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BIRDS OF A PHOTOGRAPHIC
FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER

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An automated welding line operates at an automobile plant in Baoji, Shaanxi province, on Feb 26. ZOU JINGYI / XINHUA

Bilateral collaboration
in business stressed

Chinese and U.S. business leaders have stressed the importance of bilateral trade relations.

Participants at the annual meeting of the China General Chamber of Commerce-U.S.A. in Los Angeles on March 7 addressed the challenge of tariffs and called for the world's two largest economies to work together in ways that benefit both.

Mario Cordero, chief executive of the Port of Long Beach, said: "We do have challenges ... (and) I think the challenges are big challenges.

"I don't want to get too political here or spend too much time on (tariffs), but why I am here is to reconfirm how important the trade relationship is. I want to confirm how important it is for us to collaborate and partner with our ports in China ... because together that is how we make our respective economies great."

He outlined the port's green initiatives, including a \$4.5 billion project aimed at generating 25 gigawatts of wind energy by 2045.

Cordero lauded the Chinese government and sister ports in China for their commitment to decarbonization. He also talked of the significant reduction in harmful emissions at the port of Long Beach since 2005 and credited the collaboration of stakeholders, including China.

Another keynote speaker, Bob Weis, former president of Walt Disney Imagineering, talked about being in charge of the design of Shanghai Disneyland.

"It was essential that we tap into Chinese talent," Weis said.

In his book *Dream Chasing: My Four Decades of Success and Failure with Walt Disney Imagineering*, Weis acknowledged the significance of Disney's collaboration with China. He talked of the importance of drawing on the talents of Chinese architects, engineers, artists, writers and storytellers to tailor Disney's offerings to Chinese audiences.

"The success of Shanghai Disneyland showed that working together creatively can overcome geographical boundaries."

Chinese companies have been prominent in contributing to local communities, particularly in times of crisis. During the Los Angeles wildfires, many Chinese businesses donated time, resources and financial support.

The Bank of China, a member of the China General Chamber of Commerce-U.S.A., and an associate member, the East West Bank Foundation, contributed \$10,000 and \$250,000, respectively, to the Pasadena Community Foundation's Eaton Fire Relief and Recovery Fund to aid long-term recovery efforts.

Ye Chun, president of the China General Chamber of Commerce-U.S.A. in Los Angeles, acknowledged the complexities of the current business environment and reaffirmed the chamber's commitment to supporting its members.

"The past year presented an uneven landscape. Looking ahead, we anticipate an increasingly complicated business environment. With our role as a platform for information sharing, mutual support and effective communication, we are committed to further enhancing bilateral trade and people-to-people exchanges."

Guo Shaochun, China's consul general in Los Angeles, talked of the fundamental role of economic and trade collaboration.

"Trade between our two countries is an important part of China-U.S. relations," Guo said, noting that it is mutually beneficial, based on market rule and demand, and it is significant for the global economy.

Bilateral trade has significantly contributed to the U.S. economy by creating 2.6 million jobs, reducing U.S. manufacturing costs by 15-20% and increasing the annual purchasing power of U.S. families by \$850, Guo said.

—RENA LI

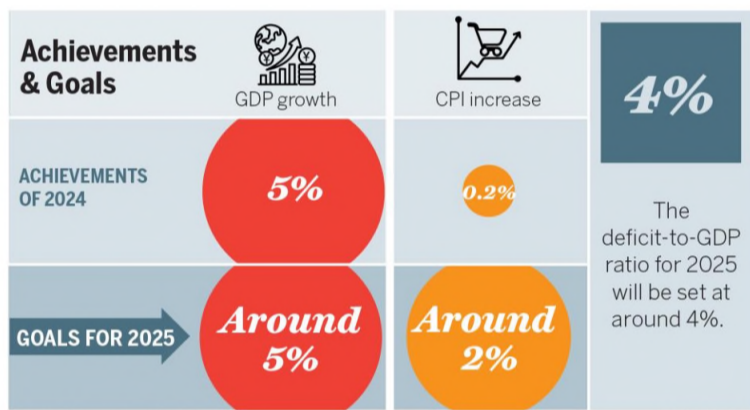
GDP target heralds
steady growth

China is keeping its GDP growth target for 2025 unchanged at around 5%, the Government Work Report said, and taking significant steps unseen for more than a decade to broadly invigorate domestic demand amid an increasingly complex and severe external environment.

