

Economic rebound lacks momentum

Data from People's Bank of China shows slump in lending in July

By **LI JIABAO**,
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Sharply slowing export growth together with a slump in bank loans and industrial output in July are pointing to a prolonged slowdown for the world's second largest economy.

China's exports increased 1 percent year-on-year in July, the worst growth since 2009, reflecting how the global economic slowdown has weakened demand for Chinese exports, the General Administration of Customs said Friday.

Meanwhile, data from the People's Bank of China, the central bank, showed that China's bank lending slumped 41.3 percent in July from the previous month, the lowest monthly

figure since September 2011.

Chinese banks extended 540.1 billion yuan (\$84.9 billion) in new loans in July, compared with 919.8 billion yuan in June, the bank said.

The set of poor macroeconomic data put more pressure on the government to loosen policies, said Zhang Zhiwei, an economist with Nomura.

China's foreign trade increased by 2.7 percent from a year earlier in July. Exports edged up by 1 percent year-on-year while imports grew by 4.7 percent, yielding a trade surplus of \$25.15 billion. The first seven months saw China's trade rise by 7.1 percent from a year earlier, according to customs.

"The sluggish demand in the EU market, caused by the deepening debt crisis in the bloc, was

responsible for China's slowed trade growth in the first half of this year," Gao Hucheng, vice-minister of commerce, said at a press briefing of the Ninth China-ASEAN Expo and the Ninth China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit held in Beijing on Friday.

"Amid the spreading global debt crisis and the slowdown of China's economic growth, the country's foreign trade will face more pressure and a more challenging outlook in the second half of this year. And there is certain pressure in achieving the goal of 10 percent trade growth this year," Gao said.

Zhang from Nomura said that export growth will likely be weak in the coming months as well.

China's exports to the EU dropped by 16.2 percent in July from a year earlier. And exports to the US edged up by 0.56 percent year-on-year in July. The US replaced the EU in the first

half of this year as China's biggest export market.

China's foreign trade figures come hot after the release of a flurry of other economic data including industrial output growth and new yuan lending.

Growth of industrial output, the key monthly measure of China's economic health, dipped to 9.2 percent year-on-year in July, down from 9.5 percent in June and the lowest level since May 2009, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Thursday.

Electricity generation eked out a 2.1-percent year-on-year increase, suggesting a sharper slowdown in energy-intensive heavy industry.

"With the current situation, we have almost eliminated an economic growth rebound in the third quarter. The fourth quarter will probably see a reverse of China's economic slowdown and the whole year GDP expansion will be around

8 percent," said Li Xunlei, deputy CEO and chief economist from Haitong Securities in Shanghai

China's GDP grew by 7.6 percent in the second quarter compared with a year earlier, down from 8.1 percent in the first quarter and the slowest pace since the second quarter of 2009.

The government has taken the rare step of slashing interest rates twice in quick succession this year, while also lowering requirements for how much money banks must keep in reserve, as it looks to spur lending and boost growth.

"As the government further emphasizes stabilizing economic growth, it's likely to see more easing monetary policies in the rest of this year," said Jia Kang, president of the Institute of Fiscal Science at the Ministry of Finance.

Jia added that the economic slowdown will reach bottom in

the third quarter and bound up in the fourth quarter.

The consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, slowed to 1.8 percent year-on-year in July from 2.2 percent in June, the lowest level since January 2010. That opens up space for the government to take more monetary measures to support growth.

More confidence

"However, we still have confidence in the future of foreign trade as many enterprises have done a very good job in transforming and upgrading. Many enterprises have been putting more effort into research, development and innovation since 2008," Gao said.

"As the EU is haunted by the debt crisis, emerging markets are becoming more important to China's foreign trade. China's trade with ASEAN countries will keep growing rapidly in the second half of this year after bilateral

trade increased by 9.8 percent year-on-year in the first half."

Li said that China will face more difficulties in exploring emerging markets as economic growth slowed in emerging economies.

"Orders have shrunk by 20 to 25 percent year-on-year," said Sun Yingli, general manager of Shanghai Manlang Textile Company, a garment manufacturer relying mainly on orders from Europe and Japan.

"I reckon it will be harder next year," she said, as she believes the European market won't recover soon, while Japanese authorities are subsidizing garment products imported from Southeast Asia.

Wang Weiyi, vice-president of tool manufacturer GreatStar, said orders grew by 8 percent last year, with larger demand coming from the US market.

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briefly

BEIJING 5.8 M affordable homes started

China started building 5.8 million residences for people with low incomes in the first seven months of this year, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said on Friday.

Of those, about 3.6 million were essentially completed during that period, the ministry said in a brief statement on its website.

The government vowed to erect more than 7 million residences for people with low incomes as part of its five-year plan to build 36 million such units by 2015.

