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Cover Photo: Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the PRC, makes a public pledge of allegiance to the Constitution at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 10 after winning his third term (XINHUA)

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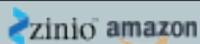
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Aspirational Goals

The First Session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, concluded in Beijing on March 13, with leading members of state institutions elected and endorsed.

Xi Jinping was unanimously elected president of the People's Republic of China and chairman of the Central Military Commission. "The people's trust is my biggest motivation moving forward and is also a weighty responsibility on my shoulders," Xi said in his speech at the closing meeting of the session. He further expressed he will continue to take the needs of the country as his mission and the people's interests as the yardstick to follow, be committed and honest in his duties and devote himself to his work without reserve. Upon nomination by President Xi, Li Qiang was endorsed as Chinese premier.

When meeting the press on March 13, Li emphasized a people-centered development philosophy and vowed to maintain steadfast determination in every undertaking concerning the people's wellbeing.

Most people do not have their eyes on GDP growth all the time, Li said, adding what they care more about are the things that are part of their everyday lives, such

as housing, employment and the environment. So the government must always plan and execute its agenda in light of what the people feel and act according to their aspirations.

As the world's second largest economy, China has made great progress in economic and social terms, but its development remains imbalanced and inadequate. Any aggregate volume divided by the 1.4-billion-strong population will result in a small per-capita figure. Going forward, the focus of China's development will shift from meeting the people's basic needs to offering them better quality of life.

In particular, China will upgrade the country's capacity in innovation, accelerate the creation of a modern industrial system and advance development in an environmentally friendly way. These are just a handful of topics the often-used term "high-quality development" refers to.

Also, the Chinese leadership has reiterated the country intends to provide a better business environment for all kinds of market players. Last year, the country's actual use of foreign capital topped \$189 billion, indicating China remains a popular destination for foreign investment. **BR**



