

OPINION: Baidu CEO ON TECH TRANSFORMATION P.28 | FEATURES: CENTENNIAL WITNESSES P.40

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THE PRIME FACTOR

New urbanization drive puts people
at the fore

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Cover Design: Wang Yajuan

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A Priority for Progress

One of the focuses of the annual meetings of the National People's Congress, the national legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body, is the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and the long-range objectives through the year 2035. Urbanization is an essential part of this focus as it is directly connected with the balanced development of different regions.

To boost urbanization, a national plan for a new type of urbanization was released in 2014, stressing efficient use of resources and eco-friendly, harmonious development.

Last year was the deadline for implementing the plan and according to the National Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2020, over 60 percent of the permanent population were living in cities, 6.3 percentage points higher than the figure in 2014.

The urbanization drive has stimulated the development of urban public facilities, real estate, education, healthcare and transport. The expansion of cities has led to the emergence of city clusters, such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta and the Pearl River

Delta, which have become major growth poles of the national economy.

However, while these regions have developed rapidly, the central and western regions still lag behind. So the focus now is to address this imbalance in the urbanization process.

The pace and quality of the new urbanization need to be higher also because it is linked to the new development model of dual circulation. Put forward by President Xi Jinping in October 2020, this is a growth vision in which the domestic market is the mainstay, with the domestic and overseas markets reinforcing each other.

The current low consumption by urban residents is a major bottleneck for domestic circulation, and new urbanization can provide the impetus to overcome it. With China's 1.4-billion population, urbanization has great potential for boosting domestic demand.

The new targets for social and economic development laid out in the 14th Five-Year Plan and beyond therefore give priority to new urbanization, which is closely connected with economic growth, social progress and people's wellbeing, essential elements in China's modernization. **BR**



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NPC SESSION OPENS

Deputies to the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) walk toward the Great Hall of the People for the opening of the national legislature's annual session in Beijing on March 5.

At the inaugural meeting attended by President Xi Jinping and other leaders that day, Premier Li Keqiang delivered the government work report, confirming the annual growth target for the economy in 2021 is over 6 percent.



A Sample From Moon

Visitors view lunar sample No.001, brought back by China's *Chang'e-5* probe, at the National Museum of China in Beijing on February 27.

Vaccination Progress

According to Beijing's municipal government, more than 5 million people in the capital had received COVID-19 vaccinations as of 2 p.m. on March 2, with 2.64 million of those having received two doses of the vaccine. With efforts beginning on January 1, Beijing has now completed COVID-19 inoculation of all key groups, including frontline customs inspectors of imported cold chain goods and personnel working in the overseas and domestic transportation sectors.

The Beijing Government will continue to promote the vaccination of other groups at high risk, such as the elderly, those responsible for maintaining social operations and ensuring the supply of necessities, personnel in service and labor-intensive industries, and those who need

to be vaccinated for other special reasons. The government will then complete the vaccination of other groups, such as healthy individuals in good physical condition.

Water Diversion

The middle route of China's South-to-North Water Diversion Project has transferred over 22 billion cubic meters of water to Beijing, Tianjin Municipality and Hebei Province since the route's completion in December 2014.

As of March 2, more than 6 billion cubic meters of water had been transferred respectively to Beijing and Tianjin, while about 10 billion cubic meters of water had been sent to Hebei, official data showed.

The mega water diversion project has directly benefited over 13 million people in Beijing, transforming water supply to

the capital and enhancing water resource security.

The project has also facilitated ecological replenishment in Hebei, supplying 3 billion cubic meters of water to more than 20 of Hebei's rivers.

Beginning at the Danjiangkou Reservoir in central China's Hubei Province, the middle route of the water diversion project crosses Henan and Hebei provinces before reaching Beijing and Tianjin. It is one of the three routes that make up the South-to-North Water Diversion project, with the eastern and western routes supplying water to other parts of China.

Expert Recruitment

The Hainan Free Trade Port will recruit top experts from China and abroad to promote port construction in Hainan, an island

province in south China.

As stated in a press conference held on March 1, recruitment has begun for three key leadership positions.

Zhang Yingduan, deputy head of the organization department of the Hainan Provincial Party Committee, said the positions are open to both domestic and overseas candidates. Hainan is in urgent need of international experts with global vision and advanced management experience, Zhang said, adding that recruiting talent from overseas is conducive to promoting the construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port.

