

OPINION: WEBINAR ON CHINA-U.S. TIES P.22 | FEATURES: SEEDS OF GRAIN SECURITY P.38

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Cover Photo: A farm in Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province (VCG)

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A Long-Term Goal

With the unprecedented victory against poverty that benefited the largest population in history, China's development vision has now shifted its focus to rural vitalization.

The government has been seeking to strengthen agriculture through modernization, develop the countryside and ensure prosperity for farmers. However, most rural areas are still far from meeting the target in all aspects.

To meet the goal, a modern agricultural system has to be completed first. With the progress of a new type of industrialization and urbanization, a large volume of rural labor force in their prime is migrating from the countryside to cities, leaving the former bereft of workers, especially in agriculture.

Additionally, as China has opened up, agricultural product imports may make an impact on local production. The nation faces the questions of who will do the farming and how to farm, which concern national food security and the quality and competitiveness of domestic agriculture.

Rural vitalization will improve the domestic capability to ensure food

security and transform agriculture from a quantity-oriented industry into a quality-oriented one. This will also improve farmers' income.

The goal of building a harmonious and eco-friendly countryside suitable for both business and living has also not been met by a long chalk. While some rural areas can be held up as model villages, the vast majority is still under extensive agricultural production. There are concerns about overexploitation of land and water, and excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, which may lead to pollution.

So while advancing rural vitalization, a red line of ecological protection must be observed. Green development needs to be promoted in the countryside. It is also necessary to improve the rural governance system and encourage self-governance by villagers.

In short, this is a project that needs long-term efforts. It needs the development of industries, talents, culture and tourism. The drive must also take into consideration local conditions because the purpose is not to turn villages into cities but to balance the development of both and integrate both. **BR**



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SOWING HOPE

A spring farming ceremony is held in the community of Khesum, in the city of Shannan in Tibet Autonomous Region, southwest China. This kind of ceremony dates back more than 1,600 years. According to the Tibetan calendar, March 16 marked the start of this year's spring farming. Khesum Community, previously Khesum Village, was the first village in Tibet to launch social reforms to end the feudal serfdom system in 1959. By 2017, all residents of Khesum had risen out of poverty. The annual per-capita net income of the community reached 25,324 yuan (\$3,900) in 2020, a more than 100-fold increase since 1978.



Better Connected

Two Miao actresses dressed in ethnic garments have their picture taken in front of a high-speed passenger train at the Shenzhen North Railway Station in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province in south China, on March 16. The train has the inscription “Romantic Season of Blossoms in Colorful Guizhou” to encourage Shenzhen residents to visit Guizhou and vice versa.

Green Growth

China unveiled a series of measures targeting industrial upgrades and green growth in 2021 on March 15, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The country will accelerate its applications of big data and other digitalized methods for the demand-side management of electricity and other utility consumption in a bid to improve energy efficiency.

Additionally, the new measures will cut carbon emissions across vital sectors and encourage companies in the industrial sector to beef up their efforts in retrofitting electrical equipment and informatization.

Furthermore, the nation will witness the cultivation of a batch of specialized outlets providing

demand-side electricity management services for industrial businesses.

China emphasizes energy conservation management in key energy consumption enterprises as well as systematic optimization of energy in the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 recently adopted during the annual session of China’s top legislature.

Rice Seeds

About 1,500 rice seeds have sprouted and grown leaves in a greenhouse in south China after returning from a journey to Moon last year, Xinhua reported on March 16.

The seeds were planted in

the greenhouse of the National Engineering Research Center of Plant Space Breeding of South China Agricultural University, and are expected to be transplanted to fields by the end of March.

These seeds traveled more than 760,000 km to Moon last November, returning to Earth on December 17, 2020, after 23 days aboard the *Chang’e-5* lunar probe.

The seeds were second-generation space-bred ones because their “parents” had also been space-bred.

Nevertheless, the experiment on the *Chang’e-5* probe differs from previous tests. It was the first such experiment conducted within a deep space setting. The space flight time was longer, and the probe encountered some radiation both in the Van Allen

Belts as well as from sunspot activity, according to Chen Zhiqiang, the center’s director.

