

OPINION: NEW CHAPTER FOR CHINA-BRAZIL TIES P.24 | FEATURES: PANDA FERVOR P.42

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## DIRECTION: GROWTH

China's Q1 data point to economic recovery



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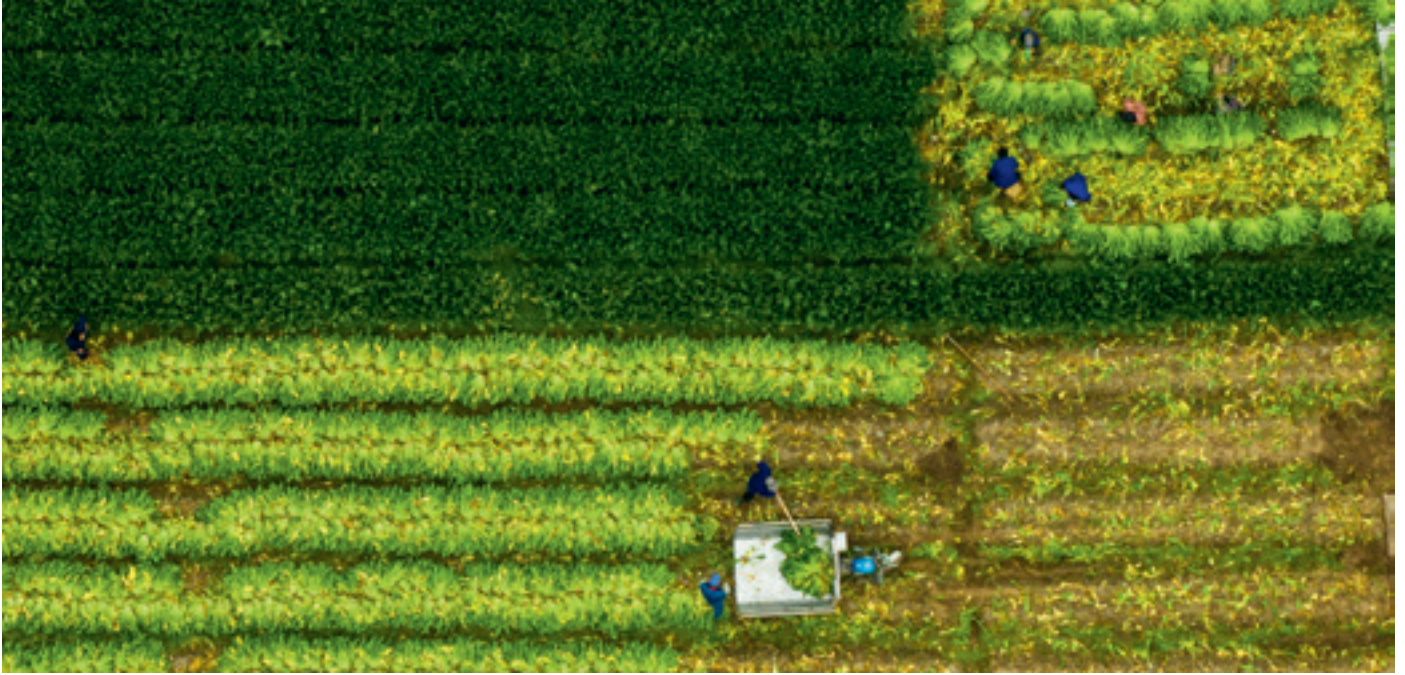
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Cover Design: Cui Xiaodong

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## Four Point Five Percent

China's GDP was up 4.5 percent in the first quarter of 2023, the first year after the country adjusted its COVID-19 management policy. At a press conference on April 18, the National Bureau of Statistics said the economy made a good start.

Since bottoming out at 0.4 percent in the second quarter last year, the Chinese economy has been on an upswing and has now entered a period of steady growth. In the first quarter, retail sales of consumer goods, fixed assets investment as well as imports and exports of goods rose 5.8 percent, 5.1 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively, year on year.

The Chinese Government set the goal of around 5 percent for GDP growth for 2023 and this first-quarter performance indicates that goal is within reach.