China last year released a master plan for the free trade port, aiming to build the whole of Hainan Island into a globally influential, high-level free trade port by the middle of the century.

School Enrollment

The gross enrollment rate in China's preschool education system reached 85.2 percent last year, according to statistics from the Ministry of Education (MOE).

There were 291,700 kindergartens in China last year, enrolling a total of more than 48 million children. According to information released by the ministry on March 1, nearly 85 percent of those children were enrolled in kindergartens that provide quality preschool education at affordable prices.

The ministry's data on China's nine-year compulsory education showed 210,800 primary and middle schools were educating 156 million students in 2020, with the retention rate of students in compulsory education reaching 95.2 percent.

In addition, more than 41 million students were studying at 24,400 senior high schools

across the country in 2020, with a gross enrollment rate of 91.2 percent.

Chinese Jet

China Eastern Airlines and the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC) have signed a contract for the purchase of five new passenger jets, marking the official market entry of China's indigenously developed C919 large passenger aircraft.

The new planes will be used on routes from Shanghai to Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Chengdu, according to a spokesperson for the airline.

China Eastern Airlines has been participating in the development of the C919 since the early stages of the project. In 2016, it signed a cooperation framework agreement with COMAC, to become the world's first user of the C919.

The C919, China's first self-developed trunk jetliner, has 158-174 seats and a flying range of 4,075-5,555 km. The plane conducted its successful maiden flight in 2017.

Air Quality Targets

New targets have been set to tackle air pollution in China over the next five years. According to Liu Bingjiang, an official with

the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, China is committed to reducing the average concentration of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in 337 major cities by 10 percent between 2021 and 2025, from the average level over the previous five years.

Liu spelled out the goal for each of the 337 cities to enjoy good-quality air for 87.5 percent of the days during the 2021-25 period at the press conference. He noted that China has achieved the goals of the three-year action plan it put in place in 2018, with days with good air quality accounting for 87 percent of 2020 in the 337 major cities.

The ministry will prioritize cutting vehicle emissions over the next five years, Liu said, stressing the importance of measures to lower carbon emissions and control air pollution simultaneously.

Disciplinary Methods

China's new rules governing school disciplinary methods came into force on March 1, banning physical punishment and verbal abuse in primary and secondary schools.

Educators are prohibited from carrying out disciplinary procedures that would inflict direct physical pain on students,



Flowering Season

Residents in Shanghai appreciate cherry blossoms in a park on March 2.

according to the trial regulations, released by the MOE last December.

In addition to verbal abuse, other forbidden disciplinary methods include forcing students to stand still or assume physically uncomfortable positions for excessive amounts of time, and covert forms of punishment such as intentional isolation.

The new regulations also clarify the conditions under which educators should intervene and introduce a new disciplinary regime for students

and teachers. According to the new rules, students who commit minor offenses should receive proportionately minor punishments, such as being required to make oral or written apologies or undertaking classroom chores.

Harsh measures for severe violations apply to children who have reached their senior years of primary school and students in middle and senior schools. Disciplinary options include suspension from school, school counseling and professional correction sessions.



A New Start

Students from a school in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China, fly kites to welcome the new school semester on February 28.

Financing Support

The banking and insurance sector has implemented a great deal of measures to buoy up economic recovery amid COVID-19 disruptions, Guo Shuqing, Chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, said at a press conference on March 2.

By the end of 2020, the sum of outstanding RMB loans increased 19.6 trillion yuan (\$3.03 trillion) over the beginning of the year, and 6.6-trillion-yuan (\$1.02-trillion) loans were extended.

Last year, the amount of new loans to the manufacturing sector stood at 2.2 trillion yuan (\$340 billion), exceeding the total volume of the previous five years. New loans to private enterprises totaled around 5.7 trillion yuan (\$882 billion), 1.5 trillion yuan (\$232 billion) more than in 2019, Guo said.

A total of 292.1 billion yuan

(\$45.2 billion) was paid to cover health insurance claims last year, up 24.2 percent year on year. Another 1.57 trillion yuan (\$243 billion) in long-term health insurance risk reserve was collected.

