

OPINION: CHINA-EU WARMUP P.25

FEATURES: SEMICONDUCTOR PROSPECTS P.34

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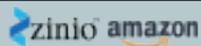
A water town in Beijing

Cover Design: Wang Yajuan

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## Democracy in Action

Should democracy necessarily be characterized by partisan politics? A look at the workings of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, sheds light on an alternative model.

Nearly 3,000 deputies are attending the First Session of the 14th NPC, which opened in Beijing on March 5. They were elected by the country's provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, special administrative regions and armed forces. Of them, 16.69 percent are workers and farmers, while 32.55 percent are Party and government officials.

Being elected is not merely an honor; deputies shoulder important responsibilities. Effectively representing public interests is their top priority, and they must maintain close contact with their communities to do so. They also need to have both an in-depth knowledge of their own industries, professions and communities, and a good command of the nation's laws and policies.

Part of the role of NPC deputies includes regularly carrying out field research to gain understanding of economic and social development, as well as collect public opinion. Based on this insight, they

formulate suggestions, which they then submit to the NPC. Government agencies are obligated to consider these suggestions and give feedback, and deputies then review this feedback and confirm whether or not it is satisfactory. As legislators, deputies can also propose motions on making, amending and interpreting laws.

In parallel with the NPC session, the annual session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee gathers together more than 2,000 advisors. They include prominent figures in political, economic, academic, scientific, artistic and sporting communities. Like NPC deputies, they also make proposals to government departments for the betterment of the people.

As no similar bodies exist in Western countries, many international observers find it difficult to comprehend China's political system. While it is natural to have misunderstandings, there is no reason whatsoever to assume the Western system is the only approach to good governance. China's development has already demonstrated that there are other viable options. **BR**



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## A ROLE MODEL FOR ALL AGES

Sculptor Wu Weishan (left) unveils his creation—a statue of the Chinese soldier and model citizen Lei Feng, on March 1 in downtown Beijing.

Wu, also President of the National Art Museum of China, created the bronze statue in 2012.

The ceremony marked the 60th anniversary of Chairman Mao Zedong's call on all Chinese citizens to learn from Lei. Ever since, March 5 has been designated as Lei Feng Day.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, too, has stressed the importance of carrying forward Lei's Good Samaritan spirit on multiple occasions.



## Sights of the Season

A tourist enjoys the cherry blossom sights at a hostel in Qianyuan Village of Sandu Township, Jiande, Zhejiang Province in east China, on February 28. In recent years, the township has helped locals increase their income by promoting seasonal sightseeing routes which feature mountain cherry blossoms, camping sites and hostels.

## Individual Pension Accounts

More than 24 million individual pension accounts have been opened since China announced the implementation of its private pension plan to supplement the country's old-age insurance mechanism in November last year, the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, the country's banking and insurance regulator, said, according to Xinhua News Agency on February 26.

The commission added that the country's banking and insurance institutions have been introducing savings, wealth management products, commercial pension insurance and other

financial products for individual pension account holders.

Under the private pension plan, applicants can open their own individual pension accounts, which can collect up to 12,000 yuan (\$1,740.1) annually and enjoy tax incentives—specifically for buying certain old-age financial products.

The country unveiled the first batch of seven private pension wealth management products on February 10, the China Banking Wealth Management Registration and Depository Center said.

China has a three-pillar old-age insurance mechanism, covering national basic old-age insurance, enterprise and occupational annuities, commercial

old-age financial products and the private pension plan.

## In the Trenches

A defensive trench dating back some 6,000 years has been discovered at a relics site in Henan Province in central China, according to the municipal institute of archaeology of Luoyang City, Xinhua reported on March 1.

The semi-annular trench, located at the Suyang relics site in Yiyang County, was dug manually, and the shape and structure reflected the powerful and orderly social organization ability and technical level at that time, Ren Guang, in charge of the site's excavation, said.

Pottery, stone, jade and bone

wares were also uncovered at the site, as well as well-preserved carbonized corn and millet remains.

