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12 issues a year at a subscription rate of 180 RMB/R360

An Africa-oriented English monthly covering China and Africa published by BEIJING REVIEW,
ChinaAfrica is the leading publication in China featuring news, views and analysis for an African audience.

SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINES: (8610) 6831 0644, +27 (0)71 613 2053 Email: circulation@bjreview.com.cn, cas201208@hotmail.com

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BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.63 NO.8 FEBRUARY 20, 2020

北京周报 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM

AN EPIC JOB

Rising to the task
amid the epidemic

RMB6.00
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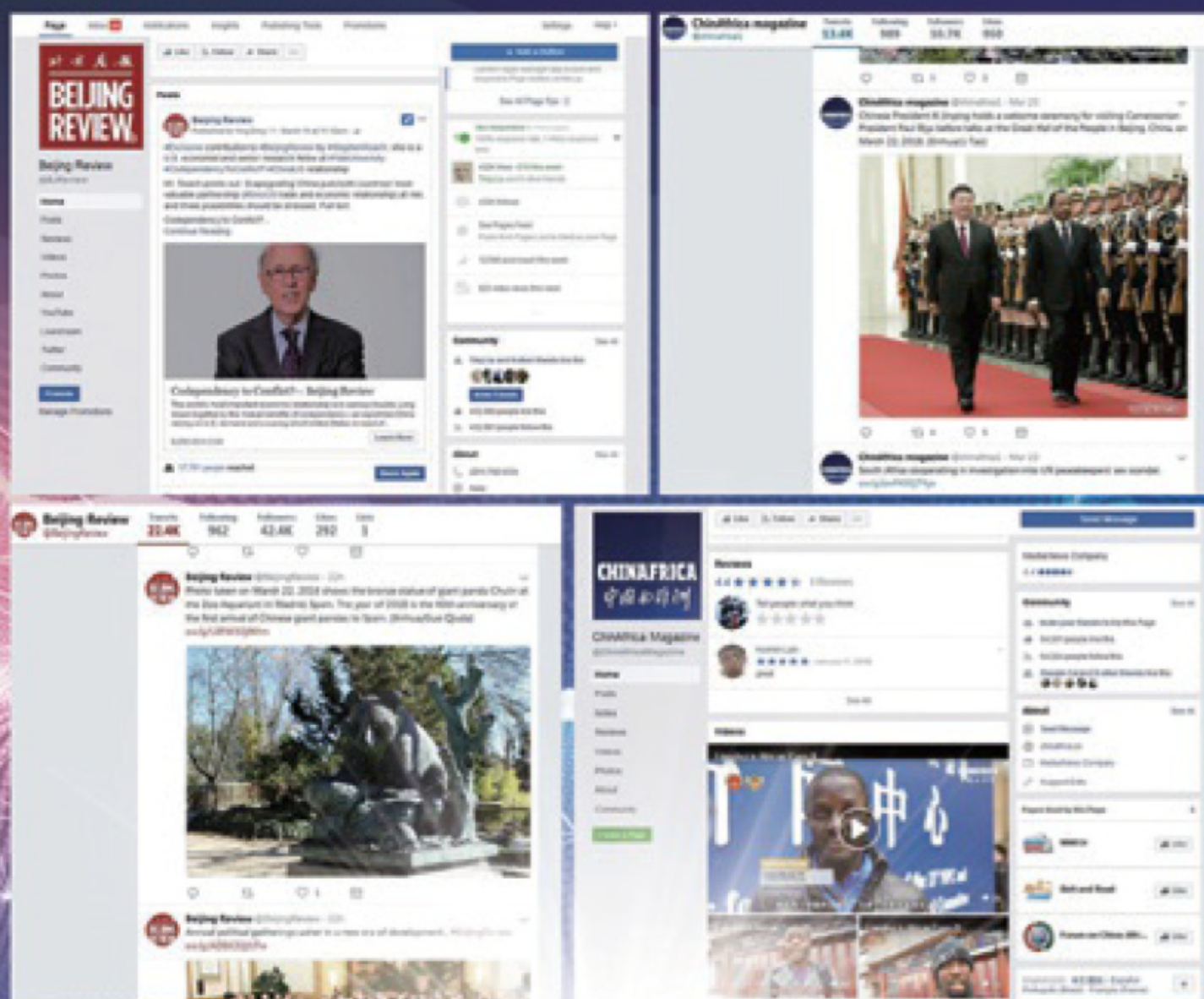
ISSN 1000-9140



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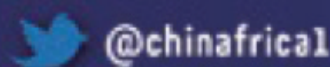
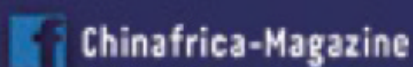
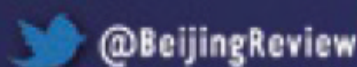
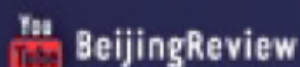
邮发代号2-922 · 国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2

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Cover Photo: Workers make protective suits at a factory in Hebei Province in north China on February 10 (XINHUA)

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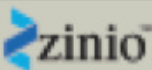
BUSINESS

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Beijing Review (ISSN 1000-9140) is published weekly for US\$61.00 per year by Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080, Periodical 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



北京周報

BEIJING REVIEW

A News Weekly Magazine
Published Since 1958

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Published every Thursday by

BEIJING REVIEW, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,

Beijing 100037, China.

Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading

Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,

Beijing 100044, China

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Fax: 86-10-68412166

E-mail: fp@mail.cibtc.com.cn

Website: <http://www.cibtc.com>

General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:

Peace Book Co. Ltd.

17/FI, 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\$61.00 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

EDITOR'S DESK

The Chinese Spirit

More than 20 days have passed since the Chinese Government launched an all-out battle against the novel coronavirus pneumonia on January 20, and the campaign has now entered a critical stage. Since February 8, the number of recovered patients discharged from the hospital has been rising rapidly.

The government is doing its best to hospitalize all suspected cases and put all close contacts in isolation for observation. The spread of the virus is being contained, making massive infection in the future unlikely. Victory is on the horizon, as long as the anti-virus measures continue to be well implemented.

Great institutional advantages have emerged during this battle. After President Xi Jinping urged resolute efforts to contain the epidemic, the entire country has been strategizing as in a chess game, with all localities activating first-level public health emergency responses. Under the uniformed command and coordination of the Central Government, the whole country has strengthened epidemic control efforts. Every artery in Chinese society is playing its due role in this battle, something that would be impossible in most other countries.

More than 11,000 medical workers from across the country have been sent to the epicenter of Wuhan as of February 10; Huoshenshan and Leishenshan hospitals, the two makeshifts with a total of 2,600 beds for infected patients, were

each completed in 10 days; mobile cabin hospitals with thousands of beds were built to treat patients with mild symptoms; hotels, training centers and local college dormitories have been temporarily converted into medical facilities with equipment and professionals for isolated treatment of suspected patients or medical observation of close contacts.

After the outbreak, Chinese scientists isolated its strain in record time, lending immeasurable support to the fight against the epidemic. The Chinese Government immediately shared information of the virus with the World Health Organization and other countries, making contributions to international anti-virus cooperation. It has been widely praised by the international community for its openness and transparency in the anti-virus fight.

While tightening epidemic control, China is working to maintain a stable and orderly daily life for people, as well as regular production. Food supplies are ensured, production restarted in early February, and fees, rents and taxes were cut to support businesses. After a temporary pause, the locomotive of the second largest world economy is moving forward again.

Chinese people will remember the Spring Festival of 2020 forever, not only because of the epidemic, but also for the perseverance and solidarity shown in the battle against the virus and the longing for a bright future for all. ■

WRITETOUS



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CHINA.....RMB6.00 U.S.A.....USD1.70 AUSTRALIA.....AUD3.00 UK.....GBP1.20 CANADA.....CAD2.60 SWITZERLAND.....CHF2.60
JAPAN.....JPY188 EUROPE.....EURO1.90 TURKEY.....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：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2020年 第8期 ISSN 1000-9140 国内统一刊号：CN11-1576/G2 邮发代号：2-922

广告许可证0171号 北京市期刊登记证第733号

国内零售价：人民币6.00元



BEING DISCHARGED

The only patient infected with the novel coronavirus in Tibet Autonomous Region, southwest China, accepts a bouquet of flowers from the doctor in charge of his case after his recovery at the Third People's Hospital in Lhasa on February 12.

The 34-year-old patient, a tourist from Suizhou, Hubei Province in central China, arrived in Lhasa on January 24 for a pre-booked tour, and was confirmed to have the virus soon after. He was discharged from the hospital after 18 days of treatment.

As of February 14, over 6,000 infected patients in China had recovered.



XINHUA

Adding a New Dimension

A worker at a company in Changsha, Hunan Province in central China, makes goggles for medical staff using 3D printing on February 11. The company started making the goggles after the novel coronavirus outbreak and can produce over 200 pairs using about 50 3D printers a day.

Ready for Tokyo

The list of 12 teams that will compete at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games has been finalized following the conclusion of the FIBA Women's Olympic qualifying tournaments.

China is one of the qualifiers, along with Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, Serbia, Spain and the U.S.

Under the current FIBA system, the top three finishers in each qualifying tournament are awarded tickets to the Tokyo Olympics.

China topped Group B in Belgrade, Serbia with a perfect record despite the loss of its home field advantage due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, which led to the competition being relocated from the southern Chinese city of Foshan. China inflicted a rare defeat on world No. 3 Spain on its way to the Olympics.

China's Li Meng was awarded Most Valuable Player along with Emma Meesseman of Belgium, Sandrine Gruda of France and Nneka Ogwumike of the U.S.

The 2020 Tokyo Women's Olympic Basketball Tournament will take place from July 27 to August 9.

The 12 participating teams will be divided into three groups, with the top two teams in each group and the two best third-placed teams in the group phase advancing to the last eight.

Rare Birds Seen

Twenty-eight spoon-billed sandpipers, known officially as the *eurynorhynchus pygmeus*, a critically endangered bird species, were spotted in south China, local authorities said on February 10.

These small waders were discovered on the coastal mudflat of Zhanjiang in Guangdong Province

during a global survey on the winter activities of spoon-billed sandpipers and black-faced spoon-bills on January 17-19, according to the provincial department of forestry.

The survey recorded 48 spoon-billed sandpipers in China. The species was classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species.

Sequence Shared

The genome sequencing of five 2019 novel coronavirus strains at the National Genomics Data Center have been synchronized and shared with a U.S. database, according to the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) on February 7.

The strains were provided by the Institute of Pathogen Biology under the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences on January 26.

Through a data-sharing

mechanism, the strains were synchronized with the GenBank database at the National Center for Biotechnology Information in the U.S.

Since the release of the database on January 22, the genome sequences of 82 virus strains worldwide have been collected and integrated.

With over 300,000 sequence file downloads, the database has provided services for over 30,000 visitors from 106 countries and regions, the CAS said.

Launch Preparations

China's Long March-5B carrier rocket arrived at the launch site in Hainan Province in south China on February 5 after a week of ocean and rail transport, according to the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation.

The rocket will take part in a joint rehearsal with the prototype of the Chinese space station's core module at the Wenchang Space Launch Center. It is scheduled to make its maiden flight and launch the prototype of China's new manned spaceship in April.

The Long March-5B is a modified version of the Long March-5 rocket and will be China's first 1.5-stage large carrier rocket, according to Wang Jue, chief commander of the Long March-5 rocket.

The rocket is 53.7 meters long, with a diameter of 5 meters and a liftoff weight of 849 tons. It uses pollution-free propellant including liquid oxygen, liquid hydrogen and kerosene. It has a carrying capacity of more than 22 tons in low-Earth orbit, the largest carrying capacity in low-Earth orbit among all Chinese rockets.

Hydrogen From Waste

Chinese researchers have developed a new method to produce hydrogen

from the industrial waste of hydrogen sulfide, according to a recent study published in *Energy and Environmental Science*.

The decomposition of hydrogen sulfide obtained from industrial byproducts is a promising energy conversion technology for hydrogen production as the environmental pollutants can be simultaneously removed, the paper said.

The researchers, from the Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, reported a remarkable metal catalyst encapsulated in graphene, a form of carbon, for highly efficient hydrogen production from hydrogen sulfide. The paper said the optimized catalyst delivered almost twice the current density than the platinum-carbon catalyst.

The new hydrogen production method was demonstrated to have potential for sustainable energy applications, it said.

Ocean Change

A Chinese research team has found that greenhouse gas emissions have played an important role in the acceleration of global ocean circulation.

A study by the team from the Institute of Oceanography of the Chinese Academy of Sciences found that the global average ocean circulation has accelerated significantly in the past 20 years, which may lead to

the reshaping of the global marine environment.

The findings have been published in *Science Progress*, a subsidiary publication of *Science*.

The researchers made the findings by integrating various data of ocean circulation and sea surface wind speed, and analyzing changes in ocean circulation on a global scale.

"Wind is the main power source of ocean circulation," said Hu Shijian, one of the researchers. "The speeding up of sea surface wind has given rise to the acceleration of global average ocean circulation."

"With increasing greenhouse gas emissions, more than 20 sets of numerical simulations show that the global average sea surface wind speed has significantly increased, indicating that greenhouse gas emissions are the main reason for the acceleration of ocean circulation," Hu added.

Wang Fan, director of the institute, said the acceleration of ocean circulation would lead to greater material and energy transport, potentially reshaping the global marine environment and exerting a significant impact on marine ecology and Earth's biochemical system.

Online Learning

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has asked colleges and universities nationwide to offer online teaching



Around the Clock

A worker is on the floor of Xinjiang Mengniu Dairy in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, on February 10. The company has stepped up production to ensure supply during the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak.

and learning resources following the postponement of school semesters.

According to a set of guidelines issued by the MOE, colleges and universities should make full use of all kinds of quality open online courses and laboratory resource platforms to organize online education activities.

Efforts should be made to ensure online learning is as efficient as learning in the classroom, the guidelines said.

Official data showed that as of February 2, 22 online course platforms had opened more than 24,000 free courses. They cover 12 undergraduate disciplines and 18 technical and vocational education majors.

In late January, the MOE announced the postponement of the 2020 spring semester for schools amid the novel coronavirus outbreak. It didn't specify the opening dates for colleges and universities under the ministry.



Safe and Sound

Residents of a community in Xihu District in Nanchang City of Jiangxi Province apply for community access cards on February 12. The community's environment and residents' health passed a recent assessment by epidemic control experts.

AIIB Loans

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) said on February 10 it is prepared to support China with public health infrastructure loans to meet the country's immediate and longer-term public health needs.

The bank has been in active discussions with Chinese authorities to strengthen the emergency public health infrastructure, the AIIB said in a statement on its website.

"With the full impact of the novel coronavirus epidemic still unknown, we want to do our part as residents of China to help stop its spread," said AIIB President Jin Liqun.

The bank will work with the Chinese Government to identify effective investments in public health infrastructure, as well as other multilateral development banks and private

partners to join hands in bolstering China and other members' ability to respond to and deal with epidemics and other public health emergencies, according to Jin.

These types of investments will not only improve the health of Chinese citizens but can have a global impact in terms of prevention and education, he said.

AIIB is a multilateral development bank that aims to support the building of infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific region.

Shortening the Process

With the continued growth of the number of invention patent applications, China's National Intellectual Property Administration (CNIPA) said it will

further shorten the process of patent review on February 8.

By the end of 2022, the processing time for an invention patent application will be cut to about 16.5 months and for a high-value patent to 13.8 months. The average time for processing a trademark application will be reduced to within four months, the fastest worldwide, according to a statement by the CNIPA.

China has attached greater importance to increasing the efficiency of patent review. Last year, the average processing time for trademark registration was shortened to 4.5 months, compared to six months in 2018, and the processing time for high-value patent examination was reduced by more than 15 percent to 17.3 months.

In 2019, more than 1.4 million invention patent applications were filed

in the country, with 453,000 granted. The total number of effectively registered trademarks surpassed 25 million, according to the CNIPA.

High-value patents have been acquired mainly in the fields of artificial intelligence, mobile communications, high-speed railways and biomedicine.

Furthermore, the CNIPA has so far approved the establishment of 26 centers nationwide to solve the difficulties of providing proof and reduce the processing time and cost of intellectual property rights protection, the statement said.

Online Payment Surge

Card payment giant China UnionPay reported an increasing number of online transactions during the weeklong Spring Festival holiday.

From January 24 to 30, about 1.38 billion online transactions were made through its network, valued at 1.32 trillion yuan (\$189 billion), data from the company showed.

