

OPINION: FUTURE OF 5G P.24 | FEATURES: KEY NUCLEAR ARMS TREATY RENEWED P.30

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A DIFFERENT BALLGAME

Messaging apps become the lifestyle of millions

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Life on an App

It is sometimes jokingly said that you may skip a meal a day without any adverse effect but skip using your WeChat for an hour and you will feel distinctly unwell. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that the app is no longer only a fun tool but an essential part of life for millions.

Launched in January 2011, this messaging, social media and mobile payment app today has more than 1 billion individual users. People use it for everything, from applying for a business license to booking a hospital appointment to keeping up with family and friends, shopping and paying bills—activities that are part and parcel of our everyday life.

When it was first introduced, WeChat was only an app supporting voice, video, picture and text messages between two persons or among a group. But today it has become ubiquitous.

In the past, people carried their wallet and keys with them wherever they went; today, a smartphone with WeChat installed is all they need in daily life. Its functions like Moments and mini programs and the official WeChat accounts of government agencies and companies have made communication and public services accessible

and convenient like never before.

WeChat is also widely used by enterprises. Figures from Tencent show there are around 15 million WeChat official accounts, which enjoy 5 billion followers. Most businesses use their WeChat official accounts + Moments + WeChat groups as a standard marketing kit. This has immensely reduced advertising, marketing and communication costs, and in the background of the novel coronavirus disease, made operations faster, contactless and safe.

However, there are concerns about the downsides of WeChat, such as addiction among primary schoolchildren. Equally serious is the misuse of WeChat for fraud or instigating crimes. However, it has to be borne in mind that these fallouts are not really the fault of WeChat, but due to the misuse of the app.

If we learn to temper our use of messaging apps with prudence and pragmatism, we could be looking forward to yet new conveniences and experience in this decade with the rapid development of 5G technology and artificial intelligence. Ultimately, the choice is ours, whether to use WeChat or any other new invention, wisely or wantonly. **BR**



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A SHOT IN THE ARM

Government officials and business representatives take a group photo at a ceremony in Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) to hand over novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines made in the mainland to Macao SAR Health Bureau on February 6. Macao received 100,000 doses of inactivated vaccines that day, its first batch of COVID-19 vaccines, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center of Macao said.



Welcoming Spring

A folk activity in Beijing on February 2 to mark *Lichun*, literally the beginning of spring. Falling on the next day this year, it is the first solar term on the Chinese lunar calendar.

Less Flight Delay

The civil aviation sector will enhance its on-time performance, tackling the issue of flight delays, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), Xinhua News Agency reported on February 3.

In 2021, CAAC will strive to maintain an on-time performance rate of more than 80 percent for domestic passenger airlines, it said in its 2021 targets.

CAAC has also proposed an 85-percent target for the average on-time performance rate in major airports, with an annual passenger throughput of more than 10 million.

In addition to on-time

performance, CAAC will also improve smart civil aviation, flight safety, as well as operational efficiency and service quality.

In 2020, the on-time performance rate of flights reached 88.52 percent, 20 percentage points higher than the figure recorded by the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-15) period, CAAC statistics showed.

Panda Cubs

Ten panda cubs posed for a Chinese New Year photograph on the morning of February 3 at a breeding base in the city of Chengdu, Sichuan Province in southwest China.

The cubs, all born at the

China Giant Panda Protection and Research Center in 2020, were in the arms of their keepers whilst posing for the camera to convey their Chinese New Year greetings to the world.

Age-wise, the cubs averaged about 6 months, with the youngest roughly 4 months old.

"Our center successfully bred 25 cubs last year, and all were born after natural mating," Zhang Guiquan, an expert at the center, said.

In spite of the pandemic, experts at the center communicated with their overseas peers through cloud communication and four baby pandas were successfully born overseas last year.

Today, over 330 giant

pandas live in captivity at the center, accounting for more than half of the global giant panda population.

Green Zones

Beijing's green area has increased in the past five years, Xinhua News Agency reported on February 4.

Beijing added some 76,667 hectares of new forestation grounds during this period and 3,773 hectares of urban green zones. The forest coverage rate rose from 25 percent to 30.4 percent in plain areas, according to statistics released by the Beijing Gardening and Greening Bureau.