Economists and executives said the target of around 5% for the third consecutive year underlined the government's priority of maintaining a steady growth trajectory despite challenges, and implied a multiyear shift toward emphasizing consumption and people's living standards in macroeconomic policy adjustments.

China's Premier Li Qiang, who delivered the report at the opening meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on March 5, said that the annual economic growth target of around 5% is well aligned with the country's mid- and long-term development goals and underscores the resolve to meet difficulties head-on and strive hard to deliver.

After adopting a "proactive" fiscal policy for 16 consecutive years, this year's work report



Source: Government Work Report

CHINA DAILY

shifted to pledging a "more proactive fiscal policy".

The report set the annual projected fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio at around 4%, compared with 3% last year and the highest since the record started in 2010, according to the information provider Wind Info.

Liu Jing, chief China economist of HSBC Global Research, said the target is aimed at anchoring market expectations and has instilled a stronger sense of resolve to bolster domestic demand, with fiscal policy taking the lead.

China will also issue 1.3 trillion yuan (\$179 billion) in ultra-long-term special treasury bonds this year, compared with 1 trillion yuan last year, and issue special local government

bonds worth 4.4 trillion yuan, compared with 3.9 trillion yuan last year, the report said.

In addition, 500 billion yuan of special treasury bonds will be issued to support large State-owned commercial banks' replenishing of capital. This year's new government debt, the report said, will total 11.86 trillion yuan, 2.9 trillion yuan more than last year, a notably higher level of spending.

"The strength of fiscal policy has increased considerably, reflecting a significant change in fiscal philosophy," said Luo Zhiheng, chief economist of Yuekai Securities.

SEE ECONOMY, PAGE 2

CHINESE CULTURE PUTS ON QUITE A SHOW

Chinese designers have been making their mark on the global stage in recent years with high-quality products and innovative designs, often drawing on the country's rich cultural traditions and textiles to add splashes of flair.

Juzui, a Shanghai brand that appeared on the schedule of New York Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2025 collection, drew many accolades for its "Winter Blooms Whispering" collection at The Glass House venue in New York on Feb 7.

The creative director Wang Tao skillfully integrated Chinese elements such as plum blossoms and peonies into modern designs. Wang has twice taken Juzui to New York for the fashion week event.

Pronounce, established in 2016, has been active in international fashion weeks, including London and Milan, since 2017. In January it unveiled its 2025 Autumn/Winter collection "Romantic Sharpness"



Left: Sandriver's designs showcase the technique of making traditional Tibetan woolen fabric called *pulu*. Right: Pronounce's design.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



during Milan Fashion Week.

The co-founders Li Yushan and Zhou Jun are post-80s designers, and studying and working overseas has enabled them to interpret Chinese culture from a different perspective.

Their designs often draw inspiration from Chinese culture and philosophy.

Through innovative tailoring and skillful fabric selection they combine the charm of the

East with modern fashion. Of Pronounce, the international fashion critic Godfrey Deeny commented: "Finally a really rocking edgy Chinese street tailoring brand that looks set to have a major future."

Li said that while this may be somewhat exaggerated, the comment is inspiring. "It actually serves as a guiding light, effectively encouraging us to persist not only in building a brand or a career, but also in promoting the dissemination of Eastern culture and facilitating cross-cultural dialogue

between the East and the West."

Another Chinese fashion name making waves globally is Sandriver, a high-end cashmere brand that combines intangible cultural heritage items such as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region's hand-felt and Tibet's *pulu* (a kind of woolen fabric) with modern designs. Since Sandriver opened in the Jinshan

district of Shanghai 13 years ago it has achieved remarkable success.

Sandriver, with numerous appearances at Paris Fashion Week and becoming the first Chinese brand featured at Le Bon Marche festival in Paris, recently wrapped up its participation in the 2025 Maison & Objet trade show in the French capital.

"During the exhibition we received a lot of praise," said Guo Xiuling, Sandriver's founder. "I brought Gesang Zhuoma, a Tibetan woman who had never been abroad before, to Paris. She sat on the floor at the booth, skillfully hand spinning yarn and demonstrating *pulu* making. It drew a lot of attention."

Sandriver has a series of major shows planned worldwide, Guo said.

Next month the company is due to present its brand story and explain the allure of intangible cultural heritage at Harvard University.