First, domestic demand continues to expand. In the first quarter, retail sales of consumer goods rose after a decline of 2.7 percent in the fourth quarter last year. In addition, investment in infrastructure and manufacturing grew 8.8 percent and 7 percent, respectively. Consumption contributed 66.6 percent to GDP growth.

Second, the employment situation is improving. Directly correlating with

economic performance, employment is essential to household incomes and spending potential. In the first quarter, the surveyed urban unemployment rate averaged 5.5 percent, down 0.1 percentage point over that of the previous quarter.

Third, new drivers of growth continue to grow. In the first quarter, investment in hi-tech industries grew 16 percent, higher than overall investment growth. The green industry expanded rapidly, with the output volumes of new-energy vehicles and photovoltaic cells increasing 22.5 percent and 53.2 percent, respectively.

Fourth, opening up is making solid progress. In the first two months, paid-in foreign investment to China rose 6.1 percent, and that in hi-tech industries surged 32 percent. In the first quarter, China's trade in goods with economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, proposed by China to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, increased 16.8 percent year on year.

However, as the economic landscape at home and abroad will continue to be complex and volatile this year, sustained efforts will be needed to ensure China meets its annual targets. **BR**



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## SPLASH A WISH!

People dive right into the fun during the Water-Splashing Festival in a square in Jinghong City, Dai Autonomous Prefecture of Xishuangbanna in Yunnan Province, on April 15.

The festival, which usually lasts three days, is the official New Year celebration for China's over 1 million Dai people, the majority of whom reside in Yunnan.

The tradition of water-splashing for good luck has its origins in Buddhist purification rituals.



## Spacewalk Record

Screenshot captured at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center on April 15 shows *Shenzhou-15* taikonaut Zhang Lu waving after performing extravehicular activities outside the *Wentian* lab module. The three crew members have now performed extravehicular activities on four occasions since they were launched into space in November 2022, setting a domestic record for the most spacewalks by a single crew.

## Yellow River Forum

The Yellow River Culture Forum closed on April 19 in the city of Dongying in Shandong Province, in the estuary of the Yellow River.

Delegates from all nine provincial-level regions through which the Yellow River runs attended the two-day event, launching the Yellow River Culture Forum Initiative.

The initiative calls for jointly working on integrated high-quality cultural and tourism development in the Yellow River basin, improving the Yellow River culture and tourism brand, and launching high-quality tourism routes.

In recent years, the regions

along the Yellow River, the cradle of ancient Chinese civilization, have made marked progress in coordinated industrial development, ecological protection and the promotion of Yellow River culture.

The forum's different activities showcased more than 80 kinds of traditional paintings, crafts and cultural and creative products from nine provincial-level regions and nine cities along the Yellow River.

## New Majors

The Ministry of Education said on April 19 it had released 26 new disciplines for undergraduate programs amid efforts to

help universities better serve national strategies and regional development.

The newly approved majors cover areas such as biometrics, robotics, national parks, rural governance and family education, according to the ministry.

So far, China's higher education institutions have 792 majors in 93 categories designated for undergraduates.

In addition, China will adjust the composition of about 20 percent of the disciplines and majors at its higher education institutions, replacing outdated ones with new ones that keep abreast with new technologies, emerging sectors and new

business models, according to a reform plan released by the education ministry and other authorities earlier that month.

## Digital Dunhuang

An interactive digital platform of a virtual duplication of the Library Cave in Mogao Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Dunhuang, Gansu Province, has become accessible to the public from April 18.

Jointly developed by the Dunhuang Academy and leading Chinese tech firm Tencent, the platform reproduces the historical scenes of the Library Cave over 100 years ago in the digital world through advanced gaming technologies.

Based on the platform, visitors can "travel back in time" to ancient dynasties and interact with eight historical figures, immersing themselves in Dunhuang culture.

The Library Cave in the Mogao Grottoes was discovered in 1900, with more than 60,000 cultural relics dating from the 4th century to the 11th century unearthed. It was one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century.

Su Bomin, Director of the academy, said more efforts will be made to explore new forms for displaying cultural relics and offer the public more immersive cultural experiences to promote and develop Dunhuang culture.

The public can access the platform via the Digital Dunhuang website and its affiliated Weixin mini-program. Mini-programs are sub-applications within the ecosystem of Weixin, China's ubiquitous superapp.

