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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S DESK

02 Ironing Out the Red Carpet

THIS WEEK

COVER STORY

12 Charting a Comeback
More convenience for inbound travelers

16 Global Shapers
Young people are at the heart of solution-building

OPINION

20 Why China Still Has Room to Grow
“Peak China” is a distorted and misleading narrative

Cover Photo: Visitors at the Jinshanling Great Wall scenic area in Chengde, Hebei Province, in October 2023 (VCG)

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22 Peace Is of Paramount Importance

The pursuit of peace is embedded in Chinese culture

23 Calculated Moves

Inside Israel's current balancing act

24 The Trappings of Fate?

Why the Thucydides Trap is not inevitable

25 Service for a Better World

Reconciliation is an option; conflict is not

26 The Rise of the Intelligent Economy

AI underpins China's new quality productive forces

FEATURES

28 Cooperative Containment

Japan's “new era” of alliance with Washington

30 Building Up Synergy

Historic FTA turns 10

34 Protecting the Yellow River

Restoring ecosystems and saving water in nation's north

36 Parks for Pleasure

Tranquility in as little as 20 minutes

38 Saying ‘I Do’ to Simplicity

Smaller, intimate weddings gain popularity

40 Facing the Future

Avatars in media and e-commerce

42 Spice Up Your Life

Beijing hosts a fiesta of flavors from near and far

CULTURE

46 Feathered Festivities

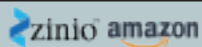
Celebrating the wildlife of China's capital city

FORUM

48 Working Weekends to Pay for Holidays



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Ironing Out the Red Carpet

When international travelers began arriving in China in early 2023 following a three-year COVID-19 hiatus, many may have found that routine daily tasks posed challenges. Because they were more at ease with cash and credit cards and were unfamiliar with Chinese apps, they experienced difficulties performing tasks such as paying with QR codes and booking museum tickets online.

But China is making efforts to address the inconveniences international visitors may face during their stay. The new initiatives are making travel around China, and within its cities, simpler and more convenient.

Alipay and Weixin Pay, China's two major digital payment services, now allow users to link international credit cards, including Visa and Mastercard. This feature makes it possible for visitors to make mobile payments in a similar way to locals. At the same time, China is diversifying its means of payment to provide tailored services for visitors from abroad. E-wallets popular in other countries can now be used in China; an increasing number of businesses are upgrading their payment systems to begin accepting international credit cards; and cash exchange services are being made more accessible.

While the major ride-hailing app Didi

Chuxing has a user-friendly English interface, museums and other attractions have been called on to provide multilingual booking services on their websites. They are also encouraged to keep in-person ticketing services in place.

In December last year, China introduced a trial visa-free policy for visitors from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia. Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg were added to the list in March this year.

In December 2023, the Central Economic Work Conference, which outlined steps the government will take to steer the country's economy toward greater efficiency and higher quality in 2024, reiterated the call for expanding high-standard opening up. It was promised at this conference that Chinese authorities will work to resolve difficulties people from other countries may encounter when they come to China for business, studies and sightseeing.

This promise is being honored and China is enthusiastically welcoming visitors from all over of the world. With continued efforts from the government as well as business and cultural sectors, the China travel experience will only become more enjoyable over the coming months. **BR**



WRITE TO US

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STRATEGIC SUPPORT

Chinese President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), presents a flag to the information support force of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) at its establishment ceremony in Beijing on April 19.

Xi said that the information support force is a new, strategic branch of the military and a key pillar in coordinating the construction and application of the network information system.

With this round of reform, the PLA now features a new system of services including the army, the navy, the air force and the rocket force, and units including the aerospace force, the cyberspace force, the information support force and the joint logistic support force, under the leadership and command of the CMC.



Kite Kaleidoscope

A dazzling array of colorful kites fills the sky at the 41st International Kite Festival in Weifang, Shandong Province, on April 20. The annual kite carnival kicked off on the same day, featuring activities such as kite-flying competitions and art performances.

Nuclear Power Generation

Nuclear power generation on the Chinese mainland reached 440,000 gigawatt-hours in 2023, accounting for nearly 5 percent of total national electricity output, according to the China Atomic Energy Authority on April 23.

This achievement is equivalent to saving 130 million tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 350 million tons.

As of late 2023, the Chinese mainland featured 55 operational nuclear power units and 36 approved or under-construction nuclear power units, with a total installed capacity of 57 gigawatts

and 44 gigawatts, respectively.

