

OPINION: INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL LEARNING P.22 | FEATURES: THE EXAM OF A LIFETIME P.28

BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.67 NO.25 JUNE 20, 2024

北京周报 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM

REDEFINING 'RURAL'

Pulling together for a countryside metamorphosis



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USD1.70
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JPY188

ISSN 1000-9140



9 771000 914246

邮发代号2-922·国内统一连续号: CN11-1576/G2

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Cover Photo: A dragon boat race in Zhenyuan County, Guizhou Province, on June 10 (XINHUA)

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A News Weekly Magazine
Published Since 1958

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E-mail: circulation@cicgamericas.com

Published every Thursday by
CICG Center for Americas, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,
Beijing 100037, China
Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading
Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,
Beijing 100044, China
Tel: 86-10-68413849, 1-416-497-8096 (Canada)
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General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:
Peace Book Co. Ltd.
17/F, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK
Tel: 852-28046687 **Fax:** 852-28046409

Beijing Review (ISSN 1000-9140 USPS 2812) is published weekly
in the United States for US\$64.00 per year by Cypress Books,
360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080
News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*,
Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48,
South San Francisco, CA 94080

Game Changers

The mere mention of the word “country-side” used to conjure up images of a dull, rustic life. But things are changing fast. Several trendy sports events that have emerged in China’s rural areas are becoming national phenomena, shattering long-held stereotypes.

To celebrate the annual Dragon Boat Festival, which commemorates the ancient patriotic poet Qu Yuan from the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.) on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, or June 10 this year, dragon boat races were organized nationwide.

The boat race, nothing short of a visual spectacle, has evolved into a sport with extensive local engagement, as well as a major attraction for tourists. But the races are just one part of the trending athletic scene.

During the Dragon Boat Festival holiday, the quarterfinals of the second edition of the *Cunchao*, or Village Super League, soccer tournament in Rongjiang County, Guizhou Province, kicked off in style. This year, 62 teams composed of local villagers competed in the *Cunchao*, which started in January and is slated to conclude in July. Last year, the inaugural edition of the competition with 20 participating teams first went viral on social media and then made headlines nationwide.

With no entry fee, spectators flocked to the county’s stadium for every match.

All matches were livestreamed on social media. The stands were often packed to capacity, with enthusiastic supporters even resorting to squatting on the ground to catch the action.

In Taijiang, another county in Guizhou, the annual village basketball tournament has also become a smash hit since 2022. Its exceptional success has inspired similar events nationwide.

These amateur sports events not only add color to the lives of rural residents, but also contribute to local income growth due to the influx of tourists.

Rural revitalization, a strategy introduced at the 19th Communist Party of China National Congress in 2017, promotes the economic prosperity and overall development of rural areas. It builds on the success of the nationwide poverty alleviation campaign, which succeeded in eradicating absolute poverty in late 2020. This initiative involves developing rural industries, creating a pleasant living environment, promoting civility and effective governance, and improving rural residents’ living standards. Cultural progress is among its priorities.

Sports are necessary in fostering social development through teamwork and healthy competition. Their growing popularity is a positive sign of rural revitalization. **BR**



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JAPAN.....JPY188 EUROPE.....EUR1.90
TÜRKIYE.....YTL5.00 HK.....HKD9.30 NEPAL.....RS40

主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局

主办单位：中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）

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印刷：北京华联印刷有限公司

北京周报 英文版2024年 第25期 ISSN 1000-9140

国内统一连续出版物号：CN11-1576/G2 邮发代号：2-922

广告许可证0171号 北京市期刊登记证733号

国内零售价：人民币9.00元



PUBLIC PREMIERE!

Giant panda Fu Bao dines in its enclosure at the Shenshuping giant panda base in the Wolong National Nature Reserve in Sichuan Province on June 12. Fu Bao, the first giant panda born in the Republic of Korea, met the public for the first time that day after moving to Sichuan in early April.



Cutting Losses, Boosting Yields

Technicians conduct machine harvest loss measurements in a wheat field in Dachang Town, Qingdao, Shandong Province, on June 11. In Shandong, China's second largest wheat-producing region, activities to reduce harvest losses are underway across counties and cities with more than 4 million hectares of wheat. Meanwhile, over 1.5 million units of agricultural machinery have joined the province's harvest.

