected by the locals in the town of Maotai — where the liquor is produced — in Guizhou province. As the story goes, Du Kang stored cooked sorghum beans in a hollow tree stump one winter day. Rain filled the stump, and in the spring he noticed a fragrant aroma coming from the stump. He discovered the process of fermenting the beans to form an alcoholic drink, now known as *baijiu* or white spirit.

A visit to the Moutai sorghum processing plant is an unexpected experience in today's machine-driven processing world. One is struck by the mix of traditional methods and state-of-the-art technology that is used in the production.

"Today Moutai's daily output is about 2.7 million bottles and more than 300 varieties produced by 12 assembly lines," said Liu Qinglang, manager of the packaging department.

At the factory, women in white uniforms intently observe the red-on-white bottles

that pass through four assembly lines. Each of the women, like most workers at the plant, average a six-hour shift each day, five days a week. Their wage is about 100,000 yuan (\$15,420) per year, more than the average starting salary in big cities of China.

Home to dozens of other liquor brands, Guizhou also serves as a hub for liquor traders across China. There are some 157 villages surrounding Renhuai city, where sorghum for Moutai is cultivated. Sorghum is the main ingredient used to make Moutai. The workers at the distillery, and the farmers that supply raw ingredients, certainly embody many of the hallmark characteristics of the nation.

Yang Daiyong, deputy general manager of Kweichou Moutai Group, said, "Moutai is the pride of the nation because of the environment where it is produced, its special techniques and the assured quality."

He said the local economy is dependent to a large extent on Kweichow Moutai, which employs about 70,000 farmers in the province in addition to more than 20,000 workers in its production facilities. About 70 to 80 percent of the population's income is derived directly or indirectly from the *baijiu* industry.

Unique techniques

According to Deng Qingqing, a certified wine taster and plant manager at Moutai, the brand stands out because of its unique processing techniques.



Yang Daiyong, deputy general manager of Kweichou Moutai. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY



An Huailun, general manager of Kweichou Moutai. JIANG DONG

She explained the process of making Moutai: "The workers steam the sorghum, and let it dry for a while and then put it in the pits where they mix it with yeast. Afterwards, they leave it in the pits for 30 days, take it out and repeat the process twice. After that they put it in the distilling machines to get the liquor. It is then put in barrels, where it stays for three years. After this period, experts test it to make sure everything is right. It takes up to five years to produce the liquor. It is a long process, but it is needed to get the best Moutai according to our own standards."

Moutai has been an important part of the country's politics in past decades. Chinese

leaders have played an in promoting the beverage and Zhou Enlai, founder of new China, helped nurture its present-day popularity. It was proposed Moutai be the main drink at state banquets.

It was poured during visits by Richard Nixon and Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, as well as during negotiations on Hong Kong. Chinese leaders continue to host guests from around the world. In 2013, President Xi Jinping toasted Barack Obama.

The Chinese culture of drinking *baijiu*

By ALLISON GRINER

A lot has changed since Li Zhihua was on the factory floor in 1972. Back then, a bottle of the Kweichow Moutai he helped produce cost about 6 yuan, a big investment for a worker earning around 30 yuan a month, but nothing compared to the 1,000-yuan (\$154) bottles sold today.

To treat his young sons, Li said he would sometimes dip his chopsticks into the Moutai he was drinking to let them taste a drop. It was his way of introducing them to *baijiu*, or white liquor, a drink that has become a symbol of Chinese national pride.

But the culture surrounding Moutai is evolving as rapidly as the society around it. With globalization and greater economic prosperity, a new type of drinking culture has emerged.

Li, now in his early 60s, has retired from the plant, but his two sons have taken jobs there. "Because the whole family has been drinking Moutai for years, we all like the taste of Moutai," Li said.

Older consumers like Li tend to be the norm in the *baijiu* market, said Derek Sandhaus, author of *Baijiu: The Essential Guide to Chinese Spirits*.

"The average *baijiu* drinker is going to be usually, though not always, a man over the age of 30," he said. "Generally people start drinking more *baijiu* the further along in their careers they get."

It's a marked contrast to Western drinking trends, Sandhaus explained, where consumers' alcohol intake tends to mature in their 20s. But despite the fact that older, more experienced consumers tend to dominate the *baijiu* market, Sandhaus argues that there is still little awareness about the history and diversity of the celebrated liquor.

"There's not a culture of *baijiu* connoisseurship, like there is with whiskey connoisseurship in the West," he said.

Chinese people may recognize the prestige of a brand like Moutai, but few grasp the peculiarities that differentiate one class of *baijiu* from another.

Part of the reason lies with *baijiu*'s relatively recent development. The drink itself has been around for centuries, but the industry was only established in the 1950s.

Liquors that were once regional specialties were suddenly available for mass consumption. Many remain obscure, but Moutai distinguished itself early on as a patriotic favorite,

given its role in cleaning wounds and healing soldiers during the Red Army's Long March. It soon became a staple at formal occasions nationwide.

Modern Chinese dining habits are another impediment to the appreciation of *baijiu*, said William J. Isler, who works alongside Sandhaus in the consultancy firm Capital Spirits Ltd. In recent decades, *baijiu* has become a pillar of banquet dinners, where it is used to give toasts until a bottle of the high-proof liquor is empty.

You can't enjoy the variation among *baijiu* if you're committed to "pounding down" a bottle of a single type, Isler said. In 2014, he co-founded Beijing's first *baijiu* bar as an alternative to the pressure of banquet binge-drinking.

A new trend

"What we try to do is completely remove *baijiu* from the culture associated with it, and present it on its own as a spirit," Isler said.

The Capital Spirits *baijiu* bar was initially frequented by expats but Isler estimates that 60 percent of his current clients are Chinese, with almost half of them women. He stocks the bar with over 50 types of *baijiu*, including a lighter, more accessible version of Moutai's

classic liquor called Moutai. "Among the younger Chinese, which is much more individualistic, there's a rejection of the banquet culture. They're finding it very refreshing to drink *baijiu*, which is something they can drink it on their own terms."

It doesn't hurt that the reflects Western traditions, appeal to Westerners, you'll find younger Chinese as well," Isler said.

His consultancy specializes in helping Western consumers to find their niche in the *baijiu* market. He can establish niche markets for Western brands, especially those that are more accessible. "If you look at younger Chinese, most of the trends they pick up from abroad anyway," he said.



Workers use traditional technique to mix steamed sorghum with yeast. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY



Newly distilled liquor is put into ceramic jars to age. The process before it goes to the market takes about five years. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY



Producing Moutai is labor-intensive. There are nine separate steps in simply adding the red ribbon to the bottles. WANG ZHUANGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

entry, Akhil Parashar reports.



for exports at / CHINA DAILY



Du Kang, the god of liquor who was said to teach people how to make *baijiu*, is highly respected by the locals in the town of Maotai WANG ZHUANGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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during the US president's state visit in June 2013.

“Moutai is looking abroad to expand its export market,” said An Huailun, general manager for exports at Kweichow Moutai. He explained Moutai has been stepping up efforts to go global in recent years. It already has a growing network extending from Asia to North America, Europe and Australia. There are increasingly encouraging signs on Moutai's way to international recognition. In 2015, it won a gold medal at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition, placing it among the best liquors globally.

Moutai in foreigner's eyes is not just a

beverage but something that represents a nation and has a history. After spending a long time in Guizhou province, I can certainly say this national drink holds a special place in the hearts of Chinese people. After hearing so much of its appreciation and surrounded by the irresistible aroma of the white spirit, it was simply not possible to return home without a bottle of Moutai. I was not previously a big fan of Chinese liquor but Moutai created a very different impact and I ended up buying four bottles.

Contact the writer through 1397398607@qq.com

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A visit to the Moutai Museum gives people an opportunity to learn the brand's centurylong history and the local culture relating to *baijiu*. JIANG DONG/ CHINA DAILY

go abroad and make it, it can come back (in China).”

Moutai has already started its foreign expansion, investing a reported \$11.76 million to open a store in Paris. More locations are planned for the United States, Russia, Japan and Australia, said Moutai's deputy general manager Yang Daiyong.

Overseas purchases account for 7 percent of Moutai's sales, Yang said, and he admitted

that Chinese travelers account for most of those purchases. But he hopes, “step by step,” to attract more foreign interest. The company's goal is to raise foreign sales to 10 percent by the end of the year, and to 20 percent over the long run.

If Moutai's overseas ambitions succeed, it could mark a new direction for the *baijiu* drinking culture, one that lifts the world's best-selling spirit to new heights.

Alcohol distributor advances with modern-day beverages

By MARIANO LARRAIN
marianolarrain@yahoo.com

As a wine wholesaler based in Beijing I could not decline the invitation to visit the Moutai facilities in Renhuai, Guizhou province. I always deal with wine distribution in China and recognize the strong brand perception of Moutai for my clients, visiting the source was among my top “things to do in China”.

For those not familiar with the alcohol making process, Moutai facilities may not be the most appealing. Mostly built during Mao Zedong's years, huge cement bunkers overtake the landscape. Moutai needs to be stored in relatively small ceramic jars for at least four years, meaning dozens of vault-bunker-type buildings to keep the liquor aging. The precious *baijiu* also needs high security standards including electric fence, and not even pictures are allowed inside this area. The fermentation facilities are even older, originally built in white iron that has turned gray from the dust and steam from distillation.

Another secret ingredient comes from the emerald river that has carved a majestic swathe through the valley. The local grains used as a base for the liquor are special also. However, the most impressive image during the visit was the labor during the fermentation process, shoveling the grains time after time.

To attend to current demand for the famous Moutai liquor, it must be tempting for the company to use modern machinery. However, they are consistent in following what they call the “Moutai Standard.” They age the liquor in ceramic jars, the older the better, even if it they are hard to manipulate and require a huge storage area.

Modern alcohol facilities usually rely on stainless steel and metal vats. Moutai doesn't. Some other components of the “Moutai Standard” are



Moutai has diversified its product portfolio to meet the demands of high, medium and low-market consumers. WANG ZHUANGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

even more secretive, such as the barefoot crushing of the grains, a tradition that remains to this day.

I was particularly surprised when I was told that Moutai had released a new product oriented more for women, with a fruity blueberry taste and a lipstick inspired bottle. Likewise, Moutai will soon release a mass oriented product, selling for less than 100 yuan (\$15.5) per bottle.

Reviewing the stock price, it is also surprising to find that Moutai has been resilient despite the recent convulsions of the Chinese stock market.

Is no secret that Moutai sales suffered from the government's anti-corruption campaign, limiting excessive expenditure. As a product historically linked to official banquets, Moutai seems to be one of most affected products. Even more, Moutai has faced competition from foreign liquor, beer and wine.

The stock price of Moutai plummeted to 116 yuan per share in January 2014 but, at the time of writing, recovered to about 230 yuan a share. Even more striking is that at the current share price, its price-to-earnings ratio is trailing at 18 times, which means Moutai shares might be

cheaper than the average for beverage companies. Moutai looks like a stock worth buying.