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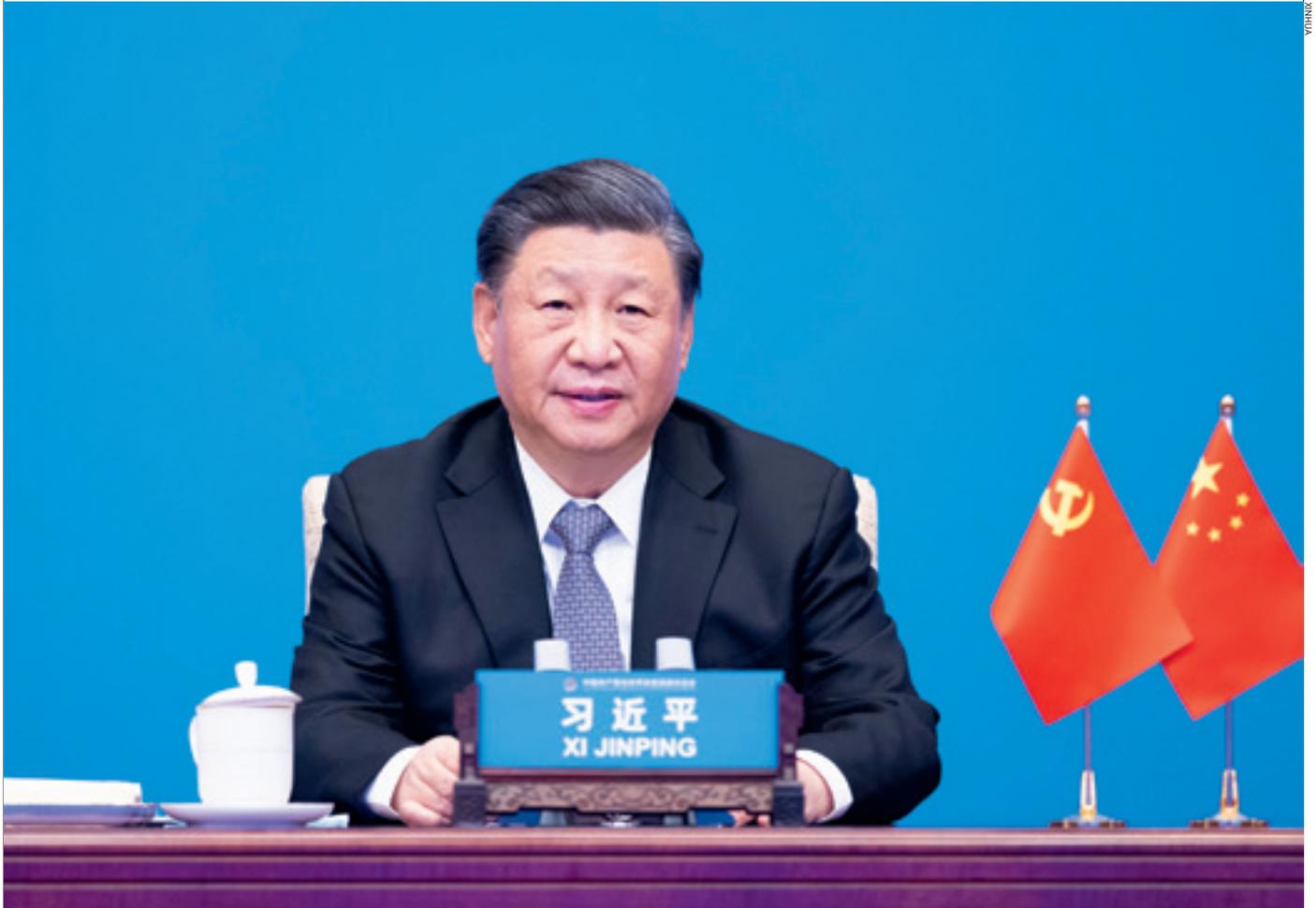
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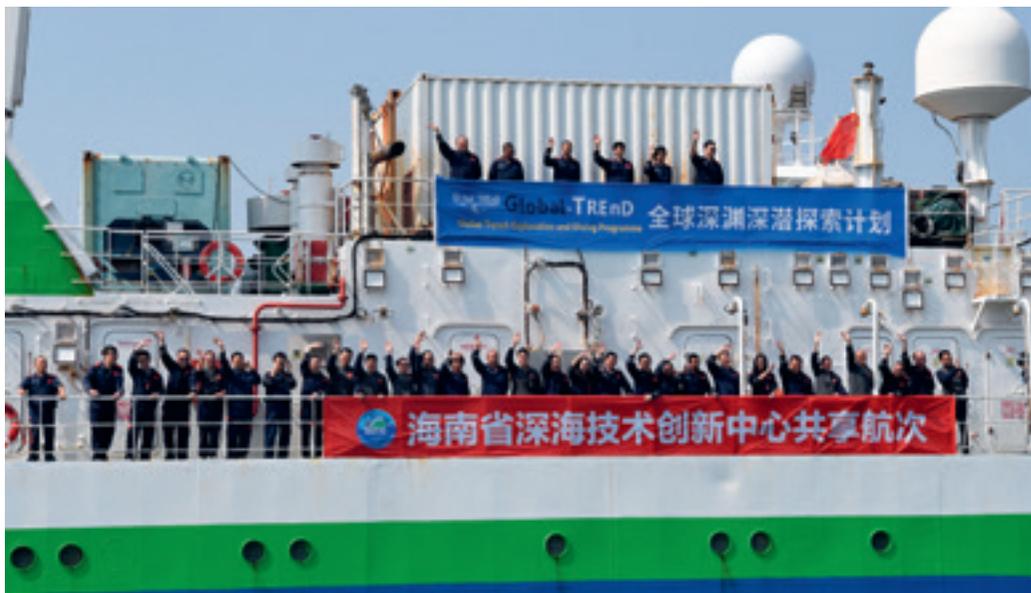


PEOPLE FIRST

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese President, attends the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting via video link and delivers a keynote address in Beijing on March 15.