Private Pension System

More than 60 million people have opened private pension accounts since the introduction of China's private pension system in late 2022, data from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security showed, Xinhua News Agency reported on June 8.

In November 2022, the government-supported, voluntary and market-oriented pension system was open to qualified citizens in 36 pilot cities and regions including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, Xi'an in Shaanxi Province and Chengdu in Sichuan Province.

The mechanism allows Chinese citizens to contribute up to 12,000 yuan (\$1,658) annually to individual pension accounts to buy certain old-age financial products.

Currently, the private pension

system has 762 special products. Among them, 465 are saving products, 192 are fund products, 82 are insurance products and 23 are asset management products.

Data also revealed that middle and high income groups aged 31 to 40 showed the strongest interest in opening such pension accounts and purchasing related products to prepare for their retirement in advance and enjoy tax incentives.

China has a three-pillar old-age insurance mechanism, covering the national basic old-age insurance, the enterprise and occupational annuities, plus the commercial old-age financial products and the private pension system.

World Intelligence Expo

The 2024 World Intelligence Expo, taking place in Tianjin from June

20 to 23, aims to aggregate artificial intelligence (AI)-related resources both nation- and worldwide.

The expo is co-hosted by Tianjin and Chongqing municipalities, combining two events formerly known as the World Intelligence Congress in Tianjin and the Smart China Expo in Chongqing.

The AI event creates a global platform for academic innovation, exhibitions, competitions and investment promotion in the field of intelligent technology. It attracts leading enterprises, renowned research institutions and top universities.

With an exhibition area of 100,000 square meters, the event includes 10 themed exhibition areas covering the fields of AI, intelligent connected vehicles, intelligent manufacturing and robotics. Multiple international organizations and institutions participate in the event, competing in robotics and

intelligent driving challenges.

The two municipalities will take turns hosting the expo in the future.

Tourist Resorts

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism on June 12 announced it has made 22 additions to its list of national-level tourist resorts, bringing the country's total to 85.

The latest additions span across 22 provincial-level regions in China, including multiple types of attractions, many of which are situated in and around rivers, lakes, mountains and coastal areas.

In a bid to boost tourism development and optimize tourism offerings, China initially identified a selection of sites as national-level tourist attractions in 2015.

The identification process considers major resort factors such as infrastructure conditions, operational efficiency, information services and tourist satisfaction levels.

In 2022, China introduced a cultural development plan for the 2021-25 period, pledging to develop a diverse, well-balanced and high-quality tourism supply system with distinctive features, aimed at meeting the public's needs and bolstering the integrated development of tourism and culture.

Donation Fraud

The Ministry of Civil Affairs has handed an administrative penalty to a children's aid foundation over a donation fraud case that led to nearly 10 million yuan (\$1.4 million) in losses.

The China Charities Aid Foundation for Children, a public fundraising foundation under the ministry's charge, has been barred from carrying out charity activities for three months and blacklisted as a dishonest social organization due to a serious law violation, the ministry said in a circular on June 11.

An investigation found that

from June to August 2023, a person surnamed Ke, who had been engaged in services at a local aid station since November 2022, had illegally raised funds from patients in the name of an aid program for seriously ill children.

In September 2023, Ke was detained for suspected fraud. The case has now been transferred to the judicial authority, according to the ministry.

The management within the foundation was found to be substandard, said the ministry, adding that the organization had also failed to disclose any relevant information.

In response, the foundation's deputy secretary general, who was in charge of the serious illness aid program, was investigated by a supervisory agency over allegations of duty crimes. The case has since been transferred to the judicial authority, read the circular.

The ministry vowed to protect the legitimate rights of the juvenile patients currently covered by the foundation's aid, initiate a comprehensive rectification process within the organization, and further strengthen supervision and law enforcement over charity organizations and activities.

Maritime Trial Cases

The Supreme People's Court (SPC), China's top court, has recently

released typical cases of maritime trials in China to underscore the importance of maritime jurisdiction in the country in settling international disputes, maintaining the shipping order and promoting the marine economy, Xinhua reported on June 10.

