

OPINION: TOUGH DECISIONS FOR EUROPE P.22 | FEATURES: DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT P.34

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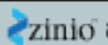
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Cover Design: Wang Yajuan

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Safe, Equitable and Productive

As a still developing country with a huge population, China has needed to overcome numerous challenges in the administration of its labor relations and social security over recent decades. Now, the accelerating emergence of new forms of employment is making the protection of labor rights a particularly and increasingly complex task.

Labor relations in China first became increasingly complex and diverse during the development of the socialist market economy, which began in the late 1970s. This system aims to combine the efficiency often characteristic of a market economy with equity associated with socialism. Since then, the government has formulated several laws and regulations to safeguard labor relations. Systems related to the protection of labor rights have also been improved, including medical insurance, pension insurance, unemployment insurance, work-related injury insurance and maternity insurance.

All of these mechanisms aim to ensure workers enjoy equal job opportunities, reasonable remuneration, safe working environments, social insurance and other welfare. The government has been enhancing the supervision and investigation of labor rights issues, cracking down on illegal employment practices. Protection of labor rights is not only a legal issue, but

also a key factor for economic, social and political development, which is vital for the country's long-term prosperity.

In line with the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, China participates in international labor affairs. It conducts exchanges and cooperation with international institutions including the International Labor Organization, the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, as well as with many other countries, playing a positive role in promoting employment, eradicating poverty and safeguarding workers' legitimate rights and interests.

Like other countries, China must work continuously to address new challenges in the protection of labor rights brought about by economic transformation and technological innovation. For instance, protection of workers in new employment forms such as food delivery workers and vloggers must be improved. Excessive overtime in some businesses also needs to be solved. In addressing these challenges, and the many others that will emerge in the future, China aims to create a safe, equitable and productive working environment that is conducive to its continued upward trajectory. **BR**



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

A naval vessel open day is held to mark the 76th anniversary of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy in Qingdao, Shandong Province, on April 22.

The PLA Navy celebrated its 76th anniversary on April 23, reaffirming its commitment to becoming a world-class naval force dedicated to safeguarding both national security and global peace.

Over 30 active PLA Navy vessels opened to the public in late April to celebrate the founding anniversary of the naval force.



Soaring in the Sky

Kite enthusiasts gather at the 42nd Weifang International Kite Festival in Weifang, Shandong Province, on April 19.

Stabilizing Job Market

China will extend key unemployment insurance policies through 2025 to help companies retain jobs and support workers in enhancing their skills, authorities announced on April 22.

The announcement was made through a circular, jointly issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the Ministry of Finance and the State Taxation Administration, outlining measures to help enterprises maintain stable employment.

Until the end of 2025, companies that do not lay off employees or minimize layoffs will continue to receive refunds of a certain percentage of unemployment insurance premiums paid in the previous year, according to the policy.

To help workers improve their skills, the extended policy relaxes eligibility requirements and expands coverage for skills-upgrading subsidies.

These measures also ensure continued provision of basic living allowances—including unemployment benefits, basic medical insurance coverage, and support for older unemployed individuals.

China has set a target of maintaining the surveyed urban unemployment rate at around 5.5 percent in 2025, while aiming to create over 12 million new urban jobs this year. The average surveyed urban unemployment rate stood at 5.3 percent in the first quarter of 2025.

Grassland Restoration

China has been steadily promoting grassland restoration in recent years, with an annual restoration of over 30,667 square km of grassland, an area comparable to the land area of Belgium, Xinhua News Agency reported on April 22.

Li Yongjun, an official with the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, told a

press conference that the Central Government has invested 110 billion yuan (\$15 billion) in supporting grassland protection and restoration during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period.

Forestry and grassland authorities across the country have intensified efforts to combat illegal activities such as grassland reclamation and unauthorized occupation.

Thanks to the country's persistent efforts, the ecological quality of grasslands has experienced a historic shift from "general degradation" in the early years of this century to the current "overall improvement," Li said.

However, the official warned, the country still faces a challenging task in grassland restoration. Most of China's grasslands are located in arid, semi-arid, cold and high-altitude areas with harsh natural conditions.