—HE QI

SOCIETY

Freshwater lake becomes magnet for migrating birds

When Lu Xubo reflects on his 20 years of taking pictures of migratory birds around China's largest freshwater lake, he said the strongest impression he has is that birds now exist more harmoniously with humans.

"People used to say that harmonious coexistence between humans and animals only existed in other countries, but we have had it here for a long time. You can see birds everywhere around Poyang Lake."

Lu, a native of Yichun, Jiangxi province, is an avid bird photographer. He began taking images of migratory birds at Poyang Lake in the province's north in 2004 and discovered it was a rewarding and interesting pursuit.

"Photographing birds is quite different from photographing people," he said. "Birds are agile and active, making it challenging to capture a striking photo, because these moments are often fleeting and hard to reproduce."

"Jiangxi has a natural geographical advantage. In winter Poyang Lake attracts tens of thousands of migratory birds. Whenever this occurs I join other bird enthusiasts at the lake to photograph these beautiful creatures."

Poyang Lake serves as one of the most significant wintering grounds for migratory birds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. More than 95% of the world's white cranes, more than 80% of oriental white storks, and more than 70% of white-naped cranes spend the winter in the Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve.

At the end of November Poyang Lake starts the peak season for migratory birds, which lasts until March.

Photographing birds often requires several days or even a week of effort, Lu said. One of his most memorable experiences was four years ago, when he and a group of friends traveled to Duchang county in Jiujiang city to take pictures of migratory birds.

To capture the best photos, they would wake up at 2 a.m., take a boat to a small island and hide behind a bamboo shelter, remaining there all day.

"It's worth it," Lu said. "We truly love these migratory birds; they feel like the spirits of nature. When I first began taking pictures of birds, not



Migratory birds add to the splendor of Poyang Lake in Jiangxi province. HUANG BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Jiangxi has a natural geographical advantage. In winter Poyang Lake attracts tens of thousands of migratory birds."

LU XUBO



From top: Photographers take pictures of migratory birds at Poyang Lake in December. ZHOU GUKAI / FOR CHINA DAILY. Patrol officers monitor migratory birds at the lake. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY. Wang Xiaolong observes the injury of an oriental white stork in February last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

many people came here, but now more and more people are coming."

Shi Shuiping, director of the Duchang County Migratory Bird Nature Reserve Management Office, said that since fishing was banned in Poyang Lake the number of migratory birds has been on the rise.

In 2002 a fishing ban was put in place each spring. A year-round fishing ban was introduced in 2021 by the province's Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs for a 10-year period, to protect aquatic resources and biodiversity.

The bans have coincided with a rise in the number of tourists visiting the area to observe and photograph the birds.

"Every year many ecological and photography enthusiasts travel from far and wide to Poyang Lake," Shi said. "With the nature protection efforts in place, the environment is continuously improving."

Every two years Jiangxi hosts what is billed as International Birdwatching Season, which attracts birdwatching enthusiasts from around the world.

Visitors can explore various birdwatching spots in Nanchang, Jiujiang, Shangrao and other areas to enjoy the stunning scenery of the Poyang Lake wetlands, Shi said.

"We have established three protection stations in Duchang county. Each station has four to five patrol personnel responsible for daily patrols and ensuring the security of the lake area."

Jiangxi Poyang Lake Nature

Reserve has grown significantly over the years, going from having no protection stations to more than a dozen now that cover almost the entire area of Poyang Lake.

After more than 20 years of conservation efforts, the ecology of Poyang Lake has improved, leading to yearly increases in the number of migratory birds that winter there.

The number of bird species in the reserve has risen from an initial 310 to 381.

Notably, the population of white-naped cranes has grown markedly, from over 100 in the 1980s to between 2,900 and 3,000 in the 1990s.

There are now about 3,600 to 4,000 cranes, which account for 98% of the world's total number of the crane species.

Wucheng township is renowned for the sight of cranes gathering along the lake's shore.

Wang Xiaolong, a patrol officer at the town's protection and management station, said the migratory birds that winter in the protected area include oriental white storks, small swans, white egrets and white-fronted geese, and total more than 160,000.

Since International Birdwatching Season was first held in Wucheng six years ago, more and more tourists have come to watch birds, Wang said. "Now there are more and more bird-watching facilities, including restaurants and hotels."