Thinking of a possible future driver for a significant increase in sales, Moutai will soon launch mass-oriented products, sharing some of the secrets from the “Moutai Standard” while having a more affordable price point. This time they will use stainless tanks, less ageing and no labor-intensive shoveling.

It seems a good move to try to reach ordinary consumers who wish to taste Moutai.

While not targeted as an elite drink, the new product can be distributed through other channels, such as the Internet. This sounds a big deal and certainly worth considering if future sales skyrocket.

I am left wondering if young people will be willing to drink *baijiu* as their grandparents did, especially when facing a deluge of new beverage products. Maybe it is time to promote *baijiu* across the nation and in international markets as well. It is time to find *baijiu* in fancy bars in China and around the world? Next time don't forget to ask for your *baijiu*-Mojito cocktail. I already drank mine.

China's tipples tickles the palates of international afficianados

By RAUL LOPEZ PARRA
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The first time I drank Moutai was at a wedding. It was a few months after I arrived in China. My host told me that it was the most famous brand of *baijiu*, the liquor made from sorghum and wheat.

We were served *baijiu* in small glasses that we later raised for a toast to the bride and groom to wish them a happy marriage. Of course, I thought, we had to toast with the best-quality liquor for this special couple's moment.

I'm from Mexico, a country where tequila is not just an alcoholic beverage, but a symbol of our traditions, so I completely identify with the importance of *baijiu* in China. Both Mexicans and Chinese use tequila and *baijiu*, respectively, to accompany our moments of joy with special people.

Four years after my first contact with Moutai, an opportunity to visit the distillery came. A group of eight foreigners, all from different countries went on a trip to Maotai, Guizhou province. As you might have guessed, it is the home of the precious liquor and where the name of the brand originated.

This liquor that contains 53 degrees of alcohol and costs around 800 yuan (\$123) a bottle is highly valued not only because of its high amount of alcohol, but also because of the long period of time needed to produce a Moutai liquor, which takes up to five years to complete. During that period, the liquor will be kept in storage and mixed up to six times to get its unique flavor. The techniques and proportions of ingredients are kept a trade secret. The producers claim that the taste lies not only in the formula, but in the place where it is produced.

Due to high consumer demand, there have been attempts to

increase the production of Moutai in other distilleries. Nevertheless, none has managed to produce a similar flavor.

Moutai is produced with the water from the Chishui River. In addition, the combination of climate and soil where sorghum and some local ingredients are grown, gives Moutai its origin denomination, protected under Chinese laws. The production process combines traditional techniques and the use of modern machinery. In addition to that, the production standards are also based on environmental protection awareness.

The Chishui River has historical value since it was a key stage of the Red Army's Long March in the 1930s.

It is claimed that the army led by Mao Zedong, crossed the river four times to defeat the enemy. The story is also linked to Moutai because the liquor was used to heal the wounded soldiers.

In 1951, two years after the founding of the New China, the State-owned Kweichow Moutai Co was founded, by bringing together various distilleries in the area. Kweichow was the romanization of Guizhou before pinyin was used.

National liquor

Since then, Moutai has been known as the national liquor of China. It is offered at diplomatic events and State banquets.

In the Moutai Culture Museum, there is a bottle especially designed in honor of Mexico. I was stunned and impressed when I saw my country being honored in this way because I was aware that not many Mexicans had the opportunity to visit these lands.

Along with all other seven foreigners, we were given access to explore the Moutai plant and see the production process.

Recruitment into the company is highly competitive and most work-

ers are local residents. This is mainly because the salary in Moutai is better than other jobs in the area.

All the workers we talked to were proud of their local brand. They spoke not as Moutai employees, but as members of a Chinese prestigious family.

As their guests, we were invited to taste their liquor. It is difficult to describe the taste. My first impression was that it left an aroma of almond mixture, vanilla and pear, but accompanied by the acidity of soy. The liquor warms the throat and part of the chest. The more you drink the softer it feels.

The bottles have holograms to verify the authenticity of the brand. To combat counterfeiting, Moutai is sold only through authorized dealers.

Annually 38,700 tons of Moutai are produced, but the company has developed different sub-brands of liquor at lower prices to meet the market demand.

Kweichow Moutai has 32 subsidiaries that also produce beer, wine and ventures in areas such as real estate, insurance, tourism and banking.

Moutai is the second-most valuable alcoholic beverage in the world, according to the 2015 ranking of independent consultancy Brand Finance. However, its value is measured mostly by the domestic market rather than the international market. In this regard, my question to An Huailun, general manager for exports at Kweichow Moutai, is about the company's plans to seek overseas consumers. To my surprise, Moutai has dealers in the United States, France, Australia and other countries. However, its mainstream market is overseas Chinese.

In this sense there is a long way to go and a huge market opportunity among Western consumers. To the extent that consumption of *baijiu* is positioned among consumers abroad, not of Chinese origin, Moutai could potentially become a leading international brand.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

NO HOUSE OF STRAW

Awarded for a top global literary honor, author Cao Wenxuan says China's transformation has provided its writers a wide range of topics. **Mei Jia** reports.

It is rare to see an author receiving the adulation the public usually reserves for movie stars.

Such a sight unfolded at the Beijing Capital International Airport on Saturday, when Cao Wenxuan arrived from Italy.

Hundreds of people had gathered to greet Cao, China's first winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards, which are top honors presented every two years to one writer and one illustrator from the world of children's literature, named after the Danish master of fairy tales.

Cao, 62, says he expected the media spotlight to fall on him soon after he received a congratulatory phone message from an acquaintance in Beijing while he was attending the Bologna Children's Book Fair in Italy after he was announced a winner of the awards this year.

During a news conference with Cao at the airport on Saturday, Xu Zhengming, an official with the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, said the market for books for young people in China has entered a golden era.

Cao's stories are anchored in rural China, where he was born and raised, but at the same time they seek to bring to the fore themes that are common to different cultures.

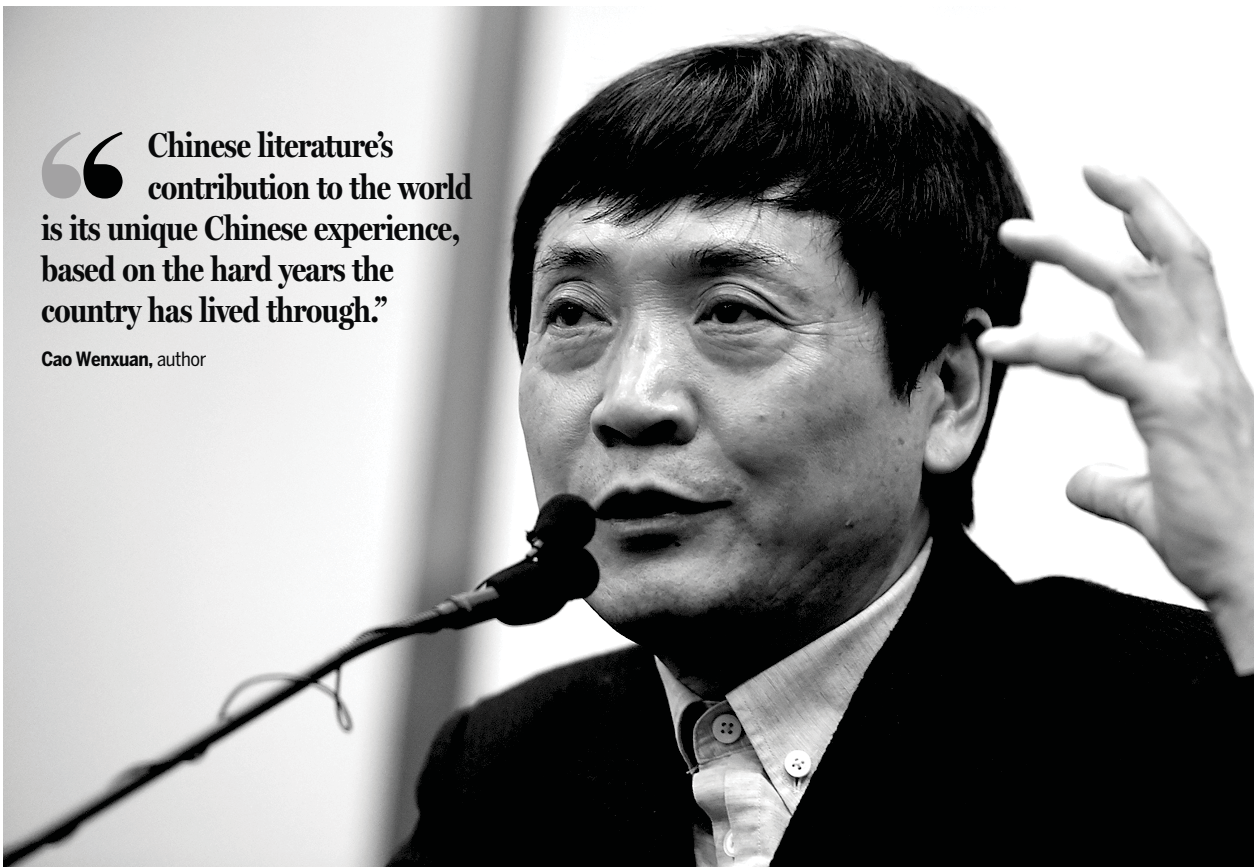
"(They're) rooted in the homeland and discuss issues that are shared by all is clever writing," he says.

Cao believes the transformation China has undergone in the past decades has offered its writers a wide range of subjects to pick from.

"Chinese literature's contribution to the world is its unique Chinese experience, based on hard years the country has lived through," Cao says.

When his 2005 novel *Bronze and Sunflower* was published in English last year, The Independent newspaper wrote that it offered a story so different that young British readers might be reluctant to read it.

The Straw House, one of Cao's



“Chinese literature's contribution to the world is its unique Chinese experience, based on the hard years the country has lived through.”

Cao Wenxuan, author

best books since the 1990s, has been reprinted more than 300 times, among which, he says, about 100 times were for adult readers.

Literary giant Ernest Hemingway and other such greats as Kawabata Yasunari, Shen Congwen and Lu Xun have influenced him, and they weren't known as writers of children's books.

Cao writes with no special targets in mind. What he cares about is good storytelling, the use of humor and wisdom that books reflect.

Cao, who is also a professor of literature at Peking University,



Award-winning author Cao Wenxuan receives a warm welcome from young readers upon his arrival at Beijing's airport on Saturday. XINHUA

addresses criticism that his works reveal a limited understanding of gender and sexuality, as most of his female characters tend to be gentle.

He says his novels are more about aesthetics and less about feminism.

In some ways, he has created Kui Hua in *Bronze* and other characters in his books, in the image of Andersen's *The Little Match Girl*, he says.

The jury for the 2016 Hans Christian Andersen Awards overwhelmingly voted for him, which probably says something about his writing.

"I am not a genius coming out of nowhere," Cao says, adding that he

is getting the award partly because of the rising international profile of Chinese authors.

Writing actively since the end of the last century, a time of "fundamental changes" in China, he says, he earlier came across critics who questioned original ideas for children's books in China.