Archaeologists initiated the Suyang relics site excavation in early 2021.

## Water-Saving Regulation

A new regulation on saving water in Beijing took effect on March 1, providing stronger legal protection for the city's water conservation efforts.

Compared with the previous decree, the regulatory upgrades improve the legal framework of water-saving measures and apply them to the entire process of water usage. The regulation also includes more comprehensive legal penalties for acts of water wastage.

"In the past, we had no legal basis for punishing the illegal use of water for landscaping and firefighting. Now, the new regulation clearly stipulates the punishment for such acts," Zhang Liang, an official with the Beijing Water Authority, said.

Zhang said that individuals and entities who illegally use water from public water facilities will be subject to fines of up to 10,000 yuan (\$1,454) and 100,000 yuan (\$14,540), respectively.

Home to more than 21 million people, Beijing has long been troubled by water scarcity. A major portion of the city's water supply is now sourced from the south.

The South-to-North Water Diversion Project has transferred over 8.4 billion cubic meters of water from major rivers in the south of the country to the nation's capital from 2014 to 2022, according to the Beijing Water Authority.

## App Regulation

China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has released 26 measures to regulate the use of Internet applications to optimize the industry's services.

The measures include standardizing the installation and uninstallation of the applications, optimizing service experiences and strengthening personal information protection, the ministry said.

In recent years, China's mobile Internet has dynamically developed, and a range of application services has boomed. Data from the ministry showed that some 2.58 million applications are available for users at present, while innovative services such as small programs continue to emerge.

The measures help improve the upstream and downstream service capabilities and solve the problems affecting the user perception of services, an official with the ministry said.

## Mountain Transit

The total length of operational rail transit in "mountain city" of Chongqing Municipality in southwest China has exceeded 500 km, as the new section of its Line 5 opened to traffic on

February 27.

The opening of the new section brings the number of rail transit lines in operation to 12 in the city, according to the municipal commission of housing and urban-rural development.

Chongqing has achieved many breakthroughs in rail transit construction over the years. It has introduced train models specially developed to adapt to the rugged terrain of the mountainous city, and constructed many world-class rail transit bridges.

Chongqing will now make more efforts to build a multi-layer rail transit system, Director of the Commission Yue Shun said, adding that the city aimed to have a mileage of more than 1,000 km of rail transit, both in operation and under construction, by 2025.

## Public Wellbeing

China put forward a series of new regulations, which took effect on March 1, to enhance the people's wellbeing, Xinhua reported on February 28.

For instance, 111 drugs were added to the list of medicines eligible for the country's medical insurance reimbursement as of March, some of which are targeted at COVID-19, rare diseases and pediatric diseases.



## Raking It In

A farmer stacks crates filled with dragon fruit in Zhonghe Township of Danzhou, Hainan Province in south China, on February 24. Many fruits and vegetables in the tropical province are currently ripe for harvesting.

Most of the newly added drugs have been on the market for under five years. The number of drugs covered by medical insurance increased to 2,967, according to the catalog issued by the National Healthcare Security Administration.

As part of the new regulations, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment has released a list of 14 key pollutants, strictly forbidding or limiting their production, processing and emission.

The pollutants are hazardous chemicals that pose risks to the environment and human health but have not yet been effectively treated in China, an official with the ministry said.

Another regulation requires the National Medical Products Administration to conduct sampling inspections on children's cosmetics and other products every year, and build a national cosmetics information system based on these reviews.



## On the Hunt

College graduates look for interesting jobs at a job fair in Beijing on March 1. The fair is part of a campaign organized by local authorities to help fresh graduates secure employment. During the three-month campaign, more than 100 such fairs will offer young job hunters over 100,000 employment opportunities.

## Investment Destination

China remains one of the most attractive destinations for investment with more companies planning to reinvest in the country this year, according to a report released by the American Chamber of Commerce in South China (AmCham South China) on February 27.