The number of transactions surged by 13.21 percent year on year while the value marked a 13.3-percent rise, it said. Since the novel coronavirus outbreak, the company has stepped up efforts to ensure the orderly operation of the cross-bank transfer system and UnionPay payment services.

It has also strengthened the supervision of the network and transaction environment in Hubei Province of central China and other major epidemic-stricken areas.

The company said that it would cut or waive service charges or cross-bank cash withdrawal fees in these areas throughout the epidemic control period.

Halving U.S. Tariff Rates

The Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council, China's cabinet, said on February 8 that China will halve rates of additional tariffs on some U.S. products starting on February 14 in a bid to promote the healthy and stable



Back to Work

Workers examine equipment in a factory in Qingdao, Shandong Province in east China, on February 9. Enterprises in the city resumed production on February 8 with tightened protective measures against novel coronavirus.



Robot Deliveries

A smart delivery robot from JD.com, a leading e-commerce giant, focuses on a delivery route in a community in Hohhot of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China, on February 7.

development of Sino-U.S. economic and trade relations.

The move will halve the 10- and 5-percent rates on a list of U.S. products that were subjected to additional tariffs starting on September 1, 2019.

The list was part of a two-step tariff countermeasure targeting U.S. products worth about \$75 billion. China suspended planned additional tariffs on products in the second list on December 15, 2019.

It decided to halve the tariff rates after the U.S. side announced on January 16 that it would halve its 15-percent additional tariffs on Chinese products worth some \$120 billion on February 14, according to an unnamed official with the commission quoted in a statement on the Ministry of Finance website.

“To ease economic and trade tensions and expand cooperation, the Chinese side decided to adjust related

measures accordingly,” the official said. “Further adjustments will mainly depend on future developments in the economic and trade relations between the two countries. It is our hope that both sides will work together toward ultimately removing all additional tariffs.”

The commission said other additional tariff measures will continue to be implemented as stipulated and work on tax exemptions for imports from the United States will proceed.

Smartphone Shipment Contracts

China’s smartphone market declined 15 percent to about 85 million units in the fourth quarter of 2019, an industrial report showed.

Huawei maintained the lead in China with a 39-percent market share in Q4, up 11 percent year on year,

according to data from global technology market analyst firm Canalys.

During the period, Huawei shipped more than 33 million smartphones and topped 5G smartphone shipments with a 78-percent market share.

Oppo and Vivo remained in second and third places, respectively, in China’s smartphone market, while Apple moved up one position to number four and Xiaomi rounded the top five.

In 2019, smartphone shipments in China hit 369 million units, down 7 percent year on year.

Canalys attributed the Q4 shipment contraction to a drastic slowdown of 4G smartphone purchases and consumers’ weaker-than-expected demand for 5G smartphones.

While estimating 5G smartphones to exceed 150 million units in 2020, Nicole Peng, Vice President of Mobility at Canalys, said that competition among vendors will be cutthroat as smaller vendors hope to break the market dominance of major brands.

Improving Performance

China’s listed banks posted improving performances in 2019 thanks to steady economic growth.

By February 6, 21 listed banks on the Shanghai and Shenzhen bourses had released their financial reports. The annual revenue in 2019 totaled 13 trillion yuan (\$186.3 billion), up 14.11 percent year on year.

Net profits rose 10.9 percent year on year to 400.15 billion yuan (\$57.3 billion), with 18 banks seeing their year-on-year growth rate exceed 10 percent.

All these banks saw growth in both revenue and net profit, while China Merchants Bank, one of the largest lenders in China, led the gains with revenue rising to 269.75 billion yuan (\$38.6 billion) and net profit nearing 93 billion yuan (\$13.3 billion).

The quality of the banking sector’s assets also improved, with the non-performing loan ratio of 17 listed banks going down from 2018.



Smart Beds

Engineers test smart hospital beds at Siasun Robot and Automation Co. Ltd. in Shenyang of Liaoning Province in northeast China on February 3. The beds will be sent to frontline hospitals fighting against the novel coronavirus.



THAILAND

People hold a candlelight vigil to mourn the victims of a shooting rampage in Nakhon Ratchasima Province on February 9. A total of 27 people were killed, including the shooter, a 32-year-old soldier



AZERBAIJAN

Soldiers cast their ballots at a polling station in Baku on February 9, the day the country held a snap parliamentary election to renew its dissolved 125-member National Assembly



IRAQ

Snow falls in Baghdad on February 11, a rare occurrence in the capital, which saw snow for the first time in over 100 years in January 2008



EL SALVADOR

An 11-year-old boy creates a drawing with words of encouragement for China to defeat the novel coronavirus in San Salvador on February 7



GERMANY

A man tries to hold onto his umbrella in Iserlohn on February 10. Storm Sabine swept through the country on February 9-11, causing severe disruptions to road, rail and air traffic



UNITED STATES

Winners of the Best Documentary (Feature) Oscar for *American Factory* pose at the 92nd Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles on February 9. The opening of Chinese company Fuyao's U.S. factory is documented in the film



↓ TOP EPIDEMIOLOGIST ON DUTY

Li Lanjuan, a famous epidemiologist and member of the expert panel appointed by the Chinese Government, has made great progress in helping prevent and control the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia. Recently, her team succeeded in the treatment of critical patients in Wuhan, Hubei Province in central China.

Born in 1947, Li has been engaged in clinical teaching and research of infectious disease for nearly four decades. She also focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of liver failure and the development of an artificial liver.

In 2003, during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak, she minimized losses as the director of the health department of Zhejiang Province in east China by adopting effective measures such as self-monitored quarantine. At the same time, she successfully cultured and isolated the SARS virus and completed its genetic sequencing.

Her team has made comprehensive breakthroughs in infectious diseases including molecular structure and the origin of viruses, fast detection, virus culturing, vaccine development and clinical therapy, and has played a crucial role in curbing the spread of the H1N1 virus.

Li was selected as an academican of the China Academy of Engineering in 2005.



Toward a Bright Future

People.cn
February 8

The battle against the novel coronavirus pneumonia is part of human progress. The disease poses a serious threat to people's life, but it also pushes people to fight shoulder to shoulder, setting differences aside.

For any country, a war against infectious disease is a test of its capability and governance system. However, beside dealing with the threat of epidemics, countries must also share relevant data and materials effectively with the international community.

China's rapid response to this outbreak was seen as it reported relevant information to the World Health Organization (WHO) and countries and regions in a transparent, responsible and

timely manner. WHO experts were invited to conduct investigations in Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak in Hubei Province, central China. These actions benefit not only China, but also the rest of the world.

Today, globalization brings people closer, which can also result in increasing the possibility of spreading viruses and diseases. This is a new challenge for professionals in epidemic prevention and control. On the bright side, the development of technology and the ability to deal with public health events, combined with international coordination mechanisms such as WHO, will create more positive communication and cooperation.

Today's battle reminds the world that there is still a long way to go before truly building a community with a shared future for humanity. China is and will continue to work to turn this ideal into a reality.



Supply Guarantee

Economic Daily
February 10

At present, the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus pneumonia is progressing in an all-round fashion. However, the epidemic is still in the spreading stage, and the concentration and allocation of resources, such as high-quality medical materials, is of utmost importance to the fight against the outbreak. At the same time, it is also necessary to ensure daily supply for the public.

The State Administration for Market Regulation launched regulations on price control, quality supervision and supply guarantee after the outbreak in late January. Nearly 2,000 enterprises, covering food, logistics and medical materials, have positively responded, promising to support the hard-

"Since the recovery of the service industry may be slow given consumers' lasting concerns about outdoor gatherings, the focus of economic recovery should be directed at the primary and secondary industries in the first quarter after the epidemic ends."

Su Jian, a professor at Peking University, in an interview with
Economic Daily on February 11

"My greatest concern is that a decline in figures may lead people to lower their guard and overlook new infections of the novel coronavirus. After overcoming this barrier, we will be one step closer to final victory in the battle."

Zeng Guang, chief epidemiologist at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, writing on Weibo on February 12



A worker makes protective suits at a plant in Ningjin, Hebei Province in north China, on February 12

Potential Among Difficulties

Xinhuanet.com
February 9

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia has disrupted enterprises' operations and production, posing a huge challenge to the economy at the start of the year.

Services such as transportation, tourism and films are obviously impacted, while other sectors, including agriculture and construction, are also facing many difficulties.

In response to the situation, China has implemented many measures, with governments at different levels and relevant departments

ensuring that policies and decisions are strictly carried out in a coordinated manner.

After companies and industries resume production, they still need to solve problems of personnel, logistics, and living and working environments before the virus is completely under control. Relevant departments and local governments must map out scientific policies and coordinate all forces. Companies that meet the standard of reopening thus can minimize economic loss as much as possible.

All these difficulties can be overcome. The epidemic will only create a temporary negative effect on the economy, as the Chinese people have the capability, determination and courage to beat the virus. What is apparent is that China's economy has great potential due to its resilience, which is why the trend of sound, high-quality economic growth continues.

hit areas as much as possible.

The institutional advantage of China's socialist system is the key to winning the battle against the epidemic, as it enables it to mobilize the necessary resources for big undertakings. Each part of society, including medical care, production and public security departments, must perform their duties. The supply of medical protective gear, in particular, should be guaranteed. This requires departments at all levels to resolutely implement the schedule of the Central Government and cooperate with each other, fulfilling their functions and responsibilities.

Under the threat of the virus, people's life has to continue, and their daily needs must be satisfied. Secured supply and stable prices are vital for daily life. At present, the country has sufficient reserves of grain, oil, meat, eggs and milk, as well as basic categories of vegetable.



DOCTOR RINGING ALARM BELLS DIES

Li Wenliang, who was among the first batch of doctors to warn about the novel coronavirus, died of the disease on February 7. The 33-year-old ophthalmologist worked at the Central Hospital of Wuhan in Hubei Province, central China, and noticed a report of seven pneumonia cases of unknown etiology on December 30, 2019. He warned in a WeChat group that a virus similar to the one that caused severe acute respiratory syndrome had appeared.

Local police, fearing his warning might cause a false alarm, reprimanded him for spreading rumors on the Internet. At that early stage, few respiratory physicians knew about the novel virus, and research into the virus was just beginning.

Li was later infected by the virus while treating a patient in mid-January. He remained upbeat and said he planned to return to work after recovering to fight alongside his fellow doctors. Unfortunately, his condition worsened and despite attempts at resuscitation, the disease took his life.

After Li's death, the public posted their condolences on social media. An investigation team has been dispatched by the National Supervisory Commission to Wuhan to probe issues related to Li's case.



“This coronavirus, which started in Wuhan, China ... is not called the ‘China virus’ and neither was H1N1 called the ‘America virus.’ These vicious, political, xenophobic racist attacks and smearing of all things China needs to stop.”

Mario Cavolo, a U.S. writer living in China for nearly 20 years, posting on LinkedIn on February 5

“We have to shut these wild animal markets. If we don't do that, we will see one of these emerging infectious diseases every couple of years.”

Dr. W. Ian Lipkin, a U.S. infectious disease expert known as one of the world's leading “virus hunters,” after arriving in China on February 5 to help contain the novel coronavirus epidemic



COVER STORY

OPPORTUNITY IN ADVERSITY

As a balancing act starts to revive the economy, industry insiders foresee new trends
By Zhang Shasha



President Xi Jinping talks to medical staff on duty in Wuhan, Hubei Province in central China, via a video call from Beijing Ditan Hospital on February 10

"The results are hard-won progress made by all sides," Xi said.

Noting that epidemic prevention and control have entered a critical stage that requires stringent efforts, Xi stressed focusing on priorities without any letup and strengthening prevention and control in areas where the epidemic situation is particularly serious or at greater risk.

"Currently, apart from Hubei Province, the hardest-hit place in central China, other provincial-level regions are heading back to work. Enterprises in key areas including medical materials manufacturing, energy, grain, transportation and logistics have reopened," Cong Liang, Secretary General of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), said at a press conference on February 11.

Picking up the pieces

Companies providing epidemic control supplies and services such as medical materials and daily necessities were among the first to resume work. They are racing toward full production.

On February 8, four production lines for acrylonitrile, an organic compound used in surgical masks, gloves and protective suits, were in full swing at a Sierbang Petrochemical Co. factory in Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province in east China.

"We made a rational production plan during the holiday and have enough people and materials for production," Bai Wei, General Manager of Sierbang, said, adding that 1,500 employees had resumed work.

In the first 10 days of February, the company produced more than 25,000 tons of acrylonitrile and other products, alleviating the shortage of raw materials for medical supplies.

Domestic medical mask production capacity had rebounded to nearly 87 percent by February 7, Chen Da, an NDRC official, said. Masks could become a national strategic material reserve instead of emergency material in the future.

Nearly 95 percent of major grain production and processing companies had resumed production and there was sufficient supply of natural gas, electricity and refined oil, Chen added.

Logistics companies were expected to reach over 40 percent of their normal handling capacity by mid-February, according to the State Post Bureau.

In other sectors, enterprises have altered their methods of work and recommenced production in a phased manner. Daily and ►►

When many Beijing residents bid farewell to the city before the Spring Festival, which fell on January 25 this year, to rush home in other regions for a family reunion holiday, it marked the start of *chunyun*, the traditional travel rush known as the greatest human migration on Earth. However, unlike the tradition, this year, the city did not see all the revelers return.

The novel coronavirus epidemic pressed the pause button, not only for the capital but for the whole country. The State Council, China's cabinet, extended the new year holiday from a week to 10 days to prevent large-scale transmission of the epidemic but now, it is time to

resume work to stabilize society and the economy. While work from home is encouraged wherever feasible, cautious onsite production started on February 10 in a new round of campaign to test epidemic control measures.

In a circular on February 8, the State Council stressed the importance of ensuring the safety of workers and public health while addressing companies' difficulties.

The epidemic situation has shown positive changes due to concerted hard work, President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said at a meeting in Beijing on February 12, adding that the prevention and control work has achieved notable outcomes.



XINHUA

Farmers in masks plant seeds and cover the land with plastic film in Hongshe in Sichuan Province, northwest China, on February 11

large-scale disinfection and health checks have become normal in public areas and enterprises. Telecommuting and working in shifts are popular ways to reduce face-to-face contact. People who returned from outside their cities stayed at home for 14 days, the incubation period for the virus, working remotely. Those who had stayed in their cities reported for onsite shift duty. Public service organs and companies are working online, with approval and assignment allocation done by e-mail or phone.

Where commuting and onsite work are necessary, employees are encouraged to take

private cars. Big cities like Beijing lifted the one-day-a-week restriction on car use for the time being, permitting all cars to ply the roads on all days. Under the previous regulation, each car was banned from the streets one day a week, based on the last digit of the license plate.

Bai knows the difficulties will not vanish overnight despite resumption of production. "Manufacturers have delayed their return to work, which has led to a slump in the demand for our products. Moreover, logistics constraints have also affected the transportation of our materials and products," he said.

To cope with the logistics problem, he rented storage tanks to ease the burden on the warehouse, and adjusted the product structure. More solid chemical products are being manufactured since they are easier to store than liquid ones.

Overcoming obstacles

Most companies face similar challenges. "Soaring logistics costs are one of the difficulties," Sang Baichuan, Dean of the Institute of International Economy at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, told *Beijing Review*. He said the mobility constraint has raised the cost of labor. Together with limited transportation, costs are rising.

Investment, supporting service facilities and supply chains have also been affected. Companies do not exist in isolation, they are all links in a chain, Sang said. If different companies resume work on different dates, it can cause the chain to unravel. Also, some foreign countries are likely to reconsider their imports from China and may restrict Chinese visitors, which will impact trade and lead to reduced orders, while some orders may not be finished in time due to the restricted supply chain.

"Shrinking orders and unfinished transactions can have a significant impact on the liquidity of companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)," Sang said.

A recent survey of 995 SMEs by Tsinghua University and Peking University found 70 percent of the respondents can survive two months at most with their current cash flow. Less than 10 percent said they could continue for half a year.

Apart from SMEs, catering, retail and tourism have also suffered. Jia Guolong, founder of Xibei, a top restaurant chain, said in an interview with *ChinaVenture.com.cn* on February 1 that the company had been forced to close more than 400 of its restaurants nationwide. Only 100 were open for delivery services. With 20,000 employees, the salaries alone cost the company 156 million yuan (\$22.4 million) per month.

On February 6, Xibei signed a 530-million-yuan (\$76-million) credit agreement with the Beijing branch of Shanghai Pudong Development Bank. The first loan worth 130 million yuan (\$18.7 million) has already been issued. However, Jia said the business can't survive more than three months even after pooling in all cash and loans.