"Some were thrilled about foreign books and were not confident enough to even mention our own works," Cao adds.

Asking critics to adopt a more balanced view, he says confidence is not only key in self-evaluation but also an important factor when talking about Chinese literature's global acceptance.

In 2014, Cao partnered with Daylight Publishing House and People's Literature Publishing House to create the Cao Wenxuan Literature & Art Center.

According to Liu Guohui, head of Daylight, the center aims to launch a full-fledged copyright-based project on his writing, and has already produced award-winning film adaptations.

The body is already offering Cao's stories to world-renowned illustrators for picture books as part of the project.

"It's a smart way to open the window and let others take a look inside and see the chances of cooperation," Cao says.

Xu, from the state administration, says Chinese publishers plan to launch 60,700 titles for young people this year — some 12,000 titles more than in 2015 — accounting for about 26 percent of all books published in the country.

"What we have is a really active and prosperous market for children's publishing," Xu says.

Cao says he wants to return to the writing table soon, because that's his calling. He plans to finish a new novel by August, when he will collect the Andersen award in New Zealand.

"I will have to wrap it up even if it rains bullets or fireballs."

Contact the writer at mejia@chinadaily.com.cn

WAR STORIES

When the focus shifts from battles to an individual's struggles

By ZHU YUAN
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What does war mean to an individual? A very pertinent question in the context of fiction writer Xue Yiwei's five war stories, which were published in English by Chinese Literature and Culture, an English-language literary magazine jointly published in the United States by IntLingo Inc, Westbury, New York and Zilin Ltd, Guangzhou.

Along with the five stories are commentaries, mostly by foreign literary critics, who try to delve into the stories for their literary value by deconstructing them.

The five stories are about the fate of individuals. In a preface to the collection, Xue writes: "The tension between history and the individual is one of the main areas I endeavor to explore in my writing, and war offers a particular means by which to access it."

In *The Veteran*, the hero identified only as The First Lieutenant is able to relive only his part in the war. The trauma of war has upset his balance of past, present and future. Experience is no longer an arch through which things gleam but a solid wall blocking anything else from coming through. The past has taken over the individual.

God's Chosen Photographer



“The tension between history and the individual is one of the main areas I endeavor to explore in my writing.”

Xue Yiwei, Chinese author

reflects absurdity and irony where the hero, who is mad about photography which he has learned from a foreigner, lies with his camera when he cheats the public with his picture of what is supposed to be

"real" but is definitely not. His career starts as a war photographer, who is supposed to seek the meaning of life using his camera, but he endeavors to do so in vain.

In *Winning the First Battle*, the eldest son of a wealthy landowner is being groomed to eventually take his father's place. However, the son rebels against his father and leaves home to join the revolutionary Red Army.

As he gets involved more deeply in the struggle, he rises to become a general. But with the revolution over, he now looks for deeper meaning in life and decides that he must reconcile with his father. Adhering to the centuries-old tradition of filial piety, he also wants to take care of his aged father.

On the way home, he tells his driver, the narrator of the story, of his tussles with his father. Through his stories of the death of his beloved mother, his father's bid to keep the family stable and his struggles with his father, we see a man who finally comes to appreciate what his father wanted to do to secure a family life for him.

The son appreciates the fact that his father married three women after his first wife's death in order to provide care and stability for the three children his first wife had given him.

We see in the general a prodigal son — one who is not ashamed of what his father did to preserve the family, but one who is eager to put the two parts of his life together.

It would be easy for readers to look down on the father as the one who tries to keep his son under control, but Xue does not present us with a father that we need to vilify.

The father represents everything that the revolution sought to abolish — aristocracy, wealth, bigamy — a privileged life that depended on the maintenance of an old society.

But the son does not hold this against his father as a revolutionary general might. Instead, the son, looking back on his life as a young man, understands that his father was trying only to create stability for his son, not to control him for any selfish purpose. The father wished for the son to have a stable life — the kind of life that he had.

In his review, Craig Hulst says that the hero of the story won the first battle with his father, but this victory cost him everything he later finds that he appreciates so much. He is supposed to find the meaning of life by leaving his stable home. But what meaning did he find from winning his first battle?

The five stories are about the way heroes search for the meaning of life from wars they get involved in, but none of them succeed. What happens in the war or what the war finally results in is not what they supposed it would bring about. The fact that they fail to come to terms with this reality should provide readers with some food for thought.

IN MOM'S OWN WORDS

How advice to her daughter became a book for all

By ASSOCIATED PRESS
in New York

Becky Blades wrote her eldest daughter a letter after she left home for college offering all the advice and words of wisdom she wished she had dispensed beforehand.

Her daughter had some advice of her own: Turn the letter into a book. Blades, who lives in Kansas City, Missouri, did just that and the result is a nifty, gifty little book, titled *Do Your Laundry or You'll Die Alone*, out in April from Sourcebooks.

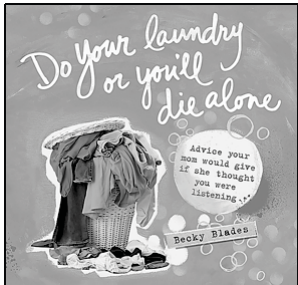
Blades knows her audience, keeping her pearls mostly text length — and funny.

"They're in this short attention span stage of life," she says. "Our best communications happen in text. It's kind of that irritating motherly voice that we know and love, but at that stage in life they really don't like to hear it."

So how did it come to pass that kids leave home these days without the most basic survival skills: laundry, mending or the sense to know that good posture is slimming?

Now, her youngest is a college sophomore and her older, driven one just graduated from Harvard. And mom just got around to writing the book.

Blades numbers her bits of advice and inspiration, with 271 in all. She includes seven ruled blank pages at the end for moms and dads to write



Becky Blades' new book offers pearls of wisdom for youngsters.

in their own pearls before handing the book over to their kids.

Rather than data-driven bullet points or chapters of soliloquy like so many parenting books are crammed with, Blades offers humor and snark to connect.

She takes on sex, bullying, common courtesy, etiquette and basic interpersonal skills such as: "Look people in the eye. You'll discover this is hard to do while looking at your phone" and, "Listen. No, but really listen."

So are her girls, slightly older now, doing just that? Most of the time, Blades says.

"I was talking a lot about the book before it was done, so they're really sick of hearing about it," she says.

"Their dad will always say: 'Hey guys, that's in the book. For cryin' out loud, it's in the book'"

crossword

Across			
1 Prepare for a court battle	24 Obfuscate	43 Leo's advisee on <i>The West Wing</i>	13 Results of knocking things off
9 1987 B-way smash	27 Cousin of a pollock	44 Anatomical tube	14 Nonentity
15 Common court battle	28 Barely communicates on a smartphone?	45 Writing rooms	20 Imposed
16 Wild	30 Prankster's activity	47 Single or double	22 Imposed (on)
17 Tell the world	31 Prankster's claim	51 Breaking news	24 Groups sharing views
18 On-deck approval	33 Rush target	52 It sets occupancy limits	25 Embryonic
19 Locale of the American Red Cross headquarters in Washington	34 Chimichurri ingredient	53 Classical squares	26 Subject to a hissy fit
20 Shapes up quickly	35 ___ good job	54 Academic references	27 Bank postings
21 Places for life-and-death decisions, for short	36 Group on a year-book page	55 Stretching muscle	28 Real mess
22 Season ticket holder, presumably	38 Many a bachelorette party hiree	56 *Hold on <i>f</i> did I hear that correctly?Z	29 Sum at risk
23 Fried rice bit	39 Star of the sitcom <i>Wanda at Large</i>		31 Sum in English
	40 ___ talk	Down	32 Maniac Mansion console, for short
	41 Having no currency	1 Area between an upper and lower deck	34 Brief after-thoughts, in brief
	42 Result of labor half the time?	2 A long time in Barcelona	37 Info on cover sheets
		3 Experienced lacrimation	38 Wigs out
		4 Reassuring words for a fallen tot	41 Item authorized by Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution
		5 Sportscaster Dick	43 Captain Clutch of baseball
		6 They're filled for a production	44 One who made many Shakespeare characters sing?
		7 Fermi, for one	45 Blind part
		8 Muscle mag subject	46 Aoki of the Champions Tour
		9 Comic strip character sur-named DeGroot	47 Actress Carano of <i>Fast & Furious 6</i>
		10 <i>Trains and Winter Rains</i> singer, 2008	48 Ice planet in <i>The Empire Strikes Back</i>
		11 Like ziggurats and some mesas	49 Bean sprout?
		12 Lots of outgoing people	50 Follower of alpha and beta
			52 Couple or so

Yesterday's solution

comics

Dilbert

F-minus

Peanuts

Drabble

horoscope



Capricorn (DEC. 22-JAN. 19)
 Seek out people you enjoy spending time with. Honest conversation will lead to positive change. Don't take a challenge that involves physical risk.



Aquarius (JAN. 20-FEB. 19)
 Avoid troublesome situations that make you feel insecure or nervous. Personal gains can be made if you focus on updating your look or romancing someone you love.



Pisces (FEB. 20-MARCH 20)
 You can learn a lot from observing how others handle confrontation. A practical, intelligent approach to anyone opposing your ideas will sway him or her to your way of thinking.



Aries (MARCH 21-APRIL 19)
 Keep the peace. Don't infringe on someone's territory at work or at home. Being open and upfront will help you avoid a dispute. Focus on self-awareness and personal improvements.



Taurus (APRIL 20-MAY 20)
 Put your goals first. Keep your costs low to avoid financial stress and criticism. An opportunity will spring from a discussion you have with someone quite unusual.



Gemini (MAY 21-JUNE 20)
 Don't share too much information regarding what you are up to or your personal background. Maintaining a bit of mystery will draw more interest than showing off what you have to offer.



Cancer (JUNE 21-JULY 22)
 Delve into a project you feel passionate about pursuing. With a little thought and effort, you can make your life and surroundings more convenient and accommodating.



Leo (JULY 23-AUG. 22)
 Get your plans up and running. Your charm and enthusiasm will make someone think about proposing a partnership. Put love on a pedestal and make romance a priority.



Virgo (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)
 Make a focused effort to have fun and to participate in events or conversations that allow you to show your playful personality. Use your intelligence to win favors and approval.



Libra (SEPT. 23-OCT. 23)
 Make a heartfelt attempt to let someone know how you feel. Finding out where you stand will enable you to make important decisions. Let the response you receive guide you.



Scorpio (OCT. 24-NOV. 22)
 Consider what you have to offer and lay it out for someone you'd like to work with. Don't underestimate your talent when negotiating a deal. Form partnerships based on equality.



Sagittarius (NOV. 23-DEC. 21)
 Honesty may get you into trouble, but it will also help you move forward. Put an end to old habits or outmoded methods and prepare to implement new plans. Romance will improve your life.

bridge

Eric Hoffer, a philosopher and author who died in 1983, said, "The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings."

Many bridge players find the hardest arithmetic to master is counting winners and losers. Since the numbers are not that high, it shouldn't be beyond anyone. It just requires a willingness to spend the time to do it. But anyone who succeeds becomes a tough player immediately.