China has established a self-reliant and comprehensive nuclear industry chain system, ensuring a secure and stable supply of nuclear fuel. China has also developed expertise in engineering, construction and operation, laying a solid foundation for the high-quality development of nuclear energy, the authority said.

According to the World Association of Nuclear Operators comprehensive index, China's nuclear power operation safety performance has continuously ranked among the world's best for several years.

The world's first fourth-generation high-temperature gas-cooled reactor, developed

by China, has been put into commercial operation, with steady progress in the construction of small modular reactors and fast reactors. Breakthroughs continue to be made in innovative research and the development of nuclear fusion technology.

Atomic Energy Law

Chinese lawmakers on April 23 started deliberating a draft atomic energy law to promote the sound and sustainable development of the atomic energy industry.

The draft was submitted to a session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, for a first reading.

Comprising 53 articles across eight chapters, the draft clarifies the principles and requirements for the peaceful development and utilization of atomic energy.

It also makes stipulations on promoting the research and development, as well as the utilization, of atomic energy, strengthening safety oversight and management, and improving international cooperation.

The draft law is expected to provide a legal guarantee for advancing sci-tech progress in the field, enhancing the industry's competitive edge, and increasing China's composite national strength.

Youth Health

Obesity, myopia and mental illness have surpassed infectious diseases as some of the top health concerns facing Chinese children and adolescents over the past three decades, as reported in a review of national surveys and data published on April 19.

China has 236 million people between the ages of 6 and 19. The overall health condition of young people in the world's second-most populous nation has significantly improved. From 1990 to 2019, the mortality rate among people aged 5 to 19 had dropped from about 77.6 to 27.8 per 100,000 people, read the study published online by medical journal *The Lancet*.

In 1990, contagious diseases, along with incidents like traffic accidents and drowning, were among the leading causes of death for young people in China.

While the threat of infectious illnesses has been effectively tackled and injuries remain a serious hazard, the report said that new health burdens characterized by excess body fat, poor vision and mental health issues have

emerged, according to the study led by researchers from the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health at Peking University's School of Public Health.

From 1995 to 2019, the prevalence of overweight and obese youth aged 7 to 18 jumped from 5 to 24.2 percent, and the rate of poor vision—including myopia—rose from 41.2 to 60.7 percent.

Mental health issues are also increasingly prominent, but access to professional psychological counseling and treatment has remained insufficient partly due to a lack of services as well as long-standing stigmas associated with such disorders.

Meanwhile, as youth engage in sexual activity at younger ages, increasing their risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases, the study found that adolescents are in urgent need of better sexual and reproductive health education.

The study proposed a raft of measures highlighting the coordination of multiple government departments, families, schools and youth themselves to address emerging health challenges.

Free Heart Surgeries

A program initiated by the Chinese Red Cross Foundation

(CRCF) will provide free surgeries for 1,056 children from Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region with congenital heart diseases (CHDs), Xinhua News Agency reported on April 20.

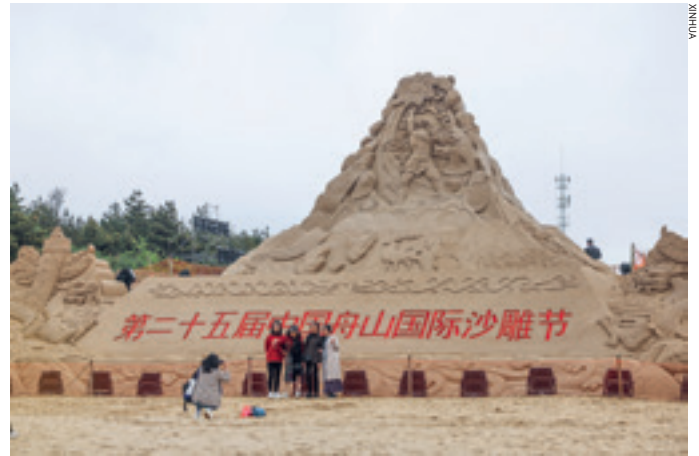
The CRCF, together with several hospitals in Shanghai, Beijing and the provinces of Henan and Shandong, dispatched six groups of medical experts to carry out CHD screening for children in 14 locations in Xinjiang between March 24 and April 18.