The chamber's annual white paper on China's business environment is seen as a window for observing the country's business environment through the eyes of foreign-funded enterprises. It was based on a survey of more than 200 companies from September to December 2022. Among the surveyed businesses, 40 percent are wholly foreign-owned companies, and nearly 20 percent are representative offices of foreign companies and joint ventures.

The report showed that more than 90 percent of participating companies had selected China

as one of their most important investment destinations worldwide.

More than half of the companies had gained over 30 percent of their global revenue from China, and 45 percent registered a significant or slight increase in their revenue from China last year, the report further read.

China has been among the world's fastest growing economies and features one of its most dynamic markets. Despite pandemic-induced uncertainty, most companies still consider China a critical part of their future strategic development plans, and 75 percent of participating firms plan to reinvest in China in 2023, an increase of around 3 percent, the report said.

With more than 2,300 members, AmCham South China provides support for American and international companies doing business in south China.

## Digital Development

China has rolled out a plan for the overall layout of the

country's digital development.

Important progress will be made in the development of a digital China by 2025, with effective interconnectivity in digital infrastructure, a significantly improved digital economy and major breakthroughs in digital technology innovation, according to the plan jointly released by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council.

By 2035, China will be at the global forefront in terms of digital development, and its digital progress in the economic, political, cultural, social and ecological fields will be better coordinated.

The plan includes support for the in-depth integration of digital technology and the real economy and the application of digital technology in the agricultural, manufacturing, financial, educational and medical services, as well as in the transportation and energy sectors.

The document envisions a digital country with effective digital government services, a thriving cyberspace culture, widely accessible digital public services, and ecological governance empowered by digital technology.

A system for independent digital technology innovation will be built, and businesses will be encouraged to play a leading role in technological innovation, according to the plan, which calls for improved intellectual property protection.

## Banking Assets

The banking financial institutions saw a steady expansion in assets in 2022, data from the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission showed.

Local and foreign currency assets of these institutions totaled 379.4 trillion yuan (\$54.7 trillion) at the end of last year, up 10 percent year on year, according to the commission.

A breakdown of the asset

## NUMBERS

China's Comprehensive Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)



data showed that large commercial banks accounted for 41.2 percent of the total, while joint-stock commercial banks contributed 17.5 percent.

The country's commercial banks reaped combined net profits of 2.3 trillion yuan (\$331.66 billion) in 2022, up 5.4 percent from 2021.

By the end of last year, the non-performing loan ratio of commercial banks stood at 1.63 percent, lower than the level at the end of the third quarter of last year.

## Vegetable Exports

China's vegetable exports saw stable growth in 2022, with export volume up 6.5 percent year on year, data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs showed.

Some 11.83 million tons of vegetables were exported last year, with a total value of \$17.22 billion, up 9.2 percent year on year, according to the ministry.

The country imported

337,000 tons of vegetables last year. The total value of these imports was \$960 million, down 19 percent from the previous year.

The data also indicated that China's vegetable trade surplus stood at \$16.26 billion in 2022, climbing 11.5 percent year on year.

## Petrochemical Project

A petrochemical project of China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC), China's leading oil and gas producer, became fully operational in Guangdong Province in late February.

The project, with a total investment of 65.4 billion yuan (\$9.43 billion), processes 20 million tons of crude oil per year, while producing 1.2 million tons of ethylene products and 2.6 million tons of paraxylene.

As a key project to support the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

strategy, it is a refining and chemical integration capable of producing a full range of petrochemical products, including more than 20 types of oil products and 200 types of chemical products.

The project will significantly reduce the dependence of Guangdong's industries, such as household appliances and electronics, on chemical materials from external sources, and will nurture the province's middle and downstream industries—worth about 560 billion yuan (\$80.8 billion).

## Monetary Policy

The People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, has pledged to make the prudent monetary policy a targeted and effective one to provide sustainable support to the real economy.

In its fourth-quarter monetary policy released on February 24, the PBC said it would intensify efforts to expand

domestic demand while ruling out the possibility of flood-like stimulus.