This year, the sector will offer more targeted financial assistance to key areas, including technology innovation, advanced manufacturing, rural vitalization, green development, and the growth of private, micro, and small businesses, Guo said.

Manufacturing Hub

China has remained as the world's largest manufacturing hub for 11 straight years, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the global manufacturing output, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT).

During the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) timeframe, the average growth rate of the value-added output of the hi-tech

manufacturing sector reached 10.4 percent, up 4.9 percentage points from that of the overall industrial output, Xiao Yaqing, Minister of Industry and Information Technology, said on March 1.

In the past five years, the value-added industrial output increased from 23.5 trillion yuan (\$3.63 trillion) to 31.3 trillion yuan (\$4.8 trillion).

The information transmission and software and information technology service industries made some remarkable progress. Their value-added industrial output surged from 1.8 trillion yuan (\$278 billion) to 3.8 trillion yuan (\$587 billion), with the proportion in GDP rising from 2.5 percent to 3.7 percent, Xiao added.

By the end of 2020, household penetration of fixed broadband reached 96 percent, while mobile broadband penetration came to 108 percent.

In terms of 5G development, the country had built 718,000

5G base stations by the end of 2020, with the number of mobile terminals connected to the network surpassing 200 million, according to the MIIT.

Capital Inflow

Since the Foreign Investment Law came into effect on January 1, 2020, international capital inflow into China has risen 4.5 percent year on year in U.S. dollar terms, hitting a record high, Zang Tiewei, a spokesperson for the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, said on February 28.

The country has become the largest foreign capital recipient in the world, with 51,000 new foreign-funded firms established in 2020, Zang said.

The law provides foreign capital with easier market access and reduces the restrictions on investors. Last year, nearly 9,000

NUMBERS

(\$1=6.4 yuan)

Comprehensive Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)



new joint ventures were set up between foreign investors and Chinese natural persons.

It also guarantees equal treatment of foreign firms in government procurement activities and standard setting, with about 100 foreign-funded firms participating in the formulation and revision of national standards last year.

Procedures related to the establishment and alteration of foreign-funded firms are simplified and the rights and interests of foreign investors are better protected with complaint mechanisms optimized, Zang said.

General Aviation

As of the end of 2020, China had 523 conventional general aviation companies with a fleet of 2,844 general aircraft, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

The sector has also witnessed a boom in brand new business

models, the administration said.

The number of registered unmanned aerial vehicles in the country reached 523,600 by the end of 2020, with annual flight hours exceeding 1.59 million.

There has also been rapid expansion in aerial tours and parachuting. By the end of last year, more than 100 air routes for low-altitude tourism had been opened, providing aerial tour services to some 50 tourist attractions nationwide, CAAC data showed.

The CAAC said it will promote supervision of the sector and give full play to its nationwide route network. Tailored regulations on certification and operation will be made.

Commercial Rocket

Smart Dragon-3 (SD-3), the third member of China's Dragon commercial carrier rocket family, will perform its maiden flight in 2022, the China Academy of Launch

Vehicle Technology, developer of the rocket, said on March 3.

The four-stage solid-propellant SD-3 will be the largest with the greatest carrying capacity among all Dragon rockets so far.

The rocket's multi-satellite launch capability enables it to carry more than 20 satellites on one single mission, at a cost of merely \$10,000 per kg, significantly increasing its market competitiveness. Its design covers both land and sea launches.

The Dragon rockets were inaugurated in 2019 for commercial space launch services. The first-generation rocket SD-1 performed its maiden flight in August that year, and is slated for two to three launches in 2021.

Robust Growth

The value of products registered by insurance asset management companies (AMCs) and private equity (PE) fund managers totaled 975.84 billion yuan

(\$150.8 billion) in 2020, up 71.6 percent year on year, official data showed on February 28.

