

FOOTBALL FEVER Amid the World Cup craze, China yearns for a stronger national squad







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EDITOR'S DESK

Why is China Still Cheering From the Sidelines?

Even the 11-hour time difference between China and Brazil is unable to cool Chinese football fans' enthusiasm for the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) World Cup happening now in Brazil. To stay up late into the night for World Cup matches has given some Chinese fans new circadian rhythms.

This is China's World Cup complex. Though the Chinese national football team is noticeably absent from the tournament in Brazil, as always, the Chinese are enthusiastically involved in the matches in a different way, contributing to a successful convening of the World Cup. Compared to those who are unable to watch the games in person, commodities made in China seem to be more fortunate, as they go to Brazil and become a part of the event.

There is only one Hercules Cup trophy made by FIFA, but its many smaller, souvenir versions are produced by a Chinese enterprise. Traces of "Made in China" can be found on souvenir footballs used in both formal matches and training matches, and on the World Cup mascots and national flags in the streets. Scoreboards on some football fields, too, are from China, and even advertisements for China-based Yingli Solar can be seen on billboards in the arenas.

However, more and more Chinese fans are feeling disappointed. China is the most populous country in the world and ranks second in terms of GDP, but the nation's football fanatics are still unable to shout, "Come on, China!"

Here in China, in regards to the country's lagging football, there are myriad theories from different perspectives on how to encourage the development of the sport, not to mention various incentives for doing so. The China Football Association has employed a few well-known foreign football coaches over the years, carried out a series of reforms on the nation's football club system, and is also active in bringing in international managerial talents and experience. More than a decade ago, the concept of "football skills from birth" was also proposed and put into practice. Chinese entrepreneurs, too, are generous in supporting the cause. However, none of these shifts have resulted in farreaching changes in the Chinese football establishment.

Is the Chinese team far from qualifying for the World Cup? After asking this question over and over, especially following China's brief involvement in the event in 2002, most fans no longer treat this as a question, but as an aspiration or encouraging sign. How far it is, however, is anyone's guess.

It is hoped that by 2018 World Cup tournament, China's national football team will finally be able to make an appearance in the Russian arenas, alongside the many obligatory "Made in China" commodities. It's high time the country's enthusiastic fans, skilled footballers, and talented coaches really made themselves part of the World Cup. Here's hoping that time's not too far away!

WRITE TO US

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A LONG-AWAITED VISIT

Zhang Zhijun (second left, front), Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, and Eric Chu (second right, front), Mayor of New Taipei City of Taiwan, talk with senior citizens at a nursing home in Tucheng District of the city on June 26.

Zhang became the first Taiwan affairs chief from the mainland to visit the island in 65 years. He spent four days on the island, paying visits to New Taipei City, Taichung, Kaohsiung and Changhua County. He held a formal meeting with Wang Yu-chi, Taiwan's mainland affairs chief, in the northerm county of Taoyuan at the start of his visit. This was the second formal meeting between the mainland and Taiwan chiefs of cross-Straits affairs. Wang visited the mainland in February.

THIS WEEK SOCIETY



Listed Waterway

China's Grand Canal has been added to the World Heritage List. The decision was announced at the 38th Session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in Doha, Qatar, on June 22.

The Grand Canal, with a length of 1,794 km, dates back 2,400 years. It's the longest man-made waterway in the world and is still in use.

This year, a section of the ancient trade route of the Silk Road, linking China and Europe, and an extension of South China Karst, a natural World Heritage Site since 2007, also made the list.

Homes for Pensions

China has begun to pilot its muchdebated houses-for-pensions program in four cities as the country seeks alternative methods to cope with the rising needs of an aging population.

On July 1, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou in Guangdong Province and Wuhan in Hubei Province launched a scheme that allows home owners over 60 to deed their houses to an insurance company or bank, which will then grant them a certain amount every month depending on the value of the houses and the person's life expectancy.

According to the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC), the pilot will last for two years.

CIRC official Yuan Xucheng said the pilot is intended to expand funding channels and improve the quality of the elderly care system.

The program, while hailed by some experts as an innovative solution, has sparked heated debate among the public, especially among those whose parents have property and fear losing their inheritance.

Latest official data show that the number of people aged above 60 has reached 202.43 million in China.

Anti-Terror Fight

The Chinese Government on June 24 released a television program about online terrorist propaganda created by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which is listed by the UN Security Council as a terrorist group.

In 2013, Chinese police tracked down 109 pieces of terror-related audio and video content produced by the movement, compared with 32 in the previous year, according to the State Internet Information Office (SIIO). The recordings were matched by a surge in attacks.

Besides promoting terrorism, ETIM videos also offer tutorials on how to make explosives and how to use weapons.

BODILY AWARENESS

A policeman explains the harm of drug use to primary school students in Hefei, Anhui Province on June 26, International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking



The documentary indicates that the videos are produced outside China, with many hosted on servers in Turky.