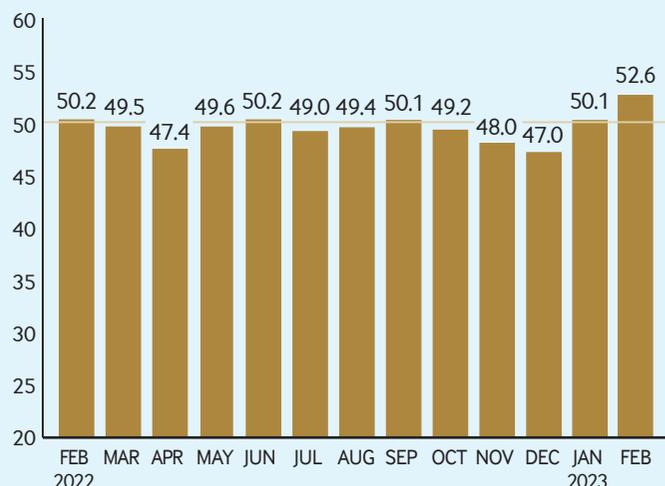
The PBC will guide financial institutions to strengthen their services in fields including inclusive finance, scientific and technological innovation, and green development, to push consumption recovery forward and tap into the economy's potential.

Efforts to deepen market-based interest rate reforms to lower financing costs for businesses and consumption credit costs for individuals will continue.

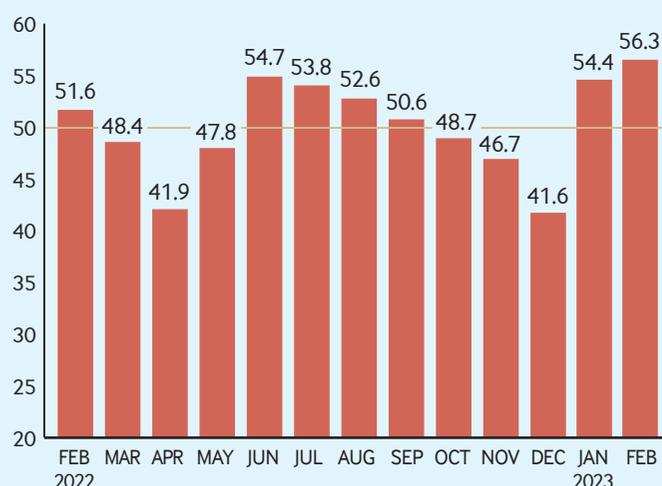
The PBC further said it would keep a close eye on future inflation trends and move to ensure the supply and price stability of grain and energy.

The renminbi's exchange rate will remain generally stable at a reasonable and equilibrium level, and the bottom line of no systemic financial risk will be safeguarded, according to the report.

China's Manufacturing PMI



China's Non-Manufacturing PMI



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



## KUWAIT

The Saudi Hawks, the Royal Saudi Air Force aerobatic team, put on a show during Kuwait's National Day celebrations in the Capital Governorate on February 25



## UNITED KINGDOM

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen attend a joint press conference in Windsor on February 27. During their talks earlier that day, they'd reached a new post-Brexit trade arrangement for Northern Ireland



## SPAIN

A visitor strikes a pose in front of a screen showing her appearance through the use of thermal imaging technology at the 2023 edition of the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on February 27. The event ran until March 2





## THAILAND

Military personnel attend the opening ceremony of Cobra Gold 2023 at U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield in Rayong Province on February 28. The multinational exercise will conclude on March 10



## CYPRUS

Nikos Christodoulides speaks during his presidential swearing-in ceremony at the parliament in Nicosia on February 28 after winning a runoff election on February 12 with 52 percent of the vote



## GREECE

Firefighters perform a rescue operation at the site of a train collision in Tempi Municipality on March 1. The death toll had reached 43, with 66 people hospitalized, as of March 2



# THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

## ↓ NEW MINISTER OF JUSTICE

**He Rong** has been appointed Minister of Justice, replacing Tang Yijun, who was elected as chairperson of the Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, in January.

