

OPINION: NEW TAKE ON CHINA-U.S. TIES P.26 | FEATURES: MADE-IN-CHINA CRUISE LINERS P.34

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Cover Photo: The Zhangjiangkou National Mangrove Nature Reserve in Fujian Province on February 2 (XINHUA)

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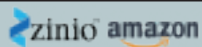
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Protecting Our Planet

April 22 is Earth Day, an annual celebration to protect the environment, which dates back to the 1970s. Every year on this day, China organizes activities throughout the country to raise public awareness of environmental protection.

China has made great contributions to global ecological conservation. For instance, its afforestation program has created more new forest than in any other country. The total area of wetlands under protection in China ranks among the largest worldwide.

Three of China's recent environmental initiatives deserve attention. The first is the Shan-Shui Initiative. Shan-Shui means mountains and rivers. The initiative is the largest ecological restoration project in China. Since 2016, the Central Government has supported 44 projects for restoring vital ecosystems, including forests, grasslands and waterways in regions of importance to national ecological security such as the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the Yellow River basin and the Yangtze River basin, covering 27 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. The initiative was recognized by the UN as one of the World Restoration Flagships.

The second is the protected area (PA) system, which focuses on national parks.

This system plays an important role in promoting harmony between humans and nature and protecting biodiversity. China has established around 10,000 PAs, accounting for 18 percent of the country's total land area. The well-planned PAs have brought 90 percent of terrestrial ecosystem types and 71 percent of key state-protected wildlife species under effective protection.

The third is the establishment of an environmental zoning system known as ecological conservation redlines. In addition to the ecological protection offered under the PA system, redlines have been drawn around areas that perform critical environmental functions or that are especially vulnerable, applying stringent measures to protect them from the potentially harmful effects of industrial development and urbanization. This innovative model now covers 3.15 million square km of ecosystems such as grasslands, wetlands, mangrove forests, coral reefs and sea grass beds, as well as undeveloped and uninhabited islands.

However, China and other countries are still facing prominent environmental challenges, such as sandstorms, loss of biodiversity and water pollution. All of these need to be met with continuous action. Earth Day reminds us to take these issues seriously. **BR**



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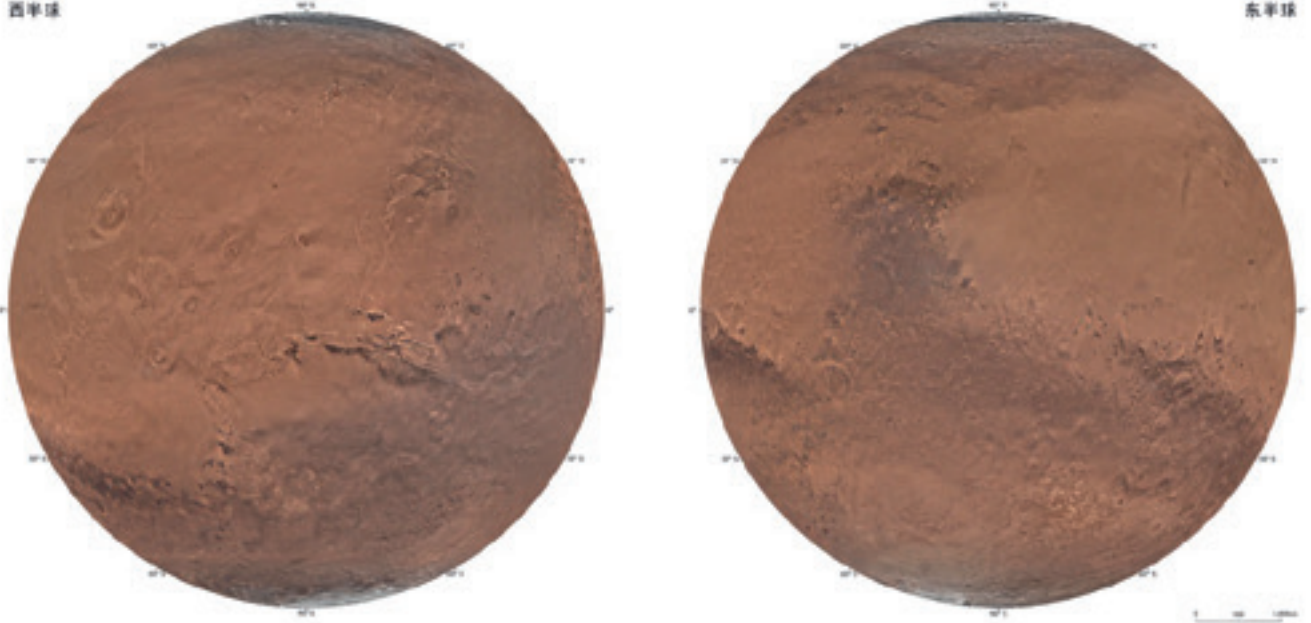
中国首次火星探测火星全球影像图