Beijing authorities stepped up their efforts to green the city through forestation projects, with 54,867 hectares of forests planted across bare land during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period. A total of 24,667 hectares of forests were established across important plain areas such as the Beijing Daxing International Airport and the city's eastern suburban district of Tongzhou.

The capital city additionally built more than 700 parks in the past five years, bringing the total number to 1,090.

Short Video Boom

The number of China's online short video users reached 873 million by the end of last year, surging by 100 million from March 2020 and accounting for 88 percent of the Internet-using population, a report on China's Internet development released on February 3 read.

The report, issued by the China Internet Network Information Center, notes the quality improvement of online video programs.

China's streaming platforms have been refining their business

models and continue to invest in short video content to bring audiences more quality content.

At the same time, short video platforms are presenting trial projects, such as mini dramas, before gradually landing in the field of long videos.

Ecological Jobs

Qinghai Province in northwest China, dubbed “the water tower of China,” has created 145,100 public posts in ecological conservation, authorities said on February 2.

The posts have been set up for protecting the grasslands, forests and wetlands of the province, home to the Sanjiangyuan (Three-River-Source) National Park, head of the provincial forestry and grassland bureau Li Xiaonan told a press conference during the province’s legislative and political advisory sessions.

The annual average per capita income of 17,200 ecological guards has reached 21,600 yuan (\$3,350), Li said.

He said the province paid farmers and herders a total of 1.87 billion yuan (\$289 million) in compensation for the losses incurred due to ecological protection in 2020, with many of

them taking on jobs as ecological guards.

The Sanjiangyuan area is home to the headwaters of the Yangtze River, China’s longest stream; the Yellow River, the second longest in the country; and the Lancang River (known as the Mekong River after it flows out of China).

Piracy Crackdown

Chinese police have arrested 14 suspects accused of having ties to the pirated-video platform YYeTs.com, which allows millions of users to stream and download pirated copies of movies and TV shows.

The Shanghai Municipal Public Security Bureau announced on February 3 they had nabbed the suspects over a piracy case involving more than 16 million yuan (\$2.5 million), in cooperation with police in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and the provinces of Shandong and Hubei.

In September 2020, Shanghai police found that YYeTs.com was providing online streaming and download services of pirated videos on its website and app.

The ensuing police investigation showed that since 2018, the



Ensuring Supply

A farmer picks cucumber inside a greenhouse in Laoting, a county in Hebei Province in north China. The county has been promoting growing vegetables for the Beijing and Tianjin markets.

suspects had founded several companies and set up servers both inside and outside China to develop and operate the website and app of YYeTs.com. They downloaded videos from foreign pirated-video websites, translated these into Chinese and uploaded

the subtitled videos to their servers for distribution, without authorization from the copyright owners.

The police have taken measures against the suspects, and a supplementary investigation is underway.



Fully Prepared

Farmers clear weeds and apply fertilizer at a tea plantation in Zigui, a county in Hubei Province in central China, to prepare for the annual spring tea picking.

Board Merger

The main and SME boards of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SZSE) will be combined, the national securities regulator announced on February 5.

According to Pi Liuyi, an official with the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the process will follow the general principles of unifying business rules and operation supervision modes. Issuance and listing conditions, investor thresholds, trading mechanisms, and stock codes and abbreviations will remain unchanged, he said.

An SZSE spokesperson said the merger would only involve adjustments to parts of business rules, market products, technical systems issuance arrangements and listing arrangements, and it would have little impact on market operation and investors' trading in general. Moreover, fixed income products, futures and options products would

be mostly unaffected. The Shenzhen-Hong Kong stock connect program would also not be affected.

After the merger, relevant indexes involving the SME board need to be adjusted. But the spokesperson said as index compiling methods will not be changed substantially, it would not lead to investment target adjustments of fund products tracking relevant indexes.

By the end of January, the main and the SME boards of the SZSE housed 1,468 listed companies, accounting for 35 percent of the yuan-denominated A-share market.

The market value of these companies amounted to 23.39 trillion yuan (\$3.61 trillion), accounting for 29 percent of the total.

Service Trade

China's service trade fell in 2020 due to the novel coronavirus

pandemic and other factors, but the trade deficit continued to narrow sharply, according to the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) on February 4.