— ZHAO RUINAN

Economy: Boost in spending a key aim

From page 1

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst of Golden Credit Rating International, said that assuming a fiscal multiplier of 1, the rise in the deficit-to-GDP ratio alone is estimated to contribute around 1.2 percentage points to GDP growth, serving as a key buffer to a slowdown in external demand. A fiscal multiplier is a ratio showing the effect that changes in fiscal policy will have on a country's economic output, or gross domestic product.

On the monetary front, for the first time in more than 10 years the work report said the country will pursue a moderately loose monetary policy, after adhering to a "prudent" monetary stance from 2011 to 2024.

The country will make timely cuts to the reserve requirement ratio and interest rates, the report said, pledging efforts to refine and develop new structural monetary policy instruments to provide stronger support for the sound development of the real estate sector and the stock market.

Chen Changsheng, a member of the group for drafting the report and deputy director of the Research Office of the State Council, said the report places significance on boosting consumption and improving people's living standards, and, for the first time, listed stabilizing the real estate and stock markets among the major annual tasks.

For instance, the report called for macroeconomic policies to be "people-oriented", vowing to provide child care subsidies, increase the minimum basic old-age benefits for rural and nonworking urban residents by 20 yuan a month, and allocating 300 billion yuan of ultra-long-term special treasury bonds to consumer goods trade-in programs.

Janice Hu, China head of the Swiss multinational investment bank UBS AG and chairwoman of UBS Securities, said, "These much-anticipated measures could gradually help underpin household confidence and unleash consumption potential in the long run."

The report outlines steps to introduce city-specific policies on adjusting or reducing property transaction restrictions and to strengthen strategic resource reserves and market stabilization mechanisms in the capital market.

In the report, China sets a consumer price index growth target of around 2%, the first inflation target below 3% in 20 years.

Analysts said this signals that policymakers are shifting from keeping inflation below a threshold to aiming for a specific price level through a recovery in demand.

The country will open up internet-related, cultural and other sectors in a well-regulated way, effectively protect the lawful rights and interests of private companies and business people in accordance with the law, and carry out demonstration initiatives on the large-scale application of new technologies, products and scenarios, the report said.

— ZHOU LANXU, OUYANG SHIJIA AND ZHU WENQIAN

A knot is passed, and China-U.S. ties become tighter

Zhang Jiayuan says she is keen to see more student exchanges between China and the United States, allowing them to explore each other's cultures firsthand and make new friends.

Zhang, a student at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, eagerly awaited the arrival of her U.S. friends this month. Only recently she had returned from an exchange visit to the U.S., spending the winter holiday in Iowa.

Reflecting on her experience, she told of meeting a girl named Alia. "I gave her a Chinese knot I brought, and she loved it. She gave me a Chinese blessing card that she wrote herself."

She was among more than 30 teachers and students from her school who celebrated Spring Festival in Muscatine, Iowa, during the exchange visit.

"Our trip to the U.S. has enabled me to profoundly appreciate the deep friendship between the Chinese and American people, along with their warmth and enthusiasm," Zhang said.

The Shijiazhuang school hosted about 100 teachers and students from five high schools in Iowa this month as



Pei Hongxia (left) makes dumplings with visiting students from the United States at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, in August last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

part of the Friendship Inheritance Study Program.

During the tour the group explored historical and scenic spots in Shijiazhuang, Beijing and Shanghai.

The activities included climbing the Great Wall and exploring the Forbidden City, said Pei Hongxia, principal of Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School.

"This time we have added a visit to Tsinghua University to help U.S. students better understand Chinese universities," Pei said.

"I've noticed that American teenagers highly value

the opportunity to study and exchange in China. They also hope to visit more cities within their limited time and experience the unique features of different regions and cities."

With this in mind, Pei suggested that provinces and cities across China strengthen coordination in the reception work for U.S. teenagers, integrate a range of resources, and design diverse activity itineraries to elevate and enrich the exchange experience.

Pei said her school has been conducting long-term and frequent reciprocal visits

and exchanges with sister schools in Iowa since 1997.

In 2023, on the 40th anniversary of establishing the sister state-province relationship between Hebei and Iowa, the school established the Friendship Inheritance Study Program for Chinese and U.S. teenagers.

Every year teachers and students from the school are dispatched to Iowa for exchanges, and teachers and students from sister schools in Iowa are invited to visit China.

"We should also conduct in-depth exchanges around topics of common interest to Chinese and U.S. students, which is more conducive to students making friends and learning from each other," Pei said.