The cases handled by Chinese courts in 2023 involved disputes related to the purchase and sale of ships, and liability for damage to ships, according to the SPC.

Chinese courts aim to establish themselves as preferred venues for maritime dispute resolution, with an increasing number of foreign parties resorting to Chinese courts, the SPC said.

In 2023, Chinese courts settled 26,425 maritime trial cases, according to data available on the China Maritime Trial website.

Beautiful Bays

China has stepped up its construction of "beautiful bays" in an effort to conserve its marine ecology and environment, Xinhua reported on June 7.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment has issued a plan to build more than 110 bays across the country by 2027. These bays will achieve harmony between people and the marine environment, with the ministry noting that "clear water and clean beaches, and shoals of fish and



Following in Ancient Footsteps

Hiking enthusiasts trek along the Wusun ancient road in Baicheng County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on June 9. A seven-day hiking and camping event was launched there that day, attracting more than 150 enthusiasts from all over the country.

flocks of seabirds" will be seen.

The 110 bays will account for about 40 percent of China's major bays, according to the ministry.

The plan also sets the goal of transforming seven cities, including Xiamen in southeast China's Fujian Province, into model zones where all coastal areas can be classed as beautiful bays.

It details three tasks, including the protection and restoration of typical marine ecosystems, and

the improvement of key sewage outlets that empty into the sea.

The ministry said that China's long-term goal is to build all 283 of its major bays into beautiful bays by 2035, with that figure including the 110 outlined in the plan.

In recent years, China has channeled more energy into the protection of its marine ecology and environment as part of its efforts to promote the construction of a Beautiful China by 2035.



Steel to Sparkle

Tourists visit an industrial tourism area transformed from the warehouse of a steel factory in Yuhuatai District of Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu Province, on June 12.

Response to EU's New EV Tariffs

China reserves the right to file lawsuits with the World Trade Organization (WTO) concerning the European Union's (EU) plan to impose provisional duties on imports of Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), the Ministry of Commerce said on June 13.

The findings by the European side in its pre-disclosure lack both a factual and a legal basis, the ministry's spokesperson He Yadong said at a press briefing.

The spokesperson stated that the move not only undermines the legitimate rights and interests of China's EV industry, but also disrupts the cooperation between China and Europe in the field of new-energy vehicles and distorts global automotive industrial and supply chains, including those in the EU.

Such an action is "blatant protectionism" and it is suspected that it violates WTO rules,

He said, adding that China will take all necessary measures to defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises.

China urges the EU to rectify its wrong-doing immediately, implement the important consensus reached during the recent China-France-EU trilateral meeting, and address economic and trade frictions through dialogue.

The European Commission on June 12 issued a statement pre-disclosing the level of protectionist provisional duties it will impose on the imports of battery EVs from China.

Passenger Car Sales

A total of 8.07 million passenger cars were sold via retail channels in China during the January-May period, an increase of 5.7 percent year on year, according to the China Passenger Car Association.

In May alone, retail sales of passenger cars in the country

reached 1.7 million units. This figure was down 1.9 percent year on year, but still 11.4 percent higher than the previous month.

The association attributed the solid performance of the auto market in the first five months to a number of factors, including the implementation of a trade-in policy and supportive measures introduced at local levels.

In early April, China introduced measures to promote the trade-ins of different consumer goods, including automobiles, with the aim of establishing a system where used goods can be exchanged for smart, green and low-carbon alternatives.

In addition, China's retail sales of new-energy vehicles (NEVs) soared by 38.5 percent year on year to 804,000 units in May, while NEV exports decreased by 4 percent compared with a year earlier to 94,000 units.

The term NEV is used to designate automobiles that

are fully or predominantly powered by electric energy, which include plug-in vehicles, battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and fuel cell electric vehicles.