A total of 1,056 child patients were deemed suitable for surgery and met the eligibility criteria for receiving charity funds provided by the CRCF.

Ning Bin, Vice Director of the Central Hospital Affiliated to Shandong First Medical University, participated in the program and said the hospital promptly started the treatment process, with 19 young patients arriving in Shandong to undergo surgery free of charge.

Reading Survey

A survey released on April 23 showed that the overall reading rate among Chinese adults stood at 81.9 percent in 2023, marking a slight increase from the 2022 number. The overall reading rate among Chinese minors had in-



Sculpting Memories

Tourists pose for photos in front of a massive sand sculpture at the Nansha scenic area in Zhoushan, Zhejiang Province, on April 22. The sand art creations were made for the 25th Zhoushan International Sand Sculpture Festival and will be on display from May to February 2025. The sculptures are inspired by Chinese dragon culture and *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, an ancient Chinese literary work.

creased to 86.2 percent, a rise of 2 percentage points from 2022.

However, there was a decrease in the number of people reading newspapers or magazines, whereas the trend of digital reading, such as on computers, mobile phones or other handheld devices, continued to grow. Approximately 80.3 percent of those surveyed in 2023 reported

having experience with digital reading, a 0.2-percentage-point increase from the previous year.

It also revealed that about one third of both adults and minors had listened to audiobooks in 2023.

The survey, the 21st of its kind, was conducted by the Chinese Academy of Press and Publication.



Soaring Into the Future

A visitor experiences a virtual reality parachute during a media preview of an aerospace exhibition in Wuhan, Hubei Province, on April 23. The exhibition, showcasing China's aerospace industry, opened to the public on April 24.

Capital Market Cooperation

The China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) announced measures to boost cooperation between the capital markets of the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) on April 19.

The scope of eligible exchange-traded funds (ETFs) under the Shanghai-Hong Kong and Shenzhen-Hong Kong stock connect schemes will be expanded to improve the schemes and support Hong Kong SAR's efforts to strengthen its status as an international financial center, according to the CSRC.

Real estate investment trusts (REITs) will be incorporated into the schemes and the inclusion of yuan-denominated securities in southbound stock connect scheme trading will be supported, the regulator said. Southbound stock connect allows qualified mainland investors to trade eligible shares listed in Hong Kong.

The CSRC will also enhance the mutual recognition of funds and support the listing of leading mainland companies in the Hong Kong market.

The regulator said it will work with the Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong SAR and other related parties to promote the early and smooth implementation of the new measures.

Power Generation

Power generation of China's major electricity production enterprises went up 2.8 percent year on year in March, official data showed.

Total power output of these firms reached 747.7 billion kilowatt-hours that month, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

A breakdown of the data revealed that the output of solar power increased 15.8 percent year on year, while that of wind power rose 16.8 percent.

The output of thermal power and hydropower climbed

0.5 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively, on a yearly basis, according to the NBS.

Industrial Capacity

China's industrial capacity utilization rate came in at 73.6 percent in the first quarter (Q1) of 2024, down 0.7 percentage points from the same period last year, data released by the NBS showed.

Industrial capacity utilization refers to the ratio of actual output to production capacity. The government's statistical authorities release utilization rate data based on surveys covering around 110,000 enterprises nationwide. The data are released on a quarterly basis.

Among three major industry classifications, the mining sector's utilization rate came in at 75 percent and the rate for the manufacturing sector stood at 73.8 percent. The utilization rate of the sector responsible for the production and supply of electricity, heat, gas and water stood at 71.2 percent, according to the data.

In terms of major industries, coal mining and beneficiation, food manufacturing and textiles reported utilization rates of 71.6 percent, 69.1 percent and 78 percent, respectively.

Coal beneficiation is a process through which the combustion attribute of the coal is enhanced by separating the inorganic impurities (volatile matter or ash) from raw coal.

Other sectors, including general equipment manufacturing, automotive manufacturing, as well as computers, information and other electronic equipment, recorded rates of 78.2 percent, 64.9 percent, and 74.7 percent, respectively.