In today's deal, how should South play in seven spades after West leads a trump?

The auction suggests that the author was looking at all of the cards! However, as I mentioned yesterday, when you have a two-suiter and find a fit in the first suit you bid, upgrade your hand. Here, South should see the slam potential if North has both red-suit aces. But as Blackwood will not help, South starts with a four-club control-bid. Then, after three more control-bids confirm that North does have those two aces, South leaps

majestically to the grand slam.

West, anticipating declarer's need of ruffing winners, sensibly starts with a trump.

Declarer has six side-suit winners (five hearts and one diamond), so needs seven trump tricks: four winners on the board and three club ruffs in his hand.

South takes the first trick on the board and ruffs a club high. He continues with a heart to the ace, another club ruff high, a diamond to the ace, and a third club ruff high. Then he draws trumps and claims. It is a textbook dummy reversal.

kakuro

A Kakuro consists of a playing area of filled and empty cells similar to a crossword puzzle. Some black cells contain a diagonal slash from top left to bottom right with numbers in them, called "the clues." A number in the top right corner relates to an "across" clue and one in the bottom left a "down" clue. The object of a Kakuro is to insert digits from one to nine into the white cells to total the clue associated with it. However, no digit can be duplicated in an entry.

Yesterday's solution

language tips

BETTER CHINESE

\$ h

Making an invitation

z X h F u V μ H W — \$

I would like to invite you to dinner tonight. Are you free?

† † † ^ p • P F b V ^ á ž μ ÿ ö b ! " # # \$ % & ' ! ! \$ %

Thanks a lot! It's very kind of you. But I've already made plans for tonight.

á ‡ , < b * ¿ ? z — \$ () % "

What bad luck! Then how about some other day?

á / Û = μ H W F ; \$ * +

I will be free next Tuesday. What about you?

á 9 Ä Y * ü / Û = ž B ù V Ô b ' , ! (% +

I don't have any plans, either. Then let's have dinner together next Tuesday.

á î Ä ž ÷ ö F Ÿ — \$ - () ! \$ #

We are having a party tonight. Would you like to come?

á B ç € . !) /

I will be there!

f ñ , á X F @ B ñ n ¶ ö F ? Ÿ — \$ -) !

\$ # I'm planning a school reunion at the end of the month. Will you come?

á X € Œ ^ € , b á , 1 μ b) . !) () \$ % . C

I really want to but I cannot make it. I will be on a business trip at the time.

f " 0 ‡ V b & ' %

Well, what a pity!

Û á X € ½ — F 1 B € — \$ * 1) # . I'm going to Xi'an on the weekend. Would you like to come with me?

From *Let's Speak: Phrasebook of Mandarin Chinese* , China Intercontinental Press and Beijing Tour Book.

BETTER ENGLISH

A S " Ê @ ß ¾ 8 " ß N Ê m

í ° B Ê o Ñ o p ß ¾ y Z Ê Ê m ^ o O Ô p „ ? © ¶ « b N Y ž á î X ž 6 B Ê Ê « " ß ¾ î c l ¯ : Simon Cowell b I ¯ : S V ‡ S u Pop Idol v „ Á S u American Idol v ¥ ß ¾ [o ý p ÷ ë b ' ù á î ¯ ¯ : Ô c b

! Ê m

You didn't beat the competition you crushed the competition!

F , ^ u ç m F ^ N â m

You made the others look like amateurs. You looked like returning pro.

ô F B 1 ô Ê m û M î < Ä ¥ b F ü ^ o | í B â b

There are no airs about her. I like her.

ò V C ¢ d Ê 1 — , S T b á Ê ò b

I'm absolutely gob-smacked. I never, in a million, million years thought that you were going to sing like that. You could sell a lot of records.

F U ž á b á B Ä 8 a B à Ä 8 û Ä X ž F ? ĭ f ' z b F | Ÿ ¥ ĭ Ê B ç ö v , b

ä Ê m

Come back and wow us next year.

û M Ÿ " F ¥ â 2 U á l b

í f s ç

If your lifeguard duties were as good as your singing, a lot of people would be drowning.

Ä T F ^ ñ ÷ 3 ô 7 O F ¥ / ? ô ĭ ä £ Ü B " * 9 " î ù 1 ô μ b

I think the audience at home deserves better than that.

ĭ ĭ f " F ¢ U Ê j - ¥ 4 Ü ' b

It was like ordering a burger and getting only the buns.

f ü z 1 á ü ü Ä ¥ ^ q ^ 2 T F ó á Ä Y ¥ ^ ë b

¢ 1 - ¥ Ä ß } Ð

Not everybody is perfect, and I don't think we should be looking for perfect people either.

Ä μ î ^ , Ä ¥ á \$ ¢ á ĭ i , ^ Ÿ s , Ä ¥ ĭ b

The object of this competition is not to be mean to the losers but to find a winner.

f ñ Ê Ü ¥ " S , ^ ¢ Ä (Ê € 7 ^ s ž Ê) € b

To learn more expressions, please log on to http://language.chinadaily.com.cn Follow us on Weibo at http://weibo.com/language tips.

ChinaDaily m ç n 8

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Stanley Cup preview

Penguins pack playoff punch

Crosby and crew primed for fight against Rangers

By ASSOCIATED PRESS in Pittsburgh

Matt Cullen can't quite find the right words to describe it — maybe because the seemingly ageless Pittsburgh Penguins center has never experienced a season quite like this in a career that spans eight cities and nearly two decades.

Lifeless and listless in December, the Penguins enter the Stanley Cup playoffs arguably the hottest team in the NHL, fueled by captain Sidney Crosby's return to doing Sidney Crosby-like things. And by fresh legs from youngsters who seem to thrive off the pressure.

And by a coach in Mike Sullivan whose arrival resonated in a dysfunctional dressing room.

Maybe that's where Cullen should start, with the man who took over for Mike Johnston on Dec 12 and put his star-laden but underachieving group on notice.

"There was a renewed sense of competition for jobs ... and that can take your game up to another level," Cullen said. "Guys were motivated to re-establish themselves."

Practices became energy-sapping endurance tests. Video work became teachable moments where mistakes were broken down and bluntly pointed out, regardless of player status.

"It doesn't matter who it is, he is critiquing our play and expecting us to be consistent every night," defenseman Ben Lovejoy said. "It took a while. It's not an overnight process. We had a lot of work to do."

Yet the Penguins have done it, rocketing from the fringe of the playoff race on New Year's Day to second in the Metropolitan Division behind a 14-2 sprint to the finish.

That sprint has improbably given them home-ice advantage in their first-round series against the New York Rangers, a best-of-seven showdown that opens on Wednesday.

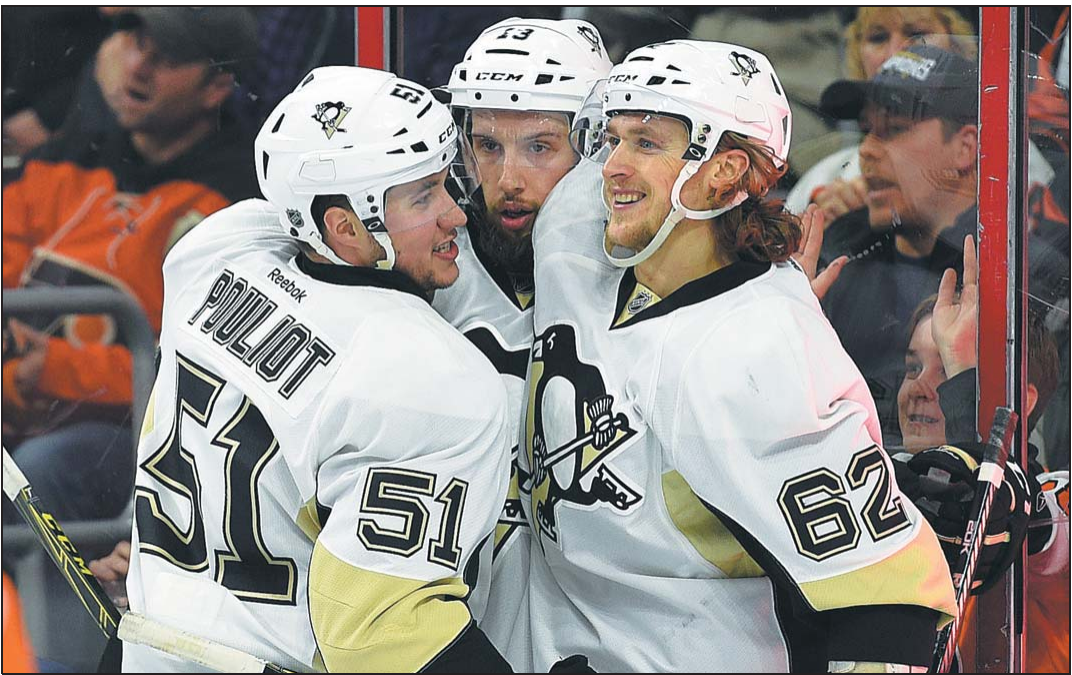
Even more remarkable than what Pittsburgh has done while averaging four goals a game over the past month is who the Penguins have done it without.

High-scoiing Evgeni Malkin skated before his teammates hit the ice on Monday but remains out indefinitely with an upper-body injury sustained on March 11.

Goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury, whose steady hands kept the season from an all-out implosion last fall, is dealing with a two-week-old concussion, but he practiced on Monday and could return for Game 1.

A similar spate of injuries last spring sent Pittsburgh into a late tailspin. The Penguins needed to beat Buffalo on the final day of the season to make the playoffs. They stuck around only long enough for the Rangers to escort them out after five taut but ultimately one-sided games.

Not this time. If anything, missing two key components of the team's core seemed to galvanize the rest of the roster — in part because of the habits ingrained by Sullivan, who stresses smart, aggressive decisions, and a series of moves by general manager Jim Rutherford that provided the Penguins with a needed jolt.



Pittsburgh Penguins' Nick Bonino (center) is hugged by teammates Derrick Pouliot and Carl Hagelin after scoring against the Philadelphia Flyers in Philadelphia last week. The Penguins open the Stanley Cup playoffs against the New York Rangers on Wednesday.

DERIK HAMILTON / USA TODAY SPORTS

“Everybody has worked hard, no matter their role or what position they’re in.”

Sidney Crosby, on Pittsburgh's late-season resurgence



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Rutherford flipped plodding defenseman Rob Scuderi for smooth-skating Trevor Daley. Forwards Tom Kuhnhackl, Bryan Rust, Conor Sheary and Oskar Sundqvist — all 24 or younger, all graduates of Sullivan's time with Pittsburgh's AHL affiliate in Wilkes-Barre — played with an energy that negated their inexperience.

Rookie goaltender Matt Murray took over for Fleury and looked just as comfortable in the NHL as he did while setting the AHL record for shut-outs last year.

"Everybody has worked hard, no matter their role or what position they're in," Crosby said.