— ZHANG YU

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BEIJING SPECIAL

Desserts inspired by Beijing's Central Axis attract visitors' attention during the 2025 conference on optimizing Dongcheng district's business environment and promoting high-quality economic development on Feb 7. JIA TIANYONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Equal footing, legal support to draw in overseas companies

Beijing implemented a series of measures over the past six years to attract foreign investment, aid cross-border trade and provide internationalized services, fostering a more equitable and convenient business environment for foreign trade and foreign-funded enterprises, according to a report.

The Beijing Business Environment Development Report (2019-24) shows that during those years, Beijing introduced regulations on foreign investment and measures to enhance the city's attractiveness toward foreign investors.

Over six years, Beijing reviewed policies that were inconsistent for domestic and foreign investors in areas such as government procurement, standard setting, subsidies, and technology policies to ensure that policies supporting business development were equally applicable to foreign-funded enterprises.

To streamline foreign investment registration procedures, Beijing enabled online facial recognition and bank card verification for overseas registrants. The city's government service hotline 12345 offers assistance in eight languages.

The city also upgraded the "International Web Portal of Beijing" website, the official web portal for the Beijing

government. It consolidates more than 500 foreign investment policies and provides more than 300 user-friendly guides. The city also launched an English-language "Beijing Service" WeChat account.

To address the lengthy and complex procedures involved in processing exports, Beijing Capital International Airport introduced a direct transfer service. It allows domestic cargo to be transferred to warehouses for export operations upon arrival at the airport.

This streamlined process has reduced the number of transfers from four to one, cutting the processing time from 24-36 hours to just four to eight hours and companies' operational costs by 20%.

During the past six years, Beijing optimized legal and intellectual property services to better protect and support foreign trade and foreign-funded enterprises.

Beijing is now home to more than 30 bases for training lawyers on handling international cases. A talent pool of internationally oriented lawyers within the Beijing Lawyers Association was established, bringing together legal service organizations and legal professionals with expertise in international domains.

— HUYUYAN

Business environment revitalized in Beijing

A robust business environment serves as fertile ground for the survival and advancement of enterprises, acting as a cornerstone of sustainable economic and social progress, Beijing officials said.

"Beijing will steadfastly adopt a problem solving-oriented approach, with the ultimate goal of enhancing enterprises' sense of accomplishment, while striving to forge the 'Beijing Service' brand for the business ecosystem," said Yin Yong, mayor of the city.

Yin noted that in recent years, the Chinese capital has promoted the development of the business environment, annually refining reform strategies and introducing a total of more than 1,500 reforms.

According to the Beijing Business Environment Development Report (2019-24), the city has adhered to optimizing government services, with a focus on promptly and efficiently addressing the needs of enterprises and the public.

It has established a standardized and well-run government service system that integrates online and offline services, said the report. This systematic approach aims to drive government management and service reform and innovation in a coordinated manner, elevating the digitization and intelligence levels of government services.

Moreover, a sound government service framework has been established at municipal, district, township and village



levels, offering enterprises and the public streamlined and integrated services.

Beijing has instituted a set of standards across government services. Notably, efforts have been made to enhance the standardization of service platforms by consolidating various matters from several departments into government service halls to assist one-stop processing.

The municipal government service hall was established in 2015, and now has 60 departments and public utility enterprises.

Over the past five years, the city has placed emphasis on bolstering the development of digital government affairs, creating a high-level "one network for all services" framework.

A total of 70 municipal government departments, alongside those from Beijing's 16 districts and economic and technological development zones, are on the city's government service network. This ensures the seamless integration of service elements across different levels, departments, and regions.

Additionally, an index for public participation in the monitoring and evaluation of government services has been established. It promotes an evaluation system encompass-

ing government service matters, evaluation targets, and multiple service channels.

Beijing has also supported the establishment of 23 high-quality industrial parks, hosting more than 300 diverse sci-tech innovation service platforms.

Of these, 12 parks have launched government service platforms, catering to more than 1,000 service items and serving nearly 600 companies on a monthly basis.

As the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region enters a new phase, Beijing has introduced innovative measures to enhance the standardization and accessibility of government services in the region.

These initiatives span various areas such as business registration, one-stop online services, long-term mutual recognition mechanisms for investor qualifications, and public service co-construction and sharing.