Xi called on political parties around the world to closely integrate their own development with their national modernization drives and put the people first.

He further proposed the Global Civilization Initiative, stressing respect for the diversity of civilizations and the joint advocating of international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.



Mission Accomplished

Scientific research ship *Tansuo-1*, carrying the deep-sea manned submersible *Fendouzhe (Striver)*, arrives in Sanya, Hainan Province, on March 11. The ship returned after completing its first international manned deep-diving scientific research mission, which began in October 2022, in the waters surrounding Oceania. During the expedition, *Fendouzhe* successfully completed 63 dives, four of which exceeded a depth of 10,000 meters.

Afforestation Progress

China made new strides in afforestation in 2022, with the area of newly planted forests totaling 3.83 million hectares, according to a report from the National Greening Commission released on March 12, the country's 45th National Tree Planting Day.

The country has also restored 3.21 million hectares of degraded grassland through grass planting in 2022, according to the report.

After decades of afforestation, China has created the world's largest planted forests, with its forest coverage rate more than doubling from 12 percent in the early 1980s to 24.02 percent last year.

The country's grassland

vegetation coverage rate rose to 50.32 percent in 2022, according to the report.

Last year, China also tackled 1.85 million hectares of sandy and stony land through vegetation improvement.

The country's green movement is part of China's efforts to fulfill its commitment to peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, as forests and grasslands are important carbon sinks that absorb and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Visa and Entry Policies

Foreigners with valid visas issued before March 28, 2020 will be allowed to enter China, as the

country is adjusting its visa and entry policies to facilitate cross-border travel, Xinhua reported on March 14.

Visa-free policies will be resumed for entry to the country's southern island province of Hainan and cruise tour groups at Shanghai ports, the National Immigration Administration said.

Visa-free entry to the southern province of Guangdong will be restored for tour groups of foreigners from Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, and a similar mechanism will be reinstated for tour groups from Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries to enter Guilin in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

The policies came into force on March 15, according to immigration authorities.

Consumer Rights

Chinese courts have stepped up efforts to protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers in cyberspace after seeing a rapid growth of related disputes in recent years, the Supreme People's Court (SPC), China's top court, said.

Statistics released by the SPC on March 15 showed that over the past five years, courts nationwide concluded some 99,000 cases concerning online purchase contracts and about 23,000 cases involving online service contracts.

"With the rapid development of the digital economy, consumption in cyberspace has become more popular with the public, in turn generating more disputes in this field," He Xiaorong, Vice President of the top court, said while discussing the data at a news conference on March 15—also World Consumer Rights Day.

For example, Chinese courts settled 32,000 disputes related to online purchases last year, significantly more than the 12,000 settled in 2018, He said.

In addition, over the past five years, courts nationwide resolved a large number of disputes centering on the quality of products bought online, as well as on rental and tourism contracts, he added.

Outbound Tours

China resumed outbound group tours to another 40 countries and regions from March 15 because of people's increasing travel demand and optimized COVID-19 management policies.

According to a release by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on March 10, the 40 countries and regions include Nepal, Spain and Denmark,

among others.

According to the ministry, travel agencies are required to remind travelers to protect their health whilst overseas prior to departure.

The ministry further stated it will also enhance its supervision of travel agencies' outbound tourism businesses to "crack down on the illegal operation of incredibly low-priced tours or the organizing of tours that violate social morality."

From February 6, China resumed outbound group tours to 20 countries and regions, including Thailand, Russia and Singapore, following the adjustment of its COVID-19 policies.

Green Space

Beijing will add 22 leisure parks and urban forests, as well as 50 pocket parks and small green areas in 2023, local authorities said, Xinhua reported on March 12.

It is expected that by late 2023, 89 percent of the capital's residents will be able to enjoy parks and small green areas within a radius of 500 meters, according to the Beijing Municipal Forestry and Parks Bureau.

Beijing now features 1,050 parks, including leisure parks, urban forests and pocket parks.