After an extended funk under Johnston, Crosby has returned with a flourish. Mired outside the top-100 in scoring in December, he finished third overall with 85 points (36 goals and 49 assists) while offering nightly reminders that he's not quite ready to fully cede his longtime spot as the world's best player.

While Crosby's ability to create was never in question, his determination to get to the dirty areas in front of the net seemed to ease.

Not so under Sullivan, who moved Crosby closer to the goal on the powerplay while also challenging him to set the tone by attacking with the kind of intelligent aggression the coach calls "playing our game."

As Pittsburgh's opponents are about to discover, it's a mantra Sullivan sneaks into nearly every answer when he's asked about what led to such a spectacular turnaround.

Road to the Cup

FIRST ROUND (Best-of-7; x-if necessary). All times EDT

Eastern Conference:

Panthers vs Islanders
Thursday, April 14: NY Islanders at Florida, 8 p.m.
Friday, April 15: NY Islanders at Florida, 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 17: Florida at NY Islanders, 8 p.m.
Wednesday, April 20: Florida at NY Islanders, 8 p.m.
x-Friday, April 22; Sunday, April 24; Tuesday, April 26.

Lightning vs Red Wings
Wednesday, April 13: Detroit at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.
Friday, April 15: Detroit at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.
Sunday, April 17: Tampa Bay at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, April 19: Tampa Bay at Detroit, 7 p.m.
x-Thursday, April 21; Sunday, April 24; Tuesday, April 26.

Capitals vs Flyers
Thursday, April 14: Philadelphia at Washington, 7 p.m.
Saturday, April 16: Philadelphia at Washington, 7 p.m.
Monday, April 18: Washington at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, April 20: Washington at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
x-Friday, April 22; Sunday, April 24; Wednesday, April 27.

Penguins vs Rangers
Wednesday, April 13: N.Y. Rangers at Pittsburgh, 8 p.m.
Saturday, April 16: N.Y. Rangers at Pittsburgh, 3 p.m.
Tuesday, April 19: Pittsburgh at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m.
Thursday, April 21: Pittsburgh at N.Y. Rangers, TBD
x-Saturday, April 23; Monday, April 25; Wednesday, April 27.

Western Conference:

Stars vs Wild
Thursday, April 14: Minnesota at Dallas, 9:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 16: Minnesota at Dallas, 8 p.m.
Monday, April 18: Dallas at Minnesota, 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 20: Dallas at Minnesota, 8:30 p.m.
x-Friday, April 22; Sunday, April 24; Tuesday, April 26.

Blues vs Blackhawks
Wednesday, April 13: Chicago at St. Louis, 9:30 p.m.
Friday, April 15: Chicago at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Sunday, April 17: St. Louis at Chicago, 3 p.m.
Tuesday, April 19: St. Louis at Chicago, 9:30 p.m.
x-Thursday, April 21; Saturday, April 23; Monday, April 25.

Anaheim vs Nashville
Friday, April 15: Nashville at Anaheim, 10:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 17: Nashville at Anaheim, 10:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 19: Anaheim at Nashville, 9:30 p.m.
Thursday, April 21: Anaheim at Nashville, 8 p.m.
x-Saturday, April 23; Monday, April 25; Wednesday, April 27.

Los Angeles vs San Jose
Thursday, April 14: San Jose at Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 16: San Jose at Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m.
Monday, April 18: Los Angeles at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 20: Los Angeles at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.
x-Friday, April 22; Sunday, April 24; Tuesday, April 26; San Jose at Los Angeles, TBD

Flyers founder dead at 83

By ASSOCIATED PRESS in Philadelphia

Ed Snider was weakened by cancer, the disease that kept him from his beloved Philadelphia Flyers.

General manager Ron Hextall went to Snider's home in California in December, watching what would be their last Flyers game together on TV.

The St. Louis Blues led 3-0 in the second period, souring the mood.

"He looked at me and said, 'We didn't plan this,'" Hextall said, smiling.

But Snider high-fived Hextall when the Flyers scored one goal, then two, then three.

When Philadelphia potted the winner, Snider showed as much fight as one of his old Broad Street Bullies.

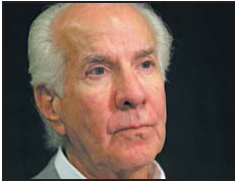
"He was in pain, a lot of pain," Hextall said. "But when we scored that fourth goal, he got right out of his seat. I couldn't believe it."

Snider, the Philadelphia Flyers founder whose hard-hitting "Bullies" used fear and intimidation to become the first expansion team to win the Stanley Cup in 1974, died on Monday after a two-year battle with bladder cancer. He was 83.

"Despite his considerable business achievements and public profile, he was first and foremost a family man," the Snider family said in a statement.

"Unrivaled, however, was his love for the Philadelphia Flyers hockey club, the team he created 50 years ago and to which he remained fiercely devoted."

With Snider ailing, the Flyers clinched a playoff spot on Saturday and dedicated the playoff push to him. Philadelphia plays Washington in the first round.



Ed Snider

Snider was arguably the most influential executive in Philadelphia sports. He was chairman of the 76ers, was once a part-owner of the Eagles and had a hand in founding both Comcast's local sports channel and the city's largest sports-talk radio station. He was elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1988.

"Ed Snider was the soul and the spirit of the Flyers, who have reflected his competitiveness, his passion for hockey and his love for the fans," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said.

Snider built his fortune with a record company and arrived in Philadelphia in 1964 as a part owner of the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, serving as team treasurer.

Galaxy of stars ready to shine

Evgeny Kuznetsov considers the KHL playoffs in Russia to be as intense as the spotlight for the Stanley Cup playoffs. He has experienced both, thanks to two rounds with the Washington Capitals last season.

This spring, Chicago Blackhawks rookie and fellow Russian Artemi Panarin gets his first taste of the NHL postseason a year after being a point-a-game player for Gagarin Cup champion CSKA Moscow. Panarin and Patrick Kane trying to land the Cup in Chicago for the fourth time in seven seasons should be a show in itself. Panarin is the first rookie to snipe 30 goals since Jeff Skinner and Michael Grabner in 2010-11, and is considered the frontrunner for the Calder Trophy. The 24-year-old finished with 77 points.

Here's a look at 15 other players to watch when the post-season opens on Wednesday:

BEST OF THE WEST

Jamie Benn, Dallas Stars: Benn is strong like a bull and has slick hands to boot. Assuming Tyler Seguin is healthy, he and Benn are the second-most dynamic duo in hockey after Kane and Panarin.

Brian Elliott, St. Louis Blues: Elliott's three consecutive shutouts in March showed his goaltending can win the Blues not just games, but a series. Against the Blackhawks, they might need it.

Shea Weber, Nashville Predators: Weber dislocated his knee in Game 2 against Chicago last year, which sank the Predators. The big defenseman does everything for defensively-minded Nashville.

Zach Parise, Minnesota Wild: Parise bears watching because an undisclosed injury forced him to miss the regular-season finale. The Wild's only 25-goal scorer is "day-to-day," and they need him playing.

Corey Perry, Anaheim Ducks: The Ducks allowed the fewest goals in the NHL this season, but they'll need to score some, too. Perry, one of the league's top shooters, can do that pretty well.

Drew Doughty, Los Angeles Kings: Playoff-level Doughty is something to behold. The two-way defenseman ratchets his game up in the post-season and has been a key reason for the Kings' two Cups.

Joe Thornton, San Jose Sharks: Thornton is having a beard-off with defenseman Brent Burns, and both are invaluable to the Sharks. Watch to see if Thornton maintains his point-a-game career pace.

BEASTS OF THE EAST

Alex Ovechkin, Washington Capitals: Kuznetsov was the Capitals' leading point-producer, but Ovechkin sniped 50 goals — again. Now 30 and without a Stanley Cup title, the 'Great 8' has something to prove in the postseason.

Sidney Crosby, Pittsburgh Penguins: Since Mike Sullivan replaced Mike Johnston as coach, Crosby has been on fire. The 27-year-old Canadian is still the world's best player, and consistently motivates his teammates to be better.

Henrik Lundqvist, New York Rangers: Lundqvist's chances to be a dominant goaltender on a Cup-winning team are dwindling. He'll have to steal the show against Pittsburgh before going any further.

Shaye Gostisbehere, Philadelphia Flyers: 'Ghost' has a wicked shot that can get through from the point on the powerplay and can ignite the Flyers' offense. He can also be an adventure defensively.

Jaromir Jagr, Florida Panthers: Who doesn't like watching Jagr chug along at 44? Hockey's elder statesman — arguably the greatest player Europe has produced — is putting up points like he did 20 years ago for the youthful Panthers.

Victor Hedman, Tampa Bay Lightning: Without the injured Anton Stralman, the pressure is on Hedman to be a rock on defense for the Lightning. With so many injuries, defense is where Tampa Bay's hopes rest.

Pavel Datsyuk, Detroit Red Wings: Datsyuk could be playing his final NHL games, so the Red Wings want to make them count. The 'Magic Man' still has some magic left after all these years and is the key to Detroit's powerplay.

John Tavares, New York Islanders: The Islanders' captain is just about the perfect balance of scorer and playmaker. If he catches fire, New York should be able to reach the Eastern Conference final.

Big Benn chimes in quietly

By ASSOCIATED PRESS in Dallas

Jamie Benn sat at his locker after Monday's practice, turned his ballcap backward and waited for reporters to start asking about just the second trip to the playoffs for the Dallas captain.

The answers were short and delivered in a soft tone that doesn't change much. Same old Benn — although he's willing to acknowledge that he's growing more comfortable with everything that accompanies wearing the "C."

It's showing on the ice for the Stars, who enter the playoffs as the top seed in the Western Conference for the first time in 13 years, when Mike Modano was the face of hockey in a southern city still relatively new to the sport.

Dallas opens the playoffs on Thursday night against Minnesota, the original home of

the Stars franchise before it was relocated in 1993 with a young Modano in tow.

In Benn, a soft-spoken Canadian, the Stars just might have the closest thing to a franchise leader since Modano dazzled fans with his fast skating and wide smile.

"I think it's generally heading in that direction," said Modano, whose last season with the Stars was Benn's first, in 2009-10.

"They've got a great nucleus, somewhat like we were when we were all 25, 26 at the time. And we were going to be together a long time. They finally have the same thing going on. Obviously, it circles around Jamie and all the things he can do out there."

The Stars underachieved last season and ended up missing the postseason. It wasn't much of a consolation to Benn that he made an improbable run to the Art Ross Trophy as

the NHL's leading scorer, getting four points on the final day of the regular season.

This season, the 6-foot-3, 215-pounder finished second in the scoring race with 41 goals and 89 points.

Three years ago, GM Jim Nill and coach Lindy Ruff took over a team without a captain after Brenden Morrow was traded. Benn certainly wasn't the vocal type, but it didn't take the new leadership long to settle on him.