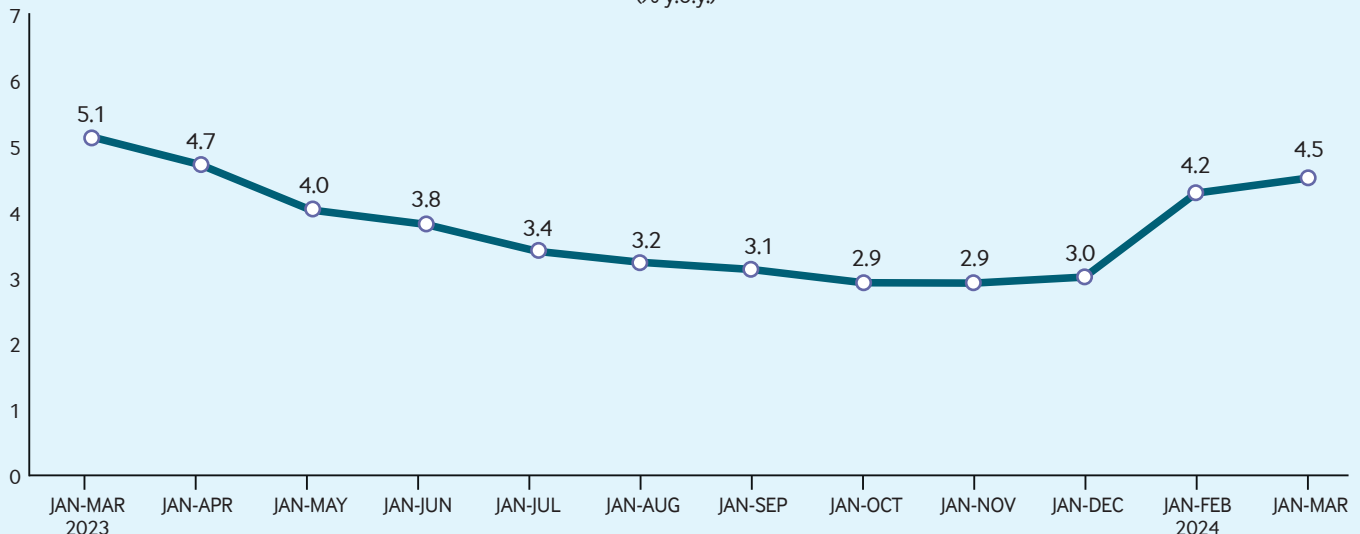
Auto Exports

Nationwide automobile exports jumped 33.2 percent year on year in Q1 of 2024, industry data showed.

China exported over 1.32 million vehicles during the period, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

NUMBERS

Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China
(% y.o.y.)



Specifically, some 307,000 new-energy vehicles (NEV) were exported, up 23.8 percent year on year. In China, NEVs refer to vehicles completely or mainly driven by new-energy sources, including battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and fuel cell vehicles.

In March alone, China's automobile exports rose 37.9 percent from the same period last year, and its NEV exports soared 59.4 percent, the data further showed.

Foreign-Invested Firms

The number of newly established foreign-invested firms in China hit 12,000 in Q1 of this year, up 20.7 percent year on year, the Ministry of Commerce said on April 19.

In terms of the structure of foreign direct investment (FDI), the country's hi-tech manufacturing sector attracted 12.5 percent of the capital inflow in Q1, up 2.2 percentage points

compared to that in the same period last year.

"FDI to service sectors that are closely related to people's lives also saw quick growth," said Vice Minister of Commerce Guo Tingting at a press conference in Beijing.

In Q1, paid-in FDI in China stood at 301.67 billion yuan (\$41.6 billion), remaining at a high level, Guo added.

Bond Holdings

Foreign investors saw a net increase of \$41.6 billion in their holdings of China's domestic bonds in Q1 of 2024, official data showed on April 18.

This figure is notably higher than the total net increase of \$23 billion registered in 2023.

As of late March, more than 1,100 overseas institutions from over 70 countries and regions had entered the domestic bond market. Their bond holdings exceeded \$570 billion, accounting for around 2.6 percent of the total domestic bonds in custody, up 0.2 percentage points from

the end of 2023.

Overseas investment in the domestic bond market has sustained reasonable structure and stable returns, Wang Chungying, deputy head of and spokesperson for the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, told a press conference. Overseas central banks and financial institutions have increased their investments in treasury bonds, policy financial bonds, and other medium-to long-term bonds.

Looking to the future, Wang said she expected overseas institutions' investment in domestic bonds to sustain a steady growth momentum backed by a sound macroeconomic environment, a stable renminbi exchange rate, and an increase in the use of renminbi in cross-border transactions.

