

Growth engine

Nation's key role bodes well for Asia and world, Boao report says
BUSINESS, PAGE 8



UN resolution on Gaza cease-fire resisted by Israel
WORLD, PAGE 6



Blend of influences
Young designer defines fashion as a form of self-expression
Z WEEKLY, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

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Anniversary of Sino-Honduran ties celebrated

Xi, Castro exchange congratulations; trade between nations grows 21.1 percent

By XU WEI
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China and Honduras renewed their commitment on Tuesday to mutual support and cooperation on the first anniversary of their diplomatic ties, with officials and analysts lauding the development of the relationship as a testament to robust partnerships with China under the one-China principle.

President Xi Jinping and Honduran President Xiomara Castro exchanged congratulations, with the Chinese president stressing that the establishment of diplomatic ties was "a correct political decision made in compliance with the historical trend" and that it "serves the fundamental interests of the two nations".

Xi noted that over the past year, the two sides have upheld the principles of mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and common development, ensuring that bilateral relations started to grow from a high level.

He also expressed his high appreciation for Honduras' adherence to the one-China principle.

According to the General Administration of Customs, trade between China and Honduras grew 21.1 percent year-on-year to \$1.91 billion in 2023, with exports from Honduras to China up 177.6 percent.

The two nations signed a \$276 million economic and technical cooperation agreement last week to help boost the Central American nation's education infrastructure, according to a social media post released by the Honduran government.

Castro said that China, with a millennium civilization and a major role to play in the course of history, is a role model for the world and an important partner of Honduras.

She lauded Beijing's dedication to innovative development, its participation in efforts to find solutions to global problems and strenuous assistance with worldwide poverty reduction efforts over the past year.

Honduras firmly adheres to the one-China principle and is willing to

develop ties with China that feature independence and mutual respect, she said, expressing her wish that the two peoples will enjoy a long-lasting friendship.

Castro made a state visit to China in June last year, three months after the establishment of bilateral ties.

Lin Jian, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said at a news briefing on Tuesday that the 17 cooperation agreements signed during Castro's visit to China laid an important foundation for the high-level start of bilateral relations.

The two nations have firmly supported each other on issues concerning their core interests and carried out effective cooperation in sectors such as the economy and trade, agriculture, science and technology, education and tourism, Lin said.

"The rapid development of China-Honduras relations fully demonstrates that establishing and developing relations with China on the basis of the one-China principle conforms to the historical trend and the trend of the times, and is in the fundamental interests of both countries and their peoples," he said.

Fredis Cerrato, Honduras' minister of economic development, told Xinhua News Agency that Honduras has no doubt that China is a strategic and fundamental partner for its development.

"We believe we are going to be able to develop an extraordinary trade relationship in the areas of tobacco, coffee, shrimp and sugar, among other products," he said.

Last year, the General Administration of Customs greenlighted imports of multiple Honduran products, including fresh bananas, coffee beans and aquatic products, which lifted Honduras' exports to China to \$81.17 million in that year.

As of March, the two nations have already held four rounds of negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement, with an early harvest arrangement for the bilateral FTA, allowing for the quicker implementation of certain aspects of the agreement, signed last month.

See Anniversary, page 3

US port copes with bridge disaster



An aerial view of the Dali cargo vessel, which crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing it to collapse, in Baltimore, Maryland, on Tuesday. At least six people were unaccounted for and presumed dead. REUTERS See story, page 7

Country set to create more opportunities for investors

By ZHONG NAN
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China's rich innovative application scenarios, supportive policies and thriving market will continue to offer appealing investment opportunities for global investors, particularly in the fields of emerging industries and innovative business formats, said government officials and senior executives of multinational corporations.

Speaking on Tuesday at the Invest in China Summit 2024 in Beijing, Vice-President Han Zheng said that China will continue to explore and unleash market demand, injecting new vitality into the global economy and creating more new business opportunities for foreign companies.

Han said that China's long-term growth has sound and solid foundations and it remains the largest engine for global development.

Ling Ji, vice-minister of commerce and China's deputy international trade representative, said the country will further shorten the negative list for foreign investment access and create a level playing field for domestic and foreign businesses.

Efforts will be made to resolve the concerns of global investors and ensure the implementation of national treatment for foreign investment.

"The government will provide more precise policy support to attract investment in areas such as research and development centers, advanced manufacturing, green and low-carbon development and the digital economy," said Ling, adding that these policy measures will create favorable conditions for overseas businesses to participate in the development of China's new quality productive forces.

New quality productive forces are advanced productivity freed from traditional economic growth modes and productivity development paths, featuring high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and in line with the new development philosophy.

Highlighting that the concept of new quality productive forces is fully in line with its growth strategy, Stefan Hartung, board chairman of German industrial conglomerate Robert Bosch, said that China's focus on technology is expected to closely align with global trends, bolstering the country's role in the world economy. The outlook is positive, as international trade and collaboration not only benefit China but also have beneficial implications for the global community.

After opening a new innovation and manufacturing center in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, last year, Hartung said that the group

will continue to expand such capabilities across China.

"This shift indicates that our focus is no longer solely on market presence and production in China. Instead, the emphasis is now on innovation," said Hartung.

Echoing that sentiment, Judy Marks, chairwoman, CEO and president of Otis Worldwide, a United States-based elevator manufacturer, said that with the expansion of China's opening-up and the optimization of the business environment, Otis will deploy more resources in developing energy-saving and digitalization-related solutions in the country.