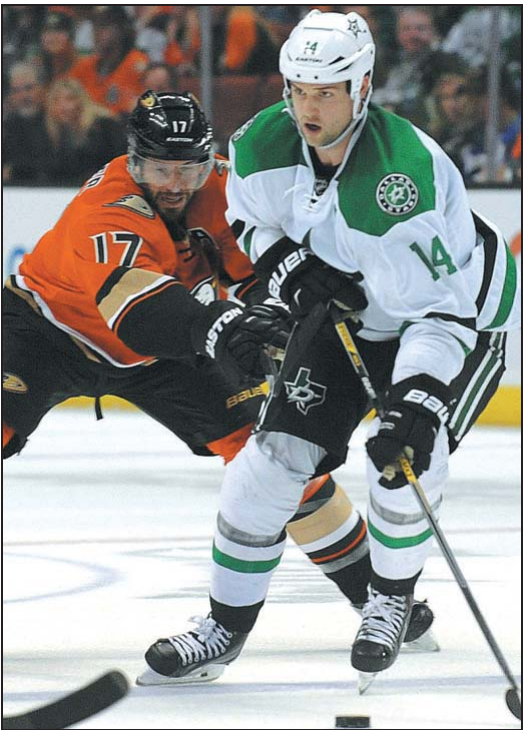
"Jamie is a quiet leader," said Nill. "He leads by example, and the rest of the guys take their cue from him."

Benn is happy to oblige.

"It was the right time, even though I was still pretty young," he said.

"I've had a lot of fun with it, and it's pretty easy being a captain for such a great group of guys."

Now he's eager to prove it in the playoffs.



Dallas Stars captain Jamie Benn stickhandles past Anaheim Ducks' Ryan Kesler during a game last week. USA TODAY SPORTS

GOLF

Fergie floored by Willett’s win

Sir Alex bet big on Spieth to win Masters

By **AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE** in London

Danny Willett’s astonishing Masters triumph cost Sir Alex Ferguson 8,000 pounds (\$11,386), but the legendary former Manchester United manager was still happy to congratulate the unlikely champion.

Ferguson, who jetted to Augusta to watch all four days of the tournament, had backed Jordan Spieth to win and appeared on course to cash in as the American established a comfortable lead in the final round on Sunday.

But defending champion Spieth collapsed over the last holes, with a disastrous 12th proving especially costly as the unheralded Willett

charged up the leaderboard to become the first Englishman to win the Masters in 20 years.

Ferguson’s light-hearted frustration at missing out on a payday was revealed when television cameras captured his meeting with Willett during the 28-year-old’s post-victory celebrations.

Ironically, Willett is a fan of Manchester United’s archrival Liverpool, but Ferguson put that — and his lost winnings — to one side as he congratulated the first Briton since Nick Faldo to don the famous green jacket given to the Masters champion.

“I bet on Spieth!” Ferguson told Willett, prompting the new world No 9 to laugh and say, “Oh, sorry!”

Ferguson was quick to show he was only teasing.

“I’m so delighted. I’m so delighted honestly. Happy to throw it away,” he said to Willett.

“You need to know where to put your money!,” Willett said

“I bet on Spieth! I’m so delighted. I’m so delighted, honestly.. Happy to throw it away.”

Sir Alex Ferguson, talking to Masters champion Danny Willett



with a smile.

Ferguson, a big golf enthusiast who gave a pep talk to the European Ryder Cup team at Gleneagles in 2014,

relished the chance to witness Willett’s victory in person.

“If you can experience something like that in a golf situation, the Ryder Cup or tonight, they are special moments, you can’t beat that,” he said.

“I’m very fortunate in my life to be able to retire and go to see that. It’s fantastic.”

Willett flew back to England on Monday for more celebrations with his family, including his brother Peter who became a Twitter sensation for his excitable tweets as his sibling closed in on his fairytale success.

“We were having a quiet drink, seeing him move up the scoreboard, seeing him getting better and better — it was really enjoyable,” Peter Willett told the BBC.

“I started sending out a few tweets just to see what kind of reaction I got because that’s the kind of guy I am.

“Then Spieth did what he did on the 12th hole and

Roaring into Ryder Cup

Danny Willett’s stunning victory at the 80th Masters has almost certainly secured him a rookie appearance for Europe’s Ryder Cup team in September.

The 28-year-old Englishman has leapfrogged Rory McIlroy at the top of the Ryder Cup qualifying list. The victory also lifted him to No 9 in the world rankings after entering last week ranked No 12.

“Still can’t believe what has happened. Masters champion 2016. Wow!” Willett said on his Twitter account after becom-

ing the first European winner of the opening major championship of the season since 1999.

“Words can’t describe the week I’ve had. Thanks to everyone involved @The Masters, fantastic hospitality from the members.”

Willett said being in the same two-ball with compatriot Lee Westwood and his caddie Billy Foster in the final round was a big help.

REUTERS

everything just went insane.”

Ranked outside the top 100 as recently as November 2014, Willett isn’t used to the spotlight and said he was looking forward to some peace and quiet with wife Nicole and their two-week-old son Zac once the champagne corks finally stop popping.

“We had the usual Masters celebrations up at the club house with the Augusta members and I had a few good friends back at the house and we continued having a good time right up until the early hours,” Willett told ITV.

“Now it’s time to relax and let it all sink in.”

BASKETBALL

Thunder roars during Kobe’s last road game

By **ASSOCIATED PRESS** in Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City Thunder fans made some big noise after flocking to Chesapeake Energy Arena on Monday night to see Kobe Bryant one last time.

They ended up getting a show from their own stars.

Kevin Durant scored 34 points and Russell Westbrook had a triple-double by half-time to help the Thunder beat the Los Angeles Lakers 112-79 in the final road game of Bryant’s brilliant 20-year career.

Kobe looked vintage in the first quarter with 13 points, but he went scoreless the rest of the way.

Westbrook had his league-leading 18th triple-double of the season, and the 37th of his career. He finished with 13 points, 14 assists and 10 rebounds.

“I haven’t seen anybody get triple-doubles as much as he has in a season,” Bryant said.

“That’s pretty outrageous, what he’s been able to do all year long. It seems to fly under the radar with what Steph (Curry) is doing at Golden State and what they’re doing as a team, but he’s having a historical season.

“He’s probably the most athletic player I’ve ever played against.”

Westbrook was honored to be a part of Bryant’s last road trip.

“It was very special for me, man,” he said.

“Growing up in LA, a young boy watching the Lakers and watching him kind of take over the town, and to be here now, in the NBA, being a part of his last road game is something very special to me.

“It’s a blessing. It’s something I never take for granted.”

Plenty of Lakers fans lined up at the arena more than two hours before the start, and the crowd chanted Bryant’s name as they waited during pre-game warmups.

The Thunder honored him with a video before the tip.

Westbrook finished the first half with 11 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists as the Thunder led 58-48 at the break.

He clinched the triple-double on an assist to Anthony Morrow for a 3-pointer with 11.9 seconds left in the second quarter.

Durant scored 16 points during a 26-6 run to start the second half, and the Thunder led 89-61 at the end of the third quarter.

Bryant sat down for good in the third quarter. In the fourth, the crowd repeatedly chanted “We want Kobe!” but the Thunder had the game well in hand.

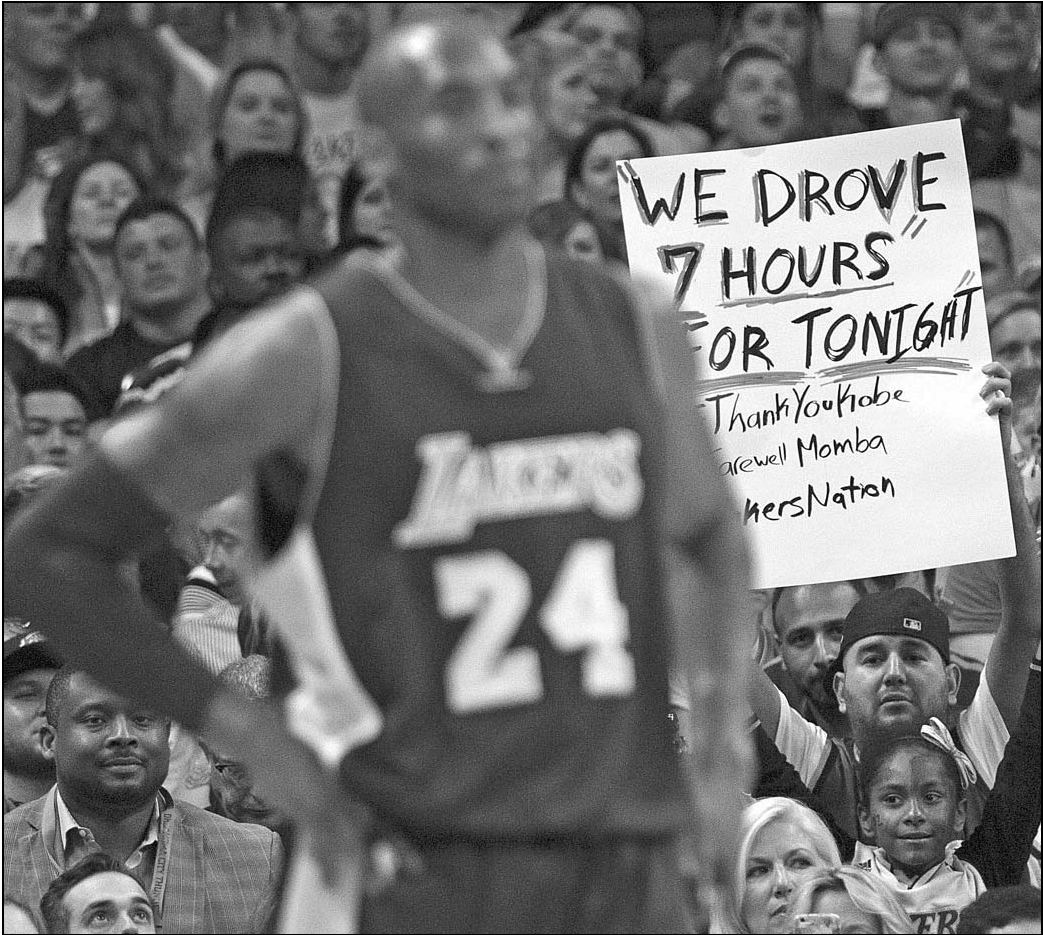
Lakers coach Byron Scott was concerned about keeping Bryant healthy for the season finale on Wednesday against Utah, so he didn’t consider returning him to the floor.

Tip-ins

Oklahoma G Buddy Hield, who led the Sooners to the Final Four, sat in the front row. Bryant watched when Hield scored 37 points in the Sooners’ Elite Eight win against Oregon.

Quotable

Bryant, on how he’s similar to Westbrook: “I didn’t smile much on the court, either. He plays the game with such an energy and such aggressiveness. It needs to be appreciated.”



A fan expresses his support for LA Lakers superstar Kobe Bryant during the first quarter of Monday’s game against the Oklahoma City Thunder at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City. In what was Bryant’s last road appearance before he draws the curtain on a 20-year career, the Thunder rolled to a 112-79 victory. J PAT CARTER / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Resurgent Rockets blast back into playoff race

Houston Rockets have scripted a stunning turnaround to stand one win away from salvaging their once-shaky playoff hopes following a tumultuous season.