GUANGXI 6 killed, 32 injured in pileup

Six people died and 32 others were injured in a five-vehicle pile-up that occurred on an expressway in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region on Friday morning, local police said.

The pileup happened at 2 am, when three passenger buses hit the rear of a car and a trailer on a section of the Nanning-Wuzhou Expressway in Wuzhou city, according to the city's public security bureau.

The people injured in the crash have been taken to a local hospital. The extent of their injuries is not yet known, the bureau said.

HUNAN Benzene leaks into river

About 200 kg of crude liquid benzene leaked into a river in Hunan province on Friday morning, local authorities said.

The leak occurred when a valve on a storage tank belonging to Xingkesheng Chemical failed as a result of metal fatigue, authorities in the city of Chenzhou said.

Emergency responders are sealing the tank and erecting barriers to prevent the leak from further contaminating the Baoyuan River. No casualties have been reported to have resulted from the accident.

CHINA DAILY — XINHUA

Hong Kong extends welcome to astronauts

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The three astronauts who accomplished the space docking and rendezvous mission on Tiangong 1/Shenzhou IX touched down in Hong Kong on Friday to a hero's welcome at the beginning of a four-day goodwill tour.

They were greeted by the cheers of about 200 local students, who waved Chinese national flags as the honored guests stepped into the arrival hall at Hong Kong International Airport. Students handed the astronauts floral bouquets,

while the visitors happily signed autographs for the young people who lined up along their way.

Liu Yang, the first Chinese woman in space, along with veteran astronaut Jing Haipeng and their crewmate Liu Wang, arrived at the airport before noon on Friday as part of a 40-member delegation.

"Da ga ho" ("Hello, everyone"), Jing greeted the press in Cantonese, expressing warm gratitude for the close attention the people and the media gave the mission in June.

"We are very glad to meet the people of Hong Kong face-to-face. We are also very willing to share our exceptionally fan-

tastic experiences and feelings," he said.

There will be ample opportunities to share China's achievement in the coming days. Local primary and secondary school students, as well as university students, will get a chance to talk to the astronauts at two weekend seminars.

There are also the 2,000 lucky ticket holders, some of whom stood in lines overnight to obtain free tickets to Saturday's special program, "Hong Kong Welcomes the Delegation of the Shenzhou IX Manned Spaceflight Mission Variety Show."

Prominent women from Hong Kong will hold a tea gath-

ering on Monday as a special tribute to Liu Yang.

The astronauts showed their appreciation for the welcome. Jing revealed that while this was only his second official post-mission tour since 2008, it was actually his third visit to Hong Kong. "I spent my vacation in Hong Kong with my wife and son in 2010. Before I headed off to Hong Kong this morning, they came forward to ask me, when I would bring them to Hong Kong again, because they like Hong Kong so much," he said.

His more subtle crewmate, Liu Wang, had not been to the city previously, but said he managed to see its famous night lights

from high above the Earth during the 13-day space mission.

"The overcast skies over Hong Kong regrettably kept the picture out of sight during those days. But at night, (it was) exceptionally beautiful. The gorgeous lights of Hong Kong are dazzling from space," Liu Wang recalled.

His family was excited by Hong Kong for a different reason. His wife gave him an exhaustive shopping list, which he carried in his briefcase. "I hope to make some time for a lot of shopping and make some real contributions to Hong Kong's prosperity," he said.

Liu Yang said she had been infused with energy and confidence while completing her tasks in space. She also expressed confidence that women will play an integral part in the nation's future space missions.

Will the people of Hong Kong fly to space one day? Niu Hongguang, the delegation leader and deputy commander-in-chief of the manned space program, said that since the space program has moved into its next stage, scientists from Hong Kong and the rest of the world will be offered the opportunity to conduct studies in Chinese spaceships.



LONG HONGTAO / XINHUA

Tang Hui is interviewed in Yongzhou, Hunan province, after she was released from a re-education through labor center on Friday.

Mom of young rape victim released

By **ZHAO YINAN**
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A woman who had been sent to a labor camp in Central China's Hunan province after petitioning for justice for her daughter, who was raped and forced into prostitution at age 11, was released on Friday morning, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Tang Hui, 39, was sent to the re-education through labor center in the city of Yongzhou on Aug 2 to serve an 18-month sentence for "seriously disturbing social order and exerting a negative influence on society" after she protested in front of local government buildings. Tang complained that the municipal police department had falsified evidence to reduce the sentences of those who kidnapped, raped and forced her daughter into

prostitution, the report said.

Labor education, a system established in the 1950s, aims to rehabilitate those who have violated regulations.

Tang on Tuesday applied for administrative reconsideration of the penalty she received, the report said.