The documentary's release followed the launch of a campaign on June 20 to rid the Internet of audio and video materials that promote terrorism or violence.

The move aims to safeguard social stability and long-term peace in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, according to a statement from the SIIO.

The authorities will prevent terrorist materials produced overseas from being disseminated in China, remove such information online, punish website servers violating the rules and urge Internet companies to uphold their responsibilities, the statement said.

Xinjiang saw its bloodiest attack in five years on May 22 when 39 innocent people were killed in a terrorist attack in the regional capital of Urumqi. On April 30, three people were killed and 79 injured in an attack at a railway station in the city.

Super Computer

The *Tianhe-2* supercomputer, developed by China's National University of Defense Technology, remains the world's most powerful computer, according to a biannual Top 500 list of supercomputers. This is the third time *Tianhe-2* has topped the list.

Tianhe-2, which is Chinese for *"Milky Way-2*," clocks in at 33.86 petaflops, the equivalent of 33,860 trillion calculations per second. One hour of calculations by the machine would take the entire population of China 1,000 years if everyone was given a calculator.

The supercomputer is a product of China's 863 hi-tech program, which aims to reduce reliance on foreign technology. According to a statement from the Ministry of Science and Technology, *Tianhe-2* has provided computing support for more than 120 clients at the National Supercomputer Center in Guangzhou in south China's Guangdong Province.

The development of the C919 airliner and drug testing in the Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica were both aided by *Tianhe-2*. The supercomputer also helped to support Guangzhou's

THIS WEEK

e-government database and cloud computing storage.

Bacteria Breakthrough

Chinese scientists have successfully analyzed the structure of *bacterium shigella flexneri*, a breakthrough that may lead to a better understanding of drug-resistant illnesses.

The research team headed by Huang Yihua from the Institute of Biophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences has analyzed lipopolysaccharide structure of the external membrane of the germ.

The Gram-negative bacteria is part of the lineage of more than half of drug-resistant bacteria and its outer membrane is the main source of the microbe's success.

According to Huang, the finding could open the door to new antibiotic strategies that target bacterial membranes.

Vocational Education

The total number of students at vocational education institutions across China will reach 38.3 million by 2020, a new government guideline announced on June 22. The document was released to help boost vocational education and was issued by the State Council, China's cabinet.

In 2020, it is expected that approximately 23.5 million students will study at vocational schools, which will take in students after they finish the first three years in middle schools. There will be 14.8 million students at vocational colleges that admit students from ordinary high "Although the country has the world's most vocational education institutions, many of them have problems including poor management, underdeveloped infrastructure, limited finances and a shortage of faculty."

Ge Daokai, head of the Vocational Education Division under the Ministry of Education ←



Folk Art Overseas

Two women from the Dong ethnic group of China perform at the opening ceremony of the Smithson Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C., the United States, on June 25. It is the first time China has been the main guest of the annual exposition of living cultural heritage from worldwide

schools and vocational schools and offer two or three years of further vocational education, according to the document.

Currently a total of 29.34 million students study at 13,600 vocational schools and colleges across China.

Higher Education

Kashgar University, the first comprehensive university in south Xinjiang, is already under construction, local authorities said on June 25.

The southern part of Xinjiang borders Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, has a population of around 10 million, mainly ethnic Uygur people. It is substantially less developed than the northern part of the region.

South Xinjiang currently has only two higher learning institutions—Kashgar Normal University and Alar Tarim University. Kashgar Normal University offers 27 disciplines, mainly linguistics and teaching.

Erken Umer, President of Kashgar University, said that the new university will provide courses in international trade, business administration, architecture, tourism and hotel management as well as basic sciences and arts.

Safer Food

An inspector from the local industrial and commercial bureau checks processed food on the shelves in a supermarket in Hengshui, Hebei Province, on May 28.

A draft amendment to the Food Safety Law had its first reading in the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, on June 23.

According to the bill, consumers can demand much higher compensation and offenders will face fines three times of that before. Administrative penalties will also be imposed on any officials responsible.



THIS WEEK ECONOMY

Declining Confidence

Chinese entrepreneurs, bankers and residents have become less optimistic about the country's economic conditions, central bank data revealed on June 25.

The entrepreneurs' confidence index came in at 64.9 percent in the second quarter, retreating 2.1 percentage points from the previous quarter, the central bank said in a report, citing results from a survey of over 5,900 Chinese entrepreneurs.

In a separate report based on a survey of 3,100 bankers, the central bank said their second-quarter confidence index was down 13.9 percentage points from the previous quarter to 53.7 percent.