In October, the US company established a research and development center in Tianjin, which serves as its innovation base in northern China.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce, fueled by China's industry upgrade and green transformation, foreign direct investment in the country's high-tech manufacturing sector jumped 10.1 percent year-on-year to 28.27 billion yuan (\$3.92 billion) in the first two months of this year.

"China is a vast and highly sophisticated market filled with opportunities, where we innovate locally to cater to both the Chinese and global markets," said Antoine de Saint-Affrique, CEO of Danone, a French multinational food products corporation. "We have huge confidence that growth will continue in China, and the country will contribute to the growth of the world. If China doesn't grow, the world wouldn't either."

WORLD WATCH
By Regina Ip

Attempts to smear HK ordinance bound to fail

On Saturday, Hong Kong enacted the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance and reached a historic milestone in the implementation of "one country, two systems". Legislation to implement the Basic Law's Article 23, which requires Hong Kong to legislate on its own to prohibit seven national security offenses, has been outstanding since 1997, and the inadequacy of the city's defense mechanism has been a drag on its development.

Now that the legislation has been successfully implemented, Hong Kong can march forward to create a more secure and prosperous future for its people.

Most of the offenses included in the legislation, such as treason, insurrection, incitement to mutiny and acts with seditious intention, and offenses related to State secrets and espionage, are common to many common law jurisdictions. Many of these offenses have long been on Hong Kong's statute books. They are commonly found in the national security legislation of most, if not all, Commonwealth countries.

Sabotage and external interference endangering national security are two new offenses included in the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, but they are not new to many common law jurisdictions. Many countries have created the offense of sabotage to punish acts aimed at

See HK, page 3

Back home safe



Sani Uba, governor of Nigeria's Kaduna state, shakes hands on Monday with a student rescued from a mass abduction. More than 130 Nigerian schoolchildren were rescued by the army after more than two weeks in captivity. They were brought to their home state in northwestern Nigeria ahead of their anticipated reunion with families. OLALEKAN RICHARD / AP

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FLORAL ORNAMENTS CROWNING ATTRACTION OF FISHING VILLAGE

In Xunpu, Fujian province, appeal of traditional headdress is boosting tourism, expanding cultural curiosity

By CHEN NAN
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As a child, Huang Rongbing used to watch his mother glide a wooden comb through her long, thick hair, which was as black as calligrapher's ink. "That was the first thing she did every morning before washing her face and brushing her teeth. She usually put some hair oil on her comb, making her long hair smooth and neat. Her hair was

very long, about knee length. She often pulled her hair back tight, rolled it around two fingers and formed a bun on the back of her head," recalled Huang, 34. "Then she would put colorful flowers on her head as accessories, which was very beautiful."

All the women in the small fish-

ing village of Xunpu in Quanzhou, Fujian province, where Huang was born and grew up, had long hair like his mother tied in a bun and adorned with flowers. The colorful and distinctive floral headdress is known as *xanhua* or *xanhuaawei*.

There is an old saying in Xunpu, "put flowers in your hair in this life and you'll also be pretty in the afterlife".

See Ornament, page 2

INSIDE
Innovative solutions required for reducing carbon emissions
Global Views, page 13

PAGE TWO

From page 1

The head ornament has become an inspiration and provided a career for Huang.

In 2016, he and his older sister opened a salon called Xunpu Huami where tourists could have their hair done in *zanhua* style and get their photos taken.

With over 100 customers a day, Huang eventually turned the salon into a cultural center, which gave female visitors the opportunity to put on the traditional clothes worn by local women to introduce them to the village's culture.

Xunpu is located about 10 kilometers southeast of the city center of Quanzhou — one of the most important ports of the ancient Maritime Silk Road, which was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2021. In the past, many oceangoing vessels anchored in Xunpu to transport silk, tea and porcelain to countries and regions around the globe, according to the Quanzhou government's official website.

Oyster house

Huang's mother, Weng Xiuzhen, 61, whose hair has remained black and luxuriant, lives in a house made of oyster shells, an eye-catching building in the village that attracts tourists. Oyster shell houses are resistant to water penetration and woodworm damage. The villagers favor them as a building material as they are warm in winter and cool in summer.

"My mother helps out at the center," Huang said. "She still wears the traditional clothes and *zanhua* on her head.

"She cannot speak Mandarin and only speaks the Hokkien dialect. When the tourists thank her for doing the *zanhua* head decoration, she always smiles back. She is also a star of the village because many tourists take photos with her."

Most of Huang's customers are young women who travel from different parts of the country to experience the village's unique culture. When Huang's business first opened, only about 20 people visited. But things changed dramatically in 2022 thanks to celebrities who visited the village and posted photos of themselves on social media wearing the floral headdress.

Actress Zhao Liying visited Xunpu and appeared in a Chinese magazine in a red traditional dress and wearing flamboyant head ornaments. With over 90 million followers on her social media account on Sina Weibo, Zhao also appeared in a video sharing her experiences in Xunpu. Captivated by the stunning images, visitors flocked to the village.

With more than 57 million followers on his Sina Weibo platform, pop star Xue Zhiqian also put on a *zanhua* when he performed in Quanzhou last September.

"After Zhao and some other celebrities came to our village, more and more tourists have come here to experience the traditional culture of Xunpu, especially *zanhua*," Huang said. "We have been fully booked and now there are over 200 businesses offering services to dress tourists with a *zanhua*."