The platform will also release new versions in different

languages, including English, Japanese and Korean.

## Waste No More

Lavish banquets became the focus of a recently released draft guideline for curbing food waste, *China Daily* reported on April 17.

The draft, currently soliciting public input, is the latest in a series of efforts by the Chinese Government to promote a more sustainable approach to food consumption and encourage responsible practices in the food and beverage industry at large.

The draft contains eight categories of measures. They include the clear indication of prices and weight of dishes offered by restaurants, reducing waste at banquets, perfecting the evaluation system for dining establishments and improving industry self-regulation.

The draft requires restaurants to take steps to reduce food waste at banquets. Catering companies hosting banquets are required to include policies aimed at reducing food waste in their contracts.

Restaurants are also required to eliminate minimum spending requirements and indicate the number of diners that each banquet package is designed for.

They are also urged to provide free containers for people to take home leftovers.

The draft calls for the increased monitoring of large-scale banquets, particularly those offered by hotels and those that charge more than 1,500 yuan (\$217.6) per table, excluding drinks. Authorities shall conduct random inspections to ensure that the protocols are being followed.

## Aviation History Museum

The History Museum of China Aviation Industry was inaugurated in Beijing on April 16, becoming the only venue to provide a comprehensive display of China's 110-year aviation history.

Located in Miyun District, the museum was jointly established by three major players in the Chinese aviation industry: the Aviation Industry Corp. of China, the Aero Engine Corp. of China and the Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China.

More than 1,400 exhibits are on display inside the museum hall, which covers an area of 3,328 square meters and has an exhibition area of around 2,400 square meters.

Ten physical aircraft and



## Ready to Roll

A China-Europe freight train loaded with Chinese-brand vehicles waits for departure at the Harbin international container center station in Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang Province, on April 16. The province launched its first China-Europe freight train carrying domestic brand vehicles that day.

full-scale simulation aircraft models are on display outside the museum.

Thanks to the country's unremitting efforts, China has cultivated a modern aviation industry and aviation culture. The museum shows major events, products, activities and

representative figures throughout the development of China's aviation industry, "highlighting the passion, culture and dedication of the Chinese aviation industry and its people," according to the museum. The museum will be open to the public free of charge.



## Flying High

The 40th Weifang International Kite Festival opens in Weifang, Shandong Province, on April 15. The festival, which will last until May 20, attracted more than 400 kite lovers from nearly 60 countries to showcase their kite-making and -flying techniques at its opening ceremony.

## Real Economy Support

The People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, has pledged to implement a more targeted approach to the prudent monetary policy and provide stronger support for the real economy.

In a statement released on April 14 after the latest quarterly meeting of its monetary policy committee, the central bank said it will make every effort to stabilize growth, employment and prices, and expand domestic demand.

While the domestic economy is witnessing a recovery trend, its foundation is not yet solid, it said, vowing to keep loan growth at a reasonable and stable level and ensure that increases in the money supply and aggregate financing are generally in step with nominal economic growth.

Priority will go to infrastructure construction and economic key sectors plus weak links, like inclusive finance, green development and sci-tech innovation,

will receive more support, the PBC said.

Efforts will be made to establish mechanisms for the financial sector to effectively support the real economy and to guarantee the financial sector's support for private enterprises is commensurate with their contributions to China's economic and social development, it said.

The central bank also pledged to effectively prevent and defuse the risks of high-quality and industry-leading housing developers, and implement city-specific policies to meet the demand of first-time home buyers or those looking to improve their housing situation.

## Auto Exports

China exported 994,000 vehicles in the first quarter (Q1) of this year, soaring 70.6 percent from a year ago, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Passenger vehicle exports jumped 82.9 percent year on

year to 826,000 units, while exports of commercial vehicles climbed 28.1 percent from a year ago to 168,000 units.

In the January-March period, exports of new-energy vehicles more than doubled to 248,000 units, the data further revealed.

## Property Rights Market

The trading volume of China's property rights market hit 22.5 trillion yuan (\$3.27 trillion) last year, marking a new high, data from the Chinese State-Owned Property Exchanges Association showed.

About 14.86 trillion yuan (\$2.16 trillion) of financial assets were traded in 2022. Procurement transactions and asset and equity transactions came in at 5.1 trillion yuan (\$739.6 billion) and 1.88 trillion yuan (\$273.3 billion), respectively.