SMEs, on the other hand, have greater limitations in getting bank loans, compared to large chains like Xibei. The central authorities and local governments have already swung into action to cushion the epidemic's impact on companies, especially SMEs. As of February 7, 13 provincial-level regions and a number of lower-level governments had issued policies to support SMEs with measures such as the waiving

of rent on a temporary basis, tax cuts and deferrals, credit support and subsidies, according to an *Economic Daily* report. Meanwhile, more policies are afoot.

The NDRC has allowed SMEs to maintain liquidity by issuing bonds. The capital raised via corporate bonds can be used to pay back project loans.

Giant real estate players such as Wanda, the R&F Group and the China Resources Group have stepped in to help, announcing that they will waive the rent for their commercial tenants by half to one month despite facing liquidity pressure themselves.

Hema Fresh, Alibaba's New Retail grocery chain with online and offline retail services, has offered to share employees to help workers who have been let go by distressed companies. With online orders for groceries mounting as people prefer to stay at home, Hema Fresh has a labor shortage. So the retailer is borrowing idle employees from catering companies to fill the gap temporarily.

As of February 10, more than 1,800 employees from 32 catering companies, including Xibei, had joined Hema Fresh's temporary sharing plan. And many more companies have offered to temporarily employ disengaged workers to tide them over during this difficult period.

Planning for the future

While battling the current situation, enterprises need to make plans for the future to make up the losses. Sang said some difficulties are temporary as consumption will see a fast rebound after the effect of the epidemic wears off.

Xu Hongcai, Deputy Director of the Economic Policy Commission, China Association of Policy Science, told *Beijing Review* that changes will take place in people's lifestyle after the epidemic as they pay more attention to their health, which will also bring about new opportunities in business.

"From a long-term perspective, the outbreak will see a comprehensive reconstruction of the business ecosystem of the country, companies, industries and the people as a whole, the impact of which will last a long time," Li Jiangtao, a postdoctoral research fellow with the Institute of Economics, Tsinghua University, told *Beijing Review*.

In 2003, the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak became a catalyst for Internet industries. In the age of 5G, the epidemic may alter business models, consumption and purchasing habits in a revolutionary manner, Li added. He suggested SMEs pay more attention to social change since this marks an opportunity to reshape their companies and industries. "I'm confident new business models will emerge," he said.

According to Li, one change could come

XINHUA



A worker hangs disposable gloves at a production plant in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province in north China, on February 10

in management ideas as health maintenance may turn into company behavior from personal behavior. Telecommuting may also change corporate management. Freed from space constraints, employees can take several jobs while companies can adopt a project responsibility system. There is a great deal of opportunities, he said.

Sang also advised companies and public service systems to introduce and strengthen the use of artificial intelligence and automation in their production and services.

At the national level, Xu said he thinks it is an opportunity to launch new reforms. For

some public service sectors such as medical care and education, the government should increase investment instead of depending fully on the market, he said.

The outbreak exposed the weakness in infrastructure as the capacity for epidemic prevention and control was insufficient. Makeshift hospitals had to be built to tackle the emergency. It is crucial to increase public investment to improve medical services, Sang said. ■

Copyedited by Sudeshna Sarkar
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COVER STORY

KEEPING THE WHEELS TURNING

China balances epidemic control and production

After an extended Chinese New Year holiday to contain the novel coronavirus, factories, offices and other institutions have resumed operation cautiously to keep life, production and the economy going.

Companies began to follow a flexible work arrangement in the week beginning February 3. Many worked from home wherever possible while in some organizations an essential skeleton staff was required at the workplace.

After the State Council, China's cabinet, issued a guideline on the resumption of production on February 8, more people headed back to work. Those providing public services, daily necessities and epidemic control supplies worked overtime even during the holiday and have been hailed as heroes. ■

(Photos by Xinhua News Agency)

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1. A welder works at Harbin Boiler Co. Ltd. in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province in northeast China, on February 10

2. The Hodo Group's production line turns out protective suits in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province in east China, on February 8

3. A worker loads livestock feed at an animal feed mill in Qinzhou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China, on February 9

4. At the Jiangling Motors Group's production base in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province in east China, workers check ambulances on February 6

5. Employees of a foreign-funded enterprise work at the Guangzhou International Financial Center in Guangdong Province in south China on February 10

COVER STORY

HEAD IN THE CLOUD

Tech companies empower China during epidemic By Li Fangfang

When the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus struck 17 years ago, China was inching its way toward the information era. Alibaba was building the online shopping platform Taobao and developing its payment service Alipay, and the number of registered users of Tencent's instant messaging service QQ had just exceeded 100 million.

"TV news programs were a major source of information for people like me to find out what was going on," said Sunny Jiang to Pandaily.com about his experience in 2003. "My entire family freaked out when my dad got a fever, but we were too afraid to go to the hospital." Luckily, his father only had the common flu.

Today, those startups from 2003 have grown into tech giants and have paved the way for the country to deal with national emergencies and make it possible for people to live an alternative life at home during the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Locked down but connected

Since the majority of Chinese people were encouraged to stay home as a precaution against contagion, the question of how to keep them informed and their daily life running has been answered by a modern, top-notch online infrastructure.

Now, people wake up every morning and can get information about the latest novel coronavirus cases from various channels on their phones or computers, such as newsfeeds, dashboards, news portals and text messages.

On January 23, Wuhan, the hardest-hit city in Hubei Province in central China, was put on lockdown, followed by several other cities. Four days later, the government extended the holiday and advised people to work from home, a measure which was seen as a way to contribute to the national fight against the virus.

Media and online platforms quickly responded to misleading rumors, which helped people realize how easily fake news can spread during an epidemic.

WeChat, Tencent's popular multi-purpose app, became one of the main channels for residents to reach out for help. A mini-app on WeChat called Jiaozhen was launched on January 25 to help users filter out fake news, with expert explanations given for fast-spreading

information that often proved to be false.

Practical ties

Thousands of WeChat groups have been established among communities, companies and non-governmental organizations, bridging the gap between people in need and people who can help.

Du Yun, a general practitioner in Wuhan's Fangcao Community with over 5,000 residents, invited doctors and nurses who live in the community to join a WeChat group as a first step to address the epidemic.

"I suggested medical workers offer professional advice and psychological consultation for residents since the epidemic can easily cause panic," Du said. "Having a fever doesn't necessarily mean one is carrying the novel coronavirus."

The group has also turned into a logistics platform where community workers can buy daily necessities for residents who can then use a QR code to pay for them. Without ever having to meet face to face, social life continues.

Given that it is flu season in China, it is imperative to identify between a common respiratory illness and a viral pneumonia. This

reassures people immediately and alleviates the burden of hospitals which may suffer shortages of medical personnel and materials.

But when community workers are unable to meet the needs of all who reach out, residents sometimes have to turn elsewhere for answers. As a result, many companies have launched online medical consultation services. On these platforms doctors or their artificial intelligence (AI) peers offer free advice.

Tencent launched a WeChat-based medical consultation platform for pneumonia-related questions for people with minor symptoms, partnering with five other popular online health-care services including Dingxiang Yisheng and Haodf.com, which have recruited 10,000 licensed doctors from all over the country. Alibaba and Baidu are offering similar services.

As of January 30, the number of visits to Alibaba's free consultation program offered on Taobao and Alipay had reached 2.8 million, with 90 percent coming from Wuhan. More than 530,000 consultations had been answered on a platform initiated by the smartphone app Chunyu Yisheng as of February 1, according to Jiemian.com, a news portal owned by the Shanghai United Media Group.



A truck passes through a toll gate in Jinan, Shandong Province in east China, on February 10, where drivers are required to report their information by scanning a QR code



COURTESY PHOTO

Protective suits purchased by Tencent and Fosun from overseas arrive in Wuhan, Hubei Province in central China, on January 30

In addition, many other online-to-offline services have taken up their social responsibility. Ride-hailing services are playing a role as volunteer drivers help transport people to hospitals in areas where public transportation has been suspended. The on-demand service Meituan Waimai's distribution channels have become the only way for many small restaurants to purchase materials, and the company has promised to guarantee catering services for frontline medical workers and senior nursing homes.

NetEase is providing classes for primary school students in Hubei, while ByteDance is inviting physicians to talk about novel coronavirus-related issues and safety measures on its popular mobile platforms Toutiao and Douyin (TikTok).

The cybersecurity solution provider Qihoo 360 has launched a system of reporting and statistics-gathering for community-based prevention and control. It identifies residents or visitors to a community and records their body temperature, which helps community workers collect real-time epidemic data that they then can report to local governments in a unified format.

For the public good

Since the novel coronavirus outbreak, at least 60 tech companies have rushed to provide support in various forms, according to data by news portal iFeng.com.

Alibaba Cloud, currently the country's largest cloud-computing service platform, announced on January 29 that it will make all its AI computing capabilities available for free to help scientific research into new medicines and vaccines for the virus.

Baidu has made its computing and software for RNA structure prediction available to gene testing organizations and scientific research institutions all over the world.

Tencent Cloud, another leading cloud provider in the country, has given a research team at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province in south China, free access to its cloud server and provided computing power and object storage capacity for a research team at Tsinghua University to help them conduct offline computing tasks for gene measurement.

Tencent has also become a reliable channel for crowdfunding. The company is cooperat-

ing with public charity foundations seeking to raise money for specific projects by publicizing them on WeChat. Among the many projects to support Wuhan, the one to donate to medical workers who are vulnerable on the frontline tops the list.

For Zong Ning, an Internet content provider who lived through both the SARS epidemic in 2003 and today's novel coronavirus, the big difference is the participation of tech companies.

"This year's fight against the novel coronavirus is tech-rich. More tech companies are participating in the battle. Their distribution channels, which were invisible to the general public, have become a lifeline," Zong said.

"The infrastructure that facilitates entertainment services has become a strong support during a national emergency. It is worth thinking about how the whole tech industry can continue to fulfill its social responsibility after the epidemic," Zong said. "Many tech products are actively functioning to keep society working." ■

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COVER STORY

DISTANCE MAKES LESS DIFFERENCE

Remote work is promoted to combat the novel coronavirus outbreak By Li Xiaoyang

As a big data engineer based in Beijing, Li Kun got into telecommuting as early as 2013, but he said that today, during the novel coronavirus outbreak, he has seen it grow like never before.

To reduce face-to-face contact and prevent the spread of the epidemic, China has promoted telecommuting and online education through emerging Internet platforms.

Data from DingTalk, a mobile office tool developed by China's Internet giant Alibaba, showed that nearly 200 million people across the country started working online on February 3, the first work day after the Spring Festival holiday.

As a flexible way of working, telecommuting is expected to offer more choices to domestic enterprises. "It may become a new trend in some industries, such as technological research and development, where offline communication is not always needed, which can greatly lower costs," Li told *Beijing Review*.

Remote but close

As the demand to work online has grown during epidemic control, many telecommuting and teleconferencing platforms have offered free services such as video conferencing to support working from home. Along with DingTalk, products from tech giants such as Tencent, ByteDance and Huawei have also seen robust user growth.

According to WeChat Work, developed by Tencent, millions of domestic enterprises had used the app by 6 p.m. on February 3, three times the number of users for the corresponding period a year before.

Data from WeLink, a Huawei cloud service, showed that a total of 17,000 new enterprise users registered on the platform and held 120,000 conferences that same day.

Telecommuting service providers such as Xiaoyu Yilian, a China-based intelligent cloud platform established in 2015, have emerged by providing targeted support. According to the company, its newly registered users have surged since the end of January, consisting of both enterprises and hospitals for remote work

and consultation.

Technology enterprises have also seized the opportunity to expand their consumer base in the online education market. Since the Ministry of Education announced that the 2020 spring semester would be postponed due to the epidemic, many schools have joined the trend toward online education by turning to platforms where students can communicate with teachers in real time. According to DingTalk, its live-streaming courses had attracted 12 million students in 20,000 schools nationwide by February 2.

To ensure people's health while working at home, DingTalk has introduced a module for a daily health report that collects real-time data. As of February 4, nearly 100 million people from over 2 million enterprises and organizations had used the module to report the health status of members, the company said.

While many people are staying home, the delivery sector has remained busy to ensure the supply of daily necessities. UU Runner, a de-

livery service platform, told Zhengzhou-based Dahe.cn that consumer demand for cooked food, foodstuffs and medical products such as masks, has increased greatly in this period.

Online food delivery platforms such as Meituan Waimai have introduced special services for users to pick up their food in containers without face-to-face contact with delivery people.

Harder than expected

Although remote work is a fantasy for most, suggesting flexibility and freedom, some office workers have found it less rosy than they expected. According to many users, problems caused by the delay of live streams have led to big headaches.

Working at home also brings challenges such as how to remain efficient and focused. Many people have reported that housework has taken up much of their working time.

Fei Fan, a designer based in Beijing, posted on Weibo, the Chinese Twitter-like platform, that



A food delivery man takes dishes from a restaurant in Hefei, Anhui Province in east China, on February 6



A group of medical experts provide remote consultation at a smart medical treatment center in Zhengzhou, Henan Province in central China, on February 1

his views on working from home have changed. At first, he said he was happy to be spared the daily three-hour commute as a freelancer, but unexpected problems soon emerged.

"Since my company has shifted from offline businesses to online promotion during epidemic control, I have been even busier than usual," Fei said.

Working at home also makes the boundary between work and life less clear. "My phone rings at all hours with new messages and there are even more conferences because team leaders want to ensure efficiency and progress, which makes me anxious. Having my child around also makes it hard to focus on the work," he added.

For those working in industries that involve offline activities, it has been quite difficult for them to advance their work. A legal specialist surnamed Cheng told TMTPost, a domestic tech site, that the project he is working on has been suspended because it requires the collection of paper documents in person. "I have only completed about a quarter of my routine weekly work in the week starting on February 3," Cheng lamented.

Still promising

The boom of remote work has brought many telecommuting enterprises forward, but Yuan Wenhui, CEO of Xiaoyu Yilian, warned that the consumer group of remote work may shrink once the epidemic and free services end, according to *Business News Daily*.

"However, domestic enterprises will at least be able to make quick progress from user feedback and begin to explore a larger market with the consumer base developed during this special period," he said.

The rise of telecommuting enterprises has shown the potential of China's remote work market. Although it has not yet been widely promoted in China, the market has been expanding and has a lot of room for growth, Zhang Xia, an analyst with China Merchants Securities, told *Securities Daily*.

According to Qianzhan Industry Research Institute, China's remote work market was about 23.4 billion yuan (\$3.3 billion) in 2018, an increase of 20.8 percent year on year. And it is expected to expand to about 48.6 billion yuan (\$6.9 billion) by 2024, with a compound annual

growth rate of 12.4 percent.

Remote work is part of China's drive to boost the digital economy. Although its long-term economic fundamentals will remain sound, it needs to restore growth momentum amid the epidemic, and the development of the digital economy needs to be prioritized, Hu Zongbiao, an associate professor at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, told *Beijing Review*.

The digital economy has become a key driving force for China's economic growth. Data from the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology showed that the market value of the digital economy was 31.3 trillion yuan (\$4.4 trillion) in 2018, contributing 34.8 percent to the country's GDP.

"With rising demand, remote work will expand to more industries, which can inject impetus into domestic enterprises and promote the digital transformation of the Chinese economy," Hu said. ■

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COVER STORY

A CLASS ACT

The online course boom shows the positivity and resourcefulness of people trying to keep life going **By Li Qing**

Before January, Lu Sa, a professor at China Jiliang University in Zhejiang Province in east China, had never heard of Zeng Heqiong, who lives and works in central China. But the novel coronavirus outbreak has brought the two women together as collaborators in education.

Zeng is the director of the micro electronics department of the Wuhan Technology and Business University (WTBU) in Wuhan, the city that was hardest hit by the epidemic and put on lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education (MOE) notified schools at all levels nationwide to delay the upcoming spring semester to ensure the safety of students and teachers.

To deal with school closures, the WTBU planned to offer online courses. While looking for online teaching resources, Zeng came across Lu's online courses on fundamental circuit analysis. The content was similar to what she was looking for so she wrote an e-mail to Lu, asking if she could use some of the videos and other materials for her class.

Lu welcomed Zeng with open arms, saying

she would be honored to help, offering the resources for free. She also created guidelines for Zeng and her students.

This is one of the trends emerging from epidemic control. All over China and beyond, educators who did not know each other are coming together to pool their knowledge and skills so that students cooped up at home can access online classes in the new semester.

Many hands, light work

The MOE calls for pooling digital education resources to ensure teaching activities continue despite the epidemic.

Colleges and universities have been asked to make full use of all types of open online courses and laboratory resource platforms. Official data showed that as of February 2, over 24,000 free courses had been uploaded to 22 online course platforms for advanced education students.

