

## EDITORIAL

## US misconduct rooted in zero-sum mindset

The United States' growing penchant for conducting so-called freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea has prompted fears that there might be a head-on clash between the US and China.

Sunday's incident in which two US warships were driven away by the Chinese navy after they entered into China's territorial waters around the Xisha Islands only aggravated these worries.

As on previous occasions, the US move was met with strong opposition by China, as such actions cannot be interpreted as friendly or peaceful. They are blatant provocations, which undermine strategic mutual trust between the two militaries and damage peace, stability and good order in the busy waters of the South China Sea.

The US always cites international law and safeguarding access to the waters as the pretexts for its freedom of navigation operations. But neither of these justifications holds water as the US is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and freedom of navigation in the waters has never been a problem.

To try and give its provocative moves in the South China Sea the gloss of altruism, the US also points an accusing finger at China and claims its naval operations are a response to China militarizing the waters. But by repeatedly sending its warships to the South China Sea, the US is finding it more and more difficult to conceal the fact that it is the real culprit for the militarizing of the waters. Its accident-prone provocations are increasing the risk of an accidental incident.

Sunday's action by the US and other provocative moves in the South China Sea in recent years highlight why China is making efforts to build a blue-water navy. It has to improve its maritime capabilities so that it can better protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity and maritime interests.

China does not seek a confrontation with the US in the South China Sea. It has repeatedly urged the US to properly handle the differences between the two countries and abandon its zero-sum mentality so that it can contribute to building peace and stability in the region.

The US should end its "freedom of navigation" operations in the waters and instead try to make military-to-military relations a stable factor in China-US relations. Doing so would serve the interests of both sides and the region, unlike the US' present course of action that threatens a deterioration in regional stability and risks a dangerous disturbance.

## TO THE POINT

## Big data based future

In a congratulatory letter to the China International Big Data Industry Expo that opened in Guiyang, Guizhou province, on Saturday, President Xi Jinping said China upholds "innovative, coordinated, green, open and sharing" principles in implementing its national big data strategy.

The rapid development of new-generation information technologies has had a significant and far-reaching impact on social and economic development, State governance and people's lives, and the national big data strategy being implemented by China will facilitate the country's economic transformation from high-speed growth to high-quality development, Xi said.

He called for strengthened international exchanges and cooperation in the development of the big data sector.

Xi's remarks fully demonstrate that China, as the world's largest market, attaches great importance to the internet, information technologies and the big data industry whose booming development is playing an increasingly important role in fueling economic growth. In 2017, China's digital economy accounted for 27.2 trillion yuan (\$4.3 trillion), 32.9 percent of its gross domestic product, according to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

If the progress of human civilization is marked by technological breakthroughs, it is surely driven by the explosive development of information technologies, the internet and big data in the 21st century.

Since it launched its national big data strategy in 2015, China has introduced a series of guideline documents and measures to promote its feasible implementation and some substantial progress has been made. China knows that in an age when information has become an important factor of production and a key resource for national competition, any country who gains advantages in big data will gain an upper hand over its competitors. This is why Xi puts great emphasis on China's need to make core technological breakthroughs in this field.

Informationalization offers rare opportunities for China's further development, but whether it can grasp such opportunities hinges on whether it can effectively implement the national big data strategy to promote the building of its digital economy and nurture a new engine for its economic development.

— NEWSCTV.NET

Zhao Guopin



## OPINION LINE

## Local governments should aim to keep their housing markets stable

**THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN-RURAL DEVELOPMENT** has urged the local governments of some cities where the realty markets are overheated to strengthen their real estate regulations to eliminate all possible room for speculation. People's Daily comments:

Following the ministry's call, the local governments of cities where housing transactions have heated up have introduced tougher measures to plug any policy loopholes that speculators have been taking advantage of, and all State-owned commercial banks have raised their interest rates for mortgages.

Local governments should not underestimate hot money's ability to move quickly. Were it not for the central authorities' preemptive and tight control, speculators would have targeted the real estate markets in Xiongan New Area and the Hainan Island, where China will build the world's largest free trade zone.

Only when the local governments realize that high housing prices do not only equate to economic prosperity, but rather present a risk to it, will they take the initiative to keep housing prices within a rational range.

It remains difficult, if not impossible, for local governments to quit their inclination to connive in beefing up unrealistic housing prices, since they

still rely on the revenue from land sales as their main source of income.