The city also plans to complete the ecological restoration of 8,000 hectares of land and the afforestation of 1,000 hectares in 2023 as well as add another 200 hectares of urban green area.

From 2012 to 2017, Beijing launched an afforestation project covering 66,667 hectares.

A new round of afforestation projects, carried out from 2018 to 2022, added 68,000 hectares of green areas in Beijing.

The city has restored 10,200 hectares of wetlands over the past five years and currently has 596 species of terrestrial wild animals.

Exhibition CEO Summit

The Global Exhibition CEO Shanghai Summit will take place in the city from June 19 to 21 after a three-year hiatus due to COVID-19, Xinhua News Agency reported on March 14.

More than 250 domestic and overseas senior executives of exhibition groups and institutions and heads of industry associations will attend the event, according to the Shanghai Convention and Exhibition Industries Association.

The exhibition industry is considered the barometer of



River Deep

The right-line tunnel of the Xiangya Road river-crossing passway is drilled through in Changsha, Hunan Province in central China, on March 12. The excavation of the right-line tunnel, together with the left-line tunnel completing bore construction a year ago, means the construction of the main part of the two-way river-crossing passway is near completion.

the economy. Data from the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce showed that the city's exhibition industry is expected to make a quick recovery this year.

The city's main exhibition venues plan to host nearly 300 exhibitions this year, with an exhibition area of more than

14 million square meters, the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce said.

The Global Exhibition CEO Shanghai Summit was held annually from 2014 to 2019, attracting more than 1,000 corporate executives and government officials from over 20 countries and regions over the years.



Bursting Into Song

Performers of Kunqu Opera, one of the oldest existing drama forms in China with a complete performance system, act out an excerpt from *Palace of the Eternal Youth*, a play written in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), at the Palace Museum in Beijing on March 13. The Palace Museum and the Shanghai Kunqu Opera Troupe signed a strategic cooperation agreement on March 14 to restage Chinese classic operas.

Economic Rebound

“In the first two months of 2023, the Chinese economy steadily recovered with rising production demand, stable employment and consumer prices, and improved market expectations,” Fu Linghui, a spokesperson for the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), told a press conference on March 15.

Value-added industrial output went up 2.4 percent year on year in the first two months, NBS data showed. The growth rose by 1.1 percentage points from the level in December 2022, and the two-year average growth stood at 4.9 percent.

Retail sales of consumer goods increased 3.5 percent year on year to 7.7 trillion yuan (\$1.12 trillion) during the period, reversing declines seen in the previous three months.

Fixed assets investment totaled more than 5.35 trillion yuan (\$780 billion) in January and February combined, up 5.5

percent year on year. The growth was 0.4 percentage points higher than the full-year growth rate of 2022.

The service sector witnessed an accelerated recovery momentum in the first two months. The index gauging the industrial output rose 5.5 percent year on year during the period, rebounding from the 0.8-percent decrease in December 2022.

The average surveyed urban unemployment rate stood at 5.6 percent in the first two months, according to the NBS.

Express Expansion

The express delivery development index for February came in at 254.8, up 11.1 percent year on year, according to the State Post Bureau (SPB).

The sub-index for the development scale grew 36.5 percent from a year earlier, the SPB said, adding the monthly volume of parcels delivered is estimated to have increased 36 percent, while

express delivery revenue went up 38 percent year on year.

The sub-index for development capacity and trend both picked up over 8 percent year on year, and the sector is expected to maintain medium-high growth in March, according to the SPB.

The courier sector saw this year’s delivery volume exceed 20 billion parcels as of March 8, 72 days earlier than in 2019, demonstrating the vitality of the industry and the resilience and potential of the Chinese consumer market, the SPB said.

Paper Export

China’s export volume of pulp, paper and paper products surged 40 percent year on year to 13.1 million tons in 2022, official data showed.

The export value of these products reached \$32.05 billion, up 32.4 percent year on year, according to data from the National Development and Reform Commission.

In December, export value of these products rose 11.2 percent year on year to \$2.71 billion.