Primary and middle school students will be able to access online courses starting on February 17 on the National Public Service Platform for Education Resources, an online

education platform under the MOE. Some schools in more than 20 provinces have already launched their online programs, with products donated by online education companies. Youdao, affiliated to Internet technology company NetEase, is offering free courses exclusively for students in Hubei, while others are for students nationwide. So far, over 500,000 students have attended.

For students living in remote areas, China Education Network Television will broadcast some courses, including a program showing them how to do physical exercises indoor. Online courses do not have to be restricted to the school curriculum; they can cover any content beneficial to students, an MOE official said on February 11.

Celebrity teacher

Pei Meng, a senior school English teacher, is adapting to the change. She has a new role as a live-streaming celebrity. Her classes are held on video-sharing platform Douyin. Students can tell her in advance what they want to learn to prepare for the spring semester and she prepares her live-streaming classes accordingly. Pei has an over 90 percent student attendance rate though the classes are not compulsory.

The online classes also teach about the epidemic and psychological health. Students interact by sending comments. Her classes fulfill a social function since the students have little interaction with non-family members due to voluntary quarantine.

To do well in the new format, Pei is exploring new strategies.

"I learnt some skills from Li Jiaqi so that the lessons are not boring," she said. Li is a Chinese vlogger who endorses beauty products through live-streaming. Pei also encourages students to attend the classes by giving rewards of snacks that can be claimed when school reopens.

Even so, how to keep students interested is still a challenge. "I can't see their expressions so I can't tell if they have understood what I am teaching," she said.

Pei called the 2020 Spring Festival a unique experience for students.

Education should be an inseparable part of the battle against the epidemic, she said. It can nurture healthy growth, social responsibility and thoughts of sustainable development in young minds.



COURTESY PHOTO

Xi Yunwei, a primary school student in Beijing, takes an online Go course at home on February 10



A teacher records online lessons for first grade students of a primary school located in Fuzhou, Fujian Province in southeast China, on February 10

On the go online

Social institutions are also going online under the supervision of local administrations. Xi Yunwei is learning to master Go, the board game invented in China over 2,500 years ago and known as *weiqi* in Chinese. Her coach is organizing sessions on a special app. Although Xi prefers to be coached in a classroom with her friends, the 10-year-old thinks this learning method is interesting.

Her parents are relieved since they were worried about his daughter catching the virus from an actual classroom with poor ventilation, with the virtual classes taking a load off his shoulders. The app courses are also flexible and can be attended at a convenient time and from any location.

In addition, parents can also participate, creating more interactions. To be evaluated, students need to upload videos, for which they are allowed to have technical assistance from family members. The involvement of parents

can help children concentrate on their studies, her father told *Beijing Review*.

Long Baoxin, a professor at the Shaanxi Normal University in northwest China, told *People's Daily* that social institutions sharing free courses is a help in these times of self-quarantine, while it is also accelerating the digitalization of education.

Though the MOE has been mobilizing resources to carry out online education, it stated that it is unnecessary to require all teachers to record and broadcast courses. On February 11, the MOE called for careful selection of courses and teaching methods suitable for online learning, rather than blind imitation of classroom instruction.

It warned that online education cannot replace classroom education and asked schools to analyze and evaluate students' online learning results after the new semester starts and create followup teaching plans accordingly.

Students should be helped with making study plans at home, selecting learning re-

sources reasonably and cultivating independent learning ability, the MOE said.

Chu Zhaohui, a researcher with the National Institute of Education Science, agreed that students should develop the ability to learn independently. It is a chance for students to come into their own, deciding what to study and making arrangements by themselves, he told Xinhua News Agency, in the process, their confidence and self-discipline will be strengthened.

"This is a more important part of children's growth than acquiring book knowledge," Chu said. "If they successfully realize their targets, they will have a stronger will and ability to overcome difficulties."

Home-based study is not equivalent to online study; rather it can be carried out in various forms, said Lu Yugang, an official with the MOE, on February 13. ■

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COVER STORY

DANGERS OF DECOUPLING AMID THE VIRUS

Isolationism should not overshadow concern and generosity in the face of the novel coronavirus epidemic **By Josef Gregory Mahoney**



The author is professor of politics and director of the International Graduate Program in Politics at East China Normal University in Shanghai

While the current novel coronavirus outbreak continues to affect many in China, looming questions remain regarding global impacts related to health, economics and geopolitics. Given current scientific understandings of the disease, including its transmission rates and associated morbidity and mortality (and despite multiple studies indicating a relatively low fatality rate), the costs for China and in particular, Wuhan, the outbreak's epicenter, continue to be substantial.

National and international containment strategies have unfolded quickly—some quite reasonable, others less so, but all fundamentally reactionary—and the economic costs to China and the rest of the world are still unknown but a cause for serious concern. For these reasons and others, the geopolitical knock-on effects likewise are matters that require sober reflection.

Simplistic thinking

While some economic analysts optimistically point to mid-March as a possible inflection point, it would be a mistake to think that everything can or should return to business as usual. On the one hand, while containment and treatment efforts appear to be working, this epidemic is still active. On the other hand, given the generally negative trend of U.S.-China relations, characterized by some in Washington as a new era of great power competition or worse, the Cold War 2.0, returning to business as usual would be undesirable and

even unhealthy.

As some have quietly noted, the impacts on global transportation and supply chains are providing a glimpse of what decoupling might look like. Decoupling is the term that some in Washington and elsewhere have used to describe their vision of future U.S.-China relations, with rhetoric and policies recalling those in play during the Cold War between the U.S. and the USSR. Stripping off the polite veneers of diplomatic discourse, the ahistorically constructed and crudely imagined ambitions of decoupling are twofold: first, to sustain U.S. global hegemony as much as possible, and

second, to create manifold pressures that undermine and destroy China's political system.

Unfortunately, in the short term, the outbreak may embolden those promoting decoupling. Their logic is that by cutting ties with China and in some narratives, rebuilding manufacturing in the U.S. and so on, the U.S. position will be protected from potentially adverse economic and health effects, among others. Such simplistic thinking has already driven a deep wedge between the U.S. and China, but it has also been at work elsewhere, including Europe, where its local version is the fool's errand



Staff members load epidemic control materials donated to China by locals in São Paulo, Brazil, on February 4

known as Brexit.

The narratives that promoted Brexit exploited reasonable anger with unreasonable fantasies, with the actual costs far exceeding promised benefits and creating political instability in the UK, including upsetting relatively precarious relations with Scotland and Northern Ireland, and more recently, in Ireland itself, if the recent electoral gains of Sinn Féin are a reliable indicator.

While some say that decoupling is already underway, the idea that one can simply decouple is ludicrous, and all the more so between China and the U.S. and the broader global economy. In fact, coupling between the U.S. and China has been underway since 1979 at least, and arguably, since the Nixon-Kissinger visits in the early 1970s. Today, bilateral trade and investment between the U.S. and China, and between China and those the U.S. counts as its closest allies, as well as other forms of exchanges, are calculated in trillions of dollars and affect billions of people.

In economic terms alone, to cleave relations would be tantamount to slitting one's own throat as well as that of a large percentage of the world's population at a time when global dangers like climate change and disease outbreaks require more coordination and mutual goodwill.

In fact, while we do not know all of the conditions that led to the current outbreak, we should not be surprised if we discover that problems like climate change and the U.S.-China trade war are cofactors. Global warming has already been linked scientifically to increasing global burdens of disease, including previous outbreaks like the severe acute respiratory syndrome, with associated morbidity and mortality expected to surge dramatically over the coming decade. This is on top of other impacts driven by volatile weather, rising sea levels, contaminated drinking water and so on.

Additionally, while it might not be the case that the U.S.-China trade war had a direct role in the outbreak, it has certainly contributed to difficulties in certain economic sectors in China preceding it and has undermined, according to some reports, efforts to organize U.S. support on China's behalf. Those who look positively at the containments associated with the epidemic as a dry run of decoupling should be wary of the response: a wet cough.



U.S. non-profit Medshare unveils donations of medical supplies in San Leandro, California, on February 10, to aid China's ongoing fight against the novel coronavirus

A tough test

There is some concern that this outbreak might already be a tipping point for a global economic recession. While some analysts believe the containment in China has been effective, a global pandemic would create greater catastrophe. The simple-minded calculators in Washington and London may yearn for the return of the Cold War, of a sharply divided world, including, in the British eurosceptic case, divisions in Europe and especially Germany, but Earth is warmer now, China's population and global economic position are much larger than the Soviet Union's, and the global costs of decoupling, in terms of both economics and human health, are exponentially higher. This is keeping in mind that numerous studies have shown that the rapid collapse of the USSR had incredibly negative health impacts on millions in Russia and beyond, including higher infant mortality rates, increased alcoholism, increased infectious and chronic disease deaths, and significant decreases in life expectancy.

Unfortunately, China is a soft target for global climate change, disease outbreaks and racism. Given its dense cities and heavily burdened health systems, coupled with its global economic integration and advanced transportation and logistics, China needs to do a better job preparing for and

responding to disease outbreaks. It needs to reassure itself and the world that it has done so. Of course, the Chinese system, like all systems, has its strengths and weaknesses, and the epidemic is testing these; but it is also testing the global system and fueling those who believe that dismantling it provides a reasonable path forward. And to be sure, there is more than a tinge of racism underlying some of these designs, as China's rise was already strongly correlated with increasing Sinophobia and new forms of Orientalism prior to the outbreak.

While many Chinese people today are rightly offended by the many instances of insensitivity and racism directed at them, particularly during this outbreak, they should not let this fuel their own xenophobia. Indeed, there are some in China who also harbor isolationist fantasies.

These developments, while unacceptable and destructive, should not overshadow the incredible concern and generosity shown by Chinese and non-Chinese alike in the face of this epidemic, nor should they feed the mutually destructive fantasies of decoupling and a new Cold War. The lesson this outbreak teaches us, whether we like it or not, is that we are all in this together. ■

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COVER STORY

TOOLS FOR RECOVERY

Strong fundamentals will see the economy rebound after temporary setback By Lan Xinzheng



Does the novel coronavirus outbreak mean economic opportunities for the U.S. that wouldn't have been possible under normal circumstances? Some U.S. media and officials seem to hold that unkind hope. However, it is unlikely as the impact of the virus on China's economy will be temporary and limited.

Economic opportunities should be seized by fair competition. The U.S., whenever it loses chances in international economic activities due to reasons of its own making, tends to blame others. It has blamed Japan, the EU and especially China, after the latter's rapid economic growth, to the extent of slandering it and starting a trade war. Now with China engaged in fighting an epidemic, some in the U.S. pin their hope on extracting economic mileage from the virus.

They forget the H1N1 influenza outbreak in the U.S. in 2009 that was declared a public health emergency of international concern with a 17.4-percent mortality rate. The fatality incidence of the pandemic was eight times higher than the novel coronavirus. The ongoing flu season in the U.S. had affected 19 million people, with at least 10,000 deaths from September 2019 to the end of January, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, neither epidemic made the U.S. economy crumble. Given the strong resilience of the Chinese economy, the current challenge will not hinder its future growth either.

China has its own advantages, which have laid a solid foundation for its economic growth despite criticism of the Chinese system by the U.S. media and certain politicians. This system has powered China to mobilize all sections of society to fight the epidemic in accordance with international practices. China is following an integrated approach combining domestic and international methods and forces. Unfortunately,

many U.S. politicians are unable to recognize China's huge potential.

The Chinese financial system has matured with the ability to cope with economic uncertainties and risks, a reason why the outbreak will not affect the economy in the long term. Having withstood the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis, the country has established a sound response mechanism. With over \$3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves, a low fiscal deficit and a stable debt level, it can tackle any unexpected situation.

China's industrial structure has been upgraded, with equipment and hi-tech manufacturing taking the lead, while emerging industries and new forms of business have been rapidly developed. In 2019, for example, the value-added industrial output expanded 5.7 percent year on year, and production in strategic emerging industries increased 8.4 percent. The output of new products, such as urban rail vehicles and solar cells, rose 32.6 percent and 26.8 percent, respectively, year on year.

In addition, China has a well-developed logistics industry and highway, railway and shipping networks with a fairly comprehensive industrial system. These will help stabilize and maintain its manufacturing advantages.

So which enterprises are moving their factories back to the U.S. because of the outbreak, as U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross anticipated? Well, none so far.

The seven-day Spring Festival holiday and the National Day holiday week in October every year mark the peak seasons for the tourism, catering, entertainment and other service sectors in China. The outbreak affected consumption during one of the two most important holidays, which will certainly have some fallout. The restrictions by some countries on Chinese goods and travel will also have an impact on China's imports and exports and lead to a decline

in the economic growth in the first quarter.

However, the government has already rolled out measures to stabilize the economy. The central bank has released 1.7 trillion yuan (\$233 billion) to maintain adequate liquidity in the banking system during epidemic control. Countercyclical adjustments will be boosted to keep market liquidity at a reasonable and ample level. So far, the financial market has been running smoothly.

On February 1, the central bank and four other authorities—the Ministry of Finance, the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, the China Securities Regulatory Commission and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange—jointly issued 30 measures to increase financial support for small and micro businesses, private enterprises, manufacturing and other key sectors. The central bank has also provided relending funds of 300 billion yuan (\$42.97 billion) to national and local banks in the worst-hit regions so that they can offer loans at discounted interest rates to key manufacturers of medical supplies and daily necessities.

In 2003, China's economy declined in the second quarter due to the severe acute respiratory syndrome. But then it rebounded with an annual economic growth rate of 9.1 percent. Similarly, while the current outbreak will affect economic growth temporarily, once the epidemic is under control, the economy will return to stable growth, and the consumption and investment disturbed by the virus will rebound, leading to economic recovery. ■

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State of Disunion

Trump's official address shows an active-passive strategy By An Gang



U.S. President Donald Trump delivers his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. on February 4



The author is an op-ed contributor to *Beijing Review* and a researcher with the Pangoal Institution

U.S. President Donald Trump's supremely confident State of the Union address on February 4, his third, was more campaign rhetoric as he seeks reelection.

Trump officially announced his candidacy in Pennsylvania on March 10, 2019, with the campaign slogan Keep America Great, a modification of his first election slogan. In the same way, his 2020 election manifesto doesn't have any major surprises, continuing and re-emphasizing his 2016 program.

As the last address before the presidential campaign, the main theme of the State of the Union was trumpeting what he deems the achievements of his term and reiterating his political beliefs.

Tooting his own horn

Trump bragged about the U.S. economy being "the best it's ever been" and the U.S. being stronger than at any other time in history, with more job opportunities, bigger incomes and a booming stock market. Poverty and the crime rate have been reduced, while people's confidence has surged. He attributed this progress to his tax reduction strategy, financial deregulation, the policy to make the U.S. energy independent and judicial reform.

He also boasted about his perceived achievements in reshaping foreign relations and advancing social reforms. For example, the trilateral North American Free Trade Agreement was replaced by the entirely new U.S.-Canada-Mexico Agreement. Then there were tariff wars with major trading partners. The phase-one trade deal signed with China, which eased the hostility to some extent, was also trotted out as an achievement, along with enhanced investment in the military and making NATO allies increase their defense budget. One relatively innocuous achievement was reforming the public education system by establishing the Opportunity

Scholarship covering chosen college students' tuition, fees and campus expenses.

Trump praised his administration's progress in medical care, illegal immigration and the building of a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. Defeating the Islamic State radical group and the raid on its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi that led to his death, the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and controlling opioid drug abuse were other achievements. Some of them were promises Trump had made during the 2016 presidential campaign and have been high on his agenda over the past three years.

Lack of rivals

Trump admittedly has several advantages over other candidates, such as solid fundamentals, a basically good economy and the absence of a good candidate from the Democratic Party. Still he is not taking the election lightly. His address made two priorities clear: winning more votes and creating a historical legacy.

His address also outlined the key tasks his administration will carry out if he wins a second term. It will reconstruct domestic infrastructure, upgrade Internet services and deport illegal immigrants with criminal records. Politically, his Middle East peace plan will be implemented, the country will be protected from the threat of terrorism and troops will be withdrawn from the Middle East and Afghanistan. Some of these plans were made in 2016 but were delayed or scrapped after the Democrats blocked some or money was not approved.

Unsurprisingly, in the nearly 80-minute speech, Trump made no mention of his impeachment trial, perhaps a pointed demonstration that his opponents can't distract him.