While natural resources deals stood at 649.7 billion yuan (\$94.5 billion), transactions of several environment-related rights, including those for

carbon emission and pollution discharge, came to 13.33 billion yuan (\$1.9 billion).

## Charging Piles

Some 632,000 charging piles were added nationwide in the January-March period, rising 28.6 percent from the same period in 2022, the China Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Promotion Alliance said.

Electric car charging piles are fixed on the ground and provide AC electric energy for electric cars with onboard chargers by using a special charging interface and conduction mode.

By late March, China had more than 5.84 million charging piles, their number surging 87.9 percent year on year.

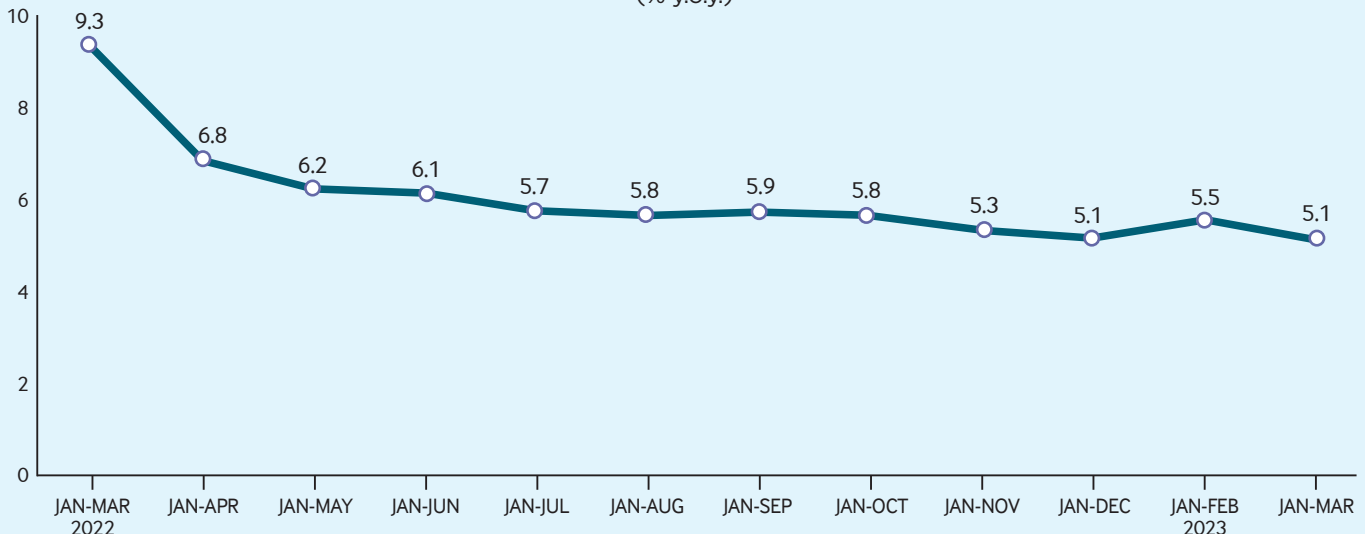
During Q1 of this year, retail sales of new-energy vehicles jumped 22.4 percent year on year to 1.31 million units.

## Power Use

China's electricity consumption, a key barometer of economic

## NUMBERS

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





activity, rose 3.6 percent year on year in Q1 of this year to 2.12 trillion kilowatt-hours (kWh), data from the National Energy Administration showed.

Electricity consumed in the primary, secondary and tertiary industries rose 9.7, 4.2 and 4.1 percent year on year, respectively, to 26.6 billion, 1.38 trillion and 369.6 billion kWh.

Residential power consumption logged an increase of 0.2 percent from the same period last year—to 342.4 billion kWh.

In March alone, the country's power use increased 5.9 percent year on year to 736.9 billion kWh.

## Train Services Growth

According to the China State Railway Group Co. Ltd., the number of China-Europe freight train services surged 15 percent year on year to 4,186 trips in Q1 of this year.

The freight trains handled about 450,000 twenty-foot

equivalent units (TEUs) of containers of goods from January to March, up 28 percent from a year ago, according to the company.