Stronger hereditary effects are expected to be produced throughout this experiment, as a deep space environment is more similar to a real space extreme environment, according to Guo Tao, the center’s deputy director.

The space-bred rice is expected to be harvested at the end of June, Guo added.

Refracting Telescope

Chinese scientists are working to set up the world’s largest refracting telescope in Tibet Autonomous Region, southwest China, for the observation of stars and planets.

Construction of the optical telescope, boasting a 1-meter aperture, has already started in the regional capital of Lhasa, said Wang Junjie, deputy director of the regional department of science and technology.

Given its high altitude and clear skies, Tibet is considered one of the world’s best spots to observe celestial bodies.

A refracting telescope is an instrument that uses a combination of lenses to produce images of distant objects in space invisible to the naked human eye.

Scientists will use the refractor to carry out sky surveys, including monitoring near-Earth asteroids, Wang added.

The refractor will be installed on a planned regional planetarium, which is likely to start construction this year. It will be the world’s highest astronomical observatory.

Research Station

China has completed a wide array of feasibility studies regarding the fourth phase of its lunar exploration program. The nation is expected to build

an international lunar research station on Moon's south pole in the future, Xinhua reported on March 14.

In an interview with *China Space News*, Wu Weiren, chief designer of China's lunar exploration program, said three missions are planned for the fourth phase of the lunar exploration program. The program includes the retrieval of lunar samples from the south pole by *Chang'e-6*, a detailed survey of the Moon's south pole resources by *Chang'e-7*, and the testing of key technologies in preparation for the construction of the lunar research station by *Chang'e-8*.

"If the lunar research station project can be successfully implemented, China will be close to achieving manned landings on Moon," Wu said.

Family Doctors

China will increase services provided by contracted family doctors, allowing them to issue long-term prescriptions to the elderly and people with disabilities, according to the National Health Commission (NHC), Xinhua reported on March 15.

Primary-level medical organizations and family doctors should play their parts in preventing myopia among children,

said the NHC during a recent conference on the development of health policies at the grass-roots level.

The commission has also vowed to help improve the ability of family doctors to diagnose and treat common and frequent illnesses, as well as their means to identify and treat infectious diseases.

Primary-level medical workers will receive more intensive training on the prevention and controlling of chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes.

China set up nearly 430,000 teams of family doctors last year who are responsible for medical services including disease prevention, treating common diseases, and rehabilitation therapy.

Forest Expansion

China's forest resources have steadily increased over the years, with the country's woodland and tree assets hitting 25.05 trillion yuan (\$3.86 trillion) by 2018, the latest research shows, Xinhua reported on March 14.

This represents a rise of 17.66 percent compared with the numbers revealed in 2014, according to data jointly released by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) and the



Laying New Tracks

Advanced technology is used to lay the tracks of the Zhengzhou-Wanzhou High-Speed Railway in Chongqing Municipality in southwest China on March 17. The line connecting Zhengzhou, capital of Henan Province in central China, and Wanzhou District of Chongqing is scheduled to open at the end of 2021.

National Bureau of Statistics.

Such an improvement will contribute greatly to China's carbon neutrality goal, said Peng Youdong, vice chief of the NFGA.

China has previously announced it will strive to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

Over the years, China has taken solid steps to promote afforestation and to protect and restore its natural forests. China's forest

area currently stands at around 220 million hectares, while the total carbon storage of its forests has reached 9.186 billion tons.

China's afforestation efforts have particularly helped increase forest carbon sinks, according to Peng. The country boasts the world's largest area of planted forests, and more than 60 percent of its forests are young or half-mature with high carbon sequestration rates and great potential for carbon sink increase.



Tea Harvest

A farmer dries freshly harvested West Lake Longjing green tea leaves in Manjuelong, a village situated at the West Lake scenic site in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province in east China, on March 12.

Robust Growth

Major economic indicators greatly improved in the first two months of the year, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on March 15.