The overall trade volume reached over 4.56 trillion yuan (\$704.9 billion) last year, down 15.7 percent year on year, MOFCOM spokesperson Gao Feng said at a press conference.

But the service trade deficit narrowed 53.9 percent over the previous year to 692.93 billion yuan (\$107 billion), he added.

The trade of knowledge-intensive services increased 8.3 percent year on year in the period, accounting for 44.5 percent of the overall volume.

Sectors such as telecommunications, computer and information services saw rapid increases in both exports and imports.

Tourism services worldwide were still significantly impacted by the pandemic, which was the main reason behind the drop in

the service trade. Last year, the tourism service trade volume slumped 48.3 percent to 1.02 trillion yuan (\$157 billion).

Excluding the tourism sector, the country's service trade in 2020 expanded 2.9 percent year on year, Gao said.

Trade in services refers to the sale and delivery of intangible products such as transportation, tourism, telecommunications, construction, advertising, computing and accounting.

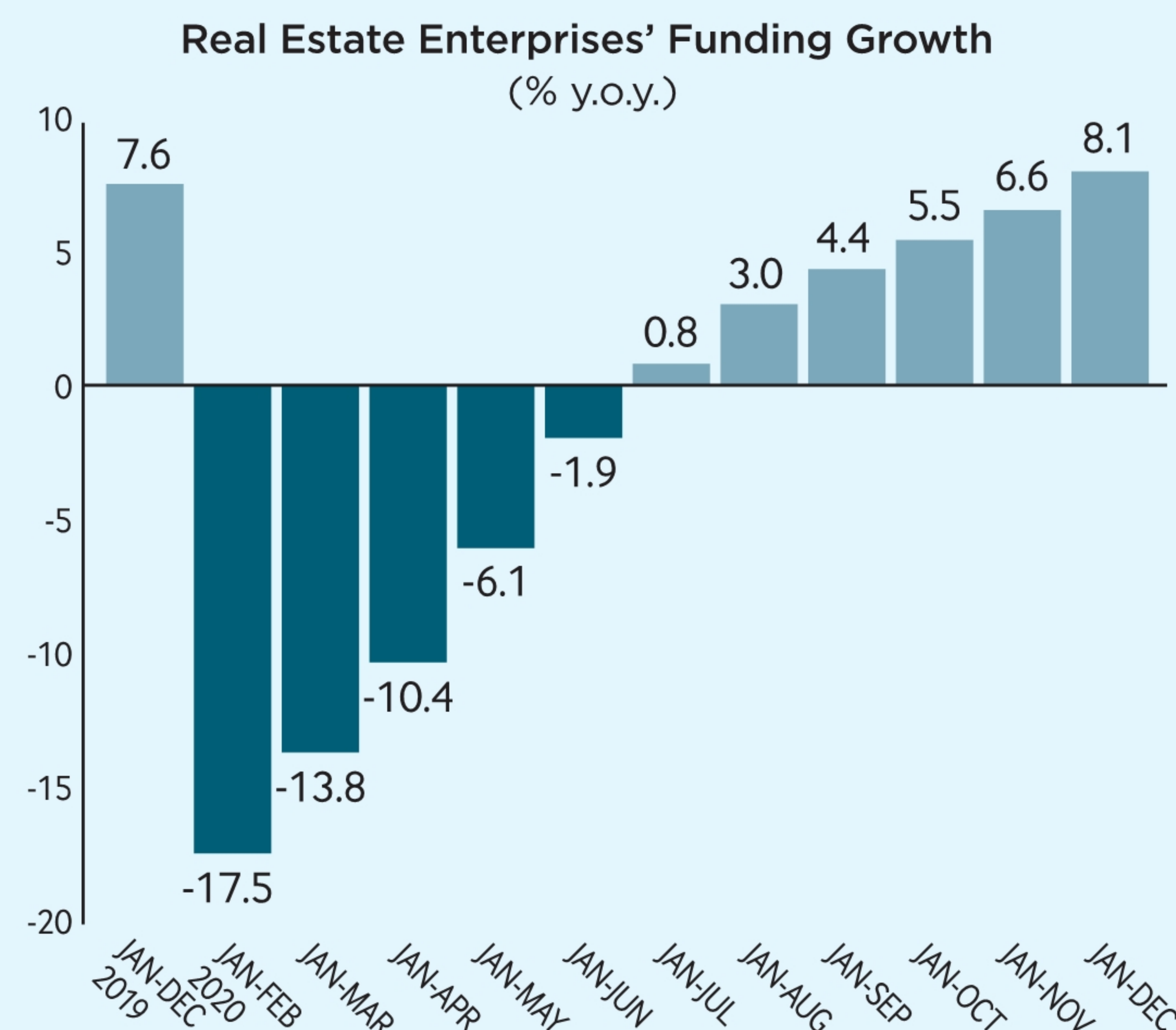
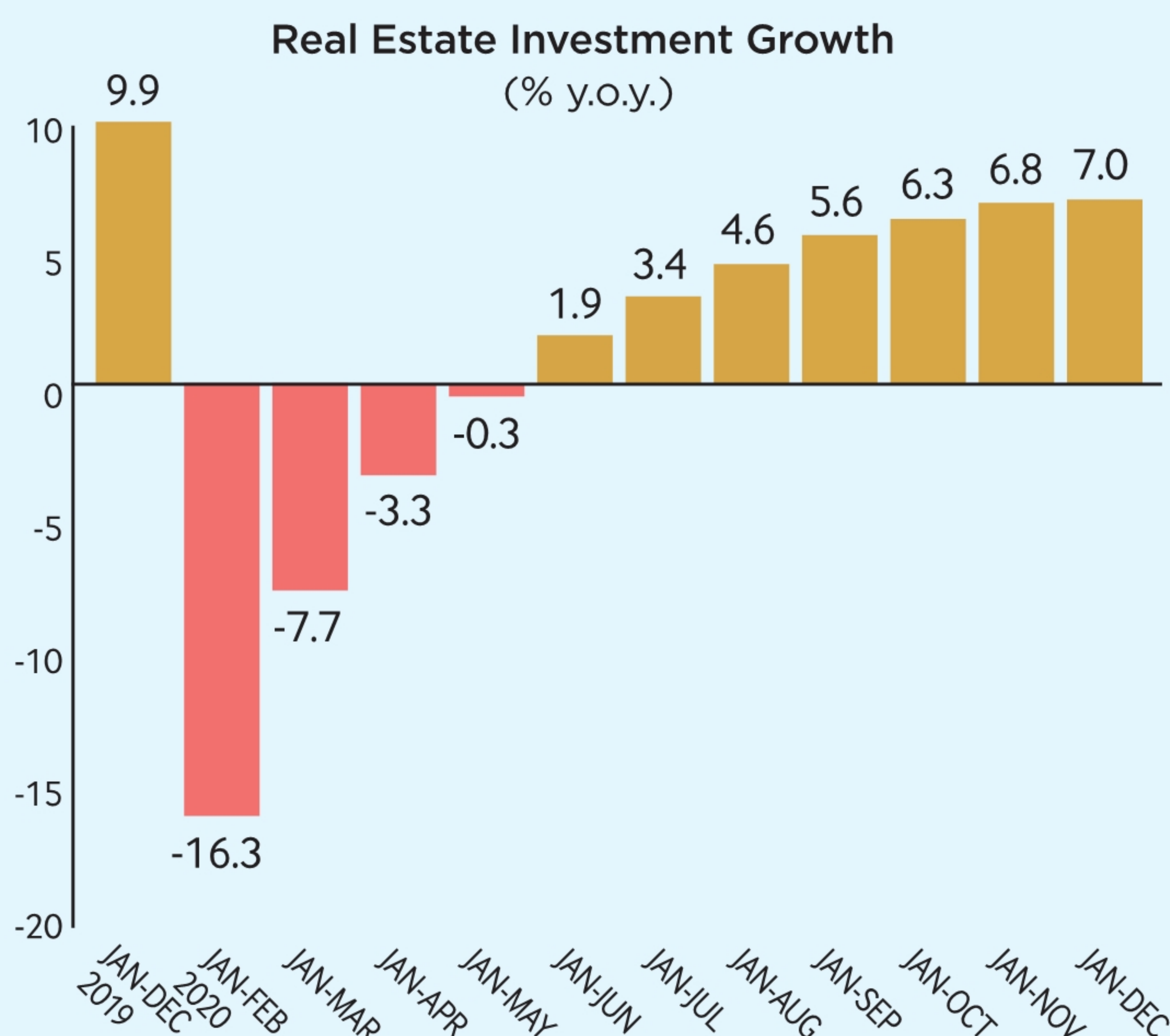
Ballast Stone

The central bank said on February 4 that the benchmark deposit interest rate, the "ballast stone" of the entire interest rates system, will be retained for the long term.