"Currently, around 70 percent of the grasslands are still suffering from different degrees of degradation, and the situation of grassland

protection and restoration remains serious," he said.

New Majors

The Ministry of Education has introduced 29 new majors to higher education institutions in response to the evolving needs of national strategies and the pursuit of high-quality development.

The ministry announced on April 22 updates to the catalog of undergraduate majors in general colleges and universities, adding majors such as carbon neutrality science and engineering and international cruise management, marine science and technology, health and medical security, smart molecular engineering, medical device and equipment engineering, spatiotemporal information engineering, aviation sports, AI education, smart audio-visual engineering, and digital drama.

To facilitate a more agile response to national strategies, the ministry has implemented a new mechanism allowing swift adjustments to the curriculum in response to newly prioritized strategic areas.

Addressing the rapid development needs of the low-altitude economy, six universities, including Beihang University, have been guided to add a major in low-altitude technology and engineering.

The low-altitude economy covers aerial economic activities that take place below 1,000 meters.

Removing Import Ban

China has launched a pilot program allowing the use of imported *calculus bovis*—cattle gallstones—in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) production under specified conditions, in an effort to ease the supply shortage of the material, which is used widely in TCM.

Calculus bovis sourced from countries or regions not subject to mad cow disease import bans and compliant with China's customs quarantine and pharmaceutical quality inspection requirements will be permitted for trial use in TCM manufacturing, the National Medical Products Administration and the General Administration of Customs said in a joint statement released on April 21.

The pilot program will cover 12 provincial-level regions, including Beijing and Tianjin, and will remain in effect for two years. Upon evaluation of the outcomes of this pilot program, authorities will progressively expand the use of imported *calculus bovis* nationwide, the statement said.

The program has detailed requirements for the application of imported *calculus bovis* and related processing, storage and production procedures.

Calculus bovis has historically been a critical source for TCM ingredients to treat high fever, convulsion and stroke.

Healthcare Opening Up

China's healthcare sector is making steady progress in opening up to foreign investment and expertise, with more than 150 joint-venture and wholly overseas-invested

medical institutions now operating nationwide, Jiao Yahui, a senior official with the National Health Commission, announced at a press briefing in Beijing on April 21.

Over 1,500 healthcare professionals from outside the Chinese mainland are practicing in China on a short-term basis, Jiao said.

These developments come as China rolls out policies and measures to expand foreign participation in its health care services sector, as part of a broader effort to open up the country's service industry.

The latest moves include allowing qualified foreign doctors and those from Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan Province to open clinics in designated pilot regions. The measures also support short-term practice for overseas medical professionals, with streamlined and simplified approval processes.

These actions fall under a work plan to expand access to China's services sector for foreign investment and professionals, which was recently released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Cargo Spacecraft

A life-size model of China's next-generation cargo craft *Qingzhou*, designed for future in-orbit supply delivery, met the public for



Flower Show

A tourist poses for photos at a venue of the 2025 Shanghai International Flower Show in Huangpu District of Shanghai, on April 18. The 2025 Shanghai International Flower Show opened that same day with two main venues, five sub-venues and 15 exhibition spots across the city.

the first time on April 24, China's Space Day.

Qingzhou, which means "Light Ship" in Chinese, has been designed to be smaller in size and lighter in weight, compared to the existing *Tianzhou* (Sky Ship) cargo craft.

Developed by the Innovation Academy for Microsatellites of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the new launch vehicle weighs about 5 tons and is capable of sending at least 1.8 tons of supplies into space. It features an internal volume of 27 cubic meters. It can accommodate up to 300 liters for cold-chain

transportation, enabling taikonauts (Chinese astronauts) to enjoy more and fresher fruits and vegetables during their space journeys.

According to Shu Rong, commander of the *Qingzhou* project, the spacecraft has been developed at a lower cost, thanks to numerous technological innovations and a more efficient launch process.

Apart from delivering supplies to China's space station, *Qingzhou* will also provide commercial cargo services in the future, aiming to bring economic and social benefits, Shu said.



Sanxingdui Ruins Recreated

An immersive art exhibition of Sanxingdui culture at the National Maritime Museum of China in Tianjin Municipality on April 22. The Sanxingdui Ruins site was discovered in the late 1920s in Guanghan City, Sichuan Province, and is dubbed one of the world's greatest archaeological finds of the 20th century.

