

“QUOTABLE

“The country and society have offered more economic support for the disabled, but they should really be paying more attention to their living standards,” said Zhou Wei, a professor at Sichuan University.

WANG JINLEI, who lost the use of both of his legs to polio, missed a train in Zhengzhou Railway Station in Henan province on Monday because the station's wheelchair passages were locked. Officials at the station apologized to Wang and paid him 3,000 yuan (\$471) in compensation.

THE NUMBER

116.4

SQUARE METERS

The average living area per household in China was 116.4 square meters in 2011, according to a report from the Institute of Social Science Survey of Peking University. After it was released on Sunday, the report received massive attention from netizens who doubted the accuracy of the figure. Li Jianxin, a sociology professor who led the research, acknowledged the research had defects in sample differences. His team will conduct more research on the topic in the future, Li said.

ON THE WEB

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Video: Feeling jaded by all the athleticism of the London Games, D.J. Clark headed to the Temple of Heaven in Beijing to learn more about dahuagun. Could this be a potential future Olympic sport?

Video: Fans in the British capital share their views on the 2012 Games, which will come to a close on Sunday.

Buzzword: Data shadow, which is the sum of all the small traces of information that an individual leaves behind through everyday activities, such as using e-mail, social media status updates, credit card swipes and ATM withdrawals.

On China Forum

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Europe still top destination

Chinese companies shift focus from resources to technology

By WEI TIAN and DING QINGFEN

Europe, despite its troubles, remains the top destination for Chinese investors who are changing their focus from energy and resources to financial markets and technology, a key report said on Wednesday.

Just under a third of Chinese companies surveyed, 32 percent, believed that the best investment opportunities will be in western Europe over the next three years, according to a survey conducted by global professional service provider Ernst & Young.

The Middle East and North Africa were favored by 29 percent and 22 percent chose North America.

The survey questioned 146 senior managers from Chinese companies across a range of industries.

“Western Europe continues to be attractive to Chinese investors due largely to its open business environment, as well as undervalued assets as a result of the ongoing eurozone crisis,” said Loletta Chow from the China Overseas Investment Network at Ernst & Young.

But Chinese investors should guard against potential risks, the report warned, explaining that many projects owned by private equity funds lacked investor protection.

A greater interest in Europe and North America was also due to a changing investor appetite with energy and resources not playing such a

dominant role.

Investment in energy declined from 82 percent in 2009 to 60 percent in the first half of 2012, the report said.

“During the past four or five years China's companies injected a large volume of capital into energy and resource deals but these are no longer showing rapid gains,” Zhang Yansheng, secretary-general of the Academic Committee of the National Development and Reform Commission, said.

Chinese companies are taking a more studied approach amid changes in the global market, he said.

Technology, agriculture and property are now receiving more investment from China, the report showed.

China's overseas investment registered weakening growth in 2011, with an annual increase of just 1.8 percent to \$60 billion, according to the

Ministry of Commerce.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development ranked China as the 9th-largest investor globally in 2011.

However, the ministry reported a 48.2 percent year-on-year growth in China's non-financial investment. About a third of this was achieved through mergers and acquisitions.

The annual volume of China's overseas M&A projects grew significantly from \$1.1 billion in 2004 to \$48.7 billion in 2011. “Asia remains the largest destination, but Europe is seeing rapid growth amid the eurozone crisis,” said Eleanor Wu, from the China Overseas Investment Network at Ernst & Young.

According to the survey, 36 percent of managers say protectionism in global markets is their top concern. This compares to an average of 28 percent for Asian companies.

The China Global Investment

Tracker database by the Heritage Foundation, a US-based think tank, showed Chinese corporations invested in 492 overseas projects, each worth more than \$100 million, since 2005.

Australia, United States and Brazil are the top three investment destinations for Chinese companies, the database showed.