Star attraction

Huang spoke with China Daily on March 9, the same day the village held a grand celebration and worship ceremony at Mazu Temple. During the event, which is held on the 29th day of the lunar calendar every year, participants seek blessings from Mazu — the goddess and protector of seafarers. To mark the annual occasion, village women turned out in traditional costumes that featured the floral head decorations.

Huang said the head ornaments his business offers to tourists are quite different from the *zanhua* that his mother's generation had worn.

In the past, women of the village rarely cut their hair. Huang said as far as he knew, his mother only cut her hair twice in her life — once when she turned 14, as part of a ceremony to mark her becoming an adult, and the other time when she got married.

"Now, when tourists come to us, we usually have to use wigs since most of the tourists' hair is not long enough to turn into a bun," he said.

To have the *zanhua* appear more colorful, he usually combines real flowers with artificial ones. In his mother's time, women usually wore real flowers, and used different types of flowers to distinguish married women from single ones.

Huang said the rise in tourist visits

Ornament: Zanhua headwear embraces modernity

Inset: Weng Xiuzhen (right) puts flowers on Yin Siqi's bun in Xunpu, Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"There is a beautiful coast near the village and it's easy to find Huang's home because of the oyster shell house his family lives in, which is very noticeable," said Yin, 35, who now lives in Quanzhou after graduating and becoming a social media influencer.

One of the things that impressed Yin was the story of Huang's older sister, who married a Moroccan man and had a grand, traditional wedding in the village.

"I saw pictures of Huang's older sister's wedding. She wore very traditional clothes and a *zanhua*, which looked very beautiful. The couple looked very young. It was very touching that the bride respected her background and family traditions and the groom also loved the unique culture," Yin said.

In 2021, Yin donned a *zanhua* for the first time at Huang's salon. Huang's mother put flowers on Yin's bun, which formed a circular shape that symbolized unity, perfection, and completion.

Yin returned to the village several times and took photos of herself in traditional Xunpu dress and wearing a *zanhua*. One of her social media posts received over 40,000 "likes" and was viewed more than 2 million times. Her photos also attracted invitations from the media for interviews as well as advertising companies to cooperate on endorsements.

"I have seen many young people come to Xunpu for *zanhua*. They match the head decorations with their own style, especially Chinese-style clothes such as the traditional skirt called the *mianqun*, which literally means 'horse-face skirt' and is one of the favorites among younger generations," Yin added.

Modern twist

In 2022, Hu Titi traveled from Guiyang, Guizhou province, to Quanzhou, to visit Huang's mother Weng and undergo the full *zanhua* experience. She learned how to comb her hair and how to use hairpins to form a stable bun in order to decorate her head with flowers.

"Besides exploring the natural landscape, old architecture, and customs and traditions of the village, I also gained in-depth knowledge about Xunpu, where tradition and modernity merge," said Hu.

Last year, she went to Paris and under the Eiffel Tower shot photos and videos of herself dressed in traditional Chinese clothes and a *zanhua*. She also offered passersby the opportunity to try on the headdress.

In April 2023, Huang Yimei and a fellow Quanzhou native, opened one of the first *zanhua* stores in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. The business is located by a riverside, which is home to restaurants and coffee shops that are popular with young people.

Huang Yimei combines *zanhua* headwear with clothes from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) as Hangzhou served as the Southern Song capital from 1127 and 1279.

Her customers include older women, and many mothers and daughters like to have photos taken of their hair being prepared in the *zanhua* style.

"Customers come from 9 am to 10 pm," she said. "I didn't go back to my home in Quanzhou during Spring Festival this year because of the rising number of customers."

Zhang Wencheng, from Yong'an county, Fujian province, has a PhD from Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hotel and Tourism Management. From 2017 to 2019, he traveled to Xunpu more than 10 times to do research for his doctorate.

"The centuries-old fishing village and the people's traditional lifestyle are not fading away," Zhang said, adding that Xunpu's history dates back over 800 years.

"The local people's lifestyle is closely associated with and affected by the ocean. The women of Xunpu village shouldered much more responsibility than the men in the families as the men were usually not at home," Zhang said.

He said he met a woman in Xunpu in 2018 who was in her 80s and whose teeth were almost all gone. She wore a bright shirt and had flowers on her head.

"She sang folk songs for me, expressing women's struggle without their husbands at home. After she finished her song, she told me that despite all the hardships, she still felt happy and full of hope."

When he returned to visit the elderly woman in 2019, she had died. Zhang compared the spirit of Xunpu women to the ocean, which is "vast, broad, generous and tolerant".



had not only made him happy from a business perspective, but also because more people were starting to learn the history and culture behind *zanhua* headwear.

"Earning a reputation for their hard work, resilience, and compassion, the women of Xunpu are renowned for harvesting the highest quality seafood. They deliberately adorned themselves with floral headpieces not only for beauty, but also as a symbol of happiness," said Huang.

He said his mother was like most of the hardworking women in the village. "They took care of their families, raised the children, and did as much as they could to make extra income to support their families, while their

husbands caught fish in the ocean," said Huang.

"When they put a *zanhua* on their heads, they expressed their wish to pursue happiness. The flowers are seen as a symbol of hope," he added.

Respecting tradition

Yin Siqi is one of Huang's customers and posts travel and food videos about the village on her social media platforms. Born and raised in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Yin learned about Xunpu and its culture after moving to Quanzhou to study at university.