Retail sales of consumer goods, a major indicator of consumption growth, exceeded 6.97 trillion yuan (\$1.07 trillion), up 33.8 percent and 6.4 percent over the same period of 2020 and 2019, respectively.

The value-added industrial output went up 35.1 percent year on year, and 16.9 percent compared with that for January and February 2019.

Fixed assets investment surged 35 percent year on year to 4.52 trillion yuan (\$694 billion), which was 3.5 percent higher than two years ago.

Investment by private businesses expanded 36.4 percent year on year to 2.62 trillion yuan (\$402 billion).

Employment remained stable, with the surveyed urban unemployment rate standing at 5.5 percent in February, 0.7 percentage point lower year on year.

NBS spokesperson Liu Aihua attributed the sharp year-on-year increase in major economic indicators to sustained economic recovery, as well as a lower basis of comparison during the same period last year, when the economy was hit by COVID-19.

Big Data

China's big data market will continue to expand in the coming years, driven by its economic development and digital transformation, according to a report from global market research firm International Data Corp. (IDC) on March 10.

The market was estimated to exceed \$10 billion for the first time in 2020, up 15.9 percent year on year. Banking

institutions, telecommunications companies and local governments accounted for 38 percent of the total spending last year, and these sectors will continue to lead in investment, the report said.

According to Wang Limeng, an analyst with IDC, fintech innovation and digital government construction will drive the steady growth of industry users' demand for big data.

By 2024, the market is expected to exceed \$20 billion, an increase of 145 percent from 2019, according to the report.

More Airports

More than 30 civil aviation airports will be built by 2025, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) on March 15.

At a press conference, CAAC official Zhang Qing said the plan was part of efforts to promote the high-quality development of

civil aviation over the course of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

According to Zhang, China is stepping up the construction of major civil aviation infrastructure and, by 2025, its civil aviation airports will be able to handle 2 billion passengers per year.

Cash-Pooling Pilot

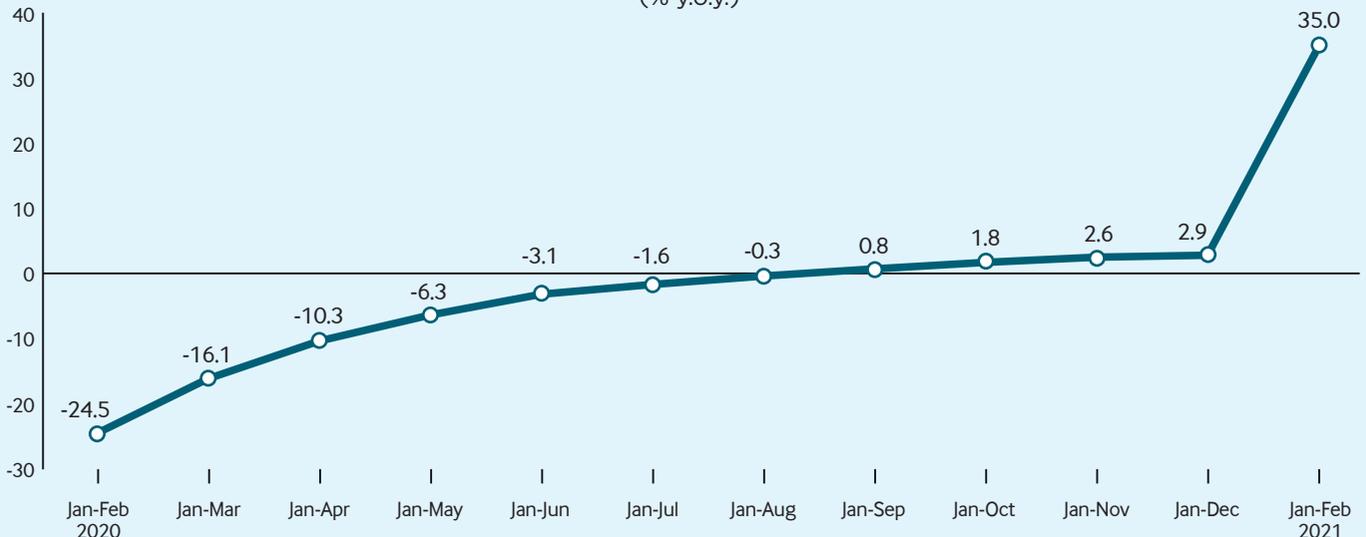
The monetary authorities announced on March 12 a pilot cash-pooling service will be launched for multinational companies that integrates domestic and foreign currency management to facilitate the use of cross-border capital.