SME Development Index

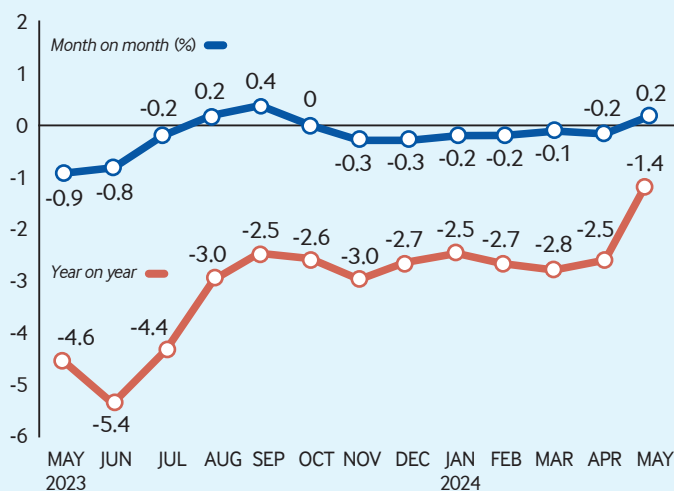
China's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reported a slight decline in business activity in May, with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Index down 0.2 points from the previous month, the latest industry data showed.

The index, calculated based on a survey of 3,000 SMEs in China, came in at 89.2 in May. The reading was up from 88.9 registered in the same period last year, according to the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises.

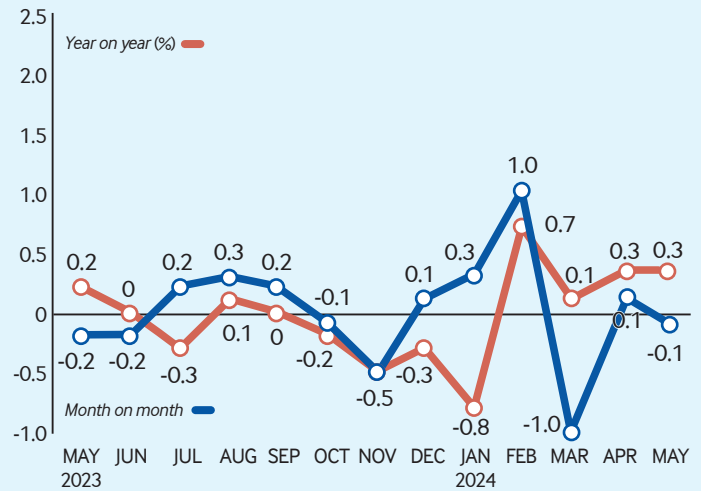
The index contains multiple sub-indexes to gauge SME performance and prospects. A reading below 100 indicates

NUMBERS

China's Producer Price Index Growth



China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) Growth



dented vitality.

In May, the sub-indexes for labor force and business capital were above 100, while those for sentiment on the macroeconomy, overall business operation, market, investment and earning performance were below 100.

SME development confidence and market expectations had yet to receive a boost, the association said. The survey showed that these enterprises faced falling demand and high operating costs in May.

The association called for consolidating and strengthening the sound economic recovery momentum, stressing the need to step up support for the real economy, expand domestic demand, and widen SME investment and financing channels.

Carbon Reduction

Authorities have set specific carbon emission reduction targets for the cement industry as China moves toward a low-carbon economy.

From 2024 to 2025, China plans to cut domestic carbon dioxide emissions by around 13 million tons through industrial renovation and equipment renewal in cement production, according to an action plan released by government departments including the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner.

During this period, China also aims to save energy equal to 5 million tons of standard coal equivalent in cement production, according to the action plan.

By the end of 2030, it is expected that the overall energy efficiency of the country's cement industry will reach a world-class level and its energy consumption pattern will be further optimized, the plan stated.

In September 2020, the country announced its goal of peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

Commercial Bank Resilience

The balance of loan loss provisions of China's commercial banks came in at 6.9 trillion yuan (\$951.3 billion) at the end of the first quarter of this year, data from the country's financial regulator showed.

The figure had increased by 269.8 billion yuan (\$37.2 billion) from the end of the previous quarter, further demonstrating the resilience of Chinese lenders against risks, according to the National Financial Regulatory Administration.