Cruise Ship

China's second domestically built large cruise ship entered a shipyard in Shanghai on April 20 for final assembly.

This signifies that the country

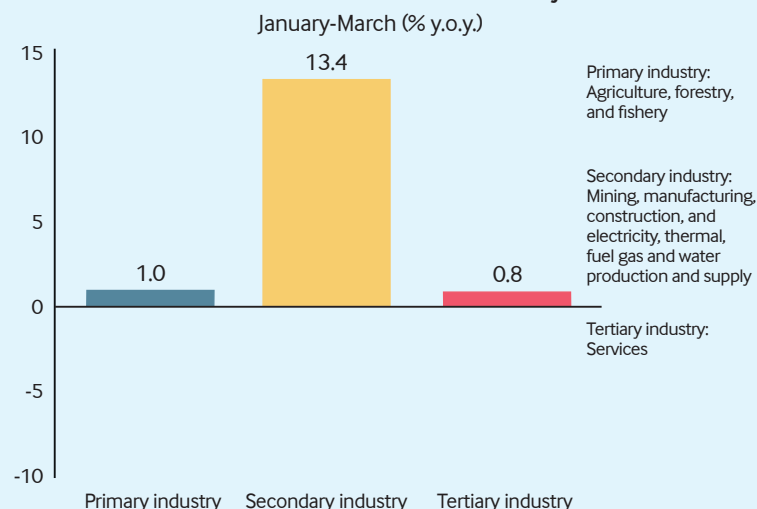
has developed the capability to engage in the bulk production of cruise ships, said Chen Jianwei, head of the cruise ship project of Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of China State Shipbuilding Co. Ltd.

He added that the cruise ship is expected to leave the dock by March 2026, and be delivered to the customer by late 2026.

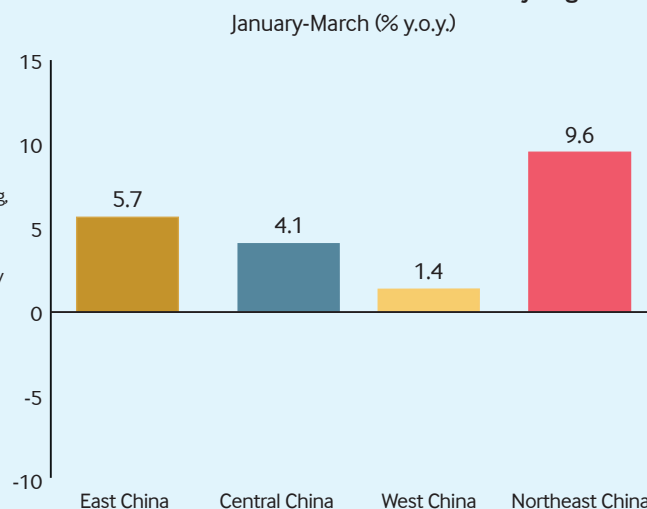
Compared to the country's first domestically built large cruise ship, the *Adora Magic City*, the new ship boasts a larger size, with a total tonnage of 141,900, a length of 341 meters, a width of 37.2 meters, and features 2,144 cabins.

The construction of the cruise ships has gathered 500 suppliers from around the world, establishing a robust cruise ship supply chain and laying a solid foundation for the mass production of large cruise vessels, according to Chen Gang, General Manager of Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co. Ltd.

Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Sector



Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Region



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

THIS WEEK WORLD



HUNGARY

Cyclists participate in the I Bike Budapest cycle parade to celebrate Earth Day on April 20



UNITED NATIONS

U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Robert Wood (front left) votes against a draft resolution that recommends to the 193-member UN General Assembly that "the State of Palestine be admitted to membership of the United Nations" at the UN headquarters in New York City on April 18