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MARTIAN MAPPING

On April 24, the China National Space Administration and the Chinese Academy of Sciences jointly released a series of images of Mars obtained during China's first Mars exploration mission. The images were released at the launch event of China's annual Space Day, held in Hefei, capital of Anhui Province in east China.

The images are based on data acquired by a remote-sensing camera on the *Tianwen-1* orbiter between November 2021 and July 2022. China's *Tianwen-1* mission, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, was launched on July 23, 2020 and its lander, carrying the rover *Zhurong*, touched down on Mars on May 15, 2021.



Welcome Onboard!

Sailors of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy take visitors on a tour of a military vessel during an open day at Shanghai's Qiujiang Dock on April 22. In honor of its 74th founding anniversary on April 23, the PLA Navy organized a range of open-day events across the country.

Improved Water Quality

China's water quality levels saw steady improvement in the first quarter (Q1) of this year, data from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment showed, according to Xinhua News Agency on April 23.

The proportion of surface water at or above Level III in the country's five-tier water quality system rose 0.9 percentage points year on year to 89.1 percent during the period, according to the ministry.

The proportion of surface water at Level V, the lowest level, stood at 0.6 percent, down 0.4 percentage points from the same period last year.

China's major rivers, lakes and reservoirs saw improved

water quality in Q1. The proportion of water at or above Level III in the Yangtze River, the Yellow River and other major river basins rose 0.6 percentage points year on year to 90.3 percent.

Lakes and reservoirs with water at or above Level III accounted for 81 percent of the 195 key lakes and reservoirs monitored by the government in the first three months, up 2.9 percentage points from the same period of 2022, the data showed.

Monk Degree

Thirteen monks obtained the degree of *Geshe Lharampa*, equivalent to a doctoral degree in modern education, in Tibet Autonomous Region on April 23.

That same day, the Jokhang

Temple in Lhasa, the regional capital, hosted a related dialogue and award ceremony. *Geshe Lharampa* is the highest degree in the exoteric teachings of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism.

With an average age of 45, the 13 monks hail from temples in Tibet and Yunnan Province.

Ranking first in this year's exam, Tsultrim Gyaltzen, a 50-year-old monk from the Sera Monastery in Lhasa, told Xinhua that he would further deepen his understanding of Buddhism and help more students of Tibetan Buddhism.

Since 2004, 177 Tibetan Buddhist monks have been awarded the degree of *Geshe Lharampa*.

Lunar 3D Printing

China plans to use its lunar exploration program to explore the feasibility of using 3D printing technology to construct buildings on the moon, *China Daily* reported on April 24.

According to Wu Weiren, a leading scientist at the China National Space Administration, the *Chang'e-8* probe is set to conduct on-site investigations of the environment and mineral composition on the moon, and check if some advanced technologies such as 3D printing can be utilized on the lunar surface.

"If we wish to stay on the moon for a long time, we need to set up stations by using the moon's own materials," Wu was quoted as saying.