“Those aspiring to invest in the developed markets mainly seek to improve their research, development and technology, but the way ahead for the developed markets is not smooth,” said Xing Houyuan, senior expert on Chinese overseas investment at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

“For Chinese companies, the top priority when it comes to their investment should be China's neighboring nations and emerging markets,” Xing said.

Research and development

should be a priority, said Zhang with the NDRC.

“Chinese companies can hardly invest in sales and manufacturing in the developed markets in the short term, given the high costs. What they can do is investing in R&D.”

Derek Scissors, a senior research fellow with the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation, struck a cautious note.

“Chinese investment is not taking the world by storm financially, nor will it in the near future,” he said.

“It does not pose a major threat to the United States, either in the purchase of American assets or expansion of Chinese influence around the globe,” Scissors said in an online research note.

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Chen Yunlin, president of the mainland-based Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, delivers a speech in a zoo in Taipei on Wednesday. He also visited Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan, the zoo's two pandas that were given by the mainland in 2008.

Cross-Straits negotiators meet

By XINHUA in Taipei

Chen Yunlin, president of the mainland-based Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, arrived in Taiwan on Wednesday afternoon for a new round of talks with his Taiwanese counterpart Chiang Pin-kung, chairman of the Taiwan-based Straits Exchange Foundation.

Chen was received by Chiang at the Grand Hotel, where the two will hold talks on Thursday.

The talks, the eighth between the two since 2008, are expected to result in the signing of two cross-Straits agreements on

investment protection and customs cooperation.

Both agreements aim to promote and protect two-way investment, as well as facilitate customs clearance and effective cargo supervision.

Chen said in a statement issued upon his arrival that the agreements will be a major step in carrying ARATS-SEF negotiations forward following the signing of the cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement in 2010.

The execution of the early harvest program under the ECFA since January 2011 has

allowed goods from both sides to enjoy either reduced or zero tariffs on each side's market, saving hundreds of millions of dollars, especially those in Taiwan.

The main tasks for the ARATS and the SEF are to hasten the ECFA's follow-up negotiations and expand benefits to more people on both sides, the statement said.

“This year and next year, we will spare no effort in forging ahead with negotiations for signing cross-Straits agreements on the trade of services and goods and the settlement of disputes

regarding the ECFA,” Chen was cited as saying in the statement.

Chen then visited a pair of giant pandas, Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan, that were given by the mainland to Taiwan in 2008.

Chen's deputy conducted preparatory negotiations with the SEF's deputy chief later on Wednesday, during which both sides confirmed the drafts of the two agreements to be signed on Thursday and details on the preparations for the formal talks between Chen and Chiang.

Zheng Lizhong, vice-president of the ARATS, said ahead of the preparatory negotiations

with SEF Vice-Chairman Kao Koong-lian that the signing of both agreements will bring the follow-up cross-Straits negotiations regarding the ECFA to a new phase.

Kao said the move will bring the number of cross-Straits pacts signed since 2008 to 18.

A reception dinner will be held by the SEF for the ARATS delegation led by Chen, according to the event schedule.

Founded in 1991 and 1990 respectively, the ARATS and SEF are authorized by the mainland and Taiwan to handle cross-Straits affairs.



We don't count on the money but it might be of great help to some people who are struggling and they deserve that.”

NI GUOQING
RETIRED CIVIL SERVANT IN XI'AN

One-child parents get more support

By SHAN JUAN
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A program in Heilongjiang province is subsidizing some one-child parents in urban areas for their contribution to the family planning policy.

The parents must be older than 60 to qualify for the subsidy, introduced in June, provincial family planning director Jia Yumei said.

Only parents employed in private businesses or the unemployed are eligible for the one-time subsidy of 3,000 yuan (\$470) for each parent, she said.

“These benefits for families should be integrated into the policy itself, particularly as the public are more aware of their rights, including childbearing,” Jia told China Daily.

There is no clearly defined national regulation or policy regarding a subsidy for elderly single-child urban parents, said Lu Jiehua, a sociology professor at Peking University.