In March alone, the number of China-Europe freight train trips soared 31 percent year on year to 1,488. The trains transported 162,000 TEUs of containers of goods, representing an increase of 52 percent from a year ago.

Starting operations in 2011, the China-Europe freight trains have offered a secure and reliable channel between Asia and Europe, transporting more than 50,000 types of goods, including IT products, automobiles and parts, clothes, grain, wine, coffee beans and timber.

## Volkswagen Center

Volkswagen will invest around 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) to establish a new development, innovation and procurement center in China, the Volkswagen Group announced on April 18.

The new center, with the project name 100%TechCo, will

be set up in Hefei, the capital of Anhui Province.

It will combine vehicles and components research and development (R&D) teams with purchasing, leverage synergies in the development process and integrate state-of-the-art local technologies into product development at an early stage, the company said.

The center is expected to be launched in early 2024 and will comprise more than 2,000 employees from procurement and R&D. It is expected to gradually shorten the development time of new products and technologies by around 30 percent.

The establishment of 100%TechCo is an important step of the company's "in China, for China" strategy, according to Ralf Brandstaetter, Chairman and CEO of Volkswagen Group China.

Based in Hefei, Volkswagen Anhui is Volkswagen Group's first joint venture in China that focuses on the R&D and manufacturing of new-energy vehicles.

## Gas Field Project

Sinopec, China's biggest oil refiner, has signed an agreement with QatarEnergy to acquire a 1.25-percent stake in the latter's North Field expansion project.

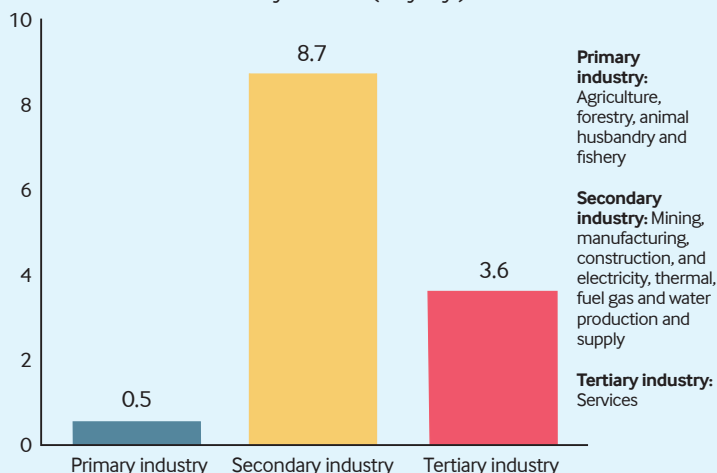
With a total investment of \$28.75 billion, the project is the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) mission and is expected to begin production in 2026.

It will boost Qatar's annual LNG exports from 77 million tons to 110 million tons, Sinopec said.

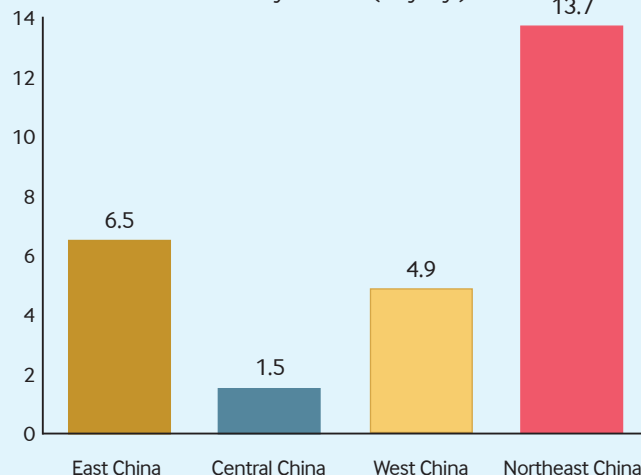
QatarEnergy is one of Sinopec's most important partners. Their collaboration will help optimize China's energy consumption structure and enhance the security, stability and reliability of China's clean energy supply, Ma Yongsheng, Chairman of Sinopec, said.

In November 2022, Sinopec signed a 27-year deal to buy LNG from QatarEnergy. According to the agreement, QatarEnergy would supply 4 million tons of LNG to Sinopec annually.

Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Sector  
January-March (% y.o.y.)



Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Region  
January-March (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

# THIS WEEK **WORLD**



## GERMANY

An intelligent robot imitates a man's arm movement during the Hannover Messe in Hannover on April 18. The leading trade fair for mechanical and electrical engineering kicked off a day earlier, with the theme of Industrial Transformation—Making the Difference



## MALTA

Rescued migrants wait to disembark in Marsaxlokk on April 17. Around 60 migrants were taken to Malta after being rescued from rough seas as they attempted to reach Europe from Libya



## YEMEN

A man hugs his brother, released during a prisoner exchange, in Sanaa on April 15. That day saw the beginning of the three-day exchange of more than 800 prisoners by Yemen's warring parties. The UN-brokered deal came amid concerted diplomatic efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict





## BELGIUM

People in traditional dress march down the street during the 25th edition of FolkNam, the folklore and traditions festival in Namur on April 15. The event aims to promote and protect local traditional culture



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## UNITED STATES

Multiple cars are stacked on top of one another amid crumbled concrete after a parking garage partially collapsed in New York on April 18. One person was killed and five others sustained injuries



## JAPAN

A man suspected of having thrown an explosive device in the direction of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during his outdoor speech is held down by police officers in Wakayama, Wakayama Prefecture, on April 15



SYRINX

# THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

## ↓ A TELLER OF TOUCHING TALES

*In Search of Lost Time*, directed by Hong Kong director **Derek Yee Tung-Shing**, won Best Asian Chinese Language Film at the 41st Hong Kong Film Awards on April 16.

Released in late 2022, the film tells a touching tale of orphans from Shanghai and other cities adopted by nomadic families in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 1960, when China grappled with natural disasters and ensuing economic difficulties. The film, based on true stories, currently scores 7.1 out of 10 on China's reviewing platform Douban.

Born in Hong Kong in 1957, Yee, who shifted from acting to directing in the early 1980s, won several top awards in the Hong Kong film industry. He chairs the Board of Directors of the Hong Kong Film Awards, founded in 1982.



## Injunction on Influencers

**Economic Daily**  
April 17

Universal Beijing Resort, a theme park owned by Universal Studios, has recently banned the entry of unauthorized professional photographers. Since its debut in September 2021, the park has been a hotspot for online influencers, who, invariably dressed in Harry Potter-themed costumes, often bring photographers—sometimes an entire film crew—into the park for post-worthy photos and travel vlogs.

Stylish posts created by professional photographers have become increasingly popular among young Chinese travelers, for whom the creation of perfect shots is almost as important as the travel experience itself.

However, these photo shoots not only are

a nuisance for other tourists, but also entail serious legal risks. One of the most valued assets of a theme park is its trademarks and franchises. The unlicensed appearance of these properties in commercial photo shoots may possibly constitute copyright infringements.

Therefore, visitors should definitely be aware of these issues and refrain from using unauthorized photography services. Meanwhile, the mere possession of a digital single-lens reflex camera does not justify a denial of entry, and simply chasing away suspicious persons at popular spots does not solve the problem. Theme park authorities should give a clearer definition of whom should be excluded from park admission and what actions should be taken when unauthorized photographers are spotted inside a park.

## Versatile Communities

**Oriental Outlook**  
April 6

First developed in 2010 by Wu Liangyong, a renowned architect who is a member of both the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, the concept of “integrated community” denotes a residential compound that incorporates canteens, clinics, gyms, kindergartens and other public facilities. It is rooted in the fact that residential compounds form the most basic units of urban life in China. With easy access to essential public services, these integrated communities can foster a boosted sense of wellbeing among China's ever-increasing population of urban dwellers.

“We need engagement and support from all corners of the world to renew the international financial architecture and make it able to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.”

**António Guterres**, UN Secretary General, at the opening of the Financing for Development Forum at the UN headquarters in New York City on April 17

“China has managed to keep inflation quite low while its growth is bouncing back quite rapidly. That's a stabilizing force, beneficial for both the regional and global economy.”