While many applauded the address, Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives, tore her copy of it right after the speech. Such acts by the opposition have become normal in the U.S. and the polarization will impact Trump's political agenda in varying degrees. However, instead of attacks and an impeachment process that couldn't unseat him but just made him the first impeached president seeking reelection in U.S. history, Democrats should concentrate on choosing an appropriate candidate and coming up with an



People participate in a demonstration in San Francisco on July 19, 2019, for the protection of immigrants' rights

attractive campaign platform. Otherwise, they will not have an effective strategy to return to the White House even after 2024.

Whether Trump wins the election will largely hinge on the economic trends in the U.S. in 2021, the reason his address highlighted the economic performance under his administration. Although the economic statistics sound good, there is still the grim reality of mounting debt, serious stock market bubbles and lackluster performance in the manufacturing sector. Economists and international economic organizations continue to warn the U.S. and the global economy of the risk of recession.

Confused diplomacy

Foreign affairs were not a focus of the address, nor will they be unless the external environment changes drastically. Trump bypassed the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue and the negotiations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), though it was a priority in his Asia-Pacific agenda after he took office. He was immensely proud to be the first U.S. president to ever meet with a DPRK leader.

The omission could indicate that bilateral negotiations have reached an impasse. There

seems to be an irreconcilable contradiction between the DPRK's position that it has the right to take effective self-defense measures and that sanctions should be removed and the U.S. line that the DPRK should abandon its missile and nuclear weapons program. This makes it unlikely that Trump will boast about U.S.-DPRK negotiations before the election.

Instead, he focused on the Iranian issue, with the general idea of tightening economic sanctions and maintaining maximum pressure. Through such measures, the U.S. intends to trigger internal changes in Iran rather than resort to military force against the Iranian Government.

After Trump was elected, the U.S. foreign strategy refocused on major country competition, positioning China and Russia as its main competitors. It also began withdrawing from international treaties to shirk its responsibilities and used maximum pressure to resolve regional hotspot issues.

However, maximum pressure often proved to be ineffective in the face of the complicated international situation with major changes in power structures. U.S. relations with Russia have been deteriorating while a trade truce has been reached with China after intermittent friction.

Besides the phase-one trade deal with China, Trump mentioned bilateral cooperation with the Chinese Government to combat the novel coronavirus. Because of these two developments, the Trump administration seems to have lost its reasons to restart the trade conflict and pressure China to enter a second stage of trade negotiations. It remains to be seen what implications this adjustment in the U.S. policy on China in Trump's remaining first term will be. Sino-U.S. relations have entered a period of strategic competition and bilateral communication and accommodation have continued despite multiple problems. The two countries have been testing each other's limit.

The U.S. strategic contraction will be a long-term process and international chaos and fragmentation will continue to intensify. Against this backdrop, Trump, while lacking strategic planning, has continued attacking specific issues but in a disorganized way. This seemingly active but actually passive diplomatic style is likely to continue. ■

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The Real Motive

U.S. Middle East peace plan boils down to a bid to win votes By Wang Jin



The author is an associate professor with the Institute of Middle East Studies of Northwest University of China

U.S. President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan, called by some the "deal of the century," is an important step—to win the support of Jewish voters in this year's presidential election. Given the complexities of the situation in the Middle East and the failure of negotiations between Israel and Palestine, the plan is unlikely to take the peace process between the two key actors forward.

The Israeli scenario

It is obvious that the plan was driven by the political circumstances in both the U.S. and Israel. Trump invited not only Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a close friend, to Washington to be briefed on the plan before it was partially announced, but also Benjamin Gantz, Netanyahu's competitor and leader of



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas holds a map showing past Palestinian land compromises as he addresses a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East in New York on February 11

China's Stance

In response to a question on the U.S.-proposed Middle East peace plan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying made the following remarks on January 29:

We believe the Palestine issue should be resolved on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, the principles of a "two-state solution" and "land for peace" and other international consensus, which should all be observed.

To make any plan on the Palestine issue, it is important to heed the views of parties concerned, especially the Palestinian side. Agreements in this process should be reached through equal-footed dialogue and negotiation. Any plan should help resolve the issue as soon as possible in a comprehensive, fair and lasting way.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

the Blue and White Party.

The plan calls for a two-state solution while recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's "undivided capital." Washington would also recognize Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, while Israel would agree to a four-year freeze on new settlement activities during the negotiations over the parameters of the Palestinian state. Predictably, the plan was rejected by the Palestinians.

Netanyahu supports upholding rightwing policies in regional issues. He favors constructing more Jewish settlements in both East Jerusalem and the West Bank to expand the area under Israel. He also favors cracking down on Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

He has been Israel's prime minister for the longest time since modern Israel was established, in the post for nearly two decades. He has close private ties with Trump. The Kushners, the family of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner who advised the president on the plan, have very close business ties with Netanyahu.

After becoming president in 2017, Trump

recognized East Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the disputed Golan Heights as the territory of Israel. Along with Trump's maximum pressure strategy toward Iran, an enemy of Israel, these activities are seen by international analysts as support for Netanyahu amid the intensified political rivalry in Israel.

Netanyahu faces two challenges right now. The corruption scandals related to him and his family might drive him out of power, and Gantz's party has become the most pressing challenger to his Likud Party.

In elections in 2019, the Blue and White Party became the biggest party in parliament but failed to form a government since it could not get enough support from other political parties to forge an alliance. The failure was due to Gantz's political stance. His party's allies in parliament are central and left parties, which rightwing parties regard as their enemy. Gantz would need to shift his stand for the election in March and woo rightwing parties. So supporting Trump's peace plan rather than rejecting it like he did in 2019 is more important to Gantz in his bid to become prime minister.



Palestinians protest against the U.S. Middle East peace plan in the West Bank on January 29

Shift in attitude

The quest for peace in the Middle East is one of the most challenging issues in international affairs. Generations of politicians and experts failed in their efforts. The issue concerns not only the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel, but also the competition between modern Arab states and traditional Islamic states.

In addition, the Israel-Palestine issue has been used by different world powers as an important tool to dominate the region. Therefore settling the Palestine issue is a highly sensitive task that can't be done easily, even with the mediation of international actors.

The U.S. has been an important mediator and a major player in the Middle East for more than half a century. In the 1990s, with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the political structure in the Middle East significantly transformed. It was then that the opportunity for peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine appeared, and the U.S. gradually became the only reliable mediator in the negotiation process.

The U.S. involvement was due to several factors. Washington hoped to maintain an alliance in the Islamic world to control extremists' hostility. It has also supported the state of Israel against its neighbors. The U.S. hoped to maintain stability in the Middle East to protect the supply of oil from the region to the North American market.

Therefore, it was important to construct a positive image of itself through direct and active involvement in the Israel-Palestine peace process. From George H.W. Bush to Barack Obama, every U.S. president has come up with a plan to facilitate the negotiations between Israel and Palestine and create a positive environment for the U.S. in the Middle East.

However, the traditional U.S. concerns in the Middle East have changed, especially after 2011. After the Arab Spring movement erupted in 2011, many traditional Arab powers, especially Egypt and Syria, were significantly weakened and their threat value to Israel decreased. With Israel already controlling East Jerusalem and most parts of the West Bank, the U.S. no lon-

ger needed to play an active role in the Israel-Palestine peace process.

In addition, the U.S. dependence on Middle East oil waned. It became the world's largest oil producer in 2019 due to the development of shale oil extraction technology. It is now a competitor of Arab oil-producing states, rather than an important buyer as it was before.

Over the past years, the U.S. administration, under both Republican and Democratic presidents, suggested a few main frameworks for the peace process. Nearly all were based on the UN principle of two states for two peoples.

However, the negotiation process has become a zero-sum game with no one able to put forward a plan accepted by both Israel and Palestine. So at this juncture, the only driving force for Trump to put forward yet another Middle East peace plan is to earn political support at home for the upcoming presidential election. ■

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Decisive Battle Against Poverty

First policy document of the year remains firm on poverty alleviation

By Ji Jing

Although schedules have been disrupted and programs postponed by the novel coronavirus outbreak, the release of the Central Government's first policy statement of the year—the No.1 Central Document—on February 5 showed that China remains resolute in eradicating absolute poverty by the end of 2020. Agriculture, rural areas and farmers' issues remained the focus of the document for the 17th consecutive year.

Experts said with all the stops pulled out to fight the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia, the release of the document on schedule is of special significance.

"I think this is a very important signal. It shows that even as we are hit by the novel coronavirus, we still need to win the battle against poverty," said Zhang Hongyu, Deputy Director of the China Institute for Rural Studies of Tsinghua University.

This battle is crucial for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and is nearing completion. The document also laid out tasks to improve the weak links in infrastructure and public services in rural areas and ensure the supply of important agricultural products. Increasing farmers' income and improving rural governance were also highlighted.

Major tasks

In 2020, China is looking to achieve two important goals: complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and eradicate absolute poverty. To accomplish these targets, the last barriers in the battle against poverty need to be overcome and the weak areas in agriculture, farmers' issues and rural areas need to be improved, the document noted.

According to National Bureau of Statistics figures released in January, by the

end of 2019, over 5.5 million impoverished people lived in rural areas, 11.09 million fewer than the previous year. Given this rate of poverty reduction, it is not difficult to realize the target of rooting out poverty this year. However, the remaining impoverished areas and population are all tough nuts to crack.

At a press conference on February 5, Han Changfu, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, called for efforts to ensure deeply impoverished areas, which have harsh natural conditions and inadequate public services, get out of poverty on schedule. Special impoverished groups should get rid of poverty with the help of social security policies, he said.

Han pinpointed inadequate infrastructure and backward public services as the most prominent problems in people's livelihood in rural areas and the most glaring proof of unbalanced urban-rural development.

In view of this, the document focused on improving eight weak links in rural areas. Public infrastructure, water supply, the living environment and education have to be improved, along with medical care, social insurance and public cultural services. Environmental protection also needs to be enhanced.

Zheng Fengtian, a professor with the School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development at Renmin University of China, said that in the past, the work of narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas focused on improving rural residents' income. However, increasing income alone cannot attract farmers back to their hometowns. Improving the eight weak areas will mean better infrastructure and public services, which will narrow the urban-rural divide. The improved facilities will persuade

many migrant workers to return home. This will be the focus of rural work for a long time to come.

In Quchangcheng, a village in Hebei Province in north China, drinking water used to be a severe problem. The water in the old wells was not up to the standard while new water sources couldn't be found. The local government finally hired a professional hydrogeological team to drill two wells in 2019, thus addressing the problem.

Such improvements cannot be achieved without policy support and various guarantees. The document rolled out new measures for ensuring talent, land and funding for improving weak areas.

To ensure adequate talent, it encouraged researchers, engineers, architects, teachers and doctors to work in rural areas. For land supply, it said the system of land use for rural industry development will be improved. Collectively owned rural land will be allowed to be used for developing rural industries through renting or shareholding.

In terms of funding, both the central and local governments will increase their spending on rural areas, farmers and agriculture. New forms of agricultural entities such as family farms will get preferential credit and enjoy the favorable tax policies available to micro and small enterprises.

Other issues

Doubling urban and rural residents' income in 2020 compared to 2010 was a quantitative criterion of a moderately prosperous society set at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012. To achieve this goal, the document highlighted the importance of developing rural industries to increase farmers' income. It said the government will support different areas to establish complete industrial

chains based on their resources, establish a system for farmers to share the dividends of the industrial chains and form competitive industrial clusters.

Zhang said different localities should focus on their unique agricultural resources to develop distinctive rural industries. For instance, northeast China's advantages lie in grain production while south China is known for fruit and tea planting.

Grain security, which has always been a key task of rural work, was also mentioned in the document. It emphasized stabilizing grain production through measures such as improving the subsidy system for farmers, which includes subsidies for buying machinery and seeds. The total grain-growing area and output should stay stable in 2020.

Han said the grain output has stayed above 650 billion kg for five consecutive years, which means grain supply is overall ample. However, the foundation for grain production capacity is not solid. Once a supply shortage occurs, it will affect social stability. Therefore, the more complicated the economic situation is, the more important it is to stabilize agriculture and grain production.

Reduction of hog production and the rise of pork prices was an important livelihood issue in 2019. The document highlighted accelerating hog production recovery in 2020, and made it clear that stabilizing hog production and ensuring pork supply is an important task. The target is to have production approach previous years' level by the end of 2020.

Hog production is also a means for escaping poverty. In Zitong, a county in Sichuan Province, southwest China, hog farmer Jia Weilun is raising his animals with the support of a large cattle breeding enterprise. The company provides the piglets and their feed, guides Jia on preventing swine epidemics, and buys the pigs when they mature. Through this model, medium and small pig farmers like Jia have overcome fund shortages and weak epidemic prevention capabilities. Before the Spring Festival, Jia earned nearly 900,000 yuan (\$128,900) by selling over 2,000 pigs he had raised in about six months.

Last but not the least, the document stressed the importance of consolidat-



New houses are built in Nonghe, a village in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China, on December 17, 2019



A resident of Fengrun District in Tangshan of Hebei Province in north China, picks cucumbers on December 28, 2019

ing the results of poverty alleviation so that those out of poverty do not slide back. It called for establishing a long-term mechanism for poverty reduction through measures such as improving the

system for detecting and monitoring the impoverished. ■

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Taming Wildlife Trade

Authorities impose a strict ban amid the epidemic and consider amending relevant laws **By Wang Hairong**

From the onset of the pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus in Wuhan, Hubei Province in central China, in late 2019, people have been trying to unravel a mystery: Where did the virus come from, and how was it first passed to humans?

Although definite answers seem elusive, China has nevertheless taken unequivocally resolute measures to block the transmission of the virus and ensure the safety and health of the public.

Several deadly and contagious diseases relatively new to humans are known to be caused by pathogens originating with wild animals. Recently Chinese researchers unveiled that the natural host of the virus could be bats and its intermediate host possibly pangolins.

Regulatory authorities first issued a document on January 21 to tighten supervision and inspection of physical markets, eateries and e-commerce platforms to crack down on illegal wildlife transactions. On January 26, a nationwide ban on wildlife trading was instituted for the duration of epidemic prevention and control.

Intensified control

After imposing the ban, relevant government organizations convened meetings the first week of February to launch special initiatives on cracking down on illegal wildlife trading in order to halt the spread of the virus from the source, said Yang Hongcan, an official in charge of law enforcement and inspection with the State Administration for Market Regulation, at a press conference on February 8.

Market regulatory departments inspected about 1.5 million business venues from January 21 to February 6, and monitored 491,000 e-commerce platforms and websites, Yang said.

More than 3,700 markets and other business venues were closed down, and 77,000 pieces of online information involving illegal wildlife trading were deleted or shielded, he

added, while over 16,000 animal breeding locations were put on quarantine.

Yang mentioned a number of illegal wildlife trading cases that were investigated recently. On January 26, 55 snakes, seven bamboo rats and other animals were seized in Xiushan County in the southwestern municipality of Chongqing. In Changyi District in Jilin City, Jilin Province in the northeast, African spurred tortoises and geckoes, two animals under national protection, were intercepted on January 27. And in Qianjiang City in Hubei, authorities confiscated 343 wild animals on January 30.

According to the Department of Forestry of the southeastern province of Fujian, under a campaign codenamed Spring Action, approximately 1,000 forest police officers patrol key venues to crack down on wildlife-related crimes every day; some 15,000 people, including forest rangers and natural reserve patrols, monitor mountainous and forest areas every day to prevent illegal hunting of wild animals; and about 10,000 law enforcement personnel supervise key business venues such as markets and eateries every day to stop illegal wildlife transactions. The province's breeding bases have been thoroughly disinfected and are under real-time monitoring.

In addition to rigorously cracking down on illegal trading of wildlife, efforts will be stepped up to block consumers' access to animals illegally captured and traded, Yang said.

Legal improvement

In an effort to fight the novel coronavirus outbreak, the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, is considering amending the law on the protection of wildlife this year, said Wang Ruihe, an official with the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, at a press conference on February 10. Efforts will also be made to accelerate the amendment of laws on animal epidemic prevention and other areas, he said.



A wildlife inspector checks a vehicle before it exits an expressway in Yanchi County, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China, on February 2

Potential public health risks caused by trading and eating wild animals have drawn worldwide concern, giving rise to the need to expand the scope of the law and toughen the crackdown, he said.

As the health risks of wildlife consumption became clearer during the fight against severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, widespread measures were taken to tackle the problem, with Guangdong Province in south China shutting down related markets and enforcing an outright ban. However, in recent years, bushmeat has gradually sneaked back onto some dinner tables.

Both legislation and law enforcement related to wildlife need to be improved, said Liu Peng, a professor at the School of Public Administration and Policy, Beijing-based Renmin University of China.