The surveys found that more people are concerned about employment. Of the 20,000 savers the central bank surveyed, 43.8 percent considered employment conditions "harsh" or "murky," and their expectation index was 47.8 percent, down 2.1 percentage points from a quarter earlier. Home prices are still a major issue of public concern, with 63 percent of people surveyed describing prices as "high and hard to accept," down 1.3 percentage points from the previous quarter.

Some 50.3 percent reported that they expect home prices to remain unchanged in the third quarter, while 21.2 percent predicted rises.

The changing outlook came as China's property sector continued to cool in May, as new home prices in half of a sample of 70 major cities showed month-on-month drops.

Fiscal Pressure

China may struggle to meet this year's fiscal revenue target, the finance minister warned on June 24.

The central treasury received 2.9 trillion yuan (\$472 billion) from January to May, a year-on-year growth of 6.3 percent, 0.7 percentage points lower than the budgeted target, said Lou Jiwei, when briefing lawmakers on the final accounts for 2013.



SWEET FRUIT

A farmer picks wolfberries, or goji berries, in Helan County, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Northwest China's Ningxia has a long history of planting wolfberry trees and the plant has become a pillar industry in the region, with its output exceeding 5 billion yuan (\$800 million)



Making Tracks

Workers weld railway tracks in a logistics park in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The railway route, which will open to traffic on July 10, will connect Mongolia and Russia to China's northeastern railway network.

This year's budgeted growth of central fiscal revenue is 7 percent. The government is "under heavy pressure," Lou said.

Difficulties lie in the downward pressure on the economy and the program to replace business tax with valueadded tax (VAT) in some service sectors, which will reduce tax revenue by some degree, Lou said.

A Net Investor

China's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) is very likely to exceed its inward FDI in 2014, making the country a net investor, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

In 2013, China's inward FDI rose by 2.3 percent to \$123.9 billion, ranking second in the world after the United States, according to the UNCTAD's World Investment Report released on June 24.

"What's more, China's outward investment is more striking," said Zhan Xiaoning, Director of the Investment and Enterprise Division at UNCTAD.

In 2013, investment outflows from China increased by 15 percent to \$101 billion, the third highest in the world after the United States and Japan, the report said.

As China continues to deregulate outbound investment, outflows to developed and developing countries are expected to grow further, it said.

Outward investment will serve as an important driver for industrial upgrading and economic growth, Zhan said.

RRR Review

The central bank is considering an annual review system to decide whether to cut lenders' reserve requirement ratio (RRR), *China Securities Journal* reported on June 25.

Reviews will focus on whether or not a bank's lending to small and micro-sized enterprises and the agricultural sector has met requirements set by the central bank. The central bank has been encouraging lending to those areas—long neglected by banks in China because of higher risk.

Banks that meet the standards will have lower reserve ratios, the newspaper

THIS WEEK



Causing a Stir

Farmers pick tea leaves in Rushan, Shandong Province.

The region has greatly developed its tea industry to help increase local farmers' income. Each *mu* (0.07 hectare) of tea will generate over 7,000 yuan (\$1,121) income for farmers.

said, citing an anonymous source. A lower RRR gives a bank more funds to lend and the chance to make more profits.

The central bank started cutting RRRs selectively this year, as part of its effort to allow greater monetary flexibility while maintaining a prudent monetary policy amid an economic slowdown.

Subsidy Ends

China is moving to replace its decadesold agricultural subsidies with a more flexible pricing mechanism, as domestic harvests in the world's largest grain importer are expected to see their 11th consecutive year of growth.

Experts say the change will not endanger food security nor result in steep price drops in major agricultural products.

Decisions to scrap the minimum purchasing price for rice, the temporary

A NEW LANDMARK

Changshan cross-sea bridge in Dalian, northeast China's Liaoning Province, will open to traffic in July



storage policy for soy and cotton and other agricultural subsidy policies were made on June 25 at a State Council executive meeting led by Premier Li Keqiang.

Under the new policy, the government will set up a target price for each kind of major agricultural product. Farmers will receive subsidies from the government when the market price is below the target, and low-income groups will also receive subsidies when the market price sours.

The reform, which aims to restore a market-oriented pricing mechanism, as domestic grain prices are usually above the global price, will be conducted first from selected areas and particular types of agricultural products.

According to a statement released after the meeting, soy and cotton will be first in line to test the concept before the policy is applied to other major agricultural products, such as wheat, rice and corn. China has gradually set up various subsidy policies since 2004 to shore up grain prices and protect farmers' motivation.

Overseas Expansion

Alipay, China's largest third-party payment service provider run by ecommerce giant Alibaba, announced on June 25 a partnership with the U.S. online payment startup Stripe.

Under the agreement, overseas merchants who use Stripe's payment software can now detect if shoppers are located on the Chinese mainland and give them the option of paying through their Alipay accounts.

The move is expected to be warmly welcomed by Chinese shoppers who are not happy with providing their credit card details to overseas websites but who use Alipay as an alternative payment solution.