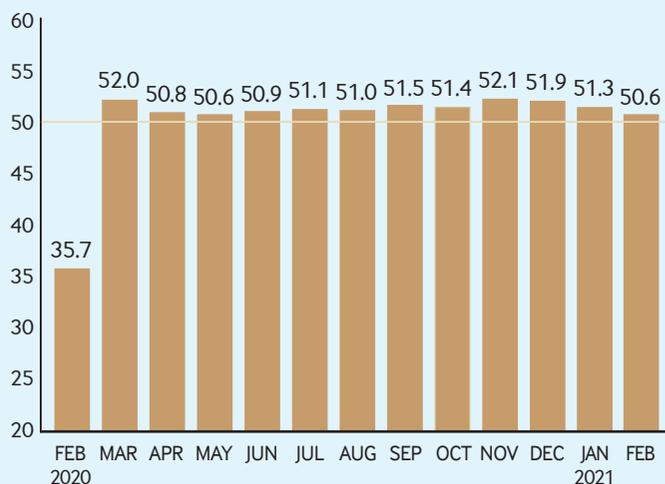
The number of products registered by AMCs and PE fund managers rose 77.31 percent year on year to 461 last year, according to the Insurance Asset Management Association of China.

Out of the total, 434 were registered for debt investment plans and 12 for equity investment plans, with the fund size reaching 819.32 billion yuan (\$126.66 billion) and 22.61 billion yuan (\$3.49 billion), respectively, the association said.

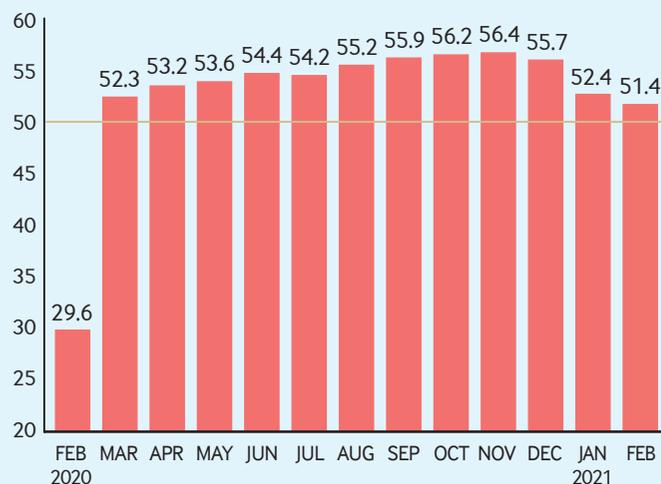
Fifteen insurance PE funds were established last year, with the fund size reaching 133.92 billion yuan (\$20.7 billion).

By the end of last year, insurance AMCs and PE fund managers registered 1,794 products, with the fund size totaling nearly 4.16 trillion yuan (\$643.13 billion), according to the association.

Manufacturing PMI



Non-Manufacturing PMI



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

THIS WEEK **WORLD**



AFGHANISTAN

Soldiers attend an event in Herat to mark the National Day of Armed Forces on February 27



FIJI

A fashion show in Suva in celebration of the Chinese Lantern Festival, which falls on the 15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar, on February 26



BELGIUM

European Council President Charles Michel (left) and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg attend the second day of a virtual EU summit in Brussels on February 26. EU leaders reaffirmed their commitment to increase the bloc's capacity to act autonomously and take more responsibility for its security





FRANCE

Former President Nicolas Sarkozy arrives at the courthouse in Paris on March 1. The court convicted him on charges of corruption and influence peddling and handed him a three-year prison sentence, which he said he would appeal against



INDONESIA

An official displays a first-day cover marking the issuance of a set of special stamps themed on COVID-19 vaccination in Jakarta on February 26



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Workers move boxes of COVID-19 vaccine doses at the airport in Abidjan on February 26. The country received 504,000 doses from the World Health Organization-led COVAX initiative



↓ HEAD OF NEW GOVERNMENT BODY

Wang Zhengpu has been appointed head of the National Administration for Rural Vitalization, the new government body for the promotion of rural vitalization. It was announced on February 25.

The newly established agency succeeds the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development.

Its debut marked the transition of the policy priority from poverty alleviation to comprehensively promoting rural vitalization.

Wang, 58, was a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Sichuan Provincial Committee and President of the Party School of the CPC Sichuan Provincial Committee in southwest China. Since January, he has served as a member of the Central Rural Work Leading Group.



Anti-Addiction System

Guancha.gmw.cn
February 24

According to data from the China Internet Network Information Center, by December 2020, there were 989 million Internet users in China, with under-19s accounting for nearly 17 percent. In addition, there are over 500 million online gamers.