The lenders' provision coverage ratio (PCR) stood at 204.54 percent by late March, down 0.6 percentage points from the end of last year, the data showed. The PCR is a financial ratio that measures the extent to which a bank or other financial institution has set aside provisions (reserves) to cover potential loan losses. A higher PCR (closer to 100 percent) indicates a conservative approach, while a lower PCR

suggests room for improvement.

In the first quarter, the cumulative net profits of China's commercial banks reached 672.3 billion yuan (\$92.7 billion), up 0.7 percent year on year.

Foreign Trade

China's total goods imports and exports expanded 6.3 percent year on year in yuan terms in the first five months of this year, official data showed.

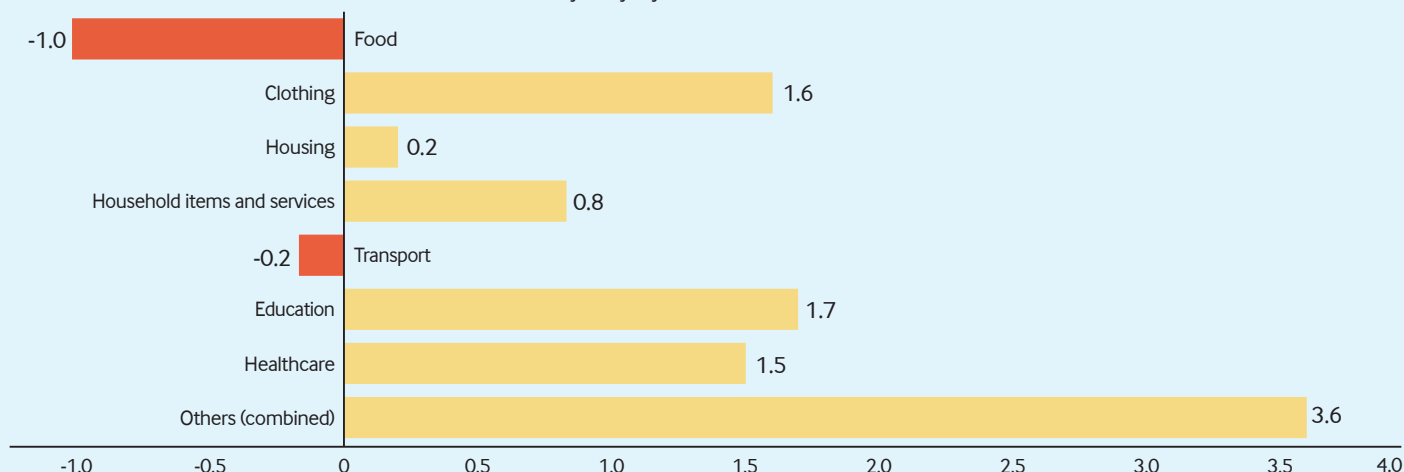
The country's exports rose 6.1 percent year on year in the January-May period, while imports climbed 6.4 percent, according to the General Administration of Customs of China.

From January to May, the country's foreign trade in goods stood at 17.5 trillion yuan (\$2.4 trillion). Exports reached 9.95 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion), while imports hit 7.55 trillion yuan (\$1.04 trillion).

In May alone, foreign trade grew 8.6 percent to 3.71 trillion yuan (\$511.5 billion).

China's CPI Growth by Type

May (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



AUSTRALIA

The Love Is in the Air drone show at the Vivid Sydney light festival on June 8



UNITED STATES

Hunter Biden (left) at the White House in Washington, D.C. on May 20. A jury of 12 members in the state of Delaware found Hunter Biden, son of President Joe Biden, guilty of three federal gun charges, marking the first time a sitting U.S. president's child was criminally convicted