Wildlife protection is stipulated in the Criminal Law, laws on wildlife protection and animal epidemic prevention, animal quarantine management measures and regulations on the implementation of terrestrial wildlife protection. The Law on the Protection of Wild Animals bans the hunting and killing of wildlife under national protection as well as the trading of the protected species and their products. It also states that the hunting of animals not under state protection requires licensing and is subject to quota management.

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Researchers deploy infrared cameras in the Wuyishan National Nature Reserve, Fujian Province in southeast China, to step up monitoring of wildlife on December 31, 2019

However, Liu said these provisions have some common drawbacks. For instance, they focus more on key animals, mostly rare and endangered, but are relatively weak regarding the protection of the common ones.

They tend to be fuzzy in the definition and classification of wild animals, and impose light punishment for illegal trading of those that are not under national protection, he explained. Moreover, the provisions on the trading of artificially bred animals and online wildlife trading are not clear enough.

Currently, issues concerning wild animals not under national protection are handled by local governments. Liu conceded that some officials may not have enough incentive to strictly regulate wildlife trading.

Moreover, as wildlife consumption involves many links along a long chain including hunting, breeding, selling, transporting, slaughtering and cooking, full-coverage supervision is hard to carry out. While stepping up routine law enforcement, it is essential to encourage industry associations and businesses to exercise self-discipline and consumers to give up bushmeat consumption, Liu said.

The supervision of wildlife trading is not only about protecting ecological resources; but more importantly, it is about protecting public health, he said.

Uncovering missing links

Amid efforts for an early win over the novel coronavirus, researchers have also been busy trying to identify the specific animals responsible for it. Upon receiving a report on the outbreak, the National Institute for Viral Disease Control and Prevention under the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention promptly sent researchers to collect samples from the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, where the virus is believed to have originated, to find clues to its causes. The market, the largest of its kind in central China, sold seafood and wild animals such as tiger frogs, snakes and hedgehogs before being shut down on January 1. Several of the earliest infected patients had worked there before being hospitalized.

On January 26, the institute announced that 33 of the 585 environmental samples collected contained novel coronavirus nucleic acids, suggesting that wild animals sold in the market were a source of the virus but researchers could not pinpoint any specific animal as the natural host.

A team led by Shi Zhengli, a researcher with the Wuhan Institute of Virology, published an article on January 23, indicating that bats are the natural host of the virus. The article noted that its genetic sequence is 96.2 percent identical to a bat coronavirus

and 79.5 percent identical to the coronavirus that caused SARS in 2003. Their finding appeared in the UK-based academic journal *Nature* on February 3.

Shi and her colleagues have been traveling across the country to study bat viruses for more than a decade. In 2017, her team discovered 15 virus strains with all the genetic building blocks of the SARS virus among horseshoe bats inhabiting a cave in Yunnan Province in southwest China. Their research provided strong evidence that the SARS virus that plagued China 17 years ago originated with bats, and was later passed to humans by civets.

However, since bats hibernate during winter, scientists reckon that there had to be one or more intermediary hosts to pass the virus to humans. Researchers at South China Agricultural University found that the metagenome sequence of a novel coronavirus strain separated from pangolins is 99 percent identical to that from infected people.

Shen Yongyi, a professor at the university and a member of the research team, said there are usually multiple intermediate hosts, and pangolins may just be one of several. ■

Copyedited by Rebeca Toledo
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Short-Term Impact

China's economy will remain strong despite the epidemic outbreak By Pan Helin



The author is acting dean of the Digital Economy Institute at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law

As the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia is brought under control, China's economic activity will recover to normal levels, notwithstanding that it has been severely affected in the short run, especially after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a public health emergency of international concern on January 31.

In the meantime, against the current cyclical fluctuation and economic downturn, China should intensify counter-cyclical adjustments, and use a basket of macro-economic control tools in a timely manner to iron out economic cycles and ensure stable economic growth.

Based on current figures, the virus has a lower fatality rate than the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003, but has a longer incubation period and stronger transmissibility. The good news is that the country's medical resources are being concentrated in the epidemic-affected area, and most patients are stable after getting prompt treatment.

The length of the current epidemic depends on whether the arrival of medical resources can outpace the transmission of the virus, whether virus variation will occur and when targeted treatment plans will be worked out. Experts estimate that the epidemic will likely last for some time.

However, the market doesn't need to be excessively fearful as irrational behavior in the short run will only make the economic situation worse. What the market urgently needs are rational economic expectations and the reasonable allocation of resources.

Back in 2003 when SARS broke out, many economists were concerned that the epidemic would trigger another Asian financial crisis. But the fact was that from November 2002 when the virus was first

found to July 2003 when the WHO declared no newly reported confirmed or suspected cases, its influence on the Chinese economy was mainly in the second quarter of 2003, while the country's GDP growth for 2003 was only mildly affected.

China's GDP growth rate dropped to 10.1 percent in the second quarter of 2003 from 11.1 percent, with tertiary sectors such as transportation and leisure services more seriously affected than manufacturing and agriculture. For instance, passenger flow of railway, road and aviation transportation experienced year-on-year decreases for three consecutive quarters that year, while sectors such as accommodations, tourism and tourist spots also saw significant drops. In addition, consumption was also seriously affected. Year-on-year growth of retail sales of consumer goods started slowing down during the first quarter of the year, declining from 10 percent to the lowest point of 4.3 percent in May. However, such influences didn't last long, and various indices soon recovered after the epidemic came to an end.

In addition to the huge costs to control the epidemic, its biggest impact on the economy so far is the direct and indirect influences of restricting the flow of people. This may include a decline in resident consumption, a reduction of corporate production and investment, a decrease in imports and exports, and higher inflation, unemployment and other major economic indices.

To curb the spread of the virus, local governments at various levels have adopted traffic control and advised residents to stay home. During the annual Spring Festival holiday, which is traditionally an economic high point, the tourism, hotel, catering, retail and entertainment industries had to suspend business. Due to the sharp decline in demand, the service industry's hope of having a good start after the Spring Festival have also been dashed.

Many local governments have postponed the restart of work, which will inevitably affect normal corporate production and investment, and may lead to

risks of defaults on orders and decreasing profits. If the epidemic spreads further, exports and foreign direct investment will also be affected. For the safety of their own nationals, foreign businesses may choose to limit imports from or delay visits to China, which will have a significant influence on the country as it actively builds an open economy.

Due to these influences, inflation and unemployment rates will rise in the short run, and GDP growth will slow down for a certain period. The government will most likely relax monetary and credit policies, increase fiscal expenditure and implement other measures to readjust the aggregate demand management to avoid the possibility of further economic downturn. Ensuring stable total demand and loosening risks should be well balanced to forestall systemic risks, with the market playing an important role in restoring the economy.

The impact of a large-scale setback on the economy in any country is seemingly a challenge to short-term demand, but it is actually a test of whether the country has a reasonable economic structure. Since China started to advance supply-side structural reform in 2015, the government has put forth a number of major reforms to address structural problems in the economy, such as eliminating outdated production capacity, promoting the development of advanced manufacturing and strategic emerging industries, and shifting from a factor-driven to an innovation-driven pattern. At the same time, new growth drivers should be established to seek growth through reform, transformation and innovation instead of relying on the traditional troika of consumption, investment and trade.

In conclusion, although we have no demographic dividend, powerful external demand or low leverage environment in government departments like we did in 2003, we should still be confident in the current economic structure and believe that China will be able to manage this setback. ■

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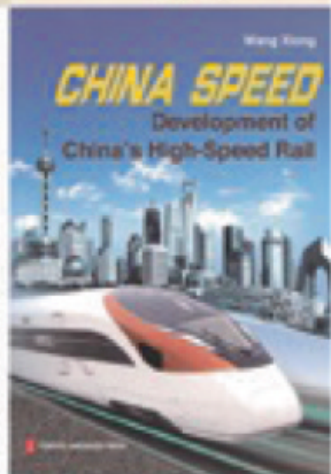
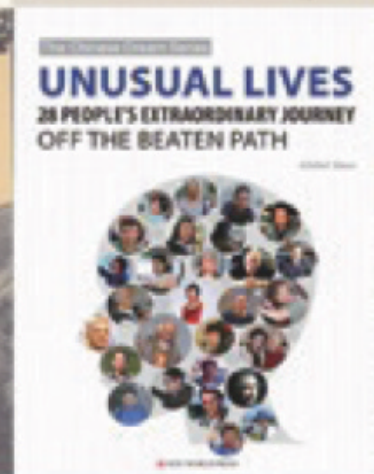
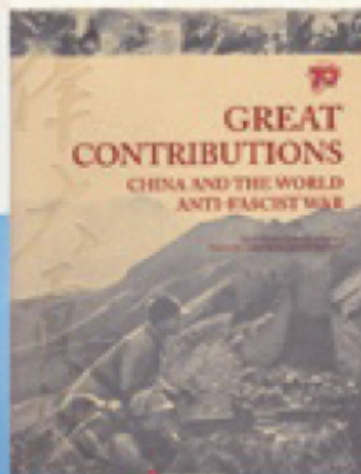
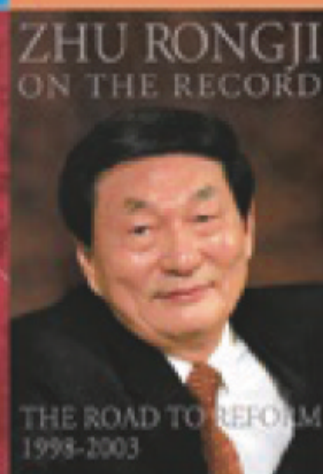
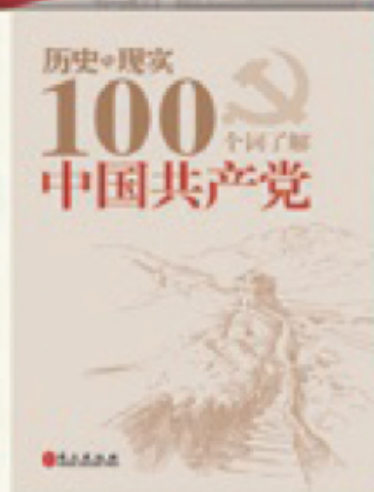
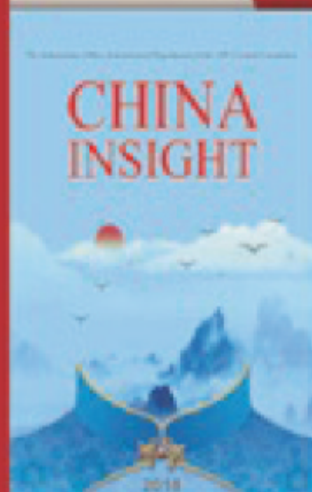
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Resilience Amid Challenges

China will overcome pressure on domestic and global business

By Michael Zakkour



The author is a U.S.-based author, consultant and op-ed contributor to *Beijing Review*

The growth, scale and scope of the novel coronavirus outbreak in China has become one of the most talked about global subjects.

The virus is first and foremost a domestic health issue for China, with an increasing international potential. President Xi Jinping is leading a national effort to contain the outbreak while scientists and doctors in China and around the world are working to find a vaccine and/or cure.

The first order of business is to ensure the health and wellbeing of Chinese citizens and to prevent the virus from spreading further outside of China. Provincial and lower-level governments are coordinating with Beijing, citizen volunteers are doing heroic work in supporting the effort and each other, and the country has taken on a war footing to battle the virus.

Xi said on February 10 that the situation at the moment remains very serious but he expressed confidence that China can certainly obtain a full victory in the fight against the epidemic.

Beyond the implications for people's health is the question of the health of the Chinese and global economy as a result of this unprecedented situation.

Business in China

The Spring Festival holiday, from January 24 to January 30, coincided with the aggressive spread of the virus. As the scope of the problem widened, the holiday period was extended to February 2 and up to February 10.

Most businesses were closed during

the prolonged holiday, and for good reason. Having millions of people working in proximity, whether on factory floors or in office buildings, or having the general public gathered in malls, department stores and shops, would do the opposite of containment and further spread the virus. The business shutdown was the correct, but painful choice, that had to be made by authorities and business owners.

The effects have been undeniably negative for China's current and short-term economic outlook, but at the same time, some valuable lessons and some new ideas have emerged.

For both blue- and white-collar workers there is solace in the fact that they will continue to get paid until things improve, but for businesses the loss of sales and productivity, if things do not improve, are of grave concern.

An immediate and obvious effect of the outbreak is that many factories remained closed and those that were running consisted of skeleton crews and reduced capacity. China and the world still depend on Chinese manufacturing to a large degree and the loss of capacity and output is a concern. The government has already called on companies to resume production while putting in place epidemic prevention measures.

Remote work is the new trend. With so many offices closed, companies have shifted to having people work remotely from home. While it's too early to say, there is potential for learning about the benefits of remote work in terms of decreasing traffic and the use of energy and technology, meeting the demand for a more remote work-based economy.

Consumption is down. China has successfully followed through on its effort to shift more of its GDP to consumption and services. In fact, consumption has been a bright spot for the economy over the past two years. An extended shuttering of

stores, restaurants, markets and malls is disconcerting to both local and international operators.

E-commerce has great potential. Thus far the effects on China's world leading e-commerce economy has been a mixed bag of positives and potential negatives. Because stores and traditional physical outlets are either closed or running on reduced hours, and because people in big cities are largely staying indoors, online sales have held steady and in some cases have seen significant bumps up.

The food and beverage industry is being affected. The epidemic has touched the food and beverage industry in several ways so far. Restaurants, bars and coffee/snack shops have been shuttered, affecting an important consumption sector. The virus has also made delivering food and beverages more difficult. The good news is the government has done a great job of ensuring the larger food supply and keeping grocery store shelves well stocked.

If logistics, supply chain and last-mile delivery services run well, e-commerce will provide a lifeline for consumers, keep consumption humming and further entrench digital commerce in China.

Global business

One of the most important takeaways from the outbreak so far, and one that many around the world did not fully appreciate, is the depth and breadth with which the Chinese economy and Chinese businesses are integrated into the world economy.

To demonstrate the importance of the U.S. economy to the world in the 1960s, a saying was coined: "When America sneezes, the world catches a cold." In this case China has literally and figuratively sneezed and the world is in fear of catching a cold.

One of the most profound potential effects of the coronavirus is on global supply chains. Despite China now being a major consumer, service and technology econo-



Staff at a smart technology company in Qingdao, Shandong Province in east China, adjust disinfection robots on February 11

my, it is still the largest manufacturing hub in the world and hundreds of thousands of companies depend on China's factories to produce their goods.

Enterprises as diverse as Apple, Walmart and Nintendo, as well as many of the world's apparel brands, are reporting that their ability to bring products to market may be affected by an extended disruption in Chinese manufacturing.

Another thing that has surfaced is just how important Chinese consumers are to global brands and retailers. China has emerged as the fastest growing and most important market for many brands and retailers and the virtual shutdown of physical retail and the need to close stores could affect their overall 2020 sales.

For now, the effect has been limited and is being mitigated through e-commerce but still the concern is justified.

Some brands have already announced that the slowdown may have a negative effect on their annual earnings.

The bottom line is that the world is intimately engaged with China in almost all aspects of making, moving, selling and buying virtually everything. Aside from the human toll, the epidemic is of great concern to businesses, governments and economists in China and the world over. This is a global human health and economic issue that will, if not contained, prove damaging to both.

This too shall pass

I remain optimistic that the outbreak will be contained, a vaccine and cure will be developed and a larger global epidemic will be averted.