Stripe didn't disclose the number of merchants Alipay is cooperating with, but said it now allows online merchants to conduct transactions using 139 currencies and Bitcoin, a virtual currency. It also plans to form more partnerships with popular payment providers in regions where credit cards are not widely used, according to media reports.

Hydroelectric Plant

On June 25, China's Sinohydro signed a deal with Bolivia's Corani Electric Co., an affiliate of the National Electricity Co., to build a hydroelectric plant that will produce an additional 124 megawatts for Bolivia's national power grid, the National Interconnected System.

Bolivia's President Evo Morales said the whole project will be developed in three stages through to 2018, with an estimated investment of \$235 million.

"The investment is guaranteed to generate energy for the department and all Bolivia," said Morales.

The government aims to consolidate the nation's electric power infrastructure by 2020, so it can meet domestic demand and generate up to 1,000 extra megawatts for export.

The project includes building a reservoir, a network of roads and three tunnels, among other infrastructure. The plant is expected to be operational by 2018.

THIS WEEK WORLD





A woman sits next to her child at a temporary refugee camp near Erbil in north Iraq on June 20. The country's humanitarian and security situation is worsening due to recent attacks by Islamic insurgents



THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Flamingos at a zoo in Prague on June 21







Akihiro Suzuki (right), a member of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, bows to Ayaka Shiomura, a fellow lawmaker, to apologize for a sexist jeer he made during a recent event, at the Tokyo City Hall on June 23

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Three Al Jazeera journalists listen to their verdict from inside the defendant cage during their trial for allegedly supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo on June 23. An Egyptian court sentenced the journalists to jail terms ranging from seven to 10 years









Models present creations by a Malaysian designer at the Islamic Fashion Festival in Kuala Lumpur on June 20



Lava flows out of the Piton de la Fournaise Volcano, one of the world's most active volcanoes, on the French island of Reunion in the Indian Ocean after it began to erupt on June 21

THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

FILM DIRECTOR AWARDED



Chinese director **Zhang Meng** won the Special Jury Award for his film *Uncle Victory* at the 17th Shanghai International Film Festival on June 22.

Zhang is a young Chinese director with Changchun Film Studio Group Corp., who are based in northeast China's Jilin Province. His other film work includes 2008's *Lucky Dog* and 2011's *The Piano in a Factory*, along with past skits for CCTV's Spring Festival Gala.

Eyes on the Skies *China Newsweek* June 16

The disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in March has raised concerns over aviation safety. *China Newsweek* traced the process from a flight's takeoff to its landing and discovered a massive organizational system behind the process, one akin to our own nervous systems. Any mistake in the system would surely result in disaster.

The magazine chose Beijing Capital International Airport to show the many components of this system: Security, ground services, security checks, runway maintenance, flight checks and air control. It is these interlocked gears that enable a plane to take off and fly that are the secrets of the airport.



Power of Talent *Outlook Weekly* June 16

In 1798, 21-year-old British spinner Samuel Slater moved to the United States, where he replicated the spinning machine invented by Richard Arkwright, the most advanced spinning machinery at that time. In this way, the United States broke Britain's technological monopoly and boosted its own textile industry in the process.

During World War II, the then U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt established a command to lure hydrogen bomb, missile and computer experts from Germany. This enabled U.S.'s status as a superpower to last through the modern era.

Looking back on the developmental courses of such strong countries as Britain, Germany, the United States and Japan, their rises can all be attributed to the talented people. Even today, the range of experts a country possesses tend to decide its position in the new international hierarchy.

However, China is in a disadvantaged position in the global talent pool. On the one hand, talent outflow exceeds inflow, exemplified by the fact that more Chinese students study overseas than foreign students study

"Through the food safety law amendment, the country expects to impose the harshest civil, administrative and criminal penalties on offenders and the strictest punishment on supervisors who neglect their duties."

Zhang Yong, head of the China Food and Drug Administration, commenting on a revision to China's Food Safety Law submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, on June 23 "Public bicycles make it easy to reach the subway or bus stations. They make it possible for people to choose public transport and leave their cars at home."

Mao Baohua, Executive Director of the China Transportation Research Center at Beijing Jiaotong University, commenting on the public bike increase in Beijing, on June 24

THIS WEEK

Dog Meat Debate **Beijing Morning Post** lune 24

The heated debate over the annual dog meat festival in the city of Yulin, southwest China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, has recently occupied the media spotlight.

Regardless of the stance debaters choose. the discussion itself represents social progress in China, as more people are daring to express their opinions in public. Though there are ocassionally irrational voices in the crowd, modern society needs such debates to progress.

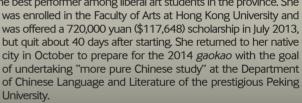
Debates enrich our minds and broaden our perspectives. In order to grow, it's important to challenge ourselves with controversial ideas and criticism.