As early as 2007, the government issued a circular on the promotion and implementation of an anti-addiction mechanism in all computer games for the youth. In

2019, the National Press and Publication Administration issued a set of guidelines, detailing how to limit underage users' excessive online gaming time. Following the lead, major online game platforms such as Tencent have launched anti-addiction mechanisms.

The mechanism requires compulsory real name registration and limits the time and money underage users can spend on games.

However, promoting the anti-addiction mechanism requires further efforts by local governments, families and schools. Internet companies also need to strengthen their on-line management and upgrade technology.



Hydrogen Vehicles

China Newsweek
March 1

China is the world's largest market for new-energy vehicles, which include battery electric vehicles as well as plug-in hybrid and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles (HFCVs). It currently has a fleet of more than 7,000 HFCVs, such

“Are we really better off if we take the Chinese domestic market away from U.S. companies? What I'd like to see is a strong engagement by the administration with the leadership of China in ways that can build a sustainable future.”

Jeff Immelt, former General Electric CEO, in an interview with *The Washington Post* on March 1

“Beijing's agenda has always been clear, that is, to maintain the 'one country, two systems' policy. In line with this policy, the ways of running Hong Kong will remain capitalist, and the people in Hong Kong will enjoy its prosperity, as well as stability.”

Huang Ping, Executive President of the Chinese Institute of Hong Kong, in an interview with CGTN on March 3

as cargo vans and trucks for commercial use, accounting for over half of the world's total. Moreover, over 1,000 hydrogen filling stations are expected to be built by 2030.

Despite a late start, China has made rapid progress in hydrogen development, mastering core hydrogen fuel cell technologies. Last year, new policies were rolled out to improve the HFCV industry's supply chains and technologies.

However, hydrogen is highly explosive and notoriously difficult to store or transport, which has hampered the development of the hydrogen energy industry. Besides, while a hydrogen fuel cell generates carbon-free power, producing it is energy-intensive and some parts of the process create carbon emissions. In addition, battery performance is a difficult point for carmakers.

The hydrogen power challenge requires local governments and companies to build a more mature supply chain and business model for the industry. They need to prove their joint projects can lower the price of hydrogen fuel, increase the number of charging stations, enlarge HFCV fleets and improve related technologies.

Rural Consumption

Economic Daily

February 24

The Central Government's No.1 Document for 2021, released on February 21, stresses efforts to comprehensively promote rural vitalization and accelerate the modernization of agriculture and rural areas.

The measures outlined in the document include tapping the consumption potential of the rural market to expand domestic demand.

Internet-based e-commerce should be harnessed to spur rural consumption. E-commerce has facilitated agricultural products' market entry and faster development of rural industries.

Attracting more urban residents to consume in rural areas is also a good way to encourage rural consumption.

The government has been encouraging rural areas to develop tourism and leisure agriculture for years. The development of rural tourism could be combined with ecological, cultural and fashion industries. It would promote rural consumption in an all-round way, and the integrated effect of urban and rural residents' consumption would become more substantial.

With the new dual circulation development pattern, the potential of the rural market is expected to be released at an accelerated pace, which would become an important support for China's economic development.

97-YEAR-OLD ROLE MODEL IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Xia Sen, a 97-year-old former researcher from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, received the honorary title of role model in China's poverty alleviation campaign during a grand gathering to mark poverty alleviation accomplishments and honor model poverty fighters on February 25.

Xia has been promoting children's education in poverty-stricken areas. After retiring in 1982, she donated 2.03 million yuan (\$320,000) to improve teaching conditions in schools in poor rural areas in Shaanxi Province in the northwest and Jiangxi Province in the east. In 2013, she set up the Xia Sen Grant Program to assist impoverished college students. She also sponsored 182 students from disadvantaged families to enroll in universities.



“Attempts to boycott the Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games are in vain and doomed to fail. We believe such actions will not win the support of the international community.”

Guo Weimin, a spokesperson for the Fourth Session of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, during a news conference on March 3

“While the northeast still grows at a slower pace than the national average, key factors such as investment, industrial growth and employment are continuing to pick up, highlighting the region's potential and vitality.”

Li Kai, Vice President of the China Academy of Northeast Revitalization, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency on March 2



An employee works in a medical equipment company that was relocated from Beijing to Tangshan, Hebei Province in north China, on December 15, 2020