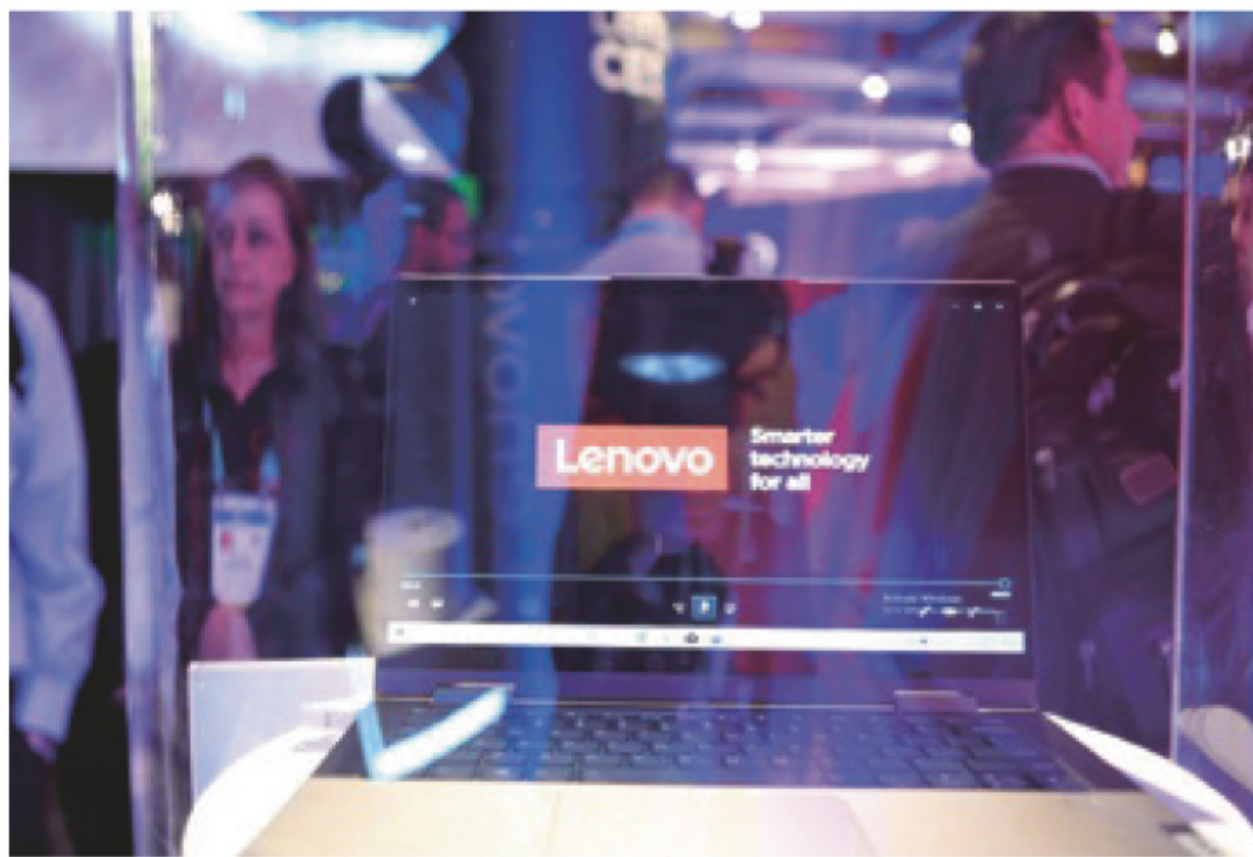
In the long-term, several positive developments will emerge. The Chinese

economy will have proven its resilience and strength in the face of a truly monumental challenge. Through adversity, many lessons will be learned about how to deal with Chinese/global economic challenges. The outbreak, as many do, will be a spur to further innovations in healthcare, economics, technology and services, and will provide an opportunity for constructive collaboration in these areas between China and the rest for the world.

Finally, I think that the people and government of China will use this unprecedented challenge as an opportunity to improve development and people's standard of living through applying the lessons learned during this time of duress. ■

Copyedited by Rebeca Toledo
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Emerging Industries Lead High-Quality Development



Lenovo showcases the world's first 5G laptop, Yoga 5G, at the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas on January 8

Strategic emerging industries are flourishing as China advances economic transformation and upgrading, injecting new impetus into high-quality development.

The country's GDP grew to 99.09 trillion yuan (\$14.38 trillion) last year, with per-capita GDP topping \$10,000, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The Chinese economy has been moving from a phase of high-speed growth to a stage of high-quality development, said Ning Jizhe, head of the NBS.

In 2019, the value-added industrial output expanded 5.7 percent year on year, with production in hi-tech manufacturing and strategic emerging industries increasing 8.8 percent and 8.4 percent, respectively.

As strategic emerging industries, hi-tech manufacturing and modern services expand in the economy, China's economic structure is continuing to be optimized, with improved quality and resilience, noted Liu Zhe, a researcher with the think tank WANB Institute.

In November 2019, mobile phone shipments were 34.84 million units, while 5G phone shipments reached 5.07 million units, for the first time exceeding 5 million units in a month, according to data from the China Academy of Information and

Communications Technology (CAICT).

These 5G phones are just a glimpse into the huge industrial opportunities brought about by new technologies. China's total 5G investment will be about 900 billion yuan (\$128.75 billion) in 2020, while the fast-growing market will create an estimated 6.3 trillion yuan (\$901.3 billion) of direct output value in 2030, a CAICT report said.

Emerging key information technology such as 5G is becoming the core engine for the digital economy, as well as an important area in advancing supply-side structural reform, ensuring China's leading position in the new round of scientific and technological revolution, said Yuan Leifeng, an official with the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council.

In Jiangxi Province in east China, the application of virtual reality (VR) technology is speeding up. For example, a skilled welder can pound 4,000 to 5,000 nails a day. However, a robot with VR technology can pound 25,000 in the same amount of time, of higher quality and only one eighth the cost of a skilled welder, said Yang Wen, a representative from Jianglian Heavy Industry Group Co. Ltd.

Meanwhile, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) released

the first list of China's 66 strategic emerging industry clusters in 2019, which included 30 clusters in central and western regions.

The revenue of the listed companies in strategic emerging industries in central and west China increased 9.6 percent and 12.2 percent, respectively, in the first three quarters of 2019, higher than the growth rates in east and northeast China, showing a narrowing gap across different regions, said Liu Yunan, head of the State Information Center.

Moreover, the Yangtze River Economic Belt will cultivate a group of world-class enterprises and industrial clusters in 2020 to achieve significant improvement in the quality and efficiency of economic development, according to the guideline of the development plan for the area.

As one of the subcenters of Shanghai, Xuhui District had 29.2 billion yuan (\$4.18 billion) in output value from artificial intelligence (AI) and related industries in 2019, up 30.8 percent year on year, with the headquarters of several companies established there.

Microsoft Research Labs, Huawei's Kunpeng Industrial Ecosystem Innovation Center and SenseTime's Chinese headquarters and global research and development headquarters were established in Xuhui, as the AI industrial cluster of the district made it to the NDRC's list.

In addition, Xuhui will build a collaborative innovation platform and enhance its attractiveness for more domestic and international innovation resources for its innovation-driven development model, said Bao Bingzhang, Secretary of the Communist Party of China Xuhui District Committee. ■

This is an edited version of an article published by Xinhua News Agency
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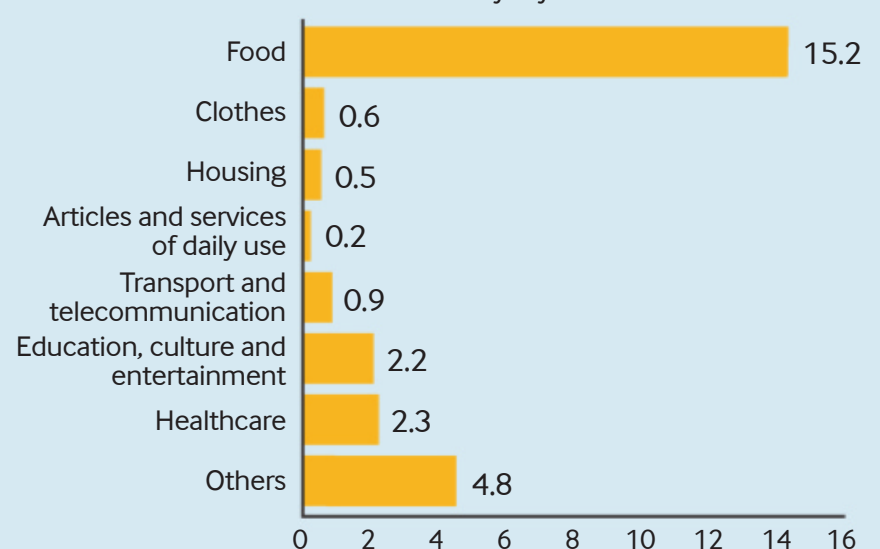
(\$1 = 7 yuan)

China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) Growth

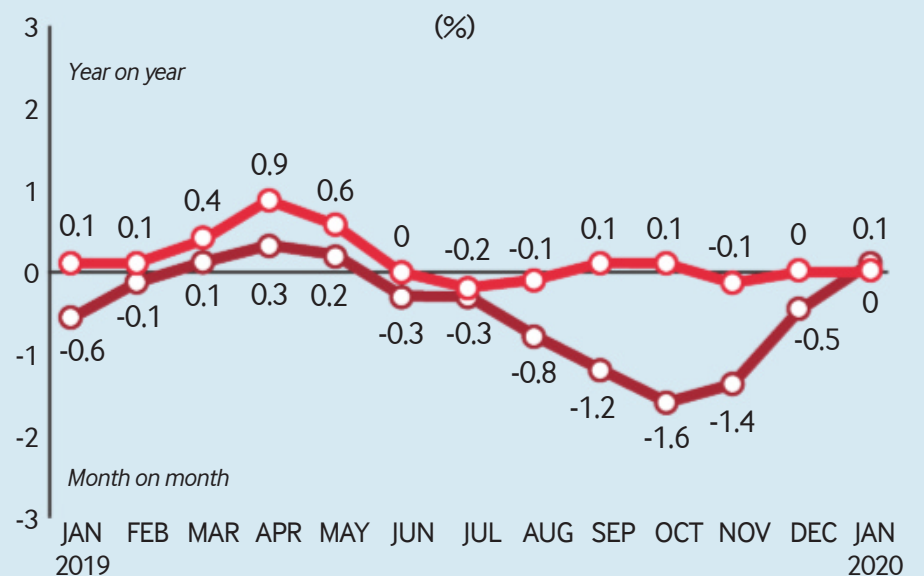
(%)


China's CPI Growth by Type

December (% y.o.y.)


China's Producer Price Index Growth

(%)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

Overseas investors held more Chinese yuan-denominated bonds at the end of January as China opens up its bond market wider to the world. The total amount of yuan bonds owned by overseas institutions under the depository of the China Central Depository & Clearing Co. Ltd. rose

25.04 percent from a year earlier to 1.89 trillion yuan

China's central bank issued

30 billion yuan of bills in Hong Kong on February 13. The move aims to enrich yuan-investment products with high credit ratings in Hong Kong and improve the yield curve of yuan bonds

Imported food value exceeded 84 billion yuan in Tianjin Municipality, north China, in 2019, a year-on-year increase of

63.35 percent. Tianjin was among the country's biggest importers of meat, dairy and plant oil last year, importing 1.86 million tons of beef, mutton, pork and poultry, the second highest in the country

(Source: Xinhua News Agency)



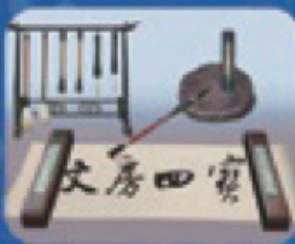
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CHINA MOSAIC

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Historical Lifeline

When the going gets tough, Chinese museums go online By Zhao Wei & Sudeshna Sarkar

For Lantern Festival, which fell on February 8 this year, the Palace Museum in Beijing, the imperial palace built 600 years ago and a famed tourist destination since 1925, presented an amazing sight. It was a vision in red and gold, bathed in the glow of multitudes of traditional lanterns hung across the sprawling complex, supplemented by ground lights and a radiant Moon.

"The museum was even more beautiful than when I saw it 'face to face' last year," said Malini Biswas, a Delhi-based software engineer who loves to travel, both actually and virtually. "The special multimedia exhibition on the museum website on Lantern Festival scored over an actual sighting by giving you such a panoramic view. From my desk in Delhi, I could see the entire grounds as well as the areas outside the walls. It was simply magical."

The museum, known as the Forbidden City when it was home to most of the Ming (1368-1644) and all of the Qing (1644-1911) dynasty emperors, is celebrating its 600th anniversary this year and it had lined up several exhibitions and events to mark the milestone. However, due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, it announced that it would remain closed till further notice.

To fill the gap, the museum, which already had an online presence, began to put multimedia presentations online to enrich people's cultural life.

For instance, a collaboration with the Moscow Kremlin Museums features the Russian Court Ceremony exhibition at the Palace Museum, with over 150 priceless treasures such as paintings, jewelry and ceremonial garments as part of an online virtual tour.

The situation is the same in many museums, galleries and cultural centers across the country where activities have been temporarily suspended to control the spread of the outbreak. The National Heritage Administration of China (NHAC), which oversees museums and the protection of cultural relics of national importance, issued a statement saying that since cultural exhibitions have a special role in spreading knowledge and interpreting culture, museums are encouraged to host online exhibitions using existing cultural digital resources to provide safe and convenient online services to the public.

Accordingly, the NHAC commissioned a public platform for online exhibitions on its website. The goal, it said, is to promote the integration of new-generation Internet technology and the inheritance and development of

Chinese traditional culture that will innovate communication channels and forms of museum exhibitions.

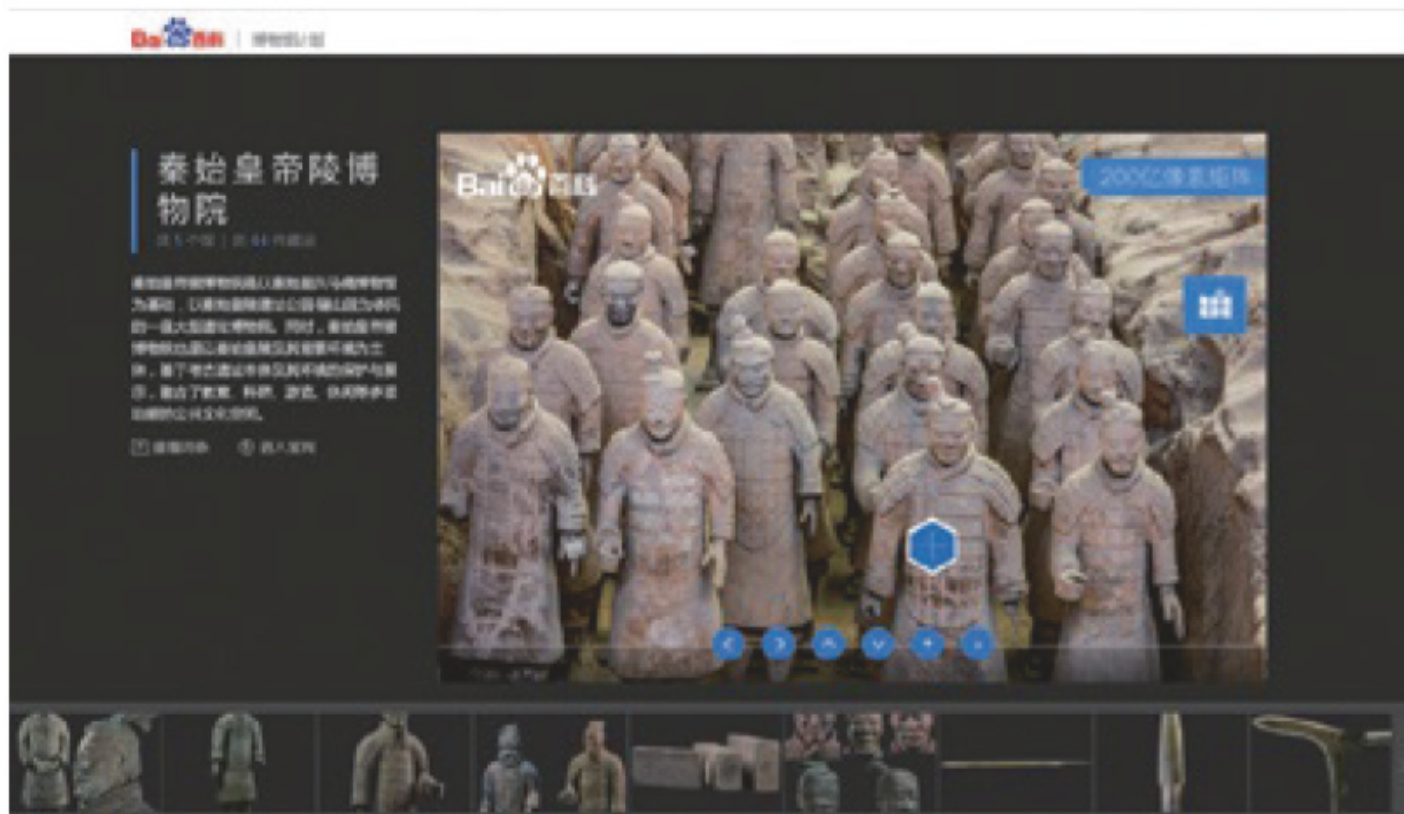
Biswas, who began visiting Chinese museums online after reading reports about the trend, found the results enriching. "Think of this," she said, "at a time when Wuhan, where the epidemic is the worst, is under a lockdown, I took a 'trip' there. I visited the 1911 Revolution Museum online and it was an eye-opener." The museum commemorates an uprising in the city in central China on October 10, 1911 that eventually led to the fall of the last imperial dynasty.