REPUBLIC OF KOREA

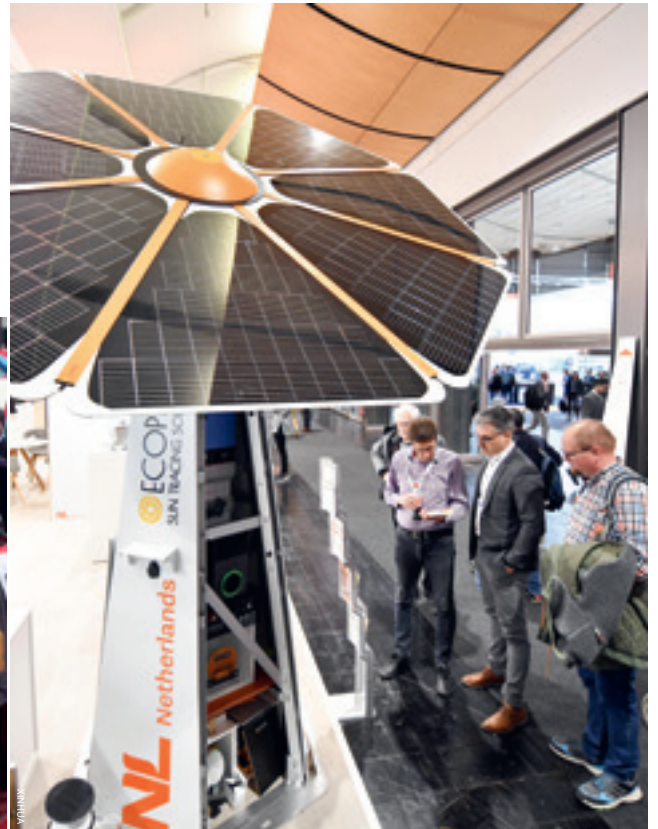
Readers enjoy the sunshine in Seoul Plaza on April 21. The Seoul Outdoor Library opened to the public on April 18





KENYA

President William Ruto (first left, front) and Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua (third left, front) attend the farewell service of defense forces general Francis Ogolla at Nyayo National Stadium in Nairobi on April 20. Ten senior commanders were killed in a helicopter crash in the country's northwest on April 18



GERMANY

Visitors learn about photovoltaic equipment at the Hannover Messe 2024 trade fair on April 23. This year's fair, which ran from April 22 to 26, focused on carbon-neutral production and hydrogen fuel cells



THE PHILIPPINES

At least 19 vehicles were destroyed in a fire in the parking area of Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 in Pasay City on April 22



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

SHENZHOU-18 CREW

Chinese astronauts **Ye Guangfu** (center), **Li Cong** (right) and **Li Guangsu** set out on a new crewed spaceflight mission on April 25, with Ye as commander.

On that day, the *Shenzhou-18* spaceship was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu Province. The three astronauts will perform in-orbit space science and application tests and experiments, as well as multiple space walks during their six-month stay in the country's space station.

Ye was a crew member of the *Shenzhou-13* mission from October 2021 to April 2022. Born in Sichuan Province in 1980, he was once an air force pilot. Li Cong and Li Guangsu are both newcomers to space.

During the mission, the astronauts will carry out the country's first in-orbit aquatic ecological research project, aiming to make a breakthrough in the cultivation of vertebrates in space.



Caught on Camera

Gmw.cn

April 17

While taking a moment to relax in a hot spring, a woman, identified as Tingting, was horrified to discover she was being filmed the whole time. It was later revealed that the hot spring resort Tingting visited has the habit of posting livestreams of its customers without their knowledge.

Livestream videos provide businesses with a unique opportunity to showcase their services in real time, offering an authentic and immersive experience to potential customers. However, these videos also allow businesses to record and distribute footage of their cus-

tomers, oftentimes without their knowledge or consent, and may therefore constitute a violation of portrait rights.

Despite the many legal risks involved, a lot of businesses still choose to pursue their secretive livestreaming activities for the simple reason that they think they will never get into trouble. The fact that the algorithms of various platforms favor this type of content also encourages the use of hidden cameras.

To address this issue, video sharing platforms should create clearer rules with regard to how live broadcasts should be properly set up. Consumers should also keep an eye out for unannounced filming and always be prepared to defend themselves when such occasion arises.



A Bygone Era of Film

China Newsweek

April 15

American film *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire*, the latest sequel in the MonsterVerse franchise, arrived in China on March 29, only to receive a mere 6.8 score on Chinese review site Douban. Other Hollywood titles that were released during the same period, including *Dune: Part II* and *Kung Fu Panda 4*, also underperformed in the Chinese box office. All of these box office blues seem to suggest that the Chinese audience is losing interest in Hollywood adventures and heroes.

“It's incredible to see all these artifacts from 2,500 years ago. It's a great opportunity to unify the two nations through art.”