In a statement released after a teleconference on deposit management, the People's Bank of China (PBC) stressed the externalities of deposit rate pricing, noting that the competition order

NUMBERS

(\$1=6.4 yuan)



in the deposit market is closely related to the vital interests of the people.

Deposit management by the PBC has yielded positive results in recent years by pushing the self-discipline mechanism for market interest rate pricing, as well as regulating the innovative products.

The PBC urged further efforts to improve deposit management, strengthen the regulation of non-standard innovative products and maintain the competition order in the market.

Tesla Plant

Tesla China's supercharger manufacturing factory in Shanghai was put into production on February 3, less than half a year after the project was officially launched in August 2020.

With an investment of 42 million yuan (\$6.49 million), the 5,000-square-meter plant has an annual capacity of 10,000

superchargers, mainly the V3 model, at the initial stage. The company claimed a V3 supercharger can add 250 km of range by charging for 15 minutes.

Previously, Tesla's superchargers used in China were imported from the United States.

The company said the opening of its supercharger plant in China will contribute to the popularization of its V3 supercharger in the country.

Tesla has opened more than 730 supercharging stations across China.

Appealing Bonds

Overseas investors raised their holdings of Chinese bonds for the 26th month in a row in January, fueled by faster-than-expected economic recovery and a strengthening yuan.

They held 3.06 trillion yuan (\$473 billion) of Chinese bonds in the month, surging 62.09 percent year on year, data from China

Central Depository & Clearing Co. Ltd. showed. The volume marked an increase of 5.96 percent from the end of 2020.

Market transactions were also robust, with trading volumes amounting to 588.3 billion yuan (\$90.95 billion) in January.

The growing appetite among global investors since 2020 stemmed from China's stable economic recovery, widening spread of Chinese 10-year government bonds over their U.S. counterparts, as well as a firming yuan, according to Zheng Kuifang, an analyst with the China Construction Bank.

Overseas investors will likely plow 1.2 trillion yuan (\$185 billion) into China's bond market in 2021, according to Liu Linan, head of Greater China Macro Strategy at Deutsche Bank.

By the end of 2021, the share of foreign holdings in yuan-denominated bonds will increase to 3.3 percent from the current 2.9 percent, while the share of

foreign holdings in China's treasury bonds will rise to 12 percent from the current 9 percent, he predicted.