China reported steady growth in its newsprint production last year, with output up 1 percent from a year ago to reach 904,000 tons, the data revealed.

Paving the Way

Tibet Autonomous Region made further progress in transportation infrastructure development in 2022, bringing the total length of roads open to traffic to 121,400 km, the regional transportation authority said on March 10.

Last year, the plateau region invested roughly 16.39 billion yuan (\$2.38 billion) in fixed assets for road transportation.

Since 2016, the region has spared no efforts in investing in the development of rural road networks. As of now, 662 townships and 4,382 villages across Tibet have been connected by

NUMBERS

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



paved roads, accounting for 95 and 78.76 percent of the total, respectively. What's more, these roads are paving the way for prosperity and rural revitalization across the region.

"Tibet will complete fixed assets investment of 26.3 billion yuan (\$3.82 billion) in road construction and increase the length of roads open to traffic to 124,000 km this year," Liu Zhiqiang, director of the regional department of transport, said.

On the Move

Nationwide auto sales expanded 13.5 percent year on year to nearly 1.98 million units in February, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers showed on March 10.

Auto sales in the January-February period totaled more than 3.62 million units, down 15.2 percent year on year, according to the data.

In February alone, sales of passenger vehicles went up 10.9

percent to over 1.65 million units.

Sales of new-energy vehicles surged 55.9 percent year on year to 525,000 units in February.

The country's automakers manufactured 2.03 million vehicles in February, rising 11.9 percent year on year, the association said.

Auto exports soared 82.2 percent from a year earlier to 329,000 units in February, bringing the number of exports in the first two months to 630,000 units, up 52.9 percent year on year.

Back in Business

The Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) Development Index, calculated based on a survey of 3,000 SMEs from eight major industries, came in at 89.6 in February, up from 88.9 in January and 87.9 in December, the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises said in a monthly report.

The figure, although still lower than the boom-or-bust

line of 100, was the highest since August 2021.

The sub-indexes for all eight major sectors picked up that month, with that of the social service industry, the information transmission, computer service and software industry, and the accommodation plus food and beverage industry logging the biggest improvements.

Thanks to pro-growth government measures, SMEs had become more confident in their business development. This was in turn reflected in their improved market expectations and an increased willingness to invest, the association said, adding the capital shortage had been eased and labor demand was on the up.

Mapping out the Basics

The Ministry of Natural Resources recently released a guideline for the development

of a standard system for smart vehicle basic maps.

Autonomous vehicles rely on a mixture of artificial intelligence, sensors and digital maps. These maps allow them to see around curves, through thick air and over large vehicles blocking the vision of sensors.

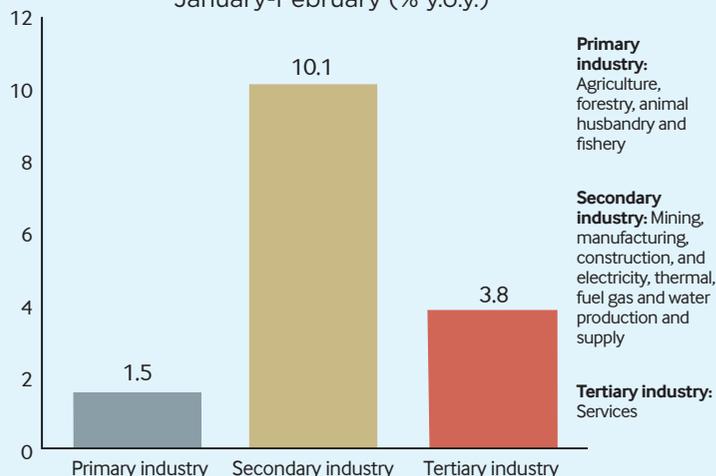
The document guides the standardization of these maps from the aspects of general application, production updates, application services, quality detection and safety management.

It proposes more than 10 standards for smart vehicle basic maps be established in advance, covering technical requirements and specifications such as basic general application and data acquisition to meet the urgent needs for the deep application of these maps.