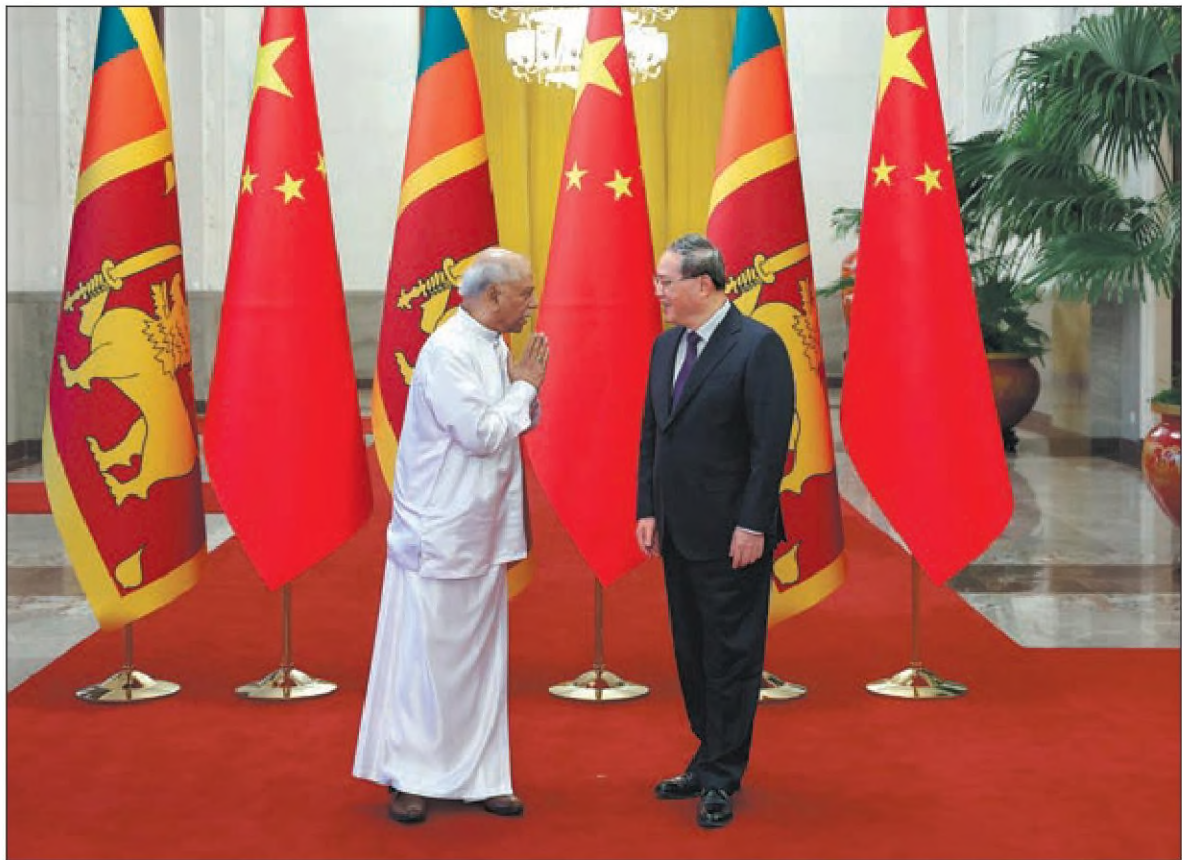
She paid her first visit to the small village in 2019 and met Huang.



Above: Weng Xiuzhen (left) receives a foreign customer. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Left and right:** Traditional costumes and *zanhua* head-dress are exhibited on March 8 at a fashion show in Quanzhou, Fujian province. ZHANG BIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



TOP NEWS



Premier Li Qiang greets Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. The Sri Lankan prime minister started his six-day official visit to China on Monday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

China boosts bilateral relations with Sri Lanka

Trade, investment agreements signed after Li holds talks with Gunawardena

By CAO DESHENG
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China and Sri Lanka signed a number of agreements on Tuesday as part of the two countries' efforts to promote bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, customs and development partnership.

Premier Li Qiang and Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, who started his six-day official visit to China on Monday, witnessed the signing of the documents following their meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

During their talks, Li hailed the sound development of bilateral ties, saying that China and Sri Lanka are strategic cooperative partners who sincerely support

each other, with their friendship passing on from one generation to another.

Since they established diplomatic relations 67 years ago, the two countries have always respected each other and treated each other as equals, enjoying a fine tradition of helping each other in difficult times, he said.

In recent years, China and Sri Lanka have witnessed frequent high-level exchanges, enhanced political mutual trust and developed pragmatic cooperation in various fields.

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe attended the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in October. During that visit, President Xi Jinping and Wickremesinghe reached a series

of consensus on promoting bilateral ties, including helping Sri Lanka tide over its debt crisis and concluding a comprehensive free trade agreement between the two countries as quickly as possible.

Li told Gunawardena that China is willing to work with Sri Lanka to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, in order to ensure the tree of China-Sri Lanka friendship grows stronger, mutually beneficial cooperation is more fruitful, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges are enhanced further.

China firmly supports Sri Lanka in its efforts to achieve national unity, stability and independent economic development, and is willing to work with Sri Lanka to

fully promote the implementation of important projects under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, the premier said.

He called for deepening bilateral cooperation in the fields of the economy and trade, agriculture and marine scientific research, and tapping the potential for partnership in clean energy, communications and other fields.

China encourages more Chinese enterprises to invest and start businesses in Sri Lanka, and is willing to increase imports of high-quality products from Sri Lanka, Li said. He expressed hope that Sri Lanka will provide a sound business environment for Chinese enterprises.