However, these discussions should be carried out under the laws of ration and reason. Though it's often hard to reach a consensus, people should not insult their opponents but exercise patience and understanding. The world is complicated. There is a wide grey zone between black and white, and it's therefore impossible to find one correct answer to every question. Social problems are often intertwined with tradition, culture, and customs. Progress can only be achieved gradually.

TEEN GIRL WOWS ON GAOKAO

Liu Dingning, a 19-year-old girl from Benxi, northeast China's Liaoning Province, recently came into the spotlight after scoring the highest college entrance exam grade in her province twice. Last year. Liu racked up 668 points plus 10 awarded points in the national college entrance

exam, or gaokao, making her the best performer among liberal art students in the province. She



This year Liu attained the highest score among liberal art students in the province once again with 666 points, far outnumbering Peking University's average benchmark in the province.

Her story aroused debate among the public. Some say she is foolish in giving up a place at the reputable Hong Kong University, which is often ranked higher than Peking University, but many support her decision to follow her heart.

"Every year around 60,000 Chinese citizens travel abroad to seek medical services ranging from anti-aging therapy to cancer screening and chronic disease treatment to giving birth. This phenomenon could gain even more momentum in the foreseeable future "

Yan Jian, CEO of the Shanghai Medical Tourism Products and Promotion Platform, commenting on an increasing number of well-heeled Chinese flying abroad in search of better medical services, on June 24

"Of China's neighboring countries, South Korea is the one that makes the most vigorous effort to attract Chinese tourists. Their endeavors can be seen in the Chinese language bulletins and guideboards and with the Chinese-speaking shop assistants everywhere."

Zhang Jia, a travel project manager who offers travel guides from different countries, on June 24





opment.

IN TOTAL DESPAIR: A Chinese fan was distraught following China's defeat to Iraq which disqualified the national team from entering the Asian Qualifiers for 2014 FIFA World Cup on October 11, 2011

COVER STORY

D

DALL OUTOF PLAY nation of football lovers

A nation of football lovers, China lacks a team strong enough to reach the FIFA World Cup By Bai Shi he 2014 FIFA World Cup re-ignited the passion of Chinese football fans of all ages when it kicked off in Brazil on June 13, despite China's national football team not being among the 32 taking part in the final round. Team China was knocked out during the regional qualifying stage for Asia back in 2011.

For most Chinese fans, it is simply too expensive to travel to Brazil and watch the World Cup matches live from the stands. Despite the 11-hour time difference, many still choose to view the games live on TV; in Beijing, that means watching games at midnight and later. Nevertheless, time difference has never held back for those enthusiastic Chinese football fans who prefer to cheer along with the fans in real-time.

There will be 64 matches in total during the month-long World Cup. To ensure they can watch the electrifying, impassioned bouts at midnight and beyond, many viewers have sought out various excuses to delay work the next day. Using vacation time, asking doctors for sick-leave notes, and even buying falsified doctor's notes online are some of the more extreme methods. Perhaps even more avidly, one die-hard football aficionado quit his well-paying job to enjoy the World Cup without being disturbed by work, *Xin'an Evening News*, a local media based in east China's Anhui Province, reported recently.

Millions tuned in

Li Yao, 32, a farm manager in Beijing, is one such impassioned World Cup viewer. Li has adjusted his work and rest schedules to Rio time in order to more conveniently watch the grand sporting event.

"My job is flexible compared to white-collar workers and I have made a schedule for the work in advance," Li told *Beijing Review*.

"During the tournament stage, there are three or four matches that take place from midnight to dawn every day in Beijing time. I watch two of them every night, take a nap in between and have a long lie in every morning, and then work in the afternoons and evenings," Li said. As a single man, he jokes that he is free from the earful of complaints from a wife.

Li said he has loved football since his child-

hood. He was a member of school team and often took part in the middle school football league in Beijing. The sport has become a part of his life.

Due to the absence of China's national team this year, Chinese fans are looking beyond nationality, cheering on other World Cup football teams like Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Germany and England. All have won over numerous supporters.

Li is a big fan of Italy. He recalled one evening, back in 2006, when he shocked his parents out of their slumber after cheering excitedly to celebrate Italy's World Cup win. It is more enjoyable to watch the games live with other fans around the world, Li said.

"My work and sleep schedules have been turned upside down. I feel exhausted after watching these midnight games. I'll take a good rest after the games are over and readjust to Beijing time," Li said.

Like the country's football fans, the media is also captivated by the World Cup. Hundreds of Chinese reporters have been sent to Brazil to cover the event, Xinhua News Agency reported.



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China Central Television (CCTV) has acquired exclusive rights to broadcast this year's World Cup on the Chinese mainland. The station's sports channel, CCTV-5, will be stream a total of 800 hours of live footage from all 64 matches to Chinese audiences during the 33day event, Jiang Heping, Director of CCTV-5 sports channel, told Xinhua recently.