Pilot Free Trade Zones

China has released a guideline for improving the country's pilot free trade zones (FTZs) to further promote high-standard opening up and high-quality development.

The guideline, issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, the country's highest state administrative organ, called for promoting the optimization and upgrading of trade in goods, invigorating the development of trade in services, and supporting innovative development in digital trade.

White list systems will be established for imported medical research and development items as well as imported food with medicinal values, the guideline said, while also calling for the application of digital bills and signatures.

Investment liberalization and facilitation should be advanced, and the level of opening up should be enhanced to attract and utilize foreign capital through greater effort.

The guideline urged the

promotion of the integration of innovation and industrial chains, and expanding international sci-tech exchange and cooperation.

Work should be done in building a modern industrial system, enhancing the modernization level of industrial chains, promoting the establishment of advanced industrial clusters and facilitating the coordinated development of industries in the pilot FTZs, it said.

The guideline also pledged to facilitate cross-border data flow and financial opening up.

Forex Market

In the first quarter (Q1) of 2025, China's net inflow of cross-border capital from trade in goods totaled \$206.3 billion, registering rapid year-on-year growth, Li Bin, deputy head of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, said on April 22.

Additionally, foreign holdings of domestic bonds increased by a net total of \$26.9 billion from February to March.

As of April 21, the onshore

renminbi spot exchange rate against the U.S. dollar stood at 7.288, appreciating by 0.1 percent from the end of 2024. The two-way fluctuation of the RMB exchange rate is a normal market movement, which also reflects the support provided by underlying economic fundamentals, according to Li.

He said the administration will continue deepening reform and opening up in the foreign exchange (forex) sector, and introduce policies to support cross-border trade and facilitate cross-border investment and financing, aiming to stabilize foreign trade and foreign investment.

Forex regulators will continue to strengthen their monitoring of the forex situation, maintain exchange rate flexibility and effectively leverage the exchange rate's role as an automatic stabilizer for the macro economy and the international balance of payments, Li added.

At the same time, efforts will be made to enrich China's macro-prudential toolkit for the management of cross-border capital flows, firmly correct

pro-cyclical market behaviors, guard against risks of exchange rate overshooting and abnormal cross-border capital movements, and safeguard national economic and financial security.

Bank Wealth Management

China's bank wealth management market enjoyed steady growth momentum in Q1 of this year, industry data indicated on April 22.

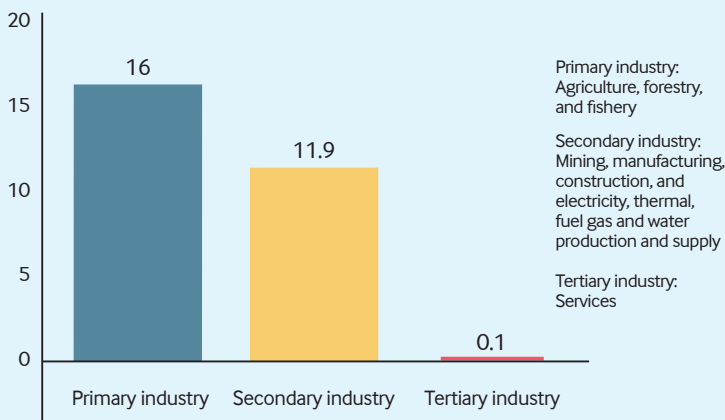
The balance of wealth management products stood at 29.14 trillion yuan (\$4 trillion) at the end of March, up 9.41 percent year on year, according to the latest data provided by the China Banking Wealth Management Registration and Depository Center.

By the end of Q1, the number of wealth management products had increased by 0.67 percent year on year to 40,600, offered by a combination of 215 banking institutions and 31 wealth management companies, the center said.

