# CHINA

## Briefly

### Ex-bank official given death with reprieve

Zhang Hongli, former vice-president of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, was sentenced to death on Wednesday, with a two-year reprieve, for accepting bribes. He was found to have taken bribes worth over 177 million yuan ($24.3 million) from 2011 to 2022, according to a court in the city of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Zhang was deprived of political rights for life, his personal property will be confiscated and all illegal gains must be recovered and turned over to the state treasury, the court sentence read. The court ruled that he had taken advantage of his former positions to assist others in matters such as loan financing and personnel arrangements, while accepting bribes in return.

### Van-truck collision kills 6 in Guangxi

Six people were killed and two others were injured in a traffic accident on Wednesday in the county of Tengxian in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, according to local authorities. The accident happened at around 5 am on a national highway in the county when a minivan collided with a semi-trailer truck. The crash resulted in four fatalities at the scene and two additional deaths despite rescue efforts, according to the public security bureau of Tengxian. An investigation into the cause of the accident is currently underway.

### Former legislator charged with bribery

Li Xiangang, former vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Heilongjiang Provincial People's Congress, has been charged with bribery and embezzlement, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said on Wednesday. The Dalian Municipal People's Procuratorate in Liaoning province filed the case with the city's intermediate people's court following an investigation by the National Commission of Supervision. Prosecutors alleged that Li abused his positions in Heilongjiang to secure benefits for others in exchange for an extremely large amount of bribes, according to the SPP.

### Beijing to share air pollution control tips

Beijing will share its best practices in battling air pollution with its sister city Bangkok, capital of Thailand, according to a memorandum of understanding recently signed by environment authorities of these two cities. The Beijing Municipal Ecology and Environment Bureau and the Environment Department of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration signed, via video, the MoU on Air Quality Monitoring and Management Cooperation, in line with the 50th anniversary of China-Thailand diplomatic relations. This MoU, spanning a time frame of three years, states that Beijing will share its best practices with Bangkok in battling air pollution, particularly in monitoring and reducing PM2.5 pollutants.

### Smart underwater data center activated

China has activated a groundbreaking underwater intelligent computing cluster off the coast of its southernmost province of Hainan, marking a significant leap forward in sustainable high-performance computing. A new data module was deployed on the seabed off the coast of Lingshui, Hainan on Tuesday morning. It established a connection with the existing underwater data center, first launched in 2023, to create a cluster for the intelligent computing center, China Media Group reported. The newly installed facility is capable of housing over 400 high-performance servers. With this new facility in place, the cluster now delivers computing power equivalent to 30,000 high-end gaming PCs, processing a year's worth of calculations for an average computer in just one second.

XINHUA

## Prime time catch

Fishermen unload their catch at Wuchang port in Wanning, Hainan province, on Tuesday. With rising temperatures and migrating fish, the South China Sea and other coastal areas have entered the prime spring fishing season. MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Prosecutors combat grassroots corruption

Over 3,000 prosecuted in healthcare, education and employment sectors

**By CUI JIA**
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China's top prosecutors have ramped up efforts to combat corruption at the grassroots level, particularly in healthcare, education and employment, as these areas directly impact people's daily lives, officials from the Supreme People's Procuratorate said.

More than 3,000 people were prosecuted in 2024 for dereliction of duty in these sectors, a 1.6-fold increase from the previous year, according to statistics released on Tuesday by the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

Procuratorial authorities have focused on tackling corruption linked to people's livelihoods and rural revitalization, said Zhang Xiaojin, head of the procuratorate's division on duty-related crimes.

To address public concerns over corruption in the healthcare sector, which has made medical treatment more difficult and expensive, prosecutors have targeted offenses such as taking kickbacks and embezzling health insurance funds. As a result, more than 1,800 individuals in the healthcare industry were prosecuted for duty-related crimes, Zhang said.

In March 2024, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Supreme People's Court and the Ministry of Public Security issued a guideline on handling health insurance fraud cases to step up enforcement against such offenses, which have been on the rise.