After considering her appeal, authorities decided to allow her to leave, because her daughter, now 17, is still a minor and requires her mother's care, provincial publicity officials said. Tang's claim that the municipal police falsified evidence is also under investigation, the officials said.

Tang's then-11-year-old daughter was kidnapped, raped and forced into prostitution in October 2006. She was forced to provide more than 100 sex services before she was rescued that December, Xinhua reported.

The Hunan Provincial High People's Court sentenced two of the defendants to death in June. Four others were given life sentences and another received a 15-year term.

Before and after the sentences were handed down, Tang had repeatedly petitioned for justice in front of government buildings and sought the death penalty for all seven people, Xinhua said.

"Tang was dissatisfied with the verdicts, and her petitions have seriously disturbed social order and exerted a very negative influence on society," Xinhua quoted a municipal public security bureau statement as saying.

Tang's case attracted more than 700,000 posts on Sina Weibo, China's Twitter-like social network. Most of them expressed sympathy for her and appealed for justice.

TV fans pan scripts ripped from US shows

By **HAN BINGBIN** and **XU LIN**

Successful US TV series have long been a major source of inspiration for their Chinese counterparts.

Many Chinese TV producers have taken delight in reproducing these screen hits by adapting their characters into a Chinese context.

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For years, Chinese TV viewers have remained tolerant toward what they call "shanzhai productions." Yet very recently they have become irritated to find one local ratings champion is directly ripping off scripts and plots.

The target of criticism is *Ipartment*, a sitcom that deals with the

hilarious happenings between occupants of two neighboring apartments of a tower block in downtown Shanghai. Soon after its third season premiered, an angry netizen posted screenshots on Tianya.cn, one of the country's most popular online forums, claiming it has almost identical scenes from popular US sitcoms like *Friends*.

In the meantime, 22-year-old Zhang Yan, a die-hard fan of Western soaps from Zhengzhou in Henan province, established *cpartment.com*, where he and other netizens post screenshots after each new episode comparing it to US sitcoms to demonstrate possible plagiarism.

According to Zhang, at least 16 of the sitcom's 24 episodes

have more than 70 percent of their plot directly copied from seven Western series including *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *IT Crowd*. Zhang said some of the dialogue is directly ripped from the Chinese subtitles of these series.

Zhang even predicted the show's upcoming storylines using his knowledge of Western sitcoms, and to his surprise he was correct four out of four times. With an average of 3,000 to 4,000 clicks every day, the website has caused many netizens to denounce and boycott the show.

"I don't mean to ruin *Ipartment*. I just want to put pressure on some Chinese directors and scriptwriters. I hope they stop

copying," he says.

Wang Yuan, *Ipartment's* scriptwriter, admitted on Sina Weibo that he's a die-hard fan of American sitcoms and that he tries to progress and innovate through imitation. He would be glad, he wrote, if he could emulate one-tenth of what they are doing right. Later, in an interview with Sina.com, Wang said he has used American sitcoms' narrative rhythms, classic story arcs and jokes as a reference.

But a representative for the show surnamed Cao denied plagiarism while speaking to Southern Metropolis Daily. He said many comedies have similar stereotypical characters such as beautiful women and sharp-tongued men, and jokes

have types as well. He said it's not plagiarism but a homage to US sitcoms.

Despite the dispute, the show has still won many fans. In one of the largest online forums for *Ipartment* fans, more than 124,000 registered members, mostly teenagers, have actively shown their love for the show by posting pictures and comments daily. One forum master, a 15-year-old middle school student surnamed Zhou from Shanghai, said she rarely watches American soaps and insists those who really like *Ipartment* won't care about the copycat thing.

But from the professional view of veteran scriptwriter Liu Hua, the copycat phenomenon

could "ruin the whole market." It leaves fewer chances to hard-working writers who spend years creating high-quality work, he said, because producers tend to choose quick writers who can finish a script in a couple of months.

But the depressing fact is that there are still "many copycat cases" nowadays. As TV stations want big-budget productions, production companies often take the risk of spending tens of millions of yuan making a TV series. But if they fail to sell it, Liu said, a medium-sized company could go bankrupt. So companies tend to use safe subjects such as remaking foreign series.

Years ago, Liu was approached by a producer who asked him to write a Chinese version of *Desperate Housewives*. It was suggested to Liu that he could use some of the original scripts. As

an established scriptwriter, Liu thought it was "a huge shame" and rejected the offer. But for start-up writers worrying about making a living, Liu said he understands they have few options.

The reason that plagiarism hasn't come to a stop, in Liu's opinion, is because "such action hasn't received any punishment so far." But he's glad that because of the power of the Internet the situation may improve.

More importantly, Liu said, netizens' growing discontent with plagiarized TV shows is also drawing attention from broadcasting supervisors.

"This is the power of the Internet. People all have a broad view, and you can't possibly cheat on anything," he said.

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