NUMBERS

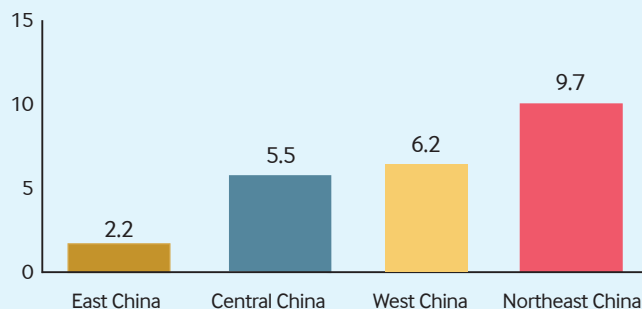
Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Sector

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



Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Region

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



Meanwhile, support for the real economy from bank wealth management products stood at nearly 20 trillion yuan (\$2.7 trillion), it added.

The number of investors holding wealth management products in the banking market had risen by 6.73 percent year on year to 126 million by the end of March, the data showed.

E-Commerce Growth

China's e-commerce sector reported steady growth in Q1 of this year, boosted by the country's pro-consumption policies such as its large-scale consumer goods trade-in program, the Ministry of Commerce said on April 21.

Official data show that China's online retail sales totaled 3.6 trillion yuan (\$500 billion) in Q1, with online retail sales of physical goods increasing by 5.7 percent.

There was also a 7.4-percent increase in online sales of digital products in this period, the

ministry said.

It noted that, boosted by the release of quality films, China's online entertainment sales volume grew by 40 percent in the first three months.

In Q1, the Central Government and enterprises worked together to accelerate the integration of domestic and foreign trade to cope with external risks, the ministry said, noting that more than 10 e-commerce platforms have taken swift measures to deliver quality foreign trade products to domestic households through e-commerce channels.

Private Enterprises

Private enterprises in China continued to expand steadily amid government efforts to spur growth in both the private sector and the broader economy, according to data from the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), the top market regulator, released on April 21.

The number of private enterprises in the country had

exceeded 57 million by the end of March, accounting for 92.3 percent of all businesses nationwide, according to data from the SAMR.

In Q1, 1.979 million private companies were established, an increase of 7.1 percent from a year ago and outpacing the average growth recorded over the past three years, the SAMR said.

Over 40 percent of the newly established private firms in Q1 were related to new technologies, products, business forms and models, SAMR data showed.

The number of private enterprises in Internet and information technology services grew the fastest, increasing by 18 percent from a year ago.

In particular, the digital economy sector saw the addition of 274,000 new private enterprises in Q1, accounting for 13.9 percent of all newly registered private businesses.

Through digital transformation, low-carbon initiatives and global development, China's private sector has strengthened its competitive edge and unleashed

a surge of innovation, the market regulator noted.