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

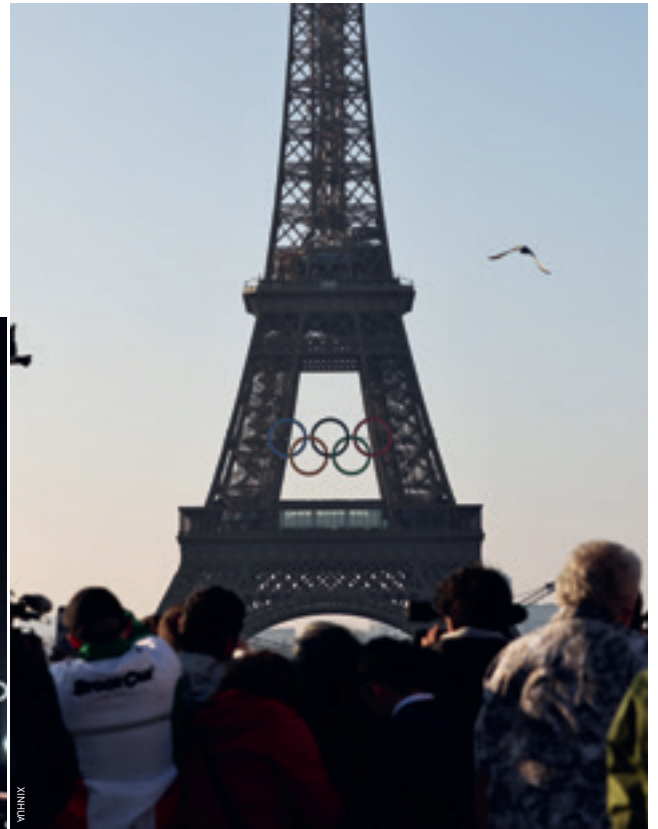
Health workers conduct a sanitation mission in a village in the Beni region of North Kivu Province on June 11. At least 57 civilians were killed within a week by Allied Democratic Forces rebels





INDONESIA

Shi Yuqi (right) of China and Anders Antonsen of Denmark pose for photos during the award ceremony following the men's singles final at the 2024 Indonesia Open badminton tournament in Jakarta on June 9



FRANCE

Olympic rings adorn the Eiffel Tower in Paris on June 7. The rings were unveiled as Paris marked 50 days before the start of the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympic Games



ISRAEL

A rescued Israeli hostage arrives at a medical center in Ramat Gan on June 8. Israeli forces rescued four Israeli hostages taken by Hamas into the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023



↓ TSINGHUA PROFESSOR RECEIVES LETTER FROM PRESIDENT XI

Andrew Chi-Chih Yao, a computer scientist and computational theorist, received a letter of reply from President Xi Jinping in mid-June, encouraging him to make more contributions to help the nation achieve high-level self-reliance and strength in science and technology.

Yao, who taught in U.S. universities for many years, returned to China in 2004 to join the faculty at Tsinghua University. In a recent letter addressed to Xi, he detailed his work in talent cultivation and scientific innovation during his two-decade tenure.

Yao is the first Chinese scientist to receive the Turing Award, given by the U.S.-based Association for Computing Machinery for major and lasting contributions to computer science. Now, the 78-year-old is dean of Tsinghua's College of Artificial Intelligence and its Institute for Interdisciplinary Information Sciences. He is also a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.



Toilet Timers

Rednet.cn

June 7

Visitors to the Yungang Grottoes, a historical site in Shanxi Province, recently discovered timers on the cubicle doors in women's lavatories, measuring the minutes and seconds each user spends inside.

The installation of timers is well-intentioned. The use of restrooms, particularly women's restrooms, at scenic spots reaches or exceeds capacity during every

national holiday. The timers are intended to remind users of the time they take to reduce queues and wait times. However, placing pressure on visitors by measuring the time they take in the restroom is unnecessary, an invasion of privacy and won't solve the fundamental problem.

The right answer is to build more public lavatories. Well-developed infrastructure is a crucial part of the tourism industry. Only by satisfying tourists' real demands can tourism achieve high-quality development.



Green Mountains and Crystal Waters

Outlook

June 3

Guizhou Province in southwest China was once ecologically fragile, but nowadays its forested areas are increasing and it is standing out as a pioneer in pursuing ecological progress.

In recent years, the ecology in major river basins and mountainous areas has markedly improved. According to Guizhou's forestry authorities, the area affected by karst rocky

“We need to enable the public, especially parents, to understand the importance of early childhood development, to acquire knowledge and skills, and to take care of young children scientifically to promote their health and all-round development.”