The station has also made full preparations: It will show live matches, video replays, interviews with the players and expert analyses every day across its many media platforms, including television, the Internet, and mobile phones.

This month, the TV station sent over 100 employees—reporters, cameramen, technicians, and more—to the various host cities in Brazil. Their assignment is to look for in-depth stories behind the scenes of the event, giving viewers a comprehensive look at Brazil, its cities, and its people's love of "futebol."

"Apart from the matches themselves, the training sessions of some teams will be broadcasted live by CCTV, and it's the first time we've done this during a World Cup," Jiang said.

Such hard work during the event has brought the channel exceptionally high ratings. According to statistics from AC Nielsen, a global marketing research firm, CCTV's live showing and replays of the World Cup's June 13 opening match—Brazil versus Croatia—reached 1.32 percent in the ratings. This means that some 46 million people in China watched the game on TV. Furthermore, the number of those who watched the game on CNTV, the online offshoot of CCTV, reached 5 million.

China's World Cup dream

As the 2014 FIFA World Cup rolls on, a recurring question is asked: When will China reach the World Cup again?

The first and last time a Chinese football team qualified for the event dates back to 2002, when Japan and South Korea jointly hosted the World Cup. Thanks to Bora Milutinovic, former coach to China's national team, China was able to achieve standing for the first time as one of 32 teams taking part in the World Cup. Chinese fans hailed Milutinovic as a "magic coach." But China's luck ran out during the event itself, and it was knocked out without winning a single match or scoring a goal.

After that, the Chinese team seemed to fall back into its vicious cycle, trying and failing to reach the World Cup again and again after 2002. Recently, China's national team even



PASSIONATE: Fans gather in a bar in Haikou, capital of China's south Hainan Province, watching the opening match of the 2014 World Cup at midnight of June 13

set a number of record "worsts." For example, China's FIFA world ranking dropped to 109 in March 2013, while its ranking in Asia simultaneously slid down to 13. Later in 2013, in a friendly match that consisted largely of young players, China was defeated 1-5 by Thailand. This loss resulted in one of the more humiliating final scores in the history of Chinese football. It led, too, to the sacking of Spaniard José Antonio Camacho, then head coach of the country's national team.

Many attributed the team's defeat to mistakes made by Camacho, its sixth foreign coach in just a few years. Camacho had been fiercely criticized by Chinese fans since 2011, when he failed to lead China to the 2014 World Cup. Foreign head coaches often bear the weight of an entire country's anticipation, and expectations are not light. However, no foreign coach —save for Milutinovic—has achieved widely regarded success with China's national football team.

On February 26, Frenchman Alain Perrin was appointed head coach of China's national football team. Perrin's mission, for now, is to lead China to the 2015 Asian Football Confederation Asian Cup hosted by Australia.

Some sports insiders have opined that

the team's players themselves should be held responsible for their poor performances. Chinese players must learn to put forward an indomitable spirit on the football field, as the game can be demanding, both physically and psychologically.

In his latest interview with Chinese media, Milutinovic said that the key to strengthening Team China is to get more people participating in the sport, better training them, and competing more often with teams from around the world.

Scandals

"Many problems within the Chinese football sphere stemmed from the Chinese Football Association (CFA), China's main governing body for football, and the Chinese Super League (CSL), its top domestic professional league," Yan Qiang, a senior commentator on Chinese football, told *Southern Weekly*, based in Guangzhou in south China.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the launch of China's domestic professional league in 1994. The league failed to field a strong national team and nearly destroyed the reputation of Chinese football following a succession of scandals. Former CFA chief Xie Yalong was



YOUNG FOOTBALLERS: The Beijing-based Silver Tide Football Club practices dribbling footballs with their coach Gong Jiajun

charged with taking over 1.36 million yuan (about \$222,950) in bribes during his term in office from 2005-08. Nan Yong, Xie's successor, was also accused of bribe-taking totaling 1.19 million yuan (\$195,081) by the court. Finally, Xie and Nan, two big names in Chinese football, were both sentenced to 10-and-a-half years by the court in June 2012.

A number of major figures in Chinese football, including referees, national team players, and a handful of football club managers have also been imprisoned over accusations of bribe-taking and gambling on games at the same time.

"Tackling corruption will be an enduring and lasting task for Chinese football," then-CFA chief Wei Di said in 2011, when the scandals were first exposed to the public.

Long had the CFA been criticized for its low transparency and lack of supervision. Following these scandals, the CFA has invited fans, lawyers, and journalists to monitor its games in a bid to enhance supervision of the governing association.

In addition, despite market-oriented reforms, the CSL failed to increase the competitiveness of the teams in China, said Chen Yuyu, associate professor of economics at Peking University. Chen has dedicated years to researching the Chinese football industry.