According to the guideline, China will initially develop a standard system for smart vehicle basic maps to support autonomous driving by 2025.

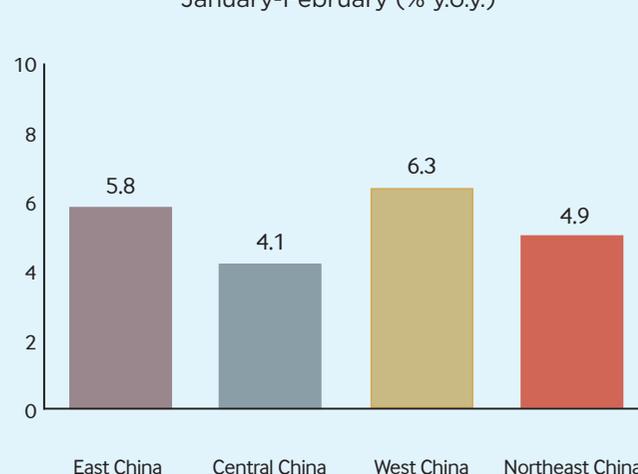
Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Sector

January-February (% y.o.y.)



Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Region

January-February (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

THIS WEEK WORLD



UNITED STATES

A Signature Bank branch in New York on March 13. The key lender to the crypto industry was declared defunct on March 12 by state regulators over a "similar systemic risk exception" following California's Silicon Valley Bank's collapse on March 10



JAPAN

A demonstrator holds up a sign reading "Weapons can't make peace" as hundreds gathered outside the venue of a military equipment fair near Tokyo on March 15 to protest the country's move to intensify its arms trade



FRANCE

President Emmanuel Macron (center) welcomes British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak upon his arrival at the Elysée Palace in Paris on March 10. Their talks focused on mending bilateral relations strained by disputes in recent years over a fishing license, illegal migration through the English Channel and the Australian submarine deal which "stabbed France in the back"





MALAWI

People gather at a flood-damaged road in Blantyre on March 14. Cyclone Freddy ripped through the country's southern region on March 13 and had claimed 225 lives as of March 16



NEW ZEALAND

Hot air balloons lift off on a sunny afternoon during the five-day Balloons Over Waikato Festival in Hamilton on March 15



UNITED KINGDOM

Bagpipers march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in London on March 12



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ ASTROPHYSICIST APPOINTED ICRA PRESIDENT

Scientist **Wang Yu** has been appointed as the new president of the International Center for Relativistic Astrophysics (ICRA), making him the first Chinese citizen to hold the position at the center, which was founded in 1985.

With a research focus on high-energy astrophysics, Wang has contributed a lot to machine learning for astrophysics as well as promoted international scientific exchanges, including cooperation between Chinese universities and the center.

Born in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, in 1985, Wang holds a bachelor's degree in physics from Southeast University, a master's in astrophysics from the Purple Mountain Observatory under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and a Ph.D. in astrophysics from the University of Rome in Italy.

He has been working in astrophysics at the International Center for Relativistic Astrophysics Network, an organization run by the ICRA since 2015.



Breaking Barriers

Rednet.cn
March 13

China's healthcare sector has seen a quiet yet wide transition from paper to electronic medical records (EMR), as many hospitals have created their own databases for EMR storage. EMRs have been recently brought into the spotlight by Xu Kewei, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, who suggested the integration of separate databases into a shared vault of patient records accessible to all authorized healthcare providers nationwide.

This action plan requires the creation of

an enormous database capable of holding a seemingly endless stream of personal information.

Despite the ability to break barriers, EMRs are extremely vulnerable to cyberattacks. To safeguard patient privacy, database creators should set up a two-factor authentication that only allows access when both patient and doctor have completed either facial or fingerprint recognition.

Apart from the use of advanced biometric technologies, a set of data protection laws clearly stating the consequences of leaking EMRs should also be put in place—not only to act as a deterrent for potential cyber attackers, but also to raise public awareness of privacy protection.