He has worked within China's judicial system for more than 30 years. Before her new appointment, the 60-year-old from Shandong Province had served as vice president of the Supreme People's Court, China's top court, since April 2020.

He started her career at the Beijing High People's Court after graduating from the China University of Political Science and Law in 1984. Over the next 20 years or so, she worked within the capital's court system. In 2011, she went to the country's top court and, two years later, became its vice president. From March 2017 to April 2020, she served in several major positions in Shaanxi Province before returning to her position as vice president of the Supreme People's Court.



## Bolstering Bougie Bookstores

**Rednet.cn**  
**February 27**

On January 29, Yanyouji, a debt-laden bookstore chain, once famous for its elaborate interior designs, closed its last branch in Shanghai. This event is part of a wider trend in recent years of the rapid rise and downfall of numerous lavishly designed bookstores.

Unlike traditional bookstores, this new breed of visually attractive bookstores features chic combinations of bookstores, cafes and gift stores. Many of these stores have turned into popular check-in spots for

fashionistas wanting to create post-worthy pictures.

Many book lovers lament the fact that these bookstores, being too fixated on visual appeal, have lost their original charm, namely the creation of quiet spaces where customers can get lost in the stacks. Made up of the same ingredients—mirrored walls, niche art and fashion magazines, and miniature art galleries, these bookshops also seem to be little more than replicates of each other, without much potential to turn first-time visitors into loyal customers.

Hopefully, these bookstores will not only offer a more varied assortment of interior styles but also shift their focus back to the provision of quality books.



## Winter Wonderland

**Outlook Weekly**  
**February 20**

Despite the already extreme temperature hitting an all-time low of minus 53 degrees Celsius, China's northernmost province, Heilongjiang, saw a great surge in ice and snow activities during the Spring Festival holiday from January 21 to 27. The province has transformed itself into a winter wonderland dotted with elaborate ice sculptures, galloping snow mobiles, ski resorts, frozen waterfalls, and rime-glazed forests.

Multiple factors have driven this winter tourism boom. On top of strong rebounds

“Joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership will encourage local businessmen to be more innovative. There will probably be new industries and innovations that would arise from the new generations.”

**Benito Techico**, the Philippine President's special envoy to China for trade, investments and tourism, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

“The business opportunities between China and Brazil are growing tremendously. We place confidence in matching Brazil's necessities and China's capabilities as a supplier.”

**Affonso Brandão Henna**, Founder of Brazilian home appliance manufacturer SEMP, in a recent interview with Xinhua

in all kinds of tourist activity after China adjusted its COVID-19 control measures, the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics spurred the country's winter sports industry to faster growth.

At a local level, cities across Heilongjiang have created their own unique sets of winter attractions. The Ice-Snow World in Harbin, the capital of the province, is one of the world's largest ice and snow theme parks. A dragon boat race featuring traditional dragon boats propped up on skates was held in January in the city of Daqing. In Mohe, the country's northernmost city, bordered by Russia, tourists can visit the Arctic Village for a rare view of the aurora borealis.

Creativity is the key to the continuous growth of Heilongjiang's winter tourism sector, which integrates numerous trending leisure activities into its industry chain. Successful crossovers include ice fishing, winter camping, and paintball games on the snow.

Seeking to play a bigger role on the international scene, Heilongjiang plans to construct a bevy of top-flight venues ideal for hosting global sporting events. The province is set to bid for the 2028 Winter Youth Olympic Games and a number of other world junior championships.

## Services for Seniors

**China Youth Daily**  
February 24

One netizen's online comment recently sparked much debate about the possible exclusion of technologically illiterate seniors from admission to the Palace Museum, or Forbidden City, in Beijing, which has adopted an online booking system that limits the daily number of visitors to 24,000. The museum responded by advising senior citizens to inquire at the entrance for remaining tickets.

Other tourist attractions in Beijing, such as Prince Gong's Mansion and the National Art

Museum, have made allowances for elderly visitors by either reserving a certain number of tickets for them or allowing them to enter without advance bookings.