John Maa, a local resident, during a visit to an exhibition displaying artifacts from China's Bronze Age, which flourished 3,000 years ago, at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, the U.S., which runs from April 19 to July 22

“The geologic atlas of the moon is of great significance for studying the evolution of the moon, selecting the site for a future lunar research station and utilizing lunar resources.”

Ouyang Ziyuan, a well-known lunar scientist and editor in chief of the world's first complete high-definition lunar geologic atlas, commenting on its importance after its release on April 21

For decades, Hollywood blockbusters have dominated China's box office sales. In 1994, Warner Bros' *The Fugitive* became the first major American film to be screened in China. Despite its extremely short release, which lasted for only a week, and deeply divided opinions among Chinese viewers as to whether China should import Hollywood films, the film was a runaway hit with a colossal earning totaling 25.8 million yuan (\$3 million at the exchange rate at that time).

The year that followed saw a slew of Hollywood movies, including *The Lion King*, *Toy Story*, *Forrest Gump*, *Speed* and *Jumanji*, enter the Chinese film market. In 1998, *Titanic* became one of the largest hits in the history of Chinese box office, taking up a quarter of the year's total domestic ticket sales. Another record-breaking Hollywood phenomenon arrived in 2010 with the debut of *Avatar* in China. These American mega-hits have introduced Chinese filmmakers to a highly systemized and industrialized approach to film production.

Unlike what many people expected, the import of Hollywood classics has not uprooted the Chinese film industry. Instead, the country's cinematic landscape has evolved at such a speed that it no longer feels threatened by Hollywood, and it is still growing at an astounding pace to become a new powerhouse within the global film market.

Sherlock Ohms

Workers' Daily
April 19

While the Internet is well stocked with glamorous fashion and lifestyle influencers, an electrician named Wang Jiansheng is breaking the mold by offering something completely different. Nicknamed "the Sherlock Holmes of electricians," Wang has earned 7.71 million followers on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, with videos about his everyday work, which mainly concerns electrical inspections.

Unlike many other online celebrities, Wang does not have a production team and therefore has to do the filming, the

editing and the voiceover all by himself. It takes him seven to eight hours to produce a single video and many hours more to track its performance and reply to online comments.

His meticulous attention to the task has turned videos that could be extremely boring into suspenseful and informative detective stories in which viewers follow Wang into a myriad of electrical problems.

Although it is hard to copy Wang's success story, those who aspire to become influencers can still take away a valuable lesson: a wholehearted commitment to one's chosen craft can go a long way, both in the real world and in the digital realm.

↓ FIRST CHINESE F1 DRIVER MAKES HOME DEBUT

Formula One (F1) driver **Zhou Guanyu** ended his maiden Chinese Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit with a 14th-place finish among 20 drivers on April 21.

Zhou is the first and only Chinese driver ever to race in the F1. He made history when he became the first ever local driver to race in the Chinese Grand Prix, which returned to the F1 calendar this year for the first time since 2019.

Born in Shanghai in May 1999, Zhou started go-karting when he was 8 years old. Joining F1 in 2022, Zhou won that year's Best Rookie Award, with a best finish of eighth place in that year's Canadian Grand Prix. He then achieved a best qualifying position of fifth at the 2023 Hungarian Grand Prix.



"China's commitment to high-quality development is very encouraging. I'm sure investment will continue in the future."

Bill Anderson, CEO of German healthcare and agribusiness giant Bayer AG, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, emphasizing China's role as a strategic pillar for the company's global business operations

"Inside books, we can find the most intense feelings, the most profound wisdom, the loftiest moral sentiments and the highest aspiration of human beings."

Teacher-turned-influencer **Dong Yuhui**, during an interview on the eve of World Book and Copyright Day, which falls on April 23



COVER STORY

CHARTING A COMEBACK

Visa-free policies and improved payment services fuel international influx

By Tao Zihui

During an interview with *Beijing Review*, Zhou Zhanfeng, who had just seen off a board member from a prominent German automaker and his family, who had traveled to China,

in Beijing, disclosed that the visitor had said the following about his first trip to China, “China is so different from what is portrayed in Western media. The Chinese people are friendly and this land is truly awe-inspiring!”

Zhou agreed, saying, “You have to come to China yourself to truly understand what it’s like here.”

As deputy general manager of CYTS International Travel Co. Ltd. and responsible for inbound tourism from North America, South America, and German-speaking European countries, Zhou underscored the importance of firsthand experience in understanding