Subsidies Ended

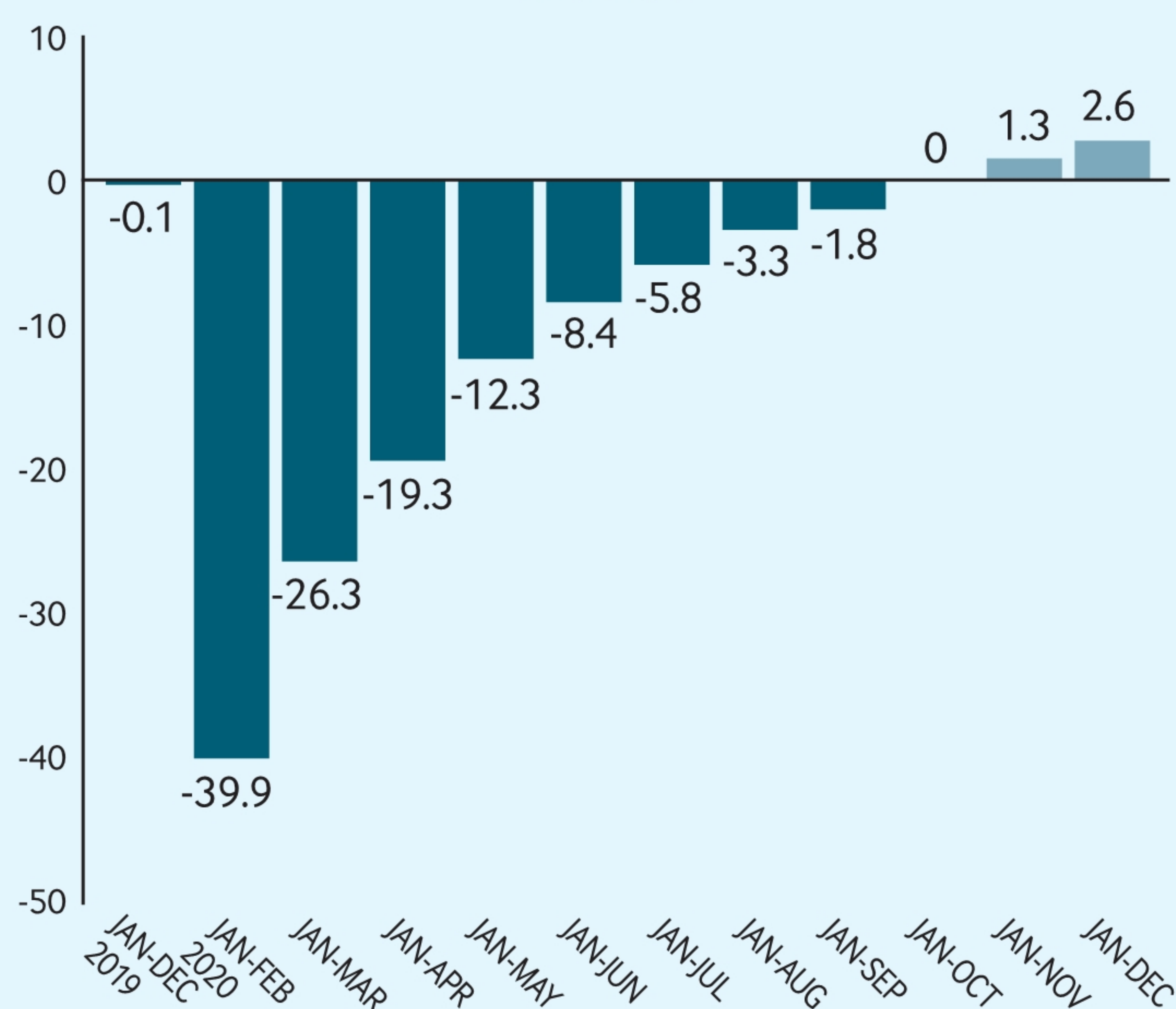
The National Intellectual Property Administration plans to end all patent subsidies as part of its efforts to boost the country's innovation and high-quality intellectual property (IP) services.

By the end of June, subsidies for patent applications at all levels will be canceled.