He claimed that the CFA did not create an equal-interests distribution system for the CSL; thus, clubs had to try to protect their rankings and ticket income any way they could. As a result, black market dealings before matches ran rampant in recent years.

To change the fortunes of the CSL, the CFA must carry out reforms and build a transparent and fair environment for Chinese leagues and players, said Yan, the senior sports reporter.

Youngsters take to the field

Chinese President Xi Jinping stated three wishes in regard to football back in 2011: For China to reach the World Cup, to one day host the Cup and, ultimately, to win the coveted trophy.

The nation should focus more on promoting football amongst young athletes, President Xi said in March 2014, after taking time out from his first state visit to Europe to watch the Sino-German Junior Football Friendship Match in Berlin Stadium.

Many have posited that younger players may be the key to revitalizing football in China. However, the current state of affairs does not inspire much optimism. Despite massive audiences for the World Cup, China's footballplaying population has long faced a huge decline. Between 1990-95, there were 650,000 registered players across China. By 2007, that number had stood at only 30,000. Similarly, in the 1990s, there were 4,300 football training schools across the country; while only 20 were still operational in 2007, *National Business Daily* reported.

Luckily, the number of student football players is on the rise, and in December 2012 stood at 190,000, said Liu Peng, head of General Administration of China Sports, the top government agency responsible for sports in the nation. In Liu's view, China must work harder to facilitate football education in its schools and make it more accessible to children.

Gao Chao, 47, a football coach, has thrown himself into promoting the sport among children since 1996.

Gao was a football player from an early age. Eventually, he was able to quit his steady job and open the Silver Tide Football Club in collaboration with Beijing No. 18 Middle School. Most of his students are between the ages of 5 and 13.

"I love football. I hope children can improve their health and learn the spirit of teamwork from the sport," Gao told *Beijing Review*, regarding his purpose for opening the club. However, during the decline of the Chinese football league, Gao also encountered a decreased interest in his club. "A few years ago, there were only a handful of children learning football in my club," Gao said.

"China does not have an established system for the development of football players. I often worry about the future of my students. After finishing their training in my club, some of them want to become professional players. But many child athletes from working-class families cannot afford the expensive fees for receiving further training in a league club," Gao said.

Today, parents and their children don't expect to make a career out of football. They just hope children can fall in love with the sport, Gao said.

"When more youngsters devote their talents to football, it will be possible to better develop China's adult leagues and build a strong national team, which will in turn help us to reach the World Cup eventually. It is like constructing a pyramid: Without a large support system at the base, we cannot reach the top," said Gao.

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COVER STORY

MADE-IN-CHINA' REACHES FEVER PITCH

Though the national team failed to make it, numerous Chinese products have found their way to Brazil during the 2014 World Cup By Deng Yaqing



nthusiasm for the beautiful game has rarely burned so brightly as it did at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. During the matches, football fans waved miniature flags of their countries, donned multicolored fluffy hairpieces and shook their *caxirolas*, percussion instruments specially designed in a bid to rival 2010's *vuvuzela*. Fuleco the Armadillo, the official mascot of the World Cup, whipped up visitors from all corners of the globe into frenzy. However, unknown to the crowd, all of this celebratory merchandise, and even Fuleco himself,

originated from China.

When cameras turned to the football stadium, the eight Chinese characters of Yingli Solar's slogan flashed on the advertising board in the arena. The Chinese solar company provided 27 sets of solar panels to power all of the stadium lighting masts in the cities hosting the World Cup.

Moreover, subways developed by China CNR Corp. Ltd. will ferry millions of travelers between Rio's central station and Maracana Stadium. "For the 2016 Rio Olympics, 80 percent of the public transportation vehicles will be supplied by China," said Wang Yong, chief engineer of CNR.

The future's bright

For Chinese entrepreneurs with international ambitions, the World Cup represents a chance to shine. "Its extensive coverage, high reseeding rate and great quantities of passionate fans allow Yingli to promote its brand in emerging markets," Liang Tian, public relations director of Yingli, told *Beijing Review*.

At both the 2010 South Africa and 2014 Brazil World Cup, Yingli has been the sole Chinese company among six FIFA partners, eight FIFA World Cup sponsors and eight national supporters. After its sponsorship of the 2010 World Cup, its sales soared to 1.06 gigawatts (GW) the same year, and tripled over the following three years. Liang predicted its sales in 2014 will hit 4 GW due to the international brand promotion.

Aside from that, in a historic first, the World Cup will be powered by solar energy with Yingli Solar panels supplying electricity to Arena Pernambuco and the Maracana Stadium.

This will ensure that Yingli has its day in the sun marketing-wise. As an official FIFA World Cup Sponsor, Yingli's advertisement will be shown during all 64 matches, for at least eight minutes per match, in all 12 of Brazil's World Cup stadiums. At the same time, it also enjoys the right to place its company logo next to the FIFA World Cup Official Emblem to advertise its products, ensuring the company will not be left languishing in the shade.