Gunawardena said that Sri Lanka is China's reliable partner. He thanked China for its long-term support in safeguarding Sri Lanka's national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as well as its assistance in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the financial debt crisis.

Sri Lanka firmly adheres to the one-China principle and will continue to firmly pursue a policy of strengthening friendly cooperation with China, Gunawardena added.

FM urges more Sino-US face-to-face exchanges

By ZHANG YUNBI
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The United States should work in tandem with China to provide more support and convenience for people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday.

Wang made the remark during a meeting in Beijing with Evan Greenberg, chair of the Board of Directors of the National Committee on US-China Relations, and Stephen Orlins, president of the committee.

The US should meet China halfway and "continue enhancing mutual understanding through face-to-face contacts and exchanges", he said, adding that it should also work with China to further stabilize, improve and advance bilateral relations.

Wang underscored that the crux of the relationship is the US' perception of China as its main strategic competitor and the most significant geopolitical challenge. This wrong perception "has led to constant problems in bilateral relations, and the promises made by US leaders have failed to translate into practical actions", he said.

Such a situation "is not in the interest of the two peoples or in line with the expectations of the international community, and is against the trend of the evolving history", he added.

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said that despite its prolonged containment of China, the US has not been able to meet its own expectations, "so it is now focusing more on the high-tech sectors and using unfair tactics to achieve its goals".

"This is a clear reminder of the deep-rooted strategic anxiety of the US," she said.

During their meeting with the foreign minister, Greenberg and

Orlins said the US-China relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world, and it is in global interest that the two countries maintain communication and advance their ties in a positive direction.

The US-China relationship started with engagement, and engagement does not necessarily mean compromise, as it is the only way to achieve sound and healthy development of the relationship, they said.

Speaking to reporters in Beijing earlier this week, Orlins said that US-China ties have been lifted "from rock bottom", and the two countries now "have enormous amounts of space to further improve" the ties.

Orlins said he is glad to see military-to-military contacts reestablished and the frequency of government-to-government talks increasing.

In November, the National Committee on US-China Relations and other friendly organizations co-hosted a grand welcoming banquet for President Xi Jinping in San Francisco.

Foreign Minister Wang praised the committee for "overcoming difficulties and eliminating disturbances" for the successful welcoming event.

He urged the committee to play a further constructive role in advancing stronger engagement between the two peoples and in promoting the healthy and stable development of China-US relations.

Wang also met with Graham Allison, a Harvard University professor, on Tuesday. He told Allison that China and the US should jointly address global challenges and "build a more stable, healthy and sustainable relationship".

Allison agreed that the US and China should cooperate with each other and find the right way to get along, which, he said, is very important for both countries and the world.

From fields to streets



Farmers drive their tractors through central London, United Kingdom, on Monday to protest against various issues facing growers around Europe, including food imports. TOBY MELVILLE / REUTERS

Anniversary: Ties serve as springboard for cooperation

From page 1

Zhou Zhiwei, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Latin American Studies, said the exchange of congratulatory messages between the heads of state of China and Honduras showcased a strong level of mutual political trust.

The establishment of diplomatic ties has served as a springboard for cooperation between the two countries, with the wide-ranging collaboration having already delivered tangible benefits to both peoples, he said.

"This cooperation has spurred the growth of the economy, created jobs and increased Chinese investment in Honduras," he said, adding that many Chinese companies are

now looking to the Latin American country for investment opportunities.

Zhou also mentioned the ongoing six-day state visit by President David Adeang of Nauru, which resumed diplomatic relations with China in January. Adeang held talks with Xi on Monday.

"There is no doubt that the one-China principle has become a global consensus, and we have every reason to believe that more countries will cut their 'ties' with the Taiwan authorities in the future and seek partnerships with China."

After Nauru reestablished diplomatic ties with China, the number of countries that have "diplomatic ties" with the Taiwan region fell to just 12.

HK: New features of legislation no stranger to common law jurisdictions

From page 1

destroying or causing severe damage to critical infrastructural facilities, which have far more serious consequences and should be differentiated from simpler acts of criminal damage.

The United Kingdom's National Security Act 2023, enacted in July, defined "sabotage" as acts that are committed knowingly, and with foreign power involvement, to damage "an asset" that is "prejudicial to the safety or interests of the United Kingdom". The UK's legislation provides that a person who commits such an offense is liable on indictment to life imprisonment or a fine or both. Hong Kong's new legislation has a similar provision.

Another new feature of Hong Kong's legislation is the offense of "external interference endangering national security", an offense that also is not new to common law jurisdictions. Wary of external threats by subtler means than invasion or attacks by armed forces, the US had in 1938 enacted the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which requires any person engaging in political activities on behalf of a foreign government, a foreign political party or a "foreign principal" to register with the Department of Justice and file detailed disclosure reports.

In 2018, Australia enacted the Foreign Influence Transparency

Scheme Act to introduce a registration program for people undertaking activity "for the purpose of political or governmental influence" on behalf of a "foreign principal".

Under Singapore's Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act of 2021, the authorities may designate an entity or individual engaged in activities with political ends as "politically significant" and require such designated entities or individuals to report political donations and foreign affiliations or "disgorge" any property received from a "foreign principal". The Singaporean government has recently started to designate influential individuals from Hong Kong as "politically significant persons".