The government will constantly enhance benefits for families that adhered to the one-child policy, particularly as they approached retirement age, said Zhao Yanpei, director of the department of policy and legislation at the National Population and Family Planning Commission.

China has about 100 million families with just one child, and 70 to 80 percent of these families live in rural areas, according to the commission.

However, “very few places, like Heilongjiang, give subsidies to urban dwellers”, Lu pointed out. “Urban couples have, in fact, done most to support the policy and should be equally supported by the government especially as they approach old age.” But he pointed out that it was hard for the government to allocate funds to support such a large group of people given the imperative of economic growth.

around china

TIBET
Nature reserves to protect plateau

Four large nature reserves, occupying 550,000 square km in western China, said on Tuesday that they are forming an alliance to protect the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The announcement came at the third conference on environmental protection, which was held in the Tibet autonomous region's Ali prefecture.

Officials from the four nature reserves — the Tibetan Chiang-tang Nature Reserve, Qinghai Hoh Xil Nature Reserve, Qinghai Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve and Xinjiang Altun Mountain Nature Reserve — agreed to establish an alliance administration that will be charged with coordinating affairs among the four reserves.

BEIJING
Farm produce price hikes continue

The prices of Chinese farm produce continued to increase last week after heavy rain fell across the country, the Ministry of Commerce said on Wednesday.

The wholesale prices of 18 types of vegetables increased in 36 cities for a third week in a row, going up 5.7 percent week-on-week, according to the ministry.

Food prices constitute nearly a third of the prices used to calculate China's consumer price index, which eased to 2.2 percent in June.

Subsidies stabilize appliance sales

A national subsidy program for rural consumers helped bring stability to sales of home appliances in rural China amid an economic slowdown

in the first seven months of the year, according to data released by the Ministry of Finance on Wednesday.

The central government spent 10.9 billion yuan (\$1.72 billion) to subsidize home appliances sold in rural areas during the period, a number up 19.2 percent year-on-year, according to ministry data.

In the first half of the year, 43.87 million units of home appliances were sold in the countryside, up 7.2 percent from the year before.

Land allocated for low-income housing

China has allocated more than 20,000 hectares of land to support the construction of low-income housing this year, an official with the Ministry of Land and Resources said on Tuesday.

The country plans to distribute 47,600 hectares of land for low-income housing projects in 2012,

more than the 43,600 hectares allocated last year, Vice-Minister Hu Cunzhi said at a seminar about low-income housing policies.

China has encouraged the construction of more low-income housing in recent years, as quickly increasing housing prices have prompted public complaints.

YUNNAN
15 dead, 9 missing in natural disasters

Fifteen people were killed and nine others were left missing in natural disasters that occurred in Southwest China's Yunnan province in the first half of the year, local authorities said on Wednesday.

Floods hit the province hard in July, resulting in direct economic losses of 87 million yuan (\$13.72 million), the provincial department of land and resources said.

Statistics from the department

showed that 233 disasters struck the province from the beginning of July to Sunday.

HUBEI
Motorists use fake permits to shun tolls

Drivers of private vehicles in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, have used fake permits similar with those issued by flood control authorities to avoid paying highway tolls, local media reported on Wednesday.

Since the city's flood season arrived in July, a toll station on the highway linking Wuhan's Hankou and Huangpi districts has recorded more than 2,400 instances in which drivers of private vehicles tried to avoid paying tolls by using fake permits that were made to look like legitimate documents issued by the local flood control and drought relief headquarters, the Wuhan

Evening News reported.

HUNAN
Probe launched into petition case

Authorities in Hunan province have launched an investigation into a case in which a mother was sent to a re-education center after petitioning for justice for her daughter who was raped and forced into prostitution at age 11.

Tang Hui, 39, was sent to a re-education center in Yongzhou for 18 months on Aug 2, sparking public anger and prompting local authorities to look deeper into the case.

“We will further investigate the case and make corrections in accordance with the law,” said Liu Xianhua, head of an investigation team with the Political and Legislative Affairs Committee of Hunan provincial Party committee.