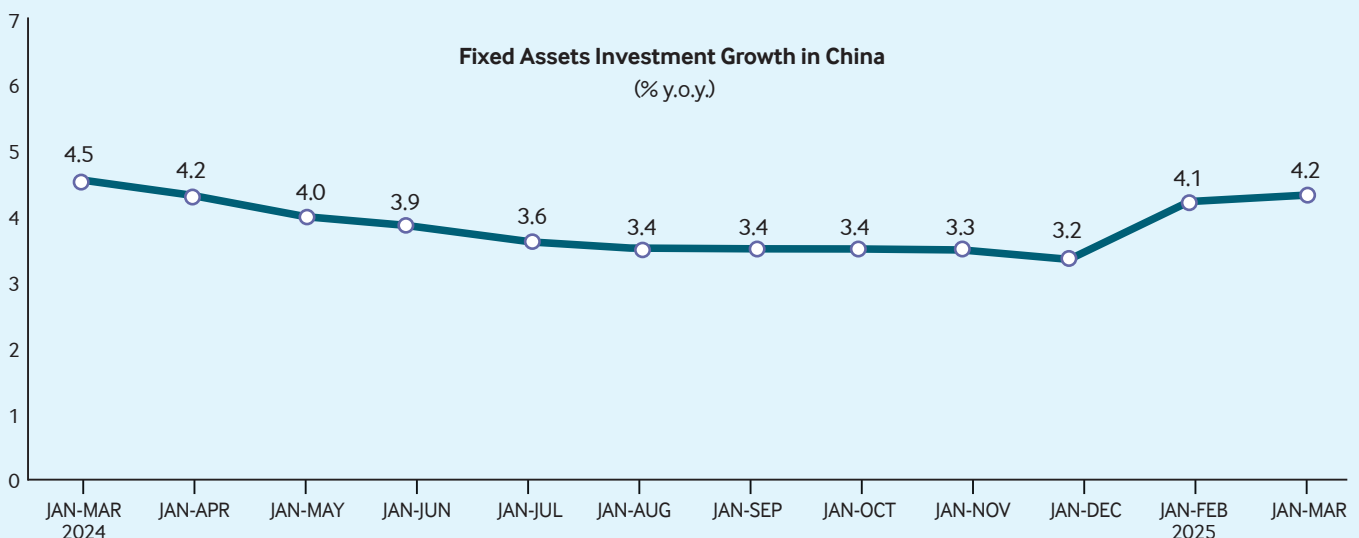
5G Base Stations

The number of 5G base stations in China topped over 4.39 million by the end of March, with the user penetration rate reaching 75.9 percent, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) said on April 18.

China's cyber infrastructure has continued to improve and its digital industry has scaled new heights, Xie Shaofeng, chief engineer with the MIIT, said at a press conference.

Digital technologies, represented by 5G and large AI models, have developed rapidly, Xie said, noting that the digital sector achieved a year-on-year revenue growth of 8.2 percent in the first two months.

In Q1, China's industrial sector posted steady performance, with improvements in the structure and advances in fostering new quality productive forces, according to Xie.



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



KAZAKHSTAN

Participants in costumes inspired by Chinese culture pose for photos at the 2025 International Chinese Language Day (April 20) event in Almaty on April 19



REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Ousted President Yoon Suk-yeol attends the second hearing of his criminal trial over insurrection charges, in Seoul on April 21



INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Chief Economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas (second left) speaks at a press briefing on the fund's World Economic Outlook in Washington, D.C., the U.S., on April 22. The fund downgraded its global growth forecast in 2025 to 2.8 percent, a hefty 0.5-percentage-point decrease from its January projection



RUSSIA

A photo exhibition commemorates the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War at the Chinese Embassy in Moscow on April 18



VATICAN CITY

A file photo of Pope Francis waving to the crowd as he attends an event in St. Peter's Square on March 31, 2024. Pope Francis, the 266th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, died on April 21 at the age of 88



UNITED STATES

Demonstrators protest against the Donald Trump administration's policies in New York City on April 19. Thousands of protesters took to the streets in cities across the U.S. in what they described as part of a "National Day of Action" against Trump's policies



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

SHENZHOU-20 CREW

Chinese astronauts **Chen Dong** (center), **Chen Zhongrui** (right) and **Wang Jie** entered orbit for the *Shenzhou-20* spaceflight mission on April 24. They will stay at China's *Tiangong* space station for approximately six months.

Prior to commanding this mission, Chen Dong was a member of the *Shenzhou-11* (October-November 2016) mission and commander of the *Shenzhou-14* mission (June-December 2022). He is the first among China's second cohort of astronauts to carry out three spaceflight missions.

Chen Zhongrui and Wang both come from the third cohort of astronauts and *Shenzhou-20* is their first spaceflight mission. Before being selected for the space program, Chen Zhongrui was an air force pilot and Wang was an engineer at the China Academy of Space Technology of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp.



Retirement Concierges

Rednet.cn
April 24

As China's aging population continues to grow, demand has surged for services that help seniors navigate healthcare, financial planning and other aspects of retirement life. In response, positions in a new profession—often labeled “senior planning consultant” or “retirement planner” have emerged on recruitment websites, promising easy jobs with high salaries, which can amount to 100,000 yuan (\$13,700) a month. Responsibilities include providing tailored health-management

plans, optimizing investment strategies and finding ideal retirement homes.

A qualified retirement planner should possess a certain level of medical knowledge and financial expertise, as well as strong analytical and planning skills. In reality, the field's low entry barriers and lack of regulatory oversight have resulted in wildly uneven service quality.

In the face of these challenges, all parties should work together to establish a robust legal framework, codify clear industry standards, conduct regular qualification reviews and establish professional associations to foster the healthy growth of this nascent sector.