Hong Kong's new ordinance has no such registration or designation requirements. It is more limited than regimes introduced in other jurisdictions in that it only criminalizes "external interference endangering national security" if all elements clearly defined in the law are present — that is, if the activity involves collusion or collaboration with an external force and employs improper means, such as threats of violence or causing financial loss, to achieve an "interference effect".

The narrower ambit and tightly defined definitions in Hong Kong's new ordinance, which are modeled on similar provisions in

other common law jurisdictions, have not prevented the countries of the Five Eyes alliance — the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand — from saying that Hong Kong's new ordinance is "sweeping", "vaguely defined" and will "further damage the rights and freedoms enjoyed in the city". Such accusations completely ignore the much harsher and more vague definitions in their own laws, which in some instances broaden "interference" to include "influence" and to define "influence" as something that might "affect in any way".

On the eve of the enactment of Hong Kong's ordinance, Australia issued a travel advisory urging its citizens to exercise "a high degree of caution" as of March 23, as Hong Kong had enacted "strict laws that can be interpreted broadly", and that "travelers could break the law without intending to (and) may be at increased risk of detention".

This advisory completely ignored the strict requirement under Hong Kong's law that *mens rea* — that is, criminal intent — must be present before prosecution can be undertaken.

No Australian has been subjected to detention or indictment under the National Security Law for Hong Kong ever since its commencement on June 30, 2020, so the travel advisory is ridiculous. It is totally divorced

from reality and likely was the outcome of lobbying by Kevin Yam Kin-fung, a Hong Kong-born Australian lawyer who, in an article he wrote that was published in the Australian Financial Review on March 18, had urged Australia to "update and upgrade its travel warnings in respect of Hong Kong, so that Australians are aware of risks to their personal liberties".

Yam's fearmongering piece is replete with lies and fake accusations. Contrary to Yam's allegation, the National Security Law for Hong Kong clearly exempts individuals resident in a foreign country and required by the law of that country to serve in an armed service from the offense of "illegal drilling". Australian businessmen are unlikely to have access to "State secrets" as tightly defined in Hong Kong's law, much more so than the way "protected information" is defined under British law. Genuine State secrets are closely guarded, and there has not been a single prosecution of theft of official secrets in Hong Kong in the past 100 years.

Shameless people in the US and other places continue to pull out all the stops to smear Hong Kong, its legitimate law to defend the security of China and the safety of the people, and its business prospects. Their antics have drawn little support, and their efforts are doomed to fail.

The author is convener of the Executive Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and a legislator. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

New data rules boost digital economy

Experts say regulations will support cross-border development, cooperation

By CAO YIN
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Experts said China's new rules on cross-border data flows send a positive signal to businesses, facilitating the high-quality development of the digital economy and helping advance high-level opening-up.

The Cyberspace Administration of China issued the 14-article rules on promoting and regulating the flow of cross-border data on Friday, carving out standards for the assessment of exported data.

Under the rules, which took effect immediately, a security review by relevant departments is required for critical information infrastructure operators when they send personal information or important data overseas.

Important data refers to information that, if tampered with, destroyed, leaked, illegally accessed or unlawfully utilized may harm national security, economic operations, social stability and public health and safety.

While highlighting the importance of data security, the rules also specify six circumstances in which data processors can be exempt from declaration and review.

Wang Xixin, a law professor at Peking University, said the rules show "our country's efforts to meet new demands in digital trade and its innovative concept in the supervision and transmission of cross-border data".

For instance, data collected and generated during activities such as international trade, cross-border transportation, academic operations and transnational manufacturing, which do not contain personal information or important data, are exempt from security review, according to the rules.

The exemption also applies to businesses whose data is related to cross-border shopping, shipping, opening bank accounts or booking flights.

Wang emphasized that the rules aim to seek a balance between data development and security, saying that they are conducive to

providing diverse and flexible channels for businesses to export data.

"The rules have strongly countered baseless accusations from Western countries such as the United States regarding China's 'data localization' and 'obstruction' of global digital trade activities," he added.

The administration noted that cross-border data flows have become the foundation for global exchanges and the sharing of capital, information, technology, talent, goods and other resources, revealing that it made the rules to facilitate the lawful, orderly and free flow of data, and to unleash the value of data.

Hong Yanqing, a law professor at Beijing Institute of Technology, said the formulation of the rules also indicated "China's determination to firmly expand high-level opening-up".

With the continuous development of technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing, the digital economy has become one of the key pillars of the Chinese economy, Hong said, adding that the central leadership has maintained an open attitude toward data export.

In 2022, a data-related guideline issued by the central government said the country aimed to build a safe, lawful and organized system of cross-border data flows, encouraging enterprises and organizations from home and abroad to carry out business cooperation in accordance with the law and regulations.

Taking the new rules as a contribution to optimizing China's system of cross-border data flow, Hong said they will help promote the coordination and consistency of global data protection standards.

The rules will also enhance the international community's confidence in and recognition of China's digital economic development, and be beneficial for advancing China's international cooperation and communication in the field of the digital economy, he said.

Tea technique



Contestants fry Longjing tea leaves at a competition in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. The technique for hand stir-frying West Lake Longjing tea is being handed down, with about 60 percent of the contestants under the age of 40. LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Courts improve handling of international maritime disputes

By CAO YIN
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China is making every effort to be one of the world's preferred venues for resolving international maritime disputes, with greater strength to enhance its judicial credibility around the world and promote high-level opening-up, judges said.