Several domestic universities, such as Tongji University and Xi'an Jiaotong University, have already begun studying the possible applications of 3D printing technology on the moon.

Chang'e-8, following *Chang'e-6* and *Chang'e-7*, will be the third probe to be placed on the moon in the country's next lunar exploration endeavor.

Digital Books

No fewer than 618,100 Chinese digital books were released overseas last year, according to a report issued by the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association on April 24.

The China Digital Readership Report 2022, released during the second National Conference on Reading in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, showed the figure had increased by more than 50 percent year on year.

Last year, North America, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Southeast Asia remained the major destinations for the digital books released, while

the European market gained attention from publishers, with the number of digital books released surpassing that in China's Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, as well as Taiwan Island.

Fantasy and martial arts were among the most popular themes, the report said.

IP Protection

China has granted 798,000 invention patents in 2022, with 9.4 high-value invention patents for every 10,000 people, the country's top intellectual property (IP) regulator said on April 24.

The review period for invention patents was shortened to 16.5 months, and the review period for trademark registrations averaged four months, Shen Changyu, head of the China National Intellectual Property Administration, told a press conference.

China saw 70,000 international applications filed under the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)'s Patent Cooperation Treaty in 2022 and the country rose to the 11th position on the Global Innovation Index 2022 released by WIPO, according to Shen.

Last year, China handled 44,000 cases of illegal acts in

the patent and trademark fields, and 58,000 administrative adjudication cases concerning patent infringement disputes. It also dealt with 71,000 applications for assistance in safeguarding rights.

Total import and export of IP royalties reached 387.25 billion yuan (\$56.1 billion) in 2022, up 2.4 percent year on year, with export volume up 17 percent year on year.

The added value of China's patent-intensive industries reached 14.3 trillion yuan (\$2.1 trillion) in 2021, up 17.9 percent from the previous year and accounting for 12.44 percent of GDP.

Background Check

The Ministry of Education has asked schools and universities to conduct mandatory background checks on candidates who are set to work on campuses for sexual crimes before they are hired, *China Daily* reported on April 21.

For primary and secondary schools, when they plan to hire staff, they need to submit an application to local education authorities to check the national teacher management information system to see whether the candidates have committed sex crimes, the newspaper said, quoting a notice issued by the



Wind of Change

Aerial photo taken on April 19 shows a wind turbine before installation at Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The installation of the first wind turbine in China's westernmost prefecture was completed on April 22.

ministry on April 20.

They also need to check whether the candidates have been included on the blacklist for teachers and whether their teaching credentials are valid or not, according to the notice.

Higher education institutions should conduct the checks themselves, it said.

The notice also stressed that education authorities and universities should not violate the privacy of the candidates when checking the information.

A guideline issued by the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Education in November 2022 said people who have committed crimes such as sexual assault, abuse, abduction and violence against children should be banned for life from working in the education sector.

Those who have served prison sentences and are deprived of their political rights are also banned for life from working in the sector.



Having a Blast

Students from the aviation model association at the Harbin Institute of Technology launch a rocket on campus in Harbin, capital of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, on April 22, to celebrate China's annual Space Day, which fell on April 24 this year.

Stabilizing Foreign Trade

To keep foreign trade stable, China will make efforts to create more opportunities, stabilize imports and exports of important products and support related companies, Vice Minister of Commerce Wang Shouwen told a press conference on April 23.

The country will extensively resume domestic offline exhibitions and promote the resumption of international passenger flights. It will issue country-specific trade guidelines, help automakers establish and improve their international marketing and service systems, and optimize foreign trade financing services for medium-sized, small and micro enterprises, Wang said.

Intensified efforts will guide the transfer of processing trade to the central, western and northeastern regions, formulate green and low-carbon standards

for some foreign trade products, guide enterprises to make good use of cross-border e-commerce retail export-related tax policies and raise the efficiency of customs clearance, according to Wang.