**Piti Disyatat**, Assistant Governor of the Bank of Thailand, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

## Weekend Warriors

Rednet.cn

April 14

The concept has transformed the country's urban landscape. Age-friendly facilities, such as elevators and senior care centers, have been added to old apartment buildings. Fifteen-minute community life circles, where the most-needed services are located within a travel distance of 15 minutes, have reshaped the physical layout of many Chinese cities. Multistory complexes that integrate offices, basic services and apartments have also blurred the boundaries between living quarters, working spaces and public areas.

Yet the construction of integrated communities is far from complete. More efforts need to be invested into understanding the needs of different subgroups of the population. Clinics, senior care facilities and food markets should be placed in close vicinity to apartment buildings, given the restricted mobility of many elderly residents. Younger generations, for their part, have a greater demand for bicycle lanes, delivery pickup services and electric vehicle chargers.

Therefore, the word "integrated" does not necessarily mean "comprehensive." Instead of ticking all the boxes, each community should offer a more targeted selection of services based on its demographic composition.

Lately, "special forces tourism," a newly invented term for weekend getaways that in many ways resemble military operations, has been the hot recreational activity among Chinese Gen Zs. After the last class on Friday, college students hop onto midnight trains headed toward other cities and rush through all major local tourist attractions in just one or two days, often without making time for proper rest.

This mode of travel provides Chinese youth with a means to make up for the time lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to briefly retreat from academic work.

Crazy as they may seem, these travel

escapades are not improvised. Instead, they require extremely detailed research and planning in advance. For some college students, long-distance weekend vacations also mean several months of frugal living.

Having noticed the difficulties that college students face when arranging for weekend getaways, local governments have issued a series of policies to ease their financial burden.

Shandong Province, for example, has launched a 399-yuan (\$58) high-speed rail travel package, which allows students to travel throughout the province for five days. Jinan, capital of Shandong, also offers free accommodation, public transport and tickets for them to visit select tourist attractions.

### ↓ BASKETBALL COACH DISCIPLINED FOR MATCH FIXING

On April 17, **Li Chunjiang**, head coach of the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) team Shanghai Sharks, received a ban from registering as a basketball coach for five years, the harshest-ever punishment the CBA has imposed, for unsporting conduct.

The penalty came as the result of a league investigation into a match between the Shanghai Sharks and Jiangsu Dragons, where both teams were found to be intentionally throwing the game.

Jiangsu's head coach Li Nan will face a three-year ban for his part in the match fixing. The two clubs have been disqualified from the 2022-23 season and will each face a 5-million-yuan (\$723,000) fine.

Li Chunjiang was appointed as the Shanghai Sharks' head coach in May 2021. He was previously the head coach of the Guangdong Southern Tigers, starting in 2001 and leading the club to seven CBA championships in 12 years.



"If we tackle the gender inequalities endemic in agrifood systems and empower women, the world will take a leap forward in addressing the goals of ending poverty and creating a world free from hunger."

**Qu Dongyu**, Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, in the foreword of a report titled the Status of Women in Agrifood Systems released on April 13

"If the G7 is really opposed to hegemonism and coercion, then it should reflect on itself and make sure that invasions similar to those in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria will never happen again."

**Wang Wenbin**, spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at a regular news conference on April 19



COVER STORY

# AND THEY'RE OFF!

Amid headwinds, China's economy still grew faster than expected in Q1  
By Zhang Shasha

Farmers prepare for spring farming in Yuyao, Zhejiang Province, on March 18

**B**etter-than-expected recovery, hard-won results... these are the key words that constitute China's economic performance in the first quarter (Q1) of 2023, laying a foundation for achieving the country's growth target for this year—set at around 5 percent.

“China's national economy is off to a solid start.” This is how

Fu Linghui, spokesperson of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), opened a press conference on China's Q1 economic performance on April 18. The Chinese economy grew 4.5 percent year on year in the first three months; on a quarterly basis, it improved 2.2 percent. Some economists and organizations had previously projected a 4-percent growth on an annual basis.

“Amid a complex and severe international environment, a slowdown of the world economy and mounting instability and uncertainty, this was no easy achievement,” Fu explained.

## Higher expectations

Endless traffic jams in large cities, restaurants buzzing with patrons inside and queuing outside, eager travelers puzzled as to why they can't get their hands on a plane or train ticket... the country's hustle and bustle is back.

The flow of people has brought back consumption, which was the number one contributor to Q1