With Monday’s 129-105 blowout victory over Minnesota and Utah’s loss to Dallas, the Rockets (40-41) climbed back into the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

They can clinch a post-season berth with a victory against Sacramento in the season finale on Wednesday.

It’s a small consolation for a franchise that reached the conference finals a year ago, but considering Houston appeared buried late last week, the Rockets will gladly take the turnaround.

“The fire under us, it is lit,” Rockets guard

Patrick Beverley said after he helped the team win a second straight game to catch Utah (40-41).

“This is not how we wanted it to be at the end of the season, but better late than never.”

The dream of repeating last season’s success was deflated early when the Rockets lost their first three games by 20 points each.

Team leader James Harden struggled out of the gate as there were rumblings he showed up out of shape for the campaign.

Coach Kevin McHale was fired after just 11 games, with the team 4-7, and replaced by assistant J.B. Bickerstaff — but that did little to fix the team’s troubles.

The defensive efforts of Harden and a

lack of chemistry between him and center Dwight Howard were just some of the questions surrounding the team.

After their third defeat in four games last Thursday, the Rockets trailed eighth-place Utah by a game and a half with just three remaining.

The Jazz sputtered with a pair of last-second defeats last week that aided Houston, and now the Rockets are positioned to crawl into the playoffs and make the best of a rocky season.

“We control our own destiny. It’s our play-offs right now,” Harden said. “It’s our last game (Wednesday) and we have to go out there and win. We’ll figure out everything else once the game is over.”

REUTERS

Scoreboard

BASEBALL

Results of MLB games on Monday (home team in CAPS):
Pittsburgh 7 DETROIT 4
Baltimore 9 BOSTON 7
San Diego 4 PHILADELPHIA 3
Chicago White Sox 4 MINNESOTA 1
ST. LOUIS 10 MILWAUKEE 3
WASHINGTON 6 ATLANTA 4
Miami 10 NY METS 3
CHICAGO CUBS 5 CINCINNATI 3
HOUSTON 8 KANSAS CITY 2
LA ANGELS 4 OAKLAND 1
Texas 7 SEATTLE 3

BASKETBALL

Results of NBA games on Monday (home team in CAPS):
CLEVELAND 109, ATLANTA 94
Orlando 107, Milwaukee 98
Washington 120, Brooklyn 111
Charlotte 114, Boston 100
Houston 129, Minnesota 105

Chicago 121, NEW ORLEANS 116
OKLAHOMA CITY 112, LA LAKERS 79
Dallas 101, UTAH 92
Sacramento 105, PHOENIX 101

SOCCER

Portuguese league

Result on Monday:
Rio Ave 2 (Guedes 6, Nhuck 22-pen) Vitoria Guimaraes 0

Italian Serie A

Result on Monday:
Roma 1 (Salah 50) Bologna 1 (Rossetтини 25)

Spanish La Liga

Result on Monday:
Deportivo la Coruna 1 (Lucas Perez 47) Las Palmas 3 (Araujo 58, 90+3, Garcia 79)

TENNIS

WTA Bogota Open

Results on Monday (x denotes seeding):
1st round

Conny Perrin (SUI) bt Romina Oprandi (SUI) 6-4, 7-6 (7/5); Paula Gonlves (BRA) bt Verica Cepede (PAR) 5-7, 6-4, 6-2; Sachia Vickery (USA) bt Yuliana Lizarazo (COL) 7-6 (7/3), 6-1; Lara Arruabarrena (ESP x4) bt Nadia Echeverria (VEN) 6-0, 6-2

Monte Carlo Masters

Results on Monday:

1st round
Alexander Zverev (GER) bt Andrey Rublev (RUS) 6-1, 7-5; Aljaz Bedene (GBR) bt Lukas Rosol (CZE) 6-2, 6-3; Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x14) bt Albert Ramos-Vinolas (ESP) 6-4, 7-6 (7/4); Guillermo Garcia-Lopez (ESP) bt Thomaz Bellucci (BRA) 7-5, 6-1; Gael Monfils (FRA x13) bt Gilles Muller (LUX) 7-5, 6-0; Pierre-Hugues Herbert (FRA) bt Guido Pella (ITA) 6-3, 6-4; Grigor Dimitrov (BUL) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB) 6-3, 6-2; Richard Gasquet (FRA x9) bt Nicolas Almagro (ESP) 6-4, 6-0; Pablo Carreno Busta (ESP) bt Stephane Robert (FRA) 6-3, 6-1; Milos Raonic (CAN x10) bt Marco Cecchinato (ITA) 6-3, 7-5; Benoit Paire (FRA x16) bt Inigo Cervantes (ESP) 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (8/6); Lucas Pouille (FRA) bt Nicolas Mahut (FRA) 7-6 (7/1), 6-3; Dominic Thiem (AUT x12) bt Jan-Lennard Struff (GER) 1-6, 6-3, 6-4

ATP rankings

Latest ATP top 20 released on Monday:

1. Novak Djokovic (SRB) 16,540 pts
2. Andy Murray (GBR) 7,815
3. Roger Federer (SUI) 7,695
4. Stan Wawrinka (SUI) 6,370
5. Rafael Nadal (ESP) 4,955
6. Kei Nishikori (JPN) 4,490
7. Tomas Berdych (CZE) 3,630
8. David Ferrer (ESP) 3,370
9. Jo-Wilfried Tsonga (FRA) 3,130
10. Richard Gasquet (FRA) 2,840
11. Marin Cilic (CRO) 2,770
12. Milos Raonic (CAN) 2,740
13. David Goffin (BEL) 2,560
14. Dominic Thiem (AUT) 2,420
15. John Isner (USA) 2,235
16. Gael Monfils (FRA) 2,220
17. Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP) 2,015
18. Gilles Simon (FRA) 1,900 (+1)
19. Kevin Anderson (RSA) 1,840 (-1)
20. Nick Kyrgios (AUS) 1,765

ATP rankings

Latest WTA top 20 released on Monday:

1 (1) Serena Williams(US) 8,625
2 (3) Agnieszka Radwanska(POL) 5,775
3 (2) Angelique Kerber(GER) 5,740
4 (4) Garbine Muguruza Blanco(ESP) 4,831
5 (5) Victoria Azarenka(BLR) 4,350
6 (6) Simona Halep(ROM) 3,763
7 (7) Petra Kvitova(CZE) 3,763
8 (8) Roberta Vinci(ITA) 3,595
9 (9) Maria Sharapova(RUS) 3,432
10 (10) Belinda Bencic(SUI) 3,340
11 (11) Carla Suarez Navarro(ESP) 3,160
12 (12) Flavia Pennetta(Italy) 3,033
13 (13) Svetlana Kuznetsova(Russia) 3,010
14 (14) Venus Williams(U.S.) 2,941
15 (15) Lucie Safarova(CZE) 2,768
16 (16) Elina Svitolina(UKR) 2,750
17 (17) Timea Bacsinszky(SUI) 2,735
18 (18) Karolina Pliskova(CZE) 2,590
19 (19) Ana Ivanovic(SRB) 2,531
20 (20) Sara Errani(ITA) 2,505

Digest

SOCCER

Former FIFA exec enters guilty plea

Former FIFA vice-president Alfredo Hawit on Monday entered a plea of guilty to four criminal charges, including racketeering and wire fraud conspiracy, in connection with the massive corruption scandal that has rocked the soccer world, US court officials said.

Hawit, who is from Honduras and also served as CONCACAF president, appeared at a hearing in a Brooklyn court where, in addition to his guilty pleas, he agreed to forfeit nearly \$1 million.

The 64-year old pleaded guilty to one count of racketeering conspiracy, two counts of wire fraud conspiracy and one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice, according to officials.

US raises prospect of Olympic boycott

The United States women’s soccer team might boycott the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro if demands to be paid the same as their male counterparts are not met, World Cup winner Becky Sauerbrunn said on Monday.

Sauerbrunn, a member of Team USA that lifted the World Cup in Canada last year and a gold medal champion from the 2012 London Olympics, told ESPN that players will not rule out the possibility of a boycott.

The 30-year-old defender said a boycott will be discussed by the team if the players believe no progress on the increasingly acrimonious dispute had been made.

BOXING

Russian champion banned for doping

The European Boxing Union (EBU) on Monday confirmed a two-year ban for light heavyweight champion Igor Mikhalkin — the latest Russian to test positive for the banned substance meldonium.

Mikhailin, who fights out of Germany, tested positive for the banned drug when he won a unanimous points victory over Frenchman Patrick Bois on March 12 in the third and latest defence of the title he first won in 2014.

Meldonium, a recent addition to the WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) list of banned substances, has snared dozens of Russian athletes, including tennis icon Maria Sharapova.

SWIMMING

Japanese ace has warning for Phelps

Japan swimming sensation Kosuke Hagino on Monday fired a warning shot at his American idols Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte by backing himself for Olympic glory in Rio in August.

The 21-year-old will compete in the 200 and 400m individual medleys, the 200 freestyle and the 4x200m freestyle relay after setting alight last week’s national championships, which served as Japan’s Olympic trials.

“I will obviously be aiming to win gold,” Hagino said after being named to Japan’s 34-strong swim team for Rio including 21 set to make their Olympic debut.

ATHLETICS

Kenya vows to beat deadline

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said on Monday he will give priority to passing a new anti-doping law before a deadline to ensure the African track giants compete at the Rio Olympics.

The second World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) deadline for Kenya to tighten its anti-doping law and provide funding for a proposed anti-doping agency expired last week, with lawmakers having failed to pass a bill criminalizing sports doping.

A new WADA deadline of May 2 has been given. IAAF president Sebastian Coe has threatened to ban Kenya from the Rio Games.

SPORTS

中國日報 CHINA DAILY » CHINADAILY.COM.CN/SPORTS

SOCCER

Barca braced to reboot offense

Enrique's squad looks to end skid at Atletico Madrid

By REUTERS in Madrid

Barcelona can redress its stuttering domestic form by sealing its passage to the Champions League semifinals when it visits Atletico Madrid on Wednesday.

A treble winner last season, Barca is in its worst run of form in La Liga since coach Luis Enrique took charge in August 2014, losing its last two games to Real Madrid and Real Sociedad and drawing with Villarreal.

Although those results have seen its La Liga lead over second-place Atletico cut to three points, Barca is still on track to become the first Spanish team to win the treble two years in a row, with the King's Cup final against Sevilla coming up next month.

Thanks to Luis Suarez's double canceling Fernando Torres' opener, the visitor takes a 2-1 lead from the first leg into the return match at Vicente Calderon stadium.

"There's no time for apologies or excuses; we need results. It's not the time to

“It's not the time to sink low and think that we're on a horrible run.”

Luis Enrique, Barcelona coach



sink low and think that we're on a horrible run," said Enrique. "There are reasons to be optimistic ... although the results have not been what we want."

Thomas Vermaelen is out and Rafinha doubtful due to injury but Barca top scorer Suarez returns after the Uruguayan served a suspension.