Looking ahead, Mayor Yin said that Beijing will persist in learning practices and experiences from various countries and cities. The city will drive comprehensive business environment reforms across all stages and aspects, aiming to elevate the overall business environment.

Additionally, the city plans to continually refine the service mechanism by solving specific enterprise problems and providing tailored services to meet individual corporate needs, he added.

— HAO NAN

City's scientific credentials rank among nation's best

Beijing's scientific research investment intensity — the proportion of such research and development expenditure to regional GDP — remained above 6%, ranking among the top cities in China and worldwide, according to the Beijing Business Environment Development Report (2019-24).

Local officials said Beijing has been improving its business environment to boost scientific and technological innovation and build itself into an international sci-tech innovation center.

Data from the report showed that there are more than 550,000 researchers and 77 national key laboratories in the city, which account for about 28% of the national total. It also has nine innovative research institutions focused on the frontiers of science and technology. They have made

significant achievements, including a new-generation quantum computing cloud platform and intelligent brain-computer interfaces.

In recent years, the city has made sustained efforts to advance its "three cities, one area", which are positioned as the main platforms for the construction of the Beijing International Center for Science and Technology Innovation. These include Zhongguancun Science City, Huairou Science City, Future Science City and the Innovative Industrial Cluster Demonstration Zone.

To encourage R&D in enterprises and accelerate research results application, city authorities have created incentives for small and micro-sized tech companies and provided customized services for unicorn enterprises —

startups valued at more than \$1 billion.

The capital has also set up an online sci-tech service platform, allowing enterprises to find the policies, research results, cooperation, funds, spaces and facilities they need. So far, the platform has received more than 16.17 million visits and served people from 150 countries and regions.

In addition, Beijing is committed to attracting and retaining talents from around the world.

Since 2020, the city has held the HICOOL Global Entrepreneur Summit and Entrepreneurship Competition annually, with over 30,000 participants from 145 countries.

Based on the competition, a comprehensive entrepreneurship service system has been established. It integrates talent selection and "one-to-one" services as well as different support programs through business schools, funds, industrial parks, and digital platforms, local officials said.

— YUAN SHENGGAO

Financial ecosystem improved in metropolis

Beijing is creating a multi-pronged financial system to improve business operating entities' sense of gain and boost faith in market prospects.

Focusing on the five major areas of technological innovation, green transformation, inclusive finance, elder care, and digital economy, financial institutions are injecting vigor into the local economy and promoting the city's high-quality development.

With plans to build a sci-tech financial reform experimental zone at the Zhongguancun National Innovation Demonstration Zone given the green light in May 2023, Beijing became the country's first city to host a national-level financial reform zone, according to the Beijing Business Environment Development Report (2019-24).

The Zhongguancun Sci-Tech Innovation Financial Service Center is pioneering financial products and services. It has launched customized solutions such as loans for mergers and acquisitions, services for tech professionals, and equity subscription, addressing the funding needs of tech companies.

The report shows that more than 90% of banks in Beijing have opened green channels for financial services for the city's key tech companies.

Local authorities have rolled out a series of policies to help the city become a global green finance center, according to the report.

Encouraged by the policies and mechanisms, more financial resources are flowing into green and low-carbon sectors, including green infrastructure upgrades, clean energy, energy conservation, environmental protection, and eco-friendly production.

Data from the report show that by the end of 2023, the balance of green loans in domestic and foreign currencies in the city reached 1.9 trillion yuan (\$261.28 billion), a year-on-year increase of 28.2%, outpacing the overall loan growth rate by 15.2 percentage points.

In the bond market, non-financial enterprises in Beijing issued green bonds worth 120.63 billion yuan in 2023, accounting for nearly 30% of the national issuance.

— YUAN SHENGGAO

Rules and regulations help stabilize operations

Beijing is creating a stable, fair, transparent and predictable business environment built around the rule of law. With continuous efforts in enhancing legislation, safeguarding enterprises' rights, expanding dispute resolution channels and strengthening intellectual

property protection, the capital has reinforced its specialized legislation to fuel market entities this year, according to the Beijing Business Environment Development Report (2019-24).

For instance, a recent amendment with a total of six chapters

and 94 articles was made to the Beijing Regulations on Optimizing Business Environment. Enacted in 2020, it integrates advanced international practices while solidifying the city's own approaches.

Furthermore, Beijing is advancing the construction of

smart courts, separating simple and complex cases, and pushing for full online processing of civil and commercial cases.