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>
> **Zhang Xiaojin,** head of the Supreme People's Procuratorate's division on duty-related crimes

The guideline states that conspirators involved in fraud schemes carried out by medical institutions, such as fabricating medical services and falsifying medical bills, will be prosecuted.

Individuals who illegally receive health insurance refunds through fraudulent means, including by using others' medical insurance certificates, will also face punishment.

Meanwhile, more than 1,200 people from township and village organizations were prosecuted for duty-related crimes last year, marking a 48.5 percent year-on-year increase.

"Punishing corruption crimes that affect the public is also a way of protecting people's livelihoods," Zhang said.

To further safeguard public interests, procuratorial authorities nationwide handled more than 92,000 public interest litigation cases from January to November last year in areas such as food and drug safety, the rights of vulnerable groups, and the security of citizens' personal information, according to Xu Xiangchun, director of the Supreme People's Procuratorate's Public Interest Litigation Procuratorate Office.

"Public interest is the interest of the people. The procuratorial public interest litigation system is closely tied to daily life," Xu said in an interview on Wednesday.

"In 2024, prosecutors focused on public concerns, actively responded to livelihood issues, and handled cases in a precise and law-abiding manner."

In one case, the Qinghai Provincial People's Procuratorate filed administrative public interest litigation against more than 60 express delivery companies for failing to legally contribute to work injury insurance for couriers, strengthening labor protections.

In another case, the procuratorial office in Tianfu New Area in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, urged administrative bodies to revise village autonomy regulations in eight villages that violated women's rights.

# China handles diverse maritime crimes

**By CAO YIN**
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China has intensified efforts to combat maritime crimes and strengthen its judicial capabilities, aiming to safeguard coastal defense, promote high-level opening-up and build a stronger maritime power.

Chinese police solved more than 14,000 maritime-related criminal cases and addressed over 20,000 coastal risk hazards last year, effectively bolstering coastal security and stability, the Ministry of Public Security said on Wednesday.

"Public security departments have always prioritized fighting maritime crimes and have worked with other authorities to crack down on illegal fishing, smuggling and illegal immigration," the ministry said in a statement.

Between May and October, Chinese police launched a special campaign during the marine fishing moratorium in coordination with fishery administrations and coast guards, solving 474 cases of illegal fishing and seizing more than 1,700 metric tons of fishery products, according to official data.

Police also inspected shipping companies, maritime agencies, docks, ports and islands last year, eliminating more than 6,100 potential risks and issuing over 1,700 notices to address hazards at an early stage, the data showed.

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>
> Ministry of Public Security

"China's coastline is long and winding, dotted with islands and harbors, and includes many sparsely populated landing areas that are easily accessible," the ministry said. "To address this, local police are using new technologies to build integrated and intelligent coastal defense systems covering ports, coastlines, waterways and islands."

Public security departments nationwide have also implemented technology-driven measures, including online programs for ship registration, port entry and exit reporting, rights protection and notifications.

Additionally, more than 16,000 police officers took part in 401 maritime rescue operations last year, saving 1,229 people and assisting 80 vessels, according to the ministry.

While cracking down on maritime offenses, China has also strengthened legislation and judicial capacity in maritime case adjudication.

In January 2021, China adopted its Coast Guard Law, which aims to safeguard national maritime sovereignty, security and interests, while protecting marine resources and the environment.

China's Supreme People's Court said more than 29,000 maritime lawsuits were heard in 2023, compared with just 18 in 1984. The types of cases have also expanded to include port operations, ship repairs, shipping logistics, and maritime finance and insurance.

"China now handles the largest number and most diverse range of maritime cases in the world," said Wang Shumei, a standing member of the top court's adjudication committee. "The figures reflect the rapid development of our maritime opening-up and the continuous improvement in our adjudication capabilities."

# Major finding made in catalytic H2 production

**By YAN DONGJIE**
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Chinese scientists have made significant strides in catalytic hydrogen production, extending catalyst lifespan for methanol reforming to over 1,000 hours and achieving carbon dioxide-free hydrogen production from ethanol, according to the lead researcher on the projects.