As the number of maritime disputes, especially those involving foreign parties, has been rapidly growing in recent years, improving the quality of case handling and innovating legal services has become more important for courts nationwide, said Du Qian, president of the Ningbo Maritime Court in Zhejiang province.

The annual work report of the Supreme People's Court, the country's top court, said that courts at all levels concluded 16,000 maritime lawsuits last year, up 5.3 percent year-on-year.

It also mentioned a ship collision case that was solved by Du's court.

In July 2021, when a Chinese-owned vessel was anchored at Cigiding, a port in Indonesia, it collided with a Panamanian ship called *Navios Felicity I*, resulting in damage.

The Chinese vessel belonged to a company in Zhoushan, Zhejiang, and the foreign one was leased by a firm registered in the Marshall Islands.

After temporary repairs in Cigiding, the Chinese vessel returned to China and unloaded at Zhoushan port in Zhejiang before going to Shandong province for further maintenance.

According to international conventions and provisions in Chinese procedural laws, courts in Indonesia, Singapore and maritime courts at the ports of discharge or ship repair in China all had jurisdiction.

The owners of the two vessels eventually turned to the Ningbo Maritime Court and agreed to apply Chinese laws to solve their dispute.

Considering the cost of repairs and compensation, the Chinese company asked for more than \$1 million, but the foreign firm said the Chinese vessel had also made mistakes while anchoring.

The court went through nearly

16,000
maritime lawsuits
were concluded by courts across the country last year, up 5.3 percent year-on-year.

500 pages of materials in both Chinese and English, and provided sufficient time and opportunities for both litigants to express their opinions on the allocation of responsibility for anchorage, the determination of ship repair costs and calculation of voyage delays.

Following the efforts, the foreign company agreed to compensate the Chinese firm, and the dispute ended with mediation.

Du said the case had shown the court's determination and endeavor in efficiently dealing with international maritime disputes, with equal protection offered to litigants, regardless of their origin.

"We've also established teams led by senior judges to improve the professionalism of foreign-related maritime case handling," she said.

With the longest coastline and most islands in China, Zhejiang is home to the world's top port in terms of throughput — Ningbo-Zhoushan Port — which has held that position for 15 consecutive years.

The Ningbo Maritime Court, as a specialized court for hearing first-instance maritime and commercial disputes in Zhejiang, has handled an average of around 4,000 cases a year over the past few years, ranking among the top in China's 11 maritime courts.

Last year, the number of maritime disputes involving litigants from foreign countries, the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan handled by the court increased 36 percent year-on-year, Du said.

"Facing the increasing number of cases, we've striven to cope with them efficiently, aiming to enhance judicial credibility and make our court become a preferred destination for resolving international maritime disputes around the world," she said.

The court has also improved the quality of its legal services to litigants, trying to offer more convenience for both domestic and foreign litigants.

In July last year, the court set up a maritime dispute resolution center in Ningbo, inviting 92 experts from the fields of port logistics, finance and insurance to serve as mediators.

At the center, the method of resolution — whether through mediation, arbitration or litigation — depends on the litigants, Du said.

She said more than 180 cases have been filed with the center, involving over 670 million yuan (\$93 million), and 107 of them — covering litigants from 23 countries and regions — have been resolved through mediation.

Due to the convenience and efficiency, more foreign litigants are choosing to resolve their disputes in Zhejiang, Du added.

In an article published by People's Court Daily in December, Hua Yujun, president of the Nanjing Maritime Court in Jiangsu province, wrote that high-quality adjudication was a crucial criterion for assessing the handling of maritime cases.

On the way to becoming a strong maritime power, it is essential for China to participate more in the formulation of international rules in that regard, he said, adding that high-quality and efficient case handling will help the country meet the goal.

Hua said cases heard by maritime courts were not only closely related to the development of the shipping economy, opening-up policies and the protection of the maritime environment, but also involved participation in global ocean governance. That called for such disputes to be resolved through the use of more professional teams, and he welcomed the establishment of courts to specialize in the handling of such cases.

China has 11 specialized maritime courts, in locations including Ningbo, Nanjing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. From 2018 to 2021, courts participating in maritime adjudication, including the specialized courts and high courts in the same places, accepted more than 132,000 maritime disputes, most of which were heard in the specialized courts, according to a report issued by the top court in 2022.

University sets up new major in security

By TAN YINGZI in Chongqing
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A new field of study focusing on the security of overseas interests has recently been made an undergraduate major, with a university in Chongqing to become the first school in the country to recruit students this September.

As the increasing number of projects being implemented under the Belt and Road Initiative has spurred Chinese businesses and citizens to seek opportunities abroad, protecting China's overseas interests has become a pressing and challenging issue.

To meet the demand for talent in this area, Southwest University of Political Science and Law will enroll 30 to 50 students in the new program, which will mainly focus on overseas investment laws and regulations, investment strategy planning, overseas risk control, security protection, intelligence analysis and international communication, said Ma Fang, dean of the university's National Security College.

Students in the major will also need good foreign language skills, and in addition to English, every student will need to learn a second foreign language such as French, German, Spanish or Arabic, he added.

"As China continues to open up to the world, we need a large number of legal professionals to protect national interests overseas," Ma said.

“As China continues to open up to the world, we need a large number of legal professionals to protect national interests overseas.”

Ma Fang, dean of the National Security College of Southwest University of Political Science and Law

"But it is a major involving many fields of knowledge and no one has done this before. We are the first school in the country, even the first in the world, to set up an undergraduate program on the security of overseas interests."