Silver Linings

China Newsweek
March 13

An aging population is one of the many realities that China currently has to cope with. By late 2022, China had 280 million seniors aged 60 and above and that number is set to keep growing. With hundreds of millions of over-50s on the cusp of exiting the workforce, China faces both a challenge and an opportunity to expand its silver economy.

“We must connect everyone, everywhere to the Internet by 2030. Leaving no one behind means leaving no one offline.”

António Guterres, UN Secretary General, at a meeting with members of civil society at the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on March 13

“I'm fully committed to continue to do everything in my power to implement the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s crucial mission in support of global peace and development.”

Rafael Grossi, Director General of the IAEA, in a statement as he was reappointed as the agency's Director General for a second four-year term on March 10

China has developed a senior care model that is commonly known as “90-7-3,” with 90 percent of older people living at home and supported by their families, 7 percent of retirees supported by community care centers, and the last 3 percent living in nursing homes. According to research conducted in 2021 by the Development Research Center of the State Council, with the rise of the 4-2-1 family structure—four seniors, two parents, and a single child—the ability of a household to fully support its senior members has been on the decline.

To tackle this challenge, the country’s senior home care sector has undergone a timely upgrade across multiple fields, such as daycare, housekeeping, dining and entertainment. Telemedicine services and house call doctors have also enabled seniors and their busy offspring to consult a doctor and refill prescriptions without going to the hospital.

Recent years have also seen many homes transformed into customized elderly friendly spaces equipped with shower chairs, handrails in bathrooms, non-slip mats and furniture with rounded edges. Smart devices, such as automatic night lights, fall detection sensors, voice-activated loudspeakers and heart rate monitors, have also been integrated into home designs to make senior life easier.

Service vs. Safety

Qianjiang Evening News
March 13

A domestic flight achieved online fame this month after the plane landed 20 minutes earlier than scheduled in response to a request from a passenger. The passenger, who had raised concerns with the flight crew about being late for his next flight, shared the experience on social media after taking the Shandong Airlines flight from Quanzhou in Fujian Province to Jinan in Shandong Province on March 6.

In response to general concerns over safety issues, Shandong Airlines stated that everything was performed in strict ac-

cordance with safety rules.

Safety has always been the top priority within the civil aviation industry and airport management involves a complex system of procedures, where every action can produce wide-ranging consequences. For these reasons, any alteration of the flight schedule should occur under strict supervision and after the careful assessments by specialists and professionals from air traffic control.

The ultimate solution to passengers’ anxieties related to flight delays lies not in the increase of flight speed, but in the provision of better customer service, such as timely updates, offers of compensation, and arrangements of express check-ins for transfer passengers.

WNBA SIGNS CHINESE BASKETBALL STAR

The American Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) side Washington Mystics has signed China’s national team’s star guard **Li Meng** to a training camp contract, it announced on March 13.

Li is the fourth Chinese player to join the WNBA for the upcoming season.

Born in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, in 1995, Li has been playing basketball since childhood and plays the position of forward.

She averaged 16.0 points, 1.7 rebounds and 2.5 assists per match while helping China finish runner-up at the 2022 International Basketball Federation Women’s Basketball World Cup in Sydney, Australia, equaling the country’s best result in major competitions.

Li recently helped Sichuan Province’s women’s basketball team land their first-ever Women’s Chinese Basketball Association title.



“China is promoting institutional opening up, which is very attractive to foreign-funded enterprises deeply engaged in the Chinese market.”

Liu Zhifei, President and General Manager of U.S. material science giant Corning Greater China, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

“China has spared no effort to strengthen the health system in Madagascar and improve access to healthcare for the [Malagasy] population.”

Onivelo Gabby Andriamanantena, chief of staff of Madagascar’s Ministry of Public Health, at a welcoming ceremony for the 23rd Chinese medical team visiting Madagascar, on March 9



COVER STORY

FRESH MOMENTUM FOR DEVELOPMENT

New leadership poised to guide the country on a journey
toward modernization By Ji Jing