"Achieving a catalyst stability of 1,000 hours is generally considered a key threshold for moving from laboratory research to pilot testing, marking our first step toward the basic conditions for large-scale application," said Professor Zhou Wu from the School of Physical Sciences at the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Zhou's team, in collaboration with Professor Ma Ding's team from Peking University, developed a rare earth oxide nano-coating on platinum-based catalysts, creating a nanoscale protective shield. This enhanced the catalyst's stability while maintaining its high activity.

The turnover number of the catalyst reached 15 million, meaning a single platinum atom can produce 15 million hydrogen molecules during its lifespan, Zhou explained.

Compared to the team's 2021 research published in Nature, catalyst stability increased tenfold, from 100 to 1,000 hours.

"Four years ago, our results were already internationally leading. Scientists worldwide are exploring different efficient and green hydrogen production methods. This breakthrough could make low-cost, large-scale hydrogen production possible," he said.

The findings were published online last week in the journal Nature.

Hydrogen energy is considered crucial for future clean energy systems, but current production methods, with about 96 percent relying on fossil fuels, typically emit 9 to 12 tons of carbon dioxide per ton of hydrogen, Zhou said.

"This creates a significant conflict with global carbon neutrality goals. Therefore, developing truly green, efficient and low-carbon hydrogen production technologies has become a key issue in the global energy transition," he said.

"Once this technology moves from the lab to industrial application, it will have a significant impact not only on the hydrogen production industry but also in areas with weak infrastructure, such as ocean-going ships and deep-sea operations, enabling the clean conversion of liquid fuels to electrical energy," Zhou said.

In separate research published in Science last week, the same team successfully performed ethanol-water reforming to produce hydrogen at a mild temperature of 270 C, fixing the carbon atoms in ethanol into acetic acid, thus eliminating direct carbon dioxide emissions.

"Traditional ethanol-to-hydrogen technologies face the dual challenges of high-temperature energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. This technology not only consumes less energy and is more environmentally friendly but also provides a new green pathway for acetic acid production," Zhou said.

Despite the progress, the cost of precious metals used remains a major challenge. The team's next step is to focus on cost reduction to promote industrial application.

## Platform shots

Visitors use a prop to create perspective shots with a monorail at a newly opened viewing platform in Jiangbei district, Chongqing, on Wednesday. The Liziba metro station is renowned for its unique design, where the monorail passes through a residential building, attracting attention both domestically and internatonally.
HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

# Strict measures in place ahead of national exam

**By CHINA DAILY**

The Ministry of Education has stipulated several measures to ensure fairness and order in the upcoming National College Entrance Examination. This year's exam will be held from June 7-8, the ministry announced on Wednesday.

The National College Entrance Examination, or *gaokao*, is a crucial test for Chinese students, serving as the primary gateway to higher education and a major determinant of their future. The high-stakes exam is key to university admissions, significantly impacting career prospects, social standing and overall life trajectory.

According to a recent notice from the ministry, authorities will take strict measures to prevent and crack down on cheating.

The notice stipulates that intelligent security gates be fully deployed and wireless signals effectively shielded at examination sites, with real-time intelligent patrols and inspections conducted at testing locations.

To promote fairness, the document calls for strict measures against "exam migrants", or students who register to take the test in a different province to improve their chances of admission to top universities. High schools are responsible for strictly regulating student records and investigating "ghost enrollments", where students enroll in one school while being registered at another, the notice said.

This phenomenon is driven by disparities in *gaokao* difficulty and university admission quotas across different provinces and regions, with some areas seen as having easier exams or higher chances of admission to prestigious universities.

The notice also calls for improved oversight in selecting top-tier innovative talent at universities. A comprehensive system for identifying, cultivating and evaluating such students will be established, along with pilot programs, such as youth talent initiatives.

To maintain a positive exam environment, the notice strictly prohibits promotions or publicity about "top scorers" or high school "enrollment rates". Teachers and students should not be rewarded based on exam scores, and admission rates should not be linked to teacher evaluations, awards or promotions, according to the document.

*Xu Nuo contributed to this story.*