In 2023, 69.78% of court hearings in Beijing were conducted online. The courts provided online services such as case filing, electronic delivery, live hearings, and blockchain-based evidence preservation a total of 4.08 million times, according to the report.

Still, the city formulated an array of policies strengthening IP protection. Specifically, Beijing is deepening its "one-stop" IP dispute resolution mechanism, integrating administrative, judicial, arbitration, mediation, notarial, and appraisal resources. There are 108 IP service stations in key industrial parks and incubators, serving more than 44,000 enterprises.

— WANG JINHU

LIFE

A HERO OF OUR TIMES

In Chinese literature there may be no characters more rebellious than the Monkey King Sun Wukong of Journey to the West and Nezha of Investiture of Gods. Both novels were written during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). With magical power the characters defied the hierarchy, fighting against unjust destinies.

Last year China's first triple A-rated video game Black Myth: Wukong shone on the world stage. This year it is Nezha's turn. Since mid-February Ne Zha 2, an animated movie by the director Yang Yu, that is better known as Jiaozi (Dumpling), the sequel to Ne Zha (2019), has been shown overseas in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States. With earnings surpassing 14.9 billion yuan (\$2.06 billion) by March 12, it has become China's all-time best-selling movie and is among the top six highest-grossing films in global cinematic history.

Despite the determination of their characters to resist, the story of Nezha in Chinese mythology is more tragic in tone than the Monkey King. The former's identity as the child of mortals has given people more space to adapt his story to different eras especially after the Ming Dynasty, though its rebellious core has never changed.

It is said that the mythology surrounding Nezha spread across China in the wake of the arrival of Buddhism. Studies of Buddhist literature from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) have found that Nezha was depicted as the third son of one of the four Heavenly Kings of Buddhism, the Guardian of the North, according to A Study on the Evolution of Nezha's Divine Image, a paper by professor Liu Wengang of Sichuan University, published in 2009 in the periodical Religious Studies. Nezha is a giant Yaksha god (a nature spirit and guardian of wealth) and Dharma protector (a spiritual entity safeguarding the teachings of the Dharma, or religious and moral law).

As Buddhism continued to spread, ancient China absorbed and adapted the religion, and folk beliefs evolved. Nezha's portrayal gradually departed from its Buddhist

origins and took on a more distinctly Chinese character.

According to Liu, the first remarkable evolution of Nezha's image occurred in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), during which Li Jing, a strategist in the Tang Dynasty, was worshipped as the heavenly king. Nezha became his son.

From a fierce Yaksha god to a Chinese deity, this change opened up space for development of Nezha's image over the centuries. Nezha has gradually become a classic literary character in China, blending elements of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

In Investiture of the Gods he is depicted as the son of Li

Jing, a general guarding the Chentang Pass, and his wife Yin Shiniang. Nezha is an adorable, slender and elegant child with magical powers, incarnated from a magical gemstone, the treasure of a Taoist immortal sect. His destiny is written in the stars — he has to die before becoming a deity.

With two magical weapons — Qiankun Quan, or the universal ring made of gold that can shrink or grow in size, and Huntuian Ling, a red armillary sash that floats around his body and can be used to immobilize or strangle rivals and regenerates if torn — Nezha goes to take a bath in an estuary of the East Sea on a hot day when he is 7.

He starts playing with Huntuian Ling and splashes around in the water. Instantly the sash turns the East Sea Dragon Palace upside down. The Dragon King Ao Guang sends a Yaksha to find out what has happened. Nezha kills the Yaksha using his ring. Then Ao Guang's son Ao Bing offers to fight the child, but is also killed.

To seek justice and revenge, the East Sea Dragon King unites with the dragon kings of the West, South and North seas to flood the Chentang Pass. To save the people and placate the dragon kings, Nezha dissects his body, returning his flesh to his mother and his bones to his father. Later his mother builds

a temple with a gilded statue for his soul to dwell in and be worshipped for three years

before he is reborn, as his destiny requires.

However, his father, still angered by these deeds that might ruin his career, breaks the statue and burns down the temple. Nezha's mentor, a Taoist immortal Taiyi Zhenren, uses lotus roots to re-

create his body and resurrects him. After being reborn, Nezha wants to kill his father, who escapes narrowly several times and is given a magical pagoda by another Taoist immortal to subdue Nezha.