According to the People's Bank of China (PBC) and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, the program will be launched in Beijing and southern economic powerhouse Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. It will serve large multinational companies with relatively high credit ratings.

NUMBERS

(\$1=6.5 yuan)

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



The move aims to advance the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Beijing's pilot free trade zone, support the building of a higher-level open economy, and improve the ability of financial services to serve the real economy, the PBC said in a statement.

The cash-pooling service will unify domestic and foreign currency management policies and allow multinationals to purchase foreign exchange at will within a certain limit, it said, noting that the purchased funds can be deposited into the domestic primary account for external payment.

The program will also implement two-way macro-prudential management to improve the autonomy and capital efficiency of cross-border financing on the basis of steady and prudent operation, further facilitate the transfer and use of funds, and

enhance operational and post-operational oversight.

Based on the performance of the program, authorities will improve the management framework of services to strengthen cross-border trade and investment facilitation, create a better business environment and boost the sound development of foreign-related businesses, the PBC said.

Insurance Operation

The insurance sector maintained steady performance in 2020, with the solvency adequacy ratio remaining within an appropriate range, the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission (CBIRC) said.

The average comprehensive solvency ratio of the 178 insurers reviewed at a regulatory meeting stood at 246.3 percent at the end of 2020. Their average core solvency ratio hit 234.3 percent, the CBIRC said.

Specifically, the average comprehensive solvency ratio of life insurance, property insurance and reinsurance companies stood at 239.6 percent, 277.9 percent and 319.3 percent, respectively.

The solvency ratio is a key metric to measure an insurer's ability to meet its debt and other obligations.

Energy Cooperation

Malaysia's Petrolia Nasional Bhd (Petronas) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the China National Offshore Oil Corp. (CNOOC) to pursue cleaner energy solutions through closer collaboration.

In a statement made on March 15, Petronas said the MoU elevates the long-standing relationship between the two parties from primarily liquefied natural gas (LNG) and upstream projects toward a shared ambition in energy security and cleaner energy

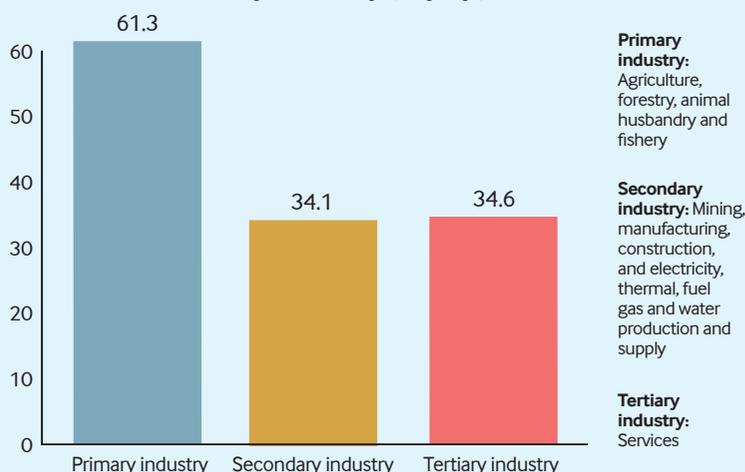
solutions.

It said the scope of collaboration opens up opportunities across Petronas' integrated value chain and across the globe through which both parties will intensify collaboration in LNG, upstream exploration and development projects, refining, oilfield and engineering services, specialty chemicals and lubricants, as well as renewable energy.