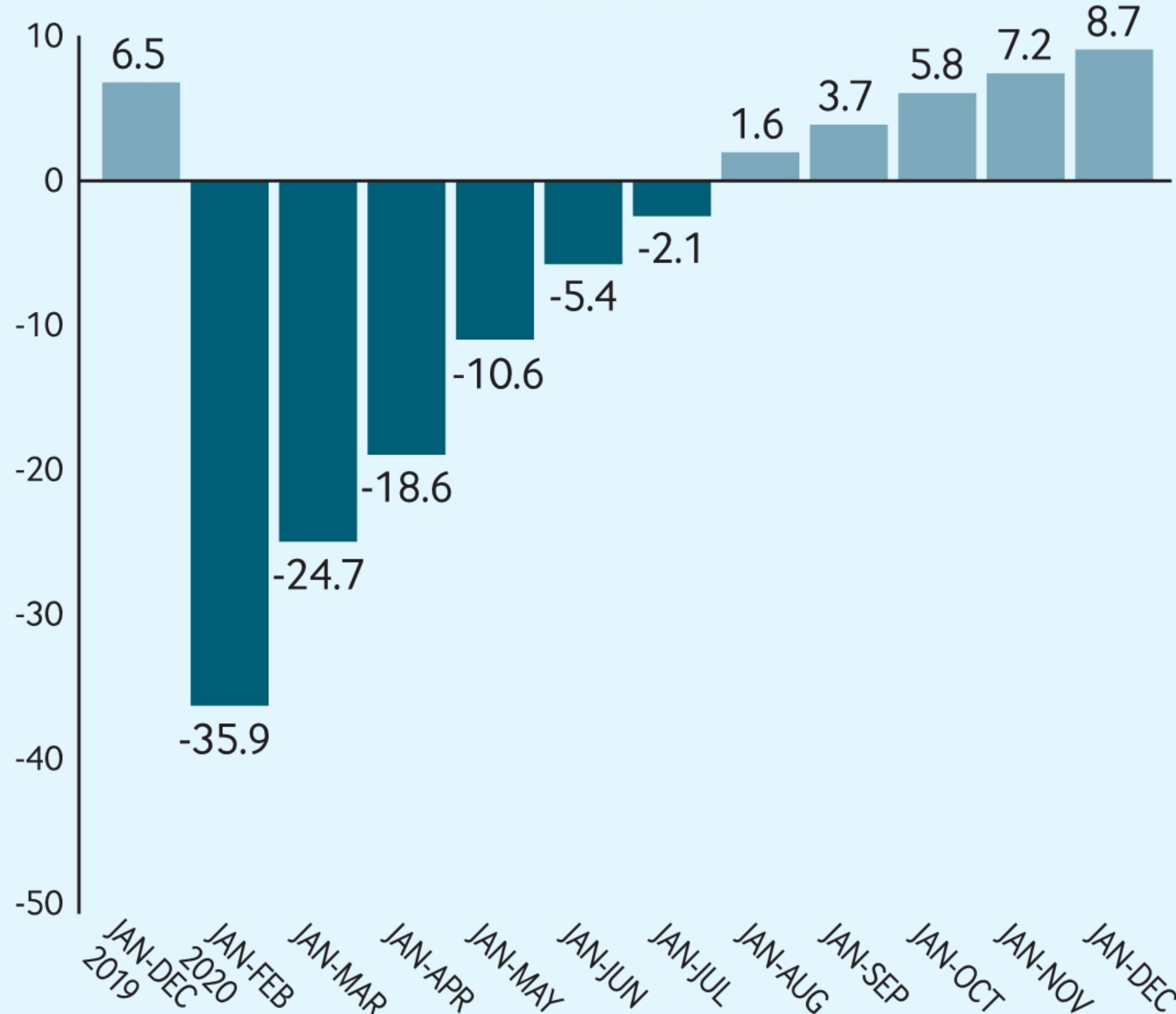
Financial aid provided by local governments for patent licensing will be reduced during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, and phased out before 2025.

The change aims to eliminate improper behavior in patent applications that do not protect innovation, and to shift the focus from improving IP quantity to quality, sources with the administration said on February 5.

Growth Rate of Floor Space of Sold Commercial Buildings (% y.o.y.)



Growth Rate of Sales of Commercial Buildings (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



AUSTRALIA

A woman shows her commemorative coin and stamps for the Chinese Year of the Ox at a post office in Sydney on February 2



PAKISTAN

A medical worker receives a dose of a China-developed novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine at a hospital in Lahore, capital of Punjab Province, on February 3



INDIA

Helicopters perform during Aero India 2021, a premier aerospace and defense biennial international exhibition, at the Yelahanka Air Base in Bengaluru, Karnataka, on February 3



GERMANY

Chancellor Angela Merkel gives a televised interview to public broadcaster ARD in Berlin on February 2. She said the EU welcomes every COVID-19 vaccine as the bloc is facing delivery difficulties



ITALY

Former chief of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi speaks to the press at the Palazzo del Quirinale in Rome on February 3 after being designated as prime minister by President Sergio Mattarella



SRI LANKA

A parade celebrates the 73rd Independence Day in capital Colombo on February 4



↓ NEW CPC VICE MINISTER

Chen Zhou was recently appointed vice minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Founded in 1951, the CPC International Department conducts all-round, multi-channel, wide-scope and in-depth party-to-party exchanges and cooperation with more than 400 political parties and organizations in over 140 countries, most of which are either parties in office or parties participating in government.

Chen, born in August 1966, started to work at the Department of Asian and African Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, in 1985. In 2019, he became chief inspector of the Discipline Inspection and Supervision Office of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission at the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs.