Xu Zongyu, Director General of the National Center for Women and Children's Health, as a new public campaign was launched on June 7 to create awareness on the importance of early childhood development

“Over millennia, the wondrous story of the Silk Road has been one of encounters—between people, cultures, religions and knowledge. These encounters have shaped civilizations over the ages.”

Irina Bokova, former Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, citing the history of the Silk Road as an example of dialogue being a key driver of human civilizations

desertification has been cut down to 15,500 square km from 37,600 square km in 2005. Additionally, more effective urban sewage treatment and the appointing of “river chiefs,” local government heads placed in charge of protecting the bodies of water within their jurisdictions, have also helped improve ecological environments. Air quality in Guizhou’s major cities was within the “excellent” range on 98.6 percent of the days in 2023. Even in the vast rural areas, a system for collecting, transferring and treating household waste now covers all villages.

The green economy contributed 46 percent of the overall economy in the province in 2023, up from 37 percent in 2017. As mountainous and hilly areas make up 92.5 percent of the province, agriculture fit for mountainous areas has been widely introduced. The province has adopted green and low-carbon development as the most suitable means for local economic development. Industries related to new-energy batteries as well as photovoltaic and wind power are advancing rapidly and the data economy continues to upgrade. By 2027, the green economy is expected to account for 50 percent of the provincial economy.

Moreover, the province has set up 34 environmental protection courts. The concept of green development has been internalized into the overall judicial process.

Branches of the Same Tree

People's Daily

June 11

Recently, a short video of a professor from Minzu University of China in Beijing, which specializes in ethnic minority studies, rehearsing a Mongolian dance went viral on social media. What has captured viewers’ attention is that the lead dancer is not of ethnic Mongolian descent but a member of China’s Korean ethnic group; the choreographer, then, is of the Hui ethnicity. The dance is therefore a confluence of multiple ethnic cultures.

Chinese civilization has developed through the interaction of the cultures of its diverse ethnic groups. Many measures are being taken to bring these cultures to the fore, such as promoting the protection and passing on of cultural heritage, tapping into the cultural resources of ethnic minorities, and promoting cultural exchange between different ethnic groups.

China is home to 56 ethnic groups, with the Han people accounting for 91 percent of the total population. The traditional cultures of all ethnic groups are an integral part of the Chinese culture and are all branches of the same tree.

↓ TABLE TENNIS LEGEND TO CHAIR OCA ATHLETES’ COMMITTEE

Chinese table tennis legend **Ding Ning** has been elected chair of the Athletes’ Committee of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), the OCA said on June 10.

In her candidature speech, Ding pledged to strengthen sports exchange and cooperation between national Olympic committees, fostering dialogue among Asian athletes.

Ding has won 21 gold medals at the Olympic Games, World Cup and World Championships. She officially announced her retirement in September 2021. She graduated with a master’s degree in physical education from Peking University in July 2023, and remained at the institution as a teacher. Three months later, she was elected a member of the OCA Athletes’ Committee.



“Chinese companies, because of the competitive threats and pressures within China, are very good at trying things out, experimenting and adapting their products to the market quickly.”

Julian Birkinshaw, Vice Dean of London Business School, in a recent interview with *China Daily*

“The Global South now represents not just the pursuit of prosperity, but the driver of emerging global prosperity and growth. In the battle for inclusion in the present, they clearly have a voice not to be ignored in the international order.”

Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysian Prime Minister, in a keynote speech delivered at a regional forum in Kuala Lumpur on June 6



COVER STORY

GRASSROOTS GLORY

Village sports embraced across China By Yuan Yuan

The Dragon Boat Festival arrived on June 10 this year with a crescendo of drumbeats in Diejiao Village of Foshan City in Guangdong Province, south China.

Famous for its dynamic and exhilarating dragon boat races—a tradition dating back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)—the village has emerged as a favored spot for tourists celebrate the festival.

For the locals, this festival is one of the highlights of the year. To secure top results in the races, villagers who have moved away are summoned back well over a month

in advance to start their preparations. The training sessions further drum up enthusiasm for the dragon boat races.

Passing passions

Wen Yongcheng, who was born in the village in 2000 and