Enrique is also likely to recall Jordi Alba, Andres Iniesta and Ivan Rakitic after starting them on the bench in a 1-0 loss to Sociedad on the weekend.

The plan to rest those players ahead of the trip to Madrid backfired when 18-year-old Mikel Oiarzabal headed Sociedad in front in the fifth minute and Barca struggled to break down the opposition for the remainder of the game.

The loss also amplified Barca's suddenly punchless offense.

Despite having seven shots, Lionel Messi could not find a way through and the Argentine superstar has now gone 362 minutes without scoring, his longest drought with Barca since 2011.

Atletico is dreaming of a repeat of its 2014 quarterfinal second leg against Barca when an early goal by Koke delivered a 1-0 win and 2-1 aggregate victory.

"The stadium will be buzzing; I'm sure it's going to be a great night," said midfielder Koke. "The other day we couldn't win because of circumstances but at home we're going to turn it around."

Atletico defenders Jose Gimenez and Stefan Savic are doubtful while Tiago Mendes is definitely out and Torres is suspended.

On the tube: CCTV 5, PPTV, QQ.com, Lesports, Sina. Thursday, April 14, 02:45 am (Beijing time)

Neymar's hefty numbers revealed

Barcelona star Neymar will make a minimum \$52.3 million from his five-year contract with the European champion, the Football Leaks website revealed on Monday.

The Brazilian's bonus-laden deal also commits the 24-year-old to learning the local Catalan language. A complicated web of contracts negotiated to complete Neymar's signing from Santos in 2013 has landed Barcelona, the player and his father in trouble with the Spanish and Brazilian authorities over accusations of tax fraud.



Neymar

Controversy over the transfer led Barca to already make certain figures from Neymar's playing contract public in a bid for transparency in 2014.

A copy of the full contract shows Barca will have to make up the difference should the player not make at least \$52.3 million between his signing bonus, salary and a series of performance related bonuses.

Barca paid an initial signing-on fee of \$11 million on top of a basic salary of \$6.5 million a season.

A treble of Champions League, La Liga and Copa del Rey titles last season netted Neymar a \$2.3 million bonus, while he will earn \$800,000 if he unseats teammate Lionel Messi for the Ballon d'Or.

AFP



Tough road ahead

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Secretary-General Windsor John holds the China name card during the draw for the Asian qualifying final round of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday. The draw for the final round was as follows (latest FIFA rankings in brackets): **Group A:** Iran (42nd), South Korea (56th), Uzbekistan (66th), China (81st), Qatar (83rd), Syria (110th) **Group B:** Australia (50th), Japan (57th), Saudi Arabia (60th), United Arab Emirates (68th), Iraq (105th), Thailand (119th). The six teams in each group will play home-and-away under a round-robin format. The winner and runner-up of each group will qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia finals while the third-place team in each group will advance to the Asian Playoff Round. The winner of the Asian Playoff Round will take on the side that finishes fourth in the fifth round of the CONCACAF qualifiers in a two-legged inter-confederation playoff for a spot in the global finals. VINCENT THIAN / AP

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Mareike Muller
Vice General Manager

Park Avenue ID:38352
Bedrooms 2 | Bathrooms 2 | Size: 150sqm | Monthly Rental ¥19,000

Boasting a big balcony overseeing an enchanting view, this low floor apartment located in the livable Chaoyang Park area welcomes you with its spacious and bright living room, 2 cosy bedrooms, 2 modernly-equipped bathrooms as well as a fully-furnished tidy kitchen, offering you a decent and comfortable urban life with enjoyable sunlight.

APARTMENTS FOR RENT IN BEIJING

Centrium Residence - 瑞安君汇
• ID: 40972 210sqm, 3Br. 2Ba. ¥35,000
• middle floor, good sunlight, floor heating

Genetime Int'l Center - 通用国际中心
• ID: 05213 343sqm, 4Br. 3Ba. ¥35,000
• spacious living room, open kitchen

Global Trade Mansion - 世贸国际公寓
• ID: 08676 265sqm, 3Br. 2Ba. ¥30,000
• high floor, garden view, open kitchen

Sanlitun SOHO - 三里屯SOHO
• ID: 04160 209sqm, 3+1Br. 3Ba. ¥32,000
• middle floor, garden view, good sunlight

Four Seasons - 四季世家
• ID: 40456 200sqm, 2Br. 2Ba. ¥48,000
• high floor, garden view, floor heating

Central Park (III) - 新城国际
• ID: 01796 280sqm, 4Br. 3Ba. ¥48,000
• high floor, big balcony, garden view

Upper East Side - 阳光上东
• ID: 13167 239sqm, 3Br. 3Ba. ¥30,000
• middle floor, big balcony, floor heating

Beijing SOHO Residences - SOHO北京公馆
• ID: 39501 310sqm, 3Br. 2Ba. ¥38,000
• spacious living room, open kitchen

Shimao Int'l Center - 世茂国际中心
• ID: 10515 80sqm, Studio. 1Ba. ¥13,000
• high floor, big balcony, floor heating

Landmark Palace - 奥马花园
• ID: 04884 300sqm, 3Br. 2Ba. ¥55,000
• high floor, big terrace, lake view

VILLAS FOR RENT IN BEIJING

Lane Bridge Villa - 长岛湖桥
• ID: 20187 375sqm, 4Br. 4Ba. ¥38,000
• big garden and balcony, high ceiling

Grand Hills(A) - 大湖山庄
• ID: 09058 650sqm, 5+1Br. 6Ba. ¥80,000
• detached, big balcony and garden

Yosemite(C10) - 伏山美地
• ID: 04816 367sqm, 4Br. 4Ba. ¥43,000
• townhouse, big garden, high ceiling living room

Beijing Riviera(III, B) - 香江花园
• ID: 01413 406sqm, 4Br. 4Ba. ¥50,000
• detached, big garden, nice balcony

Quan Fa Garden - 泉发别墅
• ID: 40785 800sqm, 6Br. 4Ba. ¥43,000
• detached, big garden, floor heating

Le Leman Lake Villa(E) - 莱蒙湖
• ID: 08726 315sqm, 3Br. 2Ba. ¥26,000
• townhouse, big garden, big terrace

Rits Garden(C) - 丽嘉花园
• ID: 00476 650sqm, 6Br. 6Ba. ¥48,000
• detached, spacious living room, floor heating

Beijing Eurovillage - 欧陆苑
• ID: 00533 280sqm, 4Br. 3Ba. ¥30,000
• detached, big garden

River Garden Villa(F) - 裕景花园
• ID: 08039 350sqm, 4Br. 3Ba. ¥45,000
• detached, big garden, sunroom

Rose and Ginkgo(I) - 龙湖别墅
• ID: 21617 410sqm, 4Br. 3Ba. ¥35,000
• big garden, floor heating

COURTYARDS FOR RENT IN BEIJING

Qianmen Courtyard
• ID: 41530 350sqm, 4Br. 4Ba. ¥60,000
• big yard, good sunlight

Beixinqiao Courtyard
• ID: 03338 285sqm, 3Br. 3Ba. ¥50,000
• nice terrace, floor heating

Beixinqiao Courtyard
• ID: 40647 400sqm, 4Br. 3Ba. ¥100,000
• big yard, suitable for commercial use

Qianmen Courtyard
• ID: 05545 300sqm, 5Br. 2Ba. ¥50,000
• big yard, classical style

Dongcheng Courtyard
• ID: 41385 230sqm, 4Br. 2Ba. ¥30,000
• beautiful yard, two-storey

APARTMENTS	Fortune Plaza	Sanlitun Area	Lufthansa Area	Chaoyang Park Area	Lido Area		VILLAS	Lane Bridge Villa	Dragon Bay Villa
CBD Area		Guangcai Int'l Apartment	Beijing SOHO Residences	Beijing Golf Palace	Upper East Side				
Central Park							Beijing Riviera		
1Br. 86sqm ¥15,000	2Br. 138sqm ¥15,000	3Br. 217sqm ¥23,000	2Br. 150sqm ¥23,000	3Br. 270sqm ¥33,000	2Br. 131sqm ¥12,000	3Br. 170sqm ¥22,000	4BrA.402sqm ¥45,000	4Br. 370sqm ¥38,000	4Br. 370sqm ¥35,000
2Br. 138sqm ¥18,000	3Br. 205sqm ¥22,000	4Br. 270sqm ¥30,000	2+1Br.200sqm ¥27,000	4Br. 310sqm ¥54,000	2Br. 150sqm ¥15,000	4Br. 220sqm ¥24,000	4BrB.405sqm ¥45,000	6Br. 430sqm ¥48,000	4Br. 500sqm ¥50,000
3Br. 190sqm ¥26,000	3Br. 180sqm ¥20,000	5Br. 500sqm ¥60,000	2+1Br.270sqm ¥33,000	4Br. 310sqm ¥54,000	3Br. 200sqm ¥20,000	4Br. 230sqm ¥25,000	4BrC.294sqm ¥40,000		Dynasty Garden
4Br. 220sqm ¥40,000	3Br. 256sqm ¥25,000		3+1Br.310sqm ¥40,000	3Br. 180sqm ¥23,000	3+1Br.220sqm ¥20,000	4Br. 350sqm ¥40,000	4BrD.251sqm ¥35,000		4Br. 412sqm ¥32,000
4Br. 286sqm ¥45,000		Sanlitun SOHO	Four Seasons	3Br. 220sqm ¥28,000	4Br. 280sqm ¥28,000		River Garden Villa		4Br. 600sqm ¥35,000
4Br. 391sqm ¥65,000		1Br. 115sqm ¥13,000	2+1Br.256sqm ¥44,000	4Br. 370sqm ¥45,000	4Br. 325sqm ¥45,000		3BrA.230sqm ¥25,000		Rits Garden
CBD Private Castle		2Br. 160sqm ¥19,000	3Br. 321sqm ¥54,000	Park Avenue	Andersen Garden		4BrB.300sqm ¥33,000		4Br. 410sqm ¥40,000
2Br. 150sqm ¥15,000		3Br. 209sqm ¥28,000	United Apartment	3Br. 173sqm ¥22,000	2Br. 150sqm ¥18,000		4BrC.300sqm ¥35,000		4Br. 500sqm ¥45,000
3Br. 170sqm ¥16,000		3+1Br.250sqm ¥32,000	2Br. 166sqm ¥17,000	3Br. 250sqm ¥26,000	3Br. 234sqm ¥26,000		4BrE.400sqm ¥45,000		
3Br. 230sqm ¥25,000		Shimao Int'l Center	3Br. 199sqm ¥20,000	4Br. 370sqm ¥48,000	4Br. 288sqm ¥33,000		Beijing Eurovillage		
		Studio 78sqm ¥13,000	3+1Br.230sqm ¥22,000	Park Apartment	Lido Serenity City		4Br. 200sqm ¥25,000		
		1Br. 108sqm ¥15,000		3+1Br.265sqm ¥30,000	2Br. 110sqm ¥12,000		5Br. 500sqm ¥33,000		
		2Br. 143sqm ¥20,000							