"Many people today think of Wuhan as the place where the virus originated. But one day, after the dust settles, maybe they will appreciate Wuhan's place," she said.

Encyclopedia of museums

It's a busy day for Fan Liting, who is a core member of the Baidu Baike Museums Project (BBMP). Working from home, she is overseeing several projects, especially one on Australian culture and nature with the Sydney Opera House, and other Australian museums and marine life protection associations.

The BBMP, the brainchild of Beijing-based multinational technology company Baidu, uses



Baidu Baike Museums Project displays an aerial view of the Terracotta Army at the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum located in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province in northwest China

hi-tech to enrich lives. The non-profit cultural educational platform creates online museums or puts actual museums online by harnessing artificial intelligence, 3D technology, virtual reality and augmented reality.

The purpose, Fan said, is to let people feel like they are visiting the museum in person with detailed information in multiple languages.

"So many children are not able to travel around the world or visit museums or heritage sites, so virtual museums can help," she said.

The BBMP works with both Chinese and foreign organizations. At home, its work includes putting the National Museum of China in Beijing as well as the Terracotta Army of Qinshihuang (259-210 B.C.), the first emperor of China, online. Viewers can scan QR codes for detailed information on the displayed items, while drones and facial recognition technology are used for a hi-tech touch.

For example, popular singer Hu Haiquan is the guide in a video specially produced for International Museum Day. His face and voice are used to make the Green-Faced Terracotta Warrior in the video come alive to narrate its own mystery. It is the only green-faced warrior among the 1,500 clay soldiers, currently reposing in the Shaanxi History Museum in northwest China.

According to Fan, the BBMP is working with about 300 museums throughout the world. "We plan to work with cultural institutions to enable thousands of people to visit them easily on the Internet," she said. Though Chinese and English are the basic languages used, depending on where the actual museum is, there are several other language versions. For the Liangjiahe exhibition, a profile of an unassuming village in the majestic Loess Plateau in Shaanxi Province widely known as the place where Chinese President Xi Jinping lived and worked for seven years, there are six language versions: Chinese, English, French, German, Korean and Japanese.

Online museums are not really a novel concept in China. Many organizations and enterprises like Baidu have been creating them for quite a while now, helping to preserve history. An ongoing BBMP project with the Okinawa Prefecture Government in Japan is rebuilding online the historical Shuri Castle, the palace of the Ryukyu kings who ruled from the 15th-19th centuries. It was destroyed during battle in 1945, then rebuilt to serve as a university but was ravaged by a fire last year.

"We want to promote ideas about culture and wildlife and nature to remind people to protect our common culture and nature," Fan said.

Museums apps

Museum lovers like Nan Yang have been visiting digital museums long before the coronavirus



A visitor takes photos on the opening day of the exhibition of Elegance of the Tang Dynasty in the National Museum of China in Beijing on September 3, 2018

outbreak. The 34-year-old, who teaches at a school in Beijing, is a regular visitor to national first-grade museums online. During the Spring Festival, he enjoyed Celebrating the Lunar New Year in the Forbidden City exhibition at the Palace Museum and the Elegance of the Tang Dynasty and Qin and Han Civilizations exhibitions at the National Museum of China.

Nan found that some online services had been optimized and strengthened. "This is not only a social education function, but is also paying attention to public health in consideration of public safety," he said.

He has also seen museums embrace social media through Weibo and WeChat public accounts. During the Spring Festival, the National Museum of China launched a WeChat exhibition on *A Dream of Red Mansions*, one of the four Chinese classics written by Cao Xueqin (1715-63) in the Qing Dynasty.

The Capital Museum in Beijing launched the Capital Museum Radio on WeChat and a *Listen to the Voice of Heritage* segment to introduce cultural relics and history using professional narrators.

According to preliminary statistics, during the Spring Festival, more than 2,000 online or digital exhibitions were launched nationwide, while over 1,300 museums across the country have websites, WeChat, Weibo and other social media accounts.

The digitalization is also percolating to

the grassroots. The China Cultural Heritage Information and Consulting Center, a non-profit institution that works on cultural relics and collecting and managing museums' information and databases, created Museum China, a national digital museum cluster. It showcases more than 180,000 collections from over 1,800 county or district museums.

There are also instances of collaboration between government departments and private enterprises. In January, Guangdong Province in south China and Internet technology giant Tencent cocreated Bo Wu Guan, or Museum Officer, a platform on WeChat providing 100 online museum services, including exhibitions and guided tours.

Bottlenecks to overcome

However, despite progress, digital museums still need to overcome many problems. Nan said some content, for example, is old while some presentations are oversimplified, with only displays but no educational value.

"Copyright is extremely important to us because it constitutes the ownership of original work. We want to help artists and institutions protect themselves, and with their permission, we want to show as many beautiful things as possible to our audiences," Fan said. ■

Copyedited by Rebeca Toledo
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The Strength Of Solidarity

China's victory over the novel coronavirus will benefit the rest of the world By George N. Tzogopoulos



The author is director of the EU-China Program at the Centre International de Formation Européenne

For almost a month, China has been engaged in a heroic fight against the novel coronavirus. While the problem is principally in Hubei Province in central China with most cases, other provinces such as Guangdong in the south, Zhejiang in the east, and Henan in central China, have also been affected, though to a much smaller extent.

In other countries, hundreds of cases in total have been reported by then. These countries include Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Thailand, the U.S., France and Germany. Although the novel coronavirus is not the same virus that caused the severe acute respiratory syndrome in 2003, it has drawn some parallels in analysis because both epidemics broke out in the same country.

Effective measures

While China has been significantly transformed in these past 17 years, it is still encountering significant challenges as an emerging economy. This is evidenced in the 2009 Global Health Security Index, a project of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security and the Nuclear Threat Initiative using research by the Economist Intelligence Unit. The index links relevant capabilities with the level of income and ranks China 51st out of 195 countries.

A public disease can start anywhere and makes no exemptions. Developed countries have also seriously suffered from

them. The H1N1 influenza that appeared in 2009 was first found in human beings in Mexico before reaching the U.S. that April. The U.S. had to declare a public health emergency, which was renewed in July and October of the same year.

As the incidence of illness continued to rise, President Barack Obama announced the influenza constituted a national emergency. Estimated fatalities in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, were 12,469. At that time, Beijing took successful measures to prevent the spread of H1N1. According to a *China Youth Daily* poll, the measures were highly appreciated by an overwhelming majority of Chinese society.

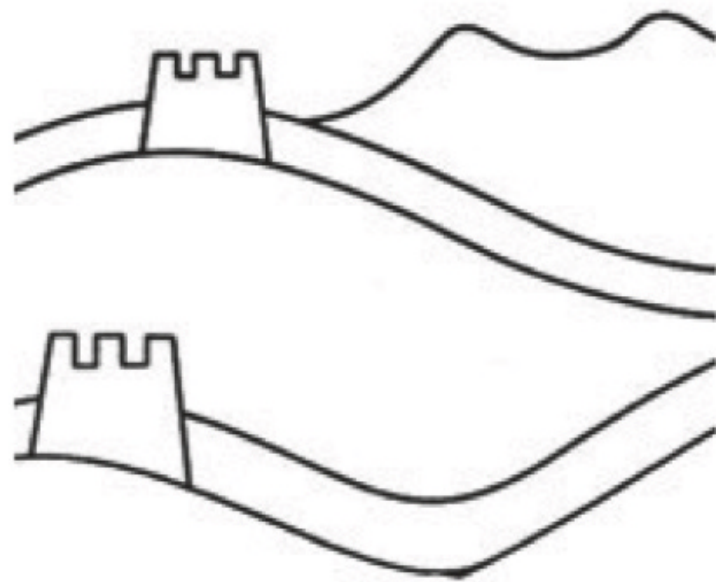
The Chinese Government's battle against the current outbreak is multifaceted. There is intensive support being offered to patients daily, including psychological counseling. Two hospitals were built in Wuhan in only a few days, along with the implementation of numerous controls and taking people's temperature in public places.

Additionally, efforts to test medicines and develop a vaccine are expanding. The speed, scale and efficiency of the response have been praised by WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Moreover, the government is providing financial assistance to citizens and companies suffering economic losses due to the disruption in their activities. This is the true meaning of a governmental social policy. When people are helpless due to an emergency beyond their means, the state needs to intervene.

International reactions

As far as the international reaction is concerned, there are countries that are helping. Daily briefings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refer to specific cases along with the government's appreciation of sup-

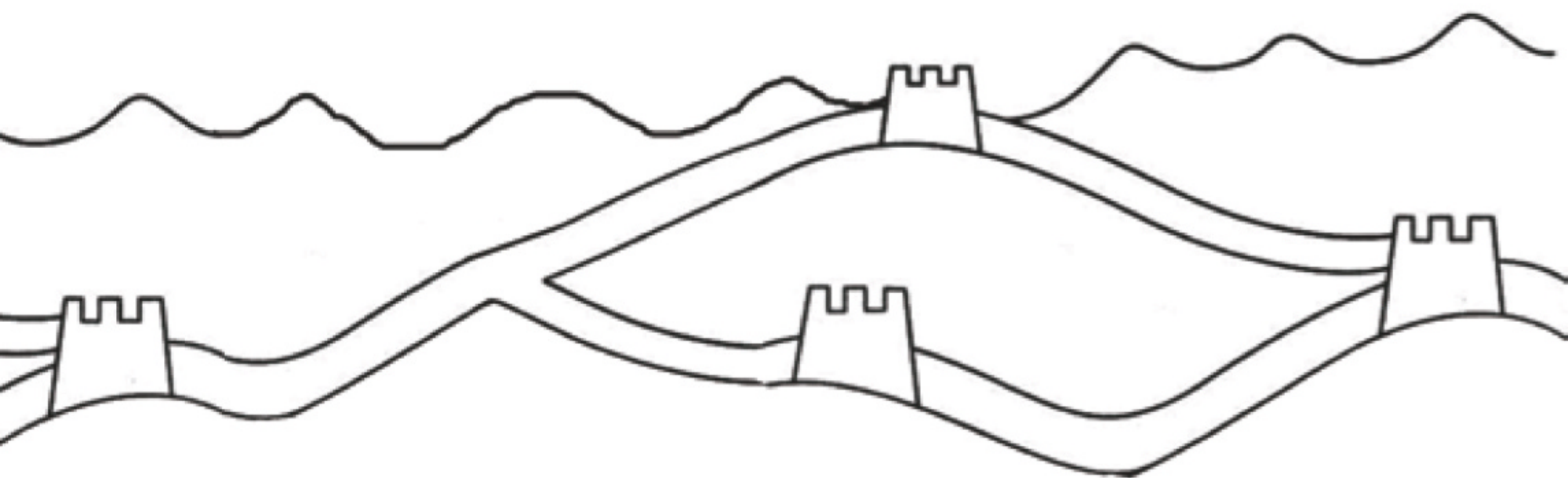


port in these difficult times.

Japan has sent face masks, goggles, protective suits and other supplies for epidemic prevention and control. In his 2020 State of the Union address, Trump spoke about coordinated actions with China.

Despite the good intentions of some governments, the role of the international media in the coverage of the outbreak has been largely biased. The media are more interested in publishing stories that appeal to their readers and audiences than conducting a thorough investigation into the matter.

A few years ago, I wrote a book about the coverage of the Greek economic crisis in the international media and concluded that many journalists had unreservedly vilified Greece and its citizens without having a clear idea about the problem or having



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visited the country. This is what is currently happening with China. You don't have to be an expert in political communication to understand that the criticism of the Chinese Government comes from the Sinophobia in Western discourse.

Sadly, there have been incidents of racism and xenophobia against Chinese and people with Asian features. Fear and panic fueled by media reports lead individuals to occasionally demonstrate unacceptable attitudes.

But on a positive note, there are journalists across the world who condemn this behavior and warn about the impact of prejudice. People in Europe, where the racist incidents occurred, are more likely to be infected by seasonal influenza than the novel coronavirus. Countries that do not follow WHO guidelines and decide to

suspend all flights to China will realize that it will damage their national economies.

This Spring Festival was certainly different. Numerous people had to stay at home and cancel their holiday or business plans for safety reasons. Despite the inconvenience due to the precautions and the uncertainty about the evolution of the public health emergency, Chinese society has remained united. This is perhaps China's most important "profit" in the last weeks.

Even under extreme circumstances, the public is determined to fight together with biologists, doctors and authorities to tackle the problem. This mentality is rarely understood in the West, where critics of China and its governance model abound.

The Chinese leadership has not looked for excuses even though international criticism against it has been often unfair.

Though the diagnosis of the virus was delayed and movement of people from Wuhan was not immediately controlled, the flaws have been noted and will shape future actions. The subsequent responsible mobilization by the Chinese Government is producing results. Thousands of patients have been released from hospitals, people are returning to their workplaces. Patience is still needed, but this element has never been absent in China.

When the epidemic is over and life returns to normal, it will not only be China that will benefit, but the whole world. Solidarity with China will accelerate this global victory. ■

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People Before Profits

By Rebeca Toledo



A customer selects vegetables at a supermarket in Chongqing, southwest China, on February 5

I was in Thailand during the Lunar New Year holiday when the news of the spread of the novel coronavirus in China really started heating up. I still had another week of travel before heading home to Beijing on February 1, and the rising number of text messages and calls from family and friends was really starting to make me nervous.

Even though several Chinese friends and colleagues stayed in steady contact with me, keeping me up to date on developments, the headlines about the virus' spread and ensuing panic were taking their toll on me. By the time I was ready to leave for Beijing, I was sure it was a big mistake.

My airline posted mixed messages about whether I would be quarantined, detained or refused boarding. I arrived at the airport expecting the worst, but was able to board my flight and make it to Beijing with no problems, only being stopped to have my temperature taken. Upon arrival in China's capital, medical personnel boarded and inspected the plane before we were let off.

With hardly any cars on the road, I got to centrally located Xicheng District in record time. At the gate of my apartment complex, two people who identified themselves as community workers asked me to sign in and specify where I had been, particularly if I had been to Wuhan, Hubei Province in central China, where the virus

first appeared, which I had not. They took my temperature, asked me how I felt and told me to let them know if I needed anything. I appreciated the concern.

I already knew the Chinese Government had asked people to stay home, avoid going out unless necessary, wear a face mask while out and wash hands regularly. Without knowing what to expect, I ventured out to the supermarket, where the usual Saturday bustle was eerily absent.

There was plenty of fresh produce and meat, as well as other foodstuffs and paper goods. Nothing was in short supply and prices were about the same as always. Chinese people at the store were friendly and orderly; there was no mad rush to horde. It was then that I started to relax. All the news I had heard while out of the country was proving to be false.

The government had extended the Spring Festival holiday and urged all companies that could to have their employees work from home. That included me, so I settled into a routine of working, watching the news, cooking, eating, napping, exercising and staying in touch with folks.

I went out every couple of days to get supplies and every time, there were more people on the street, not normal levels by any stretch, but more. Neighbors greeted me and asked me how I was doing, and an unexpected snowfall

made Beijing especially beautiful.

While I was away, China had begun construction on two hospitals in Wuhan which were finished the week I returned. How was this even possible? President Xi Jinping had said the priority was people's life and wellbeing, and I was beginning to see it. China is able to pull the country's resources together to focus on a problem because socialism with Chinese characteristics can work miracles.

For example, a large portion of medical expenses is being waived as an encouragement for people to seek treatment. As of February 6, about \$9.5 billion had been allocated for epidemic prevention and control. The production of face masks and other protective medical supplies is being streamlined and carried out around the clock.

Private and public hospitals, hotels and other places in Hubei are being used to quarantine and treat infected patients. The dispatch of medical workers from all parts of China is being well-coordinated.

The government has even waived payments on mortgages and loans while people are not working. It prohibited airlines and railways from charging customers fees for changes and cancellations and announced severe punishment for anyone caught price gouging or hoarding.

I lived in the U.S. through the AIDS pandemic in the 1980s. The Ronald Reagan administration ignored the crisis for years and stigmatized the victims of the deadly disease instead of helping them. Once pharmaceuticals made medications available years later, their costs still condemned most to death. The stampede toward profits painted a tragic picture.

In New York City, where I lived, major snowstorms easily pushed gas and food prices up to exorbitant levels. Every winter, people died in the cold because they could not afford to pay for heat, while thousands, mostly the sick and elderly, died from the common flu.

But in China, the effective, swift and compassionate battle against the virus has served as a calming balm for me. I have readily put my trust in the Chinese Government knowing that it is putting people before profits. ■

The author is a Costa Rican living in China
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Planting The Seeds



Winning the battle against poverty in 2020