China's foreign trade got off to a steady start in 2023, as total goods imports and exports expanded 4.8 percent year on year in the first quarter (Q1) of this year, official data showed.

Renewable Energy Capacity

China's installed clean energy capacity registered robust growth in Q1, data from the National Energy Administration showed.

By late March, the installed capacity of wind power had surged 11.7 percent year on year to approximately 380 million kW, while that of solar power stood at about 430 million kW, representing a yearly increase of 33.7 percent.

The country's installed power generation capacity totaled about 2.62 billion kW, rising 9.1 percent year on year.

China has enhanced its renewable energy investment over the years as part of its pursuit of green development.

In the first three months of 2023, total investment of China's major power companies in solar energy nearly doubled from the previous year to 52.2 billion yuan (\$7.56 billion), the data showed.

Financial Services Group

The New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor (ILSTC) Financial Services Consortium was launched at the Fifth China-Singapore (Chongqing) Connectivity Initiative Financial Summit in Chongqing on April 21.

The group, co-founded by 56 domestic and overseas financial institutions, will focus

on facilitating investment and financing cooperation on cross-border trade among countries and regions along the ILSTC.

It will further help facilitate the sharing of financial credit and demand information, strengthen cooperation among enterprises and provide more localized financial services.

Launched in 2017, the ILSTC is a trade and logistics passage jointly built by provincial-level regions in west China and the 10 member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

So far, the consortium covers over 3,000 Chinese service outlets as well as over 1,000 overseas outlets in countries and regions along the ILSTC.

Grain Output

China's grain output is expected to reach 694 million tons in 2023, with the production of rice and wheat remaining stable and that of corn and soybean

NUMBERS

China's Service Outsourcing Industry in January-March

(All growth rates are y.o.y.)

Service outsourcing contracts inked by Chinese firms

Total value



Executed contract value



Offshore service outsourcing contract value



Service outsourcing executed contract value

With members of the RCEP

51.8 bln yuan

With the United States 42.5 bln yuan



With the European Union 29.4 bln yuan



increasing, according to a report on the outlook of China's agricultural sector released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The report also predicted a substantial increase in the output of rapeseeds, peanuts and special oil crops, expecting the country's full-year production of oil crops to grow 5.1 percent.

The increase in urban and rural residential income and the upgrading of food consumption will drive up the consumption of foods such as fruits and meat, the report said.

China's capability to ensure a steady and safe supply of grain and major farm produce is projected to see further improvement this year, with new progress achieved in building a diversified food supply system.

Outbound Direct Investment

China's non-financial outbound direct investment (ODI) rose 26.3

percent year on year to 215.97 billion yuan (\$31.3 billion) in Q1, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

In U.S. dollar terms, ODI went up 17.2 percent from a year earlier.

In the first three months of 2023, ODI in wholesale and retail grew 31.4 percent from a year ago to \$7.16 billion, while that in transportation, warehouses and postal services climbed 24.4 percent to \$1.48 billion.

ODI in sectors such as manufacturing and construction also expanded, the data showed.

During the period, non-financial ODI in countries along the routes of the China-proposed Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road came in at \$5.76 billion, up 9.5 percent year on year, the ministry said.

RMB Global Payment

The Chinese currency renminbi (RMB), or the yuan, saw its share

in global payments rise in March, a recent report read.

The RMB's global share went up from 2.19 percent in February to 2.26 percent that month, according to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, a global provider of financial messaging services. It remained the fifth most active currency for global payments by value.

In March, the value of RMB payments gained 25.04 percent from a month earlier, higher than the 21.46-percent increase in that of all payments currencies.

In terms of international payments, excluding the eurozone, the RMB ranked seventh with a share of 1.67 percent.

Shortened Negative List

China will appropriately shorten the negative list for foreign investment, as part of efforts to promote high-level opening up, Meng Wei, a spokesperson for

the National Development and Reform Commission, said at a press conference on April 19.

The negative list specifies the areas out of bounds for foreign investors.