Fathers' Presence

Beijing Youth Daily
February 4

Recently, a primary school in Wuhan, Hubei Province in central China, has come into the limelight due to its new rule. According to it, fathers must pick up their children from school on at least three specified dates each month. It was formulated to ensure fathers share more responsibility in their children's education and upbringing.

According to a report by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences in 2015, the proportion of fathers looking after their

children's education had fallen to 23.7 percent from 30.2 percent in a decade, while mothers' role had increased.

Although some people say the rule might have a psychological effect on children from single-mother families and is not a practical way to ensure a greater role by fathers, it is still a way to make both parents fulfill their duties better.

The warm environment created by both parents is vital for the physical and mental wellbeing of youngsters, especially for the development of their personality. Fathers' involvement cannot be replaced by the material things they contribute.



Social Life in Virtual World

Lifeweek
January 25

Information-sharing platform Douban has a group where people post photos and strangers comment on them, rating their appearance. The group has nearly 30,000 members, the majority of them female.

"It [the Wuhan Institute of Virology] is well-organized. I do not know who criticized them. The laboratory is perfectly equipped. It is hard for me to imagine that something could have leaked from there."

World Health Organization (WHO) expert team member **Vladimir Dedkov**, refuting the theory of a virus leakage during a visit to the institute with nine other WHO experts on February 4

"In order to do that [vaccinating billions of people as soon as possible] we need to work together and use all of the vaccines at our disposal, without any kind of prejudice based upon the country of origin."

Former member of the European Parliament **Jonathan Arnott**, encouraging countries to evaluate vaccines based upon science, in an article on CGTN website on February 5

A photoshopped image can help a person win virtual admiration for his or her appearance. Besides beauty, winning recognition in real life is also a matter of money, status and career achievement.

Therefore, social platforms have become an important channel for people to be appreciated through images alone. To meet the general aesthetic standard influenced by photo editing software, there are also cases of those who want to become Internet celebrities undergoing plastic surgery.

Wang Minan, a professor at the School of Humanities, Tsinghua University, said posting life's moments or photoshopped pictures have become part of people's lifestyle on the Internet. Though that may not reflect their life, for those who have many followers and get a lot of praise and thumb-ups from them, the virtual world becomes real.

The influence of images in social life was proved in 2015 when the Oxford Dictionary announced the laugh-cry emoji, which shows a face laughing and crying at the same time, as its word of the year. It was the first time it chose a pictograph and not an actual word. It was a signal that interpersonal communication is undergoing a radical change.

Beauty With Medical Assistance

People's Daily
February 2

Plastic surgery and cosmetic medical procedures such as laser therapy have become popular means for looking younger and glamorous. Even minors are flocking for cosmetic surgery.

People who try to improve their appearance via cosmetic surgery should ensure that the procedures are medically required and follow medical safety regulations.

The clinics and doctors in the industry should have the necessary industrial

certifications and the equipment should meet industrial standards.

To guide the industry's development, the government has issued supervision policies and cracked down on illegal medical cosmetology with the joint efforts of multiple ministries. The authorities should also standardize services and strengthen the management of medical equipment production and application.

In addition, consumers need to be cautious about medical cosmetology and choose the cosmetology institutions carefully and rationally. Advertisements targeting minors and other commercial behaviors that encourage children to undergo such cosmetic procedures should be banned.

↓ ANG LEE GETS FRANCE'S HIGHEST HONOR

Chinese Oscar-winning director **Ang Lee**, 67, was awarded the Légion d'Honneur, the highest French order of merit. Instituted in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte, the honor was retained by subsequent French governments.

Lee, one of today's greatest movie directors, won the Oscar for best director twice, in 2013 for *Life of Pi*, and in 2006 for *Brokeback Mountain*. His *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* won the best foreign-language film Oscar in 2001. Last December marked the 20th anniversary of the release of the martial arts period drama.

In 1979, Lee went to the U.S. to study at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in theater. Later, he received his master's degree in film production at New York University.



“Faced with global challenges like COVID-19 and climate change, the areas where China and the United States can and must cooperate get only greater and wider.”

Foreign Ministry spokesperson **Wang Wenbin** at a press conference on February 6

“China has immediately shared their experience with the rest of the world... So, it's time that we quickly got over COVID-19 and all started working together.”

Muhammad Faruk Khan, Chairman of Bangladesh's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, to Xinhua News Agency in a recent interview