For hundreds of years Nezha's stories have been adapted into countless works of art. The latest adaptation, Ne Zha 2, directed by Yang, incorporates his understanding of the relationship between personal growth and the external world, and the dream to fight for fairness.

In his version, Nezha is reimagined as the story of a boy with dark circles around his eyes, who breaks stereotypes, and the Dragon Prince Ao Bing as a kindhearted youngster, while the Dragon Kings and Shen Gongbao, a key villain, who is a leopard demon turned celestial being, each have their own struggles.

Good and evil no longer stand in binary opposition. The Dragon Prince Ao Bing and the Dragon Clan embody spiritual burdens stemming from ancestral responsibilities.

Compared with that old image of a Buddhist or Taoist deity, this latest Nezha resembles a real human child. Beyond the story, the director hopes to offer more encouragement, hope, warmth and strength to those pursuing their dreams, those running forward, he said in an interview with Southern Weekend.

Yang Chenxi, a 17-year-old senior middle school student of Huzhou, Zhejiang province, resonated with the spirit of the movie.

"This version of Nezha is different from the typical storyline of a divine being reincarnated to save others and himself. Instead, it begins with Nezha as an underestimated demon who gradually proves himself, defying fate to start anew."

— YANG YANG



The character of the animation Ne Zha 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From left: The three-headed Nezha, a character in the 1961 animation Uproar in Heaven. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A poster for Nezha Conquers the Dragon King (1979). ZHANG HENGWEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE A drawing of Nezha in a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) book introducing the characters in Investiture of the Gods. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Remote beasts just won't let you go

One can glide through the Yangtze River alongside finless porpoises, soar thousands of miles with migratory birds, or dash across expansive grasslands with foxes — all with a single bracelet.

This is not a scene from a fairy tale but a reality made possible by advances in animal tracking technology. Through the bracelet of Chinalife, a creative program of the volunteer agency Easin, one can match with a wild animal and track its movements by scanning the QR code on the accompanying card.

In addition to tracking the movements of wild animals, digital adoption programs provide an opportunity to form a virtual bond with them. With a few clicks one can adopt a wolf, capybara, koala or red panda, even if he or she is a long way away. This is not just about virtual connection; it also offers a chance for virtual mamas to see their babies offline.

Since 2022 the virtual adop-

tion program launched by Nanjing Hongshan Forest Zoo, or Hongshan Zoo, in Jiangsu province has allowed individuals, families and even companies to adopt animals through a mini-program. Participants can interact with their chosen animals, learn about their habits and support their protection, all from the comfort of their homes.

These innovative digital programs, ranging from tracking the journeys of wildlife to virtual adoption, are bridging the gap between humans and animals. Through these creative initiatives individuals are not only gaining insights into animal behaviors but are also taking part in conservation efforts and advancing research in the field.

Meng Chen, a bracelet owner in Beijing, said: "The mini-program provides timely data updates, generally every two to five days. Every time I check it there's always a delightful surprise."

The animal Meng matched is a finless porpoise named Gulu. The bracelet shows its activities in the Poyang Lake area, such as making new friends or spending time with its family. It also provides information about the surrounding environment and the conservation efforts of protectors.

"These photos and descriptions always make me happy, and I can't help but share them with my friends on social media," Meng said. "Through this bracelet I can help protect China's endangered animals while establishing a connection with them, which gives me a sense of fulfillment."

The collected animal tracking data serves as a valuable resource and foundation for numerous scientific research projects. Eris Ling, the planner of the Chinalife series bracelet, said that all wildlife conservation ultimately comes down to protecting habitats.

In this process, animals' data can act as bioindicators, helping



A Chinalife lucky dip for rescue dogs includes a bracelet and a card. By scanning the QR code on the card users can receive a weekly progress report of the rescue dog they are linked to. Animals available for digital adoption at Nanjing Hongshan Forest Zoo in Jiangsu province include red pandas and ring-tailed lemurs. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



governments and organizations develop more reasonable environmental protection policies, Ling said.

"For instance, tracking migratory bird data can help monitor climate change and urban pollution along their routes, while also effectively reducing the risk of bird strikes."

In addition to tracking animals, the bracelet links to meaningful causes.

One-third of the bracelet's gross profit will be donated to charitable organizations or directly allocated to wildlife conservation projects. Ling said: "It's a great way to connect wildlife with the public."

— HOU CHENCHEN



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