Efforts have been made to evaluate the effect of the list over the past few years and learn about the demands of foreign-invested enterprises, according to Meng.

She pledged more moves to proactively utilize foreign investment, saying that policies to channel more foreign investment into advanced manufacturing, high-end technologies and modern services, as well as the central, western and northeastern regions of the country, will be fully implemented.

Special working mechanisms for major foreign investment projects will see further improvement, while development zones will be better leveraged to attract overseas investors, Meng said, adding these upgrades will include better services.

Executed contract value of outsourcing services

Of private enterprises

58.9 bln yuan

27.8%

of the total

Of foreign-funded enterprises

105.3 bln yuan

49.7%

of the total



In January-March
15.15 mln people



work in China's service outsourcing industry

1 icon = 1 mln

The industry added
170,000 jobs



1 icon = 10,000

(Source: Ministry of Commerce)

THIS WEEK WORLD



ITALY

Performers in Rome take part in a parade to celebrate the city's 2,776th birthday on April 23. According to legend, Romulus founded the city on April 21, 753 B.C. after killing his twin brother Remus



SUDAN

Thick black smoke rises into the air in Khartoum on April 19. With a series of ceasefires failing to hold, the death toll of the fighting between two factions of Sudan's armed forces, that first erupted on April 15, had exceeded 420 as of April 24, according to local and international nongovernmental organizations



REPUBLIC OF KOREA

People read books in Seoul's Gwanghwamun Square on April 23. Seoul Plaza and Gwanghwamun Square in downtown Seoul hosted a range of reading events on the occasion of World Book Day, which falls on April 23 every year





KYRGYZSTAN

Photo taken on April 20 shows a snippet of the Tiangong Dialogue between student representatives from Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries and crew members of China's *Shenzhou-15* spacecraft inside the auditorium of Bishkek State University in Bishkek



TÜRKIYE

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other officials attend a commissioning ceremony of Black Sea natural gas in Filyos, Zonguldak Province, on April 20. The country started the delivery of natural gas from its Black Sea field that day, as part of its flagship project aimed at reducing its dependence on energy imports



SWEDEN

Protestors holding up a banner that reads "Stop Aurora 23" march against Sweden hosting the large international military exercise Aurora 23, as well as the country's bid to become a NATO member, in Stockholm on April 22



↓ RENOWNED DIRECTOR HEADS FILM AWARD JURY

Zhang Yimou, one of China's most prominent directors, for the first time served as the jury president of the Tiantan Award, granted at the Beijing International Film Festival, which took place in late April.

Initiated in 2011, the festival aims to boost international exchange in the film industry. A record-breaking 1,488 films from 93 countries and regions were submitted for entry to the competition this year.

In addition to directing many well-known films, such as *Full River Red* and *Hero*, Zhang masterminded the pageantry of the opening and closing ceremonies at the 2008 Summer Olympics and the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Zhang, 73, has recently revealed plans to direct an online drama on e-sports, inspired by the video game *League of Legends*.



Pounding the Pavement

Rednet.cn

April 20

After three years of absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wuhan Marathon, an annual event held in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province, returned on April 16. Approximately 26,000 runners from around the world took part in the marathon's three major races—the 42.195-km full marathon, the half marathon and the 13-km run.

On top of offering a carefully curated route that took the runners past and

through local landmarks, organizers also made sure participants received a high standard of service. Water-soaked sponges, electrolyte tablets, heat stroke treatments, and medical staff were available at stations dispersed along the route to help the runners stay cool, hydrated and healthy.

The event was also a demonstration of the city's inclusiveness. Participated by people with disabilities, parents pushing their kids in strollers and even a runner dressed in a frog costume, the event provided space for every runner to compete, have fun and be celebrated for exactly who they are.

AI-Pocalypse Now?