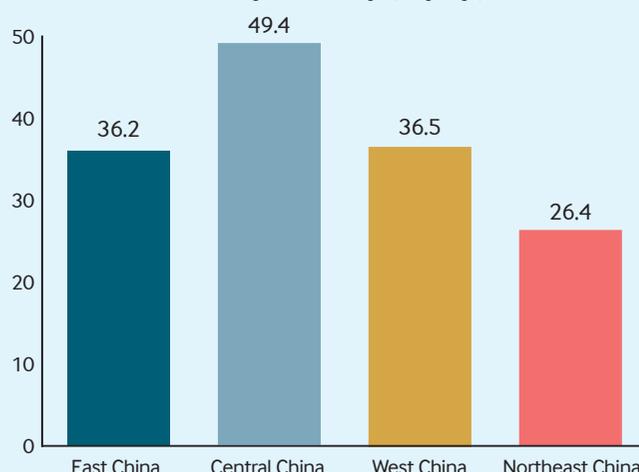
In addition to LNG supply, Petronas and the CNOOC will also cooperate on promoting the use of natural gas as a cleaner marine fuel through LNG bunkering solutions, in support of the International Maritime Organization regulations on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships.

According to the statement, Petronas and the CNOOC will explore the establishment of a global bunkering supply network, leveraging both companies' experience in this regard.

Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Sector
January-February (% y.o.y.)



Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Region
January-February (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



NEW ZEALAND

Hot air balloon enthusiasts take part in the five-day Balloons Over Waikato event in Hamilton on March 16



UNITED NATIONS

UN Undersecretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, addresses the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York City on March 15, calling for bold and strong moves toward gender equality



GERMANY

A visitor at the Neues Museum in Berlin on March 16. Several museums in Berlin have reopened with hygiene requirements and restrictions after being closed for months due to COVID-19





NETHERLANDS

Prime Minister Mark Rutte speaks to the press at a polling station after casting his vote during the parliamentary elections in The Hague on March 17



UNITED KINGDOM

Prime Minister Boris Johnson leaves 10 Downing Street for the House of Commons to make a statement on the Integrated Review of Security, Defense, Development and Foreign Policy in London on March 16. Britain is set to increase its nuclear weapon stockpile, it said



ZIMBABWE

Local staff check China-donated COVID-19 vaccines at the Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport in Harare on March 16



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

CHINESE ASTROPHYSICIST PASSES AWAY

Zhou Youyuan, an astrophysicist and academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, passed away in Beijing on March 12 at the age of 82.

Zhou made outstanding contributions to research in the fields of active galaxies, nuclear and cosmology, and large-scale structures of the universe. He was one of the earliest scholars in China to conduct such research and create a corresponding research group.

In 2018, the Small Celestial Body Nomenclature Committee of the International Astronomical Union approved the asteroid coded 120730 to be named Asteroid Zhouyouyuan. Asteroids are the only celestial bodies that can be named by their discoverers subject to rules.

Zhou was engaged in education, with more than 50 years of teaching experience in Chinese universities. He was also a researcher at the National Astronomical Observatory.



Tax-Cut Policies

Economic Daily
March 14

Tax and fee cuts to support the real economy during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period totaled about 7.6 trillion yuan (\$1.2 trillion), data from the State Taxation Administration showed. The cuts last year alone exceeded 2.6 trillion yuan (\$400.6 billion). The tax-to-GDP ratio decreased from 18.1 percent in 2015 to 15.2 percent in 2020.

In 2021, tax cuts will continue and value-added tax reform will be deepened to ease the burden on enterprises and ordinary people. A tax policy will be issued in due time, and the policies rolled out last year will be extended

wherever appropriate.

It's still an arduous task to help market entities stand firmly on their feet and thrive. Inclusive tax-cutting measures should be strengthened to boost their vitality. Measures should also be taken to curb arbitrary charges and fines on enterprises. The efficiency and quality of proactive fiscal policies should be improved to make them more sustainable.