Despite this, local governments have no reason to shirk their duty of building enough subsidized houses to meet the demand of their low-income populations. But regrettably there is still a long way to go for some cities in this regard.

Governments and banks must avoid putting first-time homebuyers in their cross hairs while cracking down upon speculators, because their demand is rational and should be distinguished from that of speculators.

Local governments must rationally determine the scale, structure and timing of the supply of housing and land. Once the local real estate market fluctuates, local governments must assume the main responsibility for stabilizing housing prices and controlling rent. In other words, the real estate regulation must adjust measures to local conditions and the strategy of the city, but the "tight" tone for regulations and stability are consistent throughout the country.

## More than taste test required for salmon

**IT IS REPORTED THAT** about 30 percent of the salmon in the Chinese market is in fact rainbow trout, which is a species of salmonid living in cold fresh water. Beijing Youth Daily comments:

The fish sellers have on purpose kept consumers in the dark, profiting from the price gap between the two kinds of fish. Even after the media exposed the fish dealers' trick, those selling rainbow trout as salmon simply call the fish "fresh water salmon".

However, none of the food safety, agricultural or commerce administrative departments has yet put a stop to the wrongdoings.

It is ridiculous that the fake salmon dealers are still selling the rainbow trout as salmon at high prices. They defend themselves by saying the "fresh water salmon" tastes the same and experience shows it is safe to eat raw, despite the parasites in the rainbow trout making it dangerous to eat uncooked.

The then Agricultural Ministry vowed to accelerate the construction of a quality tracing system for agricultural produces last year, according to which such swindling would be eliminated. The case of the salmon that is not salmon should serve as a reminder to the new Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs that they should brook no delay in establishing the system.

Hopefully, the authorities can take immediate actions to rectify the order of the salmon market, and correct the wrongdoings of the fake salmon sellers as soon as possible. That the fake salmon has not evolved into a threat to public health does not mean it is not an issue of food safety that must be addressed.

## Cost-effective for insurance to cover stop smoking drugs

**SHENZHEN**, South China's Guangdong province, has launched a tobacco control plan that mentions listing smoking cessation medications in the basic medical care insurance. Beijing News comments:

The reported plan of Shenzhen is quite ambitious. According to reports, Shenzhen plans to build a "tobacco-free city" by 2020, as well as maintain the smoking rate of the elderly population below 20 percent.

In order to realize these goals, the municipal government has shown strong determination. For example, it has already ordered all public-sponsored hospitals and community health centers to open smoking cessation clinics by the end of this year. At the same time, the plan also mentions that Shenzhen will explore the inclusion of smoking cessation drugs in the list of medications covered by medical insurance.

It is the last of these measures that has aroused controversy. Many people have challenged the proposed measure, saying it is a waste of taxpayers' money to improve the health of a few who have chosen to risk their own health.

Actually, the World Health Organization has clearly defined tobacco addiction as a chronic disease in terms of medical science. More important, smoking hurts the health of not only smokers, but also nonsmokers who suffer from secondhand smoke. According to reports, there are over 300 million smokers in China and 760 million secondhand smokers. If the former could quit smoking, that would be good news for at least 1 billion people.

The cost of paying for smoking cessation drugs will be much less than the cost of treating diseases caused by smoking and passive smoking, because most smoking-related diseases are major conditions such as lung cancer for which the treatments are more expensive. If the smokers quit smoking, this money may be saved. Therefore, the inclusion of smoking cessation drugs in health insurance may, in a sense, save public money. Shenzhen's move will help people quit smoking and therefore it should be supported.

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## HOT WORDS

## Zombie policies

僵尸政策(jiāngshī zhèngcè)

Over the years, central and local governments have issued a variety of policies aimed at social and economic development that have failed to be properly implemented. These well-intentioned but "dormant" policies are known as zombie policies.

There are a variety of reasons why these policies have failed to be effectively implemented.

Some policymakers only draw up the rough framework of a policy and do not detail how it should be implemented, which makes the proposed policy difficult to carry out. Also the relationships among various policies are not straightened out and some new policies are in contradiction with other existing policies. And some local policies lack feasibility, which is only the impulsive decision of local policymakers.

These zombie policies can hardly benefit the enterprises and the public, and they undermine the government's authority and credibility. In addition, they undermine local business

environments, which is harmful for social and economic development.

For the sake of the public and enterprises, all the zombie policies should be cleaned up, implemented or improved as soon as possible. Meanwhile, there should be a supervision mechanism to enable the effective implementation of policies in the future.



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