A hallmark of a civilized society is that it looks after its most vulnerable members. While digital services have made life easier for many people, the older generations seem to have been left behind.

In 2050, the total number of senior citizens is expected to reach 487 million, an estimated 34.9 percent of the entire population. Therefore, China still has a long way to go in better serving the elderly in an increasingly digital age.

## ↓ PIONEER OF ECONOMIC REFORM DIES AT 92

Chinese economist **Li Yining**, renowned for his contributions to China's economic reform, died at 92 on February 27. He was a senior professor at Peking University and Honorary Dean of the university's Guanghai School of Management.

Born in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, Li graduated from Peking University in 1955 with a bachelor's degree in economics and had been teaching at his alma mater ever since.

Li has been one of the most influential economists in China since the beginning of the country's transition to a market economy in 1979. He was one of the first scholars in China to propose reforms to the shareholding system. He was also known for his staunch advocacy of reforming state-owned enterprises. His contributions have earned him the honorary title of Pioneer of China's Reform and Opening up.



“We will join hands with other countries to contribute more Chinese wisdom and strength to promoting the progress of humankind and the building of a better homeland.”

**Zhang Guangjun**, Vice Minister of Science and Technology, at a press conference on February 24

“We can rise above the fray, and use human rights, not as a weapon in the context of geopolitical shifts...but as what it is and was always meant to be: a solution to help us get out of the harms that are destroying our world.”

**Volker Turk**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the opening of the 52nd regular session of the UN Human Rights Council on February 27

## Editor's Note:

As the annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the top advisory body, are currently underway, *Beijing Review* presents the stories of a few NPC deputies and CPPCC National Committee members. We hope these reports help readers understand who they are and how they work for the nation's greater good.

### COVER STORY

# TIME TO SHINE

A construction worker's pathway to the nation's top legislature By Lu Yan



Zou Bin, a deputy to the National People's Congress from Hunan Province and a quality controller for the China Construction Fifth Engineering Division Corp., works on a construction site in Changsha, Hunan Province

**F**ive years ago, when Zou Bin first spoke to the media as a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), he was nervous. Standing in front of journalists at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the venue for the full sessions of the NPC, China's top legislature, the then 23-year-old felt overwhelmed by the situation and the responsibility.

This year, Zou, reelected to serve from 2023 to 2028, is much more poised and confident.

"I will continue to be a voice for all frontline construction workers, helping to address their concerns and

improve their work and life," Zou told *Beijing Review*.

## From rural worker to world champion

Born into a family of construction workers in a village in Xinhua County, Hunan Province, Zou began working as an apprentice bricklayer 200 km away in Changsha, the provincial capital. As a new apprentice still learning his trade, a typical day for Zou consisted of laying bricks, breaking them down, and laying them again until he was completely satisfied with his work.

Despite the daily pain from his physical exertions, Zou persisted in perfecting his skills, and it was this dedication and attention to detail that have seen him excel in his career. In two years, Zou became a fully qualified bricklayer and reached the first major turning point of his life.

In April 2014, when working at a construction site of China Construction Fifth Engineering Division Corp. in

Changsha, Zou's employer asked if he was willing to participate in a worker skills competition held by the company. Zou took the offer and ended up winning first place in his age group. In July that year, he entered and won a national skills competition and then began receiving national training in preparation for international competitions.

In 2015, Zou won a Medallion for Excellence in bricklaying at the 43rd WorldSkills Competition, held in Brazil, setting a record for China in this field.

"Winning the world competition changed not only my life, but also my attitude toward my career and bricklaying," Zou said, adding that through training and competing, he realized that bricklaying could be technically very sophisticated. The experience helped him gain a better understanding of what craftsmanship is. "It was way more than a means for making a living," he said.

When he returned to work, Zou was recruited as a construction quality controller for China Construction Fifth Engineering Division Corp. In the following years, he received several national awards, including the China Youth May Fourth Medal—the top honor for outstanding young Chinese people, and the title of National Model Worker.

Zou was also given the chance to share his skills and his stories with his colleagues and other people across the