China Newsweek

April 17

On March 28, an open letter signed by tech leaders and researchers worldwide called on all artificial intelligence (AI) labs to immediately pause for at least six months the development of AI systems more powerful than ChatGPT-4. "Recent months have seen AI labs locked in an out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no one—not even their creators—can understand,

"We cannot allow confidence in routine immunizations to become another victim of the [COVID-19] pandemic. Otherwise, the next wave of deaths could be of more children with measles, diphtheria or other preventable diseases."

Catherine Russell, Executive Director of the UN Children's Fund, commenting on the organization's latest report, *The State of the World's Children 2023*

"What we are facing are increasing geopolitical conflicts, intensified major power competition, a slowdown in North-South cooperation, and an expanding development gap."

Luo Zhaohui, Chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency, at the 2023 Economic and Social Council Financing for Development Forum at the UN on April 18

predict, or reliably control,” the letter read.

The race mentioned in the letter was triggered by the release of ChatGPT, an AI chatbot model launched by American AI lab OpenAI in November 2022. Since then, Google, Amazon, and other tech giants in Silicon Valley have all been rushing the development of their own generative chatbots. On the other side of the Pacific, China has also unveiled a slew of chatbot models, including Ernie Bot developed by Baidu, a Chinese search engine company, and Tongyi Qianwen developed by Alibaba, China’s largest e-commerce group.

Like every other technological leap, these new chatbots have stirred controversy. Many worry that, by sometimes generating biased answers and false facts, these programs will be a powerful tool for the diffusion of lies and misinformation. At the core of all these worries lies the ultimate fear, which is that AI may one day replace humans completely.

Despite this widely shared sense of apprehension for an AI takeover, some remain confident that the technology can be steered away from extreme risks and toward benefiting humanity. These new models can potentially unlock creativity, reorient the way people work and engage with the world, and lift humanity to previously unimaginable heights.

Switch Off the Spotlight

Guangming Daily
April 21

Personalized short videos, popularized by Douyin, TikTok’s Chinese version, and other social media platforms, have redefined what childhood means for Chinese children. Born into an age where everyone can become an online star, these children are not only part of the audience, but also the lead actors in these short videos.

It is the natural wish of every parent to record his or her child’s growing up. However, the making of these videos sometimes deviates from parents’ original intentions and becomes a scripted production. Children are often required to act out carefully designed

plots, recite lines that are overly mature for their age, and strictly follow their parents’ directions while filming.

Apart from the apparent loss of spontaneity, these short videos also run the risk of forcing children into the spotlight and denying them the opportunity to grow up quietly. Children who grow up being watched online may be permanently haunted by a felt sense of pressure to perform.

In a way, these videos, which are trying so hard to preserve snippets of childhood, take childhood away from children by prematurely exposing them to the adult world. Parents should probably turn the camera off more often to allow their children a more private and personal experience of growth.

ONE-LEGGED CYCLIST VENTURES ACROSS CHINA

Sun Youzhi, a 34-year-old cyclist, has recently finished a journey of more than 10,000 km beginning in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in the south and ending in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the northwest, inspiring those who followed his trip.

Born in Henan Province, Sun had his left leg amputated after an accident when he was 19. The accident almost destroyed him but, in 2013, Sun took to cycling during a trip to Yunnan Province in the southwest and immediately fell for the sport.

In the past decade, he has conquered several popular cycling routes in China. His total mileage has topped 100,000 km.

His latest journey took him along the G219, the longest national highway with the highest average elevation in the country and a must-go route for cycling enthusiasts.



“Trade wars in general (are) a negative-sum for countries, unless they are able to improve their terms of trade by imposing barriers.”

Martin Wolf, chief economics commentator at the London-based *Financial Times*, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

“Our reliance on each other for help is constant... This human tendency to help others when needed and to explain when such help can’t be given transcends cultural differences.”

Nick Enfield, a professor of linguistics at the University of Sydney, commenting on a new study on prosocial behaviors published in the *Nature Scientific Reports* journal on April 19



COVER STORY

A NEW GREEN-PRINT

China's ambitious nationwide efforts for ecological restoration

By Yuan Yuan