Of course, all of these privileges didn't come cheap; a hefty sponsorship fee had to be paid by Yingli. Liang declined to shed light on the specific figure, citing its agreement with FIFA, but did disclose that the average marketing cost per watt is actually low given its large shipments of photovoltaic (PV) modules.

Such a sunny outlook belies the difficulties Chinese solar companies face on the international front. Recently, solar trade disputes with the United States and the EU have forced China's PV industry to undergo restructuring, Following the U.S. decision to impose tariffs ranging from 31.14 percent to 249.96 percent on PV products imported from China, the European Commission pegged the floor price for Chinese solar imports at 0.56 euro (\$0.74) per watt and imposed an export quota of 7 GW on Chinese manufacturers.

These measures have undoubtedly cast a shadow over the industry. "Amid its plight, Yingli should take the initiative to explore new markets. In the course of its evolution, the company has expanded its presence from eight countries to more than 50 countries," said Liang,

Sponsoring the World Cup reflects current trends in the Chinese PV industry's global gameplan, which is shifting the spotlight from traditional U.S. and European markets to emerging markets including Brazil, said Liu Chongyuan, a public relations officer from Yingli.

Climbing the value chain

In fact, Chinese companies have long been involved in making products for the world football event. In Yiwu, the world's largest wholesale center for small commodities and accessories, the level of activity has kicked into overdrive owing to huge demand related to the 2014 World Cup.

In the first five months, Yiwu's exports to Brazil totaled \$160 million, up 31.4 percent year on year. Exports of sports commodities to Brazil were \$2.78 million, up 42 percent from the same period last year.

In stark contrast to low-tech commodities shipped by small manufacturers before the World Cup events, high-end products containing advanced technologies have begun to appear more and more on China's exports list.

When Brazil unveiled its plan to renovate its rail transportation network by investing \$5.43 billion in 2007, China CNR Corp. Ltd. managed to pip rivals Siemens and Alstom to the post in four bids, scoring an order for 90 electric multiple units (EMUs) and 114 subway units for the



STEADY AND SPEEDY: (Top) The EMU gets loaded for shipment to Brazil on February 28. Comprised of four carriages, the EMU train capable of carrying 1,300 people can run at a maximum speed of 100 km per hour (Bottom) The inside of an electric multiple unit (EMU) made by China CNR Corp.

construction of the required infrastructure for the 2014 World Cup.

Since some EMUs have to share routes with freight trains, carriages produced by CNR have to be strong enough to remain intact even in the case of collisions with off-track freight trains. To meet these special requirements, CNR developed new technologies to manufacture carriages with a longitudinal compression load of as high as 363 tons, 2.5 times as much as those in Europe.

"Even if the EMU collides with an 80-ton cargo train traveling at a speed of 36 km per hour, the carriages will not be distorted or broken," said Zhao Yao, EMU project manager of CNR.

"Every day during the World Cup, millions of tourists enjoy the convenience made possible by Chinese products. 'Made-in-China' products have undergone a drastic image change in the eyes of foreigners," said Zhang Tian, publicity director of CNR.

In addition to the subway, Chinese brands can be spotted both inside and outside the

football stadium. Appliance maker Midea Group will be charged with keeping fans cool by providing air-conditioning equipment for nine of the 12 football fields—48 of the 64 football matches will be played in stadiums equipped with Midea's central air conditioners.

Nuctech Co. Ltd. provides nine of the 12 stadiums with security inspection equipment and services. The nine venues include Arena de Sao Paulo, scene of the opening ceremony and Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, which will host the final. About 600 advanced security inspection equipment packages from Nuctech help screeners identify hazardous materials through clear imaging.

"In the past four years, the 'made-in-China' brand has gradually shed its image of focusing more on quantity than quality. By taking advantage of the World Cup, China's manufacturing industry has begun to show its true potential," said Guo Xia, a research fellow from Peking University's China Center for Strategic Studies.

Setting goals

It seems that football fever is not confined solely to Brazil this summer. On June 5, the exciting news broke that China's biggest ecommerce company Alibaba had acquired 50 percent of Guangzhou Evergrande,

China's top-notch football club, for \$192 million. Alibaba will not only invest in Guangzhou

Evergrande, but also push forward the progress of China's domestic game, according to Jack Ma, Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group.

Just recently, Evergrande announced its decision to open a branch of its school in Spain with the aim of training to nurture the future stars of Chinese football.

"Taobao, Alibaba's online B2C shopping platform, sold 9.6 million cans of beer during the first day of the 2014 World Cup, while none of China's football clubs make profits from the industry," Ma said in an article, maintaining that the intervention of new forces like the Internet would mark a massive uptick in the fortunes of China's domestic football scene.

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