In 2021, government debt management will be improved and the macro leverage ratio of government departments kept basically stable. The necessary support for economic recovery will be maintained while policy space will be reserved for future response to risks and challenges.



International Order

China Newsweek
March 15

The world is struggling to find an efficient way to tackle the rising tide of problems and forge a more stable and prosperous future due to COVID-19.

Countries need to stay committed to the international law and rules that have been jointly formulated and widely accepted by the

“Sanctions based on lies could be interpreted as deliberately undermining China’s security and development interests... We want dialogue, not confrontation.”

Zhang Ming, head of the Chinese Mission to the European Union, warning the bloc against sanctions over Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, northwest China, in a video conference on March 17

“By opening up its market to the rest of the world, China is certainly facing the typical challenges carried by participation in globalization but it has eventually recognized that the advantages of an open and inclusive economy prevail over the negative effects of protectionism and isolation.”

Matteo Giovannini, a finance professional at the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in Beijing, in an article published on the CGTN website on March 16

global community.

The international community needs to adhere to the spirit of extensive consultation. That means global affairs should be jointly addressed through everyone working together, instead of being dominated by just one or a handful of major powers. To uphold multilateralism in the new era, countries need to work together to reform global governance.

In the economic field, an open, transparent, inclusive, rule-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading regime is essential to expand the global market, keep the global industrial and supply chains running steadily and boost high-quality and sustainable development.

Over the past half century, China has safeguarded the UN-centered international system, and the international order underpinned by international law. As a responsible major country, it has engaged in global cooperation to improve global governance so that the world community as a whole can better handle global challenges.

Given the evolution of the international situation, the international community is expecting the UN to keep pace with the times and improve itself through reform. The way to address the various challenges in the world is for countries to uphold true multilateralism.

Hollywood Films in China

Guancha.gmw.cn

March 17

Recently two animated Hollywood films, *Tom and Jerry* and *Raya and The Last Dragon*, were screened in China. However, neither of them performed as well as expected, especially compared to the box-office records during the Spring Festival.

In recent years, the market share of Hollywood films in China has declined. In 2004, the box office of domestic films surpassed Hollywood films' for the first time. In 2019, only two Hollywood films were in

China's top 10 list.

The government has introduced favorable policies for the application of technologies like cloud computing, big data and artificial intelligence in the film industry in recent years. In addition, both the themes and special effects of domestic films have become world class. In fact, there is not much difference between Chinese and Hollywood films in the level of film production.

Besides, domestic films can resonate better because they reflect the core common values shared by the Chinese audience and can better demonstrate China's rich history and culture.

NEW HONORARY CURATOR FOR WUDANG MUSEUM

Shan Jixiang, who served as the curator of the Palace Museum between 2012 and 2019, has been appointed honorary curator of the Wudang Museum on March 11.

Shan, who called himself the gatekeeper of the Palace Museum, reinvigorated the former imperial palace and made it more popular with young people by carrying out a series of innovative changes during his term.

The Wudang Mountains are a small mountain range in Shiyan, Hubei Province in central China. They are renowned for magnificent ancient buildings, profound traditional Taoist culture and Wudang kung fu. In 1994, the Ancient Building Complex in the mountains was listed by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage Site.

The Wudang Museum, a national second-class museum, receives about 600,000 visitors per year. Its objectives are to increase the public's understanding of kung fu, Taoism and local customs.



“China has lost some of its advantages in mid- and low-end manufacturing due to the soaring costs of labor and natural resources. Chinese enterprises should promote technology innovation to meet market demand and add more value to their products.”

Jia Kang, head of China Academy of New Supply-Side Economics, on China's manufacturing industry in an article published on the *China Daily* website on March 17

“China has taken advantage of its exposure to global markets and beneficial trade relations, using these to drive productivity gains. This is an example that other countries can seek to emulate.”

Elliott Harris, United Nations chief economist, commenting on China's poverty alleviation in an interview with Xinhua News Agency on March 16

Farmers harvest pineapples in Shangen in Hainan Province, south China, on March 14