Global Gourmet Goes Local

Lifeweek
April 14

From Yunnan Province's Puer tea to Zhejiang Province's mitten crab, regional specialties have long offered a glimpse into China's rich and varied food culture. In recent years, however, a new wave of regional products has sprouted across the country, reflecting a broader shift in the

“If the U.S. side truly wishes to solve tariff-related issues with China through dialogue and negotiation, it must stop threatening and extorting, and conduct the dialogue on the basis of equality, respect and mutual benefit.”

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson **Guo Jiakun**, at a daily news briefing on April 23, in response to the latest comments made by U.S. President Donald Trump and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on trade tensions between the two countries

“Strengthening regional ties through more efficient border processes, lower trade costs, less friction, clear rules of origin—these can boost trade volumes and support more stable and diversified growth.”

Ajay Banga, World Bank Group (WBG) President, at an event during the 2025 Spring Meetings of the WBG and the International Monetary Fund on April 22, noting lower tariffs are good for everybody

country's agricultural landscape.

Consider caviar: China is now the world's largest producer and exporter of caviar, and Quzhou, a small city in Zhejiang, is now a top supplier for Kaluga Queen, the world's largest caviar producer.

Meanwhile, Linqu, a small town in Shandong Province, has emerged as a major hub for foie gras production—an other long-imported delicacy commonly used in haute cuisine. Today, local production of this premium food rivals that of France's Landes in both scale and output.

These new specialties stand in stark contrast against traditional specialty products, which prioritize scarcity and therefore are often confined to local, small-scale production. The newcomers, however, are spearheaded by large enterprises and utilize all kinds of advanced technologies to scale up production.

To ensure the healthy growth of these nascent sectors, more efforts should go into developing new breeds and cultivating a host of quality, trustworthy brands. In this way, these new specialties can secure a lasting place on tables both at home and abroad.

Coding Culture in Global Games

People.cn
April 24

Chinese games are marching into overseas markets at an accelerating pace, with overseas revenue for homegrown video games exceeding \$18 billion in 2024—a 13.4-percent year-on-year increase.

Since its inception in China, the gaming industry has been driven by continuous breakthroughs in AI, game engine technologies and graphics rendering systems. Meanwhile, advanced gaming technologies have also been applied to a wide range of fields, including film production, smart city planning, autonomous

driving and medical diagnosis.

The success of *Black Myth: Wukong*, a hit action role-playing game developed by Chinese firm Game Science, is part of a broader trend. Since its global debut last September, *Delta Force*, a Chinese tactical first-person shooter (FPS) video game, has soared to the top of download charts in over 160 countries; as of now, *Arena Breakout*, another FPS developed by China, has amassed more than 180 million global registrations.

When international players enter these virtual worlds, they find themselves immersed in China's rich cultural narratives. This connection has also transformed video games into a platform for people worldwide to discover more about China and its advanced technology.

↓ PARA-ATHLETE WINS SPORTS 'OSCAR'

Chinese paralympic swimmer **Jiang Yuyan** was named the Laureus World Sports person of the Year with a Disability on April 21.

Jiang, who lost her right arm and right leg in a childhood accident, won seven gold medals at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Summer Games, setting two world records and three Paralympic records. She was the most decorated athlete across all delegations at the games.

When receiving the honor, Jiang said she hoped to inspire others who have suffered life-changing accidents or disabilities.

Established in 1999, the Laureus World Sports Awards, often referred to as the "Oscars of sport," is an annual award ceremony honoring individuals and teams from the world of sports along with sporting achievements throughout the year.



"The BYD Shenzhen... is more than just a transport ship, it serves as a 'maritime bridge' connecting Chinese innovation with the global market, enabling users around the world to share in the benefits of Chinese technology."

Wang Junbao, General Manager of BYD's public business division, on April 22, as the leading Chinese electric car maker launched the world's largest cargo ship for vehicles, which is expected to provide stable and low-carbon logistics support for BYD's global delivery of new-energy vehicles

"At a time of profound changes unseen in a century, reading plays a crucial role in nurturing globally competent talents and serves as the cornerstone for enhancing international communication abilities."

Wang Dinghua, Secretary of the Communist Party of China Beijing Foreign Studies University Committee, at an event marking the 30th World Book Day that fell on April 23



COVER STORY

RIGHTS ON THE RISE

The improvement of labor protections for new occupations By Lu Yan