The security of overseas interests mainly covers energy resources, strategic maritime channels, and citizens and businesses operating overseas.

Southwest University of Political Science and Law established the country's first national security college and started a trial course on the security of overseas interests in 2018. Around 100 students have graduated from the course since then.

"It is a made-to-order approach to make sure our students meet the demands of related companies and government departments," Ma said.

"So our graduates are very popular among China's big international enterprises like Huawei and security companies."

After gaining teaching experience from the trial course over the past six years, the university was granted the new major by the Ministry of Education this year.

To better protect the lives and interests of Chinese citizens abroad, the Regulation on Consular Affairs was unveiled by the State Council on July 14 last year, following a growing number of evacuations and cases of consular protection in recent years.

The regulation clarified the responsibilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Council departments and Chinese diplomatic missions overseas in terms of offering consular protection.

According to the Foreign Ministry, China has organized nearly 20 evacuations and has handled more than 500,000 cases of consular protection involving millions of nationals over the past 10 years.

Peach blossoms



Tourists enjoy peach blossoms in the town of Tangxi, in Zixing, Hunan province, on Tuesday. In recent years, the town has planted more than 170 hectares of yellow peaches to promote the integrated development of rural agriculture and tourism. GUO LILIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Extinguished Sichuan forest fire now enters cleanup stage

By HUANG ZHILING
and PENG CHAO in Chengdu

No open flames were visible at the site of a forest fire in Yajiang county, Sichuan province, at 3 pm on Tuesday, leading to the withdrawal of some members of the firefighting team.

Work at the site has entered the stage of cleaning and guarding, the county's forest fire headquarters said.

After the open flames were extinguished, humus and decayed wood were still smoldering deep inside, posing a risk that strong winds and dry conditions could cause the fire to reignite. That made cleaning and guarding the site of the fire particularly important, the Sichuan Forest Fire Brigade said.

The forest fire broke out at around 5 pm on March 15 near Baizi village and spread to a larger area, driven by

a sudden increase in winds that began the next day.

The fire had three main sections, with control made more difficult by unpredictable wind shifts that spread the blaze in multiple directions.

The wildfire created a large amount of smoke. On March 17, helicopters carried out three extinguishing operations when the smoke cleared a little, according to the local government.

Yajiang is located in the south of the Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture, which has complex terrain with dangerous slopes and deep valleys.

There is no highway at the site and the mountain slope is between 70 and 80 degrees. In many cases, firefighters had to carry materials on their backs.

The Garze prefecture forest and grassland prevention and control

command said all 3,396 people living in the county's 11 villages had been safely relocated to eight centralized resettlement areas after the blaze, which had claimed no lives.

The prefecture's emergency management bureau said the fire was caused by the use of fire at a construction site.

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CHINA

‘Happy stations’ shelter Xinjiang herdsmen

By CHEN MEILING in Beijing and MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi

While a biting wind blows over a remote pasture and frost covers the ground, herdsmen drink hot milk tea in houses as warm as spring.

Saying goodbye to stone or grass houses, herdsmen in Altay prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, have been provided with brand-new public houses called “happy stations” so that when they are working outside and encounter severe weather, extreme cold or exhaustion, they have a place to rest, warm up and shelter.

Hairat Leihul, 52, from Qinghe county, frequently visits a happy station to eat or take a shower.

“If I arrive late at night, I sleep there,” he said, adding that workers at the stations also offer fodder grass and daily necessities.

Doctors at the station check his physical condition once a month, and veterinarians help control livestock epidemics.

“I’m satisfied with the environment and services,” he said. “The station provides a lot of convenience.”

Since 2017, Altay has spent more than 36.5 million yuan (\$5.07 million) to build 164 happy stations along routes between pastures. They have benefited about 50,000 people, according to local authorities.

Fixed stations include a reading room, medical treatment room, veterinarian’s room, canteen and dormitory. Mobile ones are set up for livestock and supplies.

The local government has dug wells at the stations and solar panels provide power. It is also building more signal towers.

“In the past, herdsmen used to live in stone houses or felt tents during relocations. These were generally sufficient for everyday use, but during extreme winter weather conditions, they posed safety risks,” said Erlan Salamhan, head of the animal husbandry department at Altay’s agriculture and

rural affairs bureau.

The happy stations provide accommodation and heating facilities, and are equipped with carbon monoxide detectors, improving conditions for herders during relocations, he added.

Some of the stations are built along roads leading to attractions. During seasons when herders use the stations less often, they are open to the public, receiving booked visitors and hosting activities, Erlan said.

Altay has also spent 110 million yuan building 523 houses and 466 folds for herdsmen.

Hatax Sabdulla, 55, moved to a new house at a winter pasture at no cost.

“Previously, when I went to the winter pasture, I lived in a simple felt tent,” he said. “It was especially cold in winter and not safe, especially during extreme weather conditions when it was uninhabitable.”

The new house has all the facilities the family may need, including a fireplace, wooden bed and electrical wiring. “It’s warm, tidy and safe. We only need to bring our quilts and bowls, which has brought us great convenience,” he said.

There is also an enclosed corral and outdoor courtyard. “During the day, we can graze our animals, and when we come back at night, we can secure them in the corral,” he said. “Unlike before, we don’t have to worry about wolves or the cold.”

The family lives in the house for five months in the winter.

Erlan said the new infrastructure aims to improve production and living conditions in pastoral areas and enhance public services in animal husbandry.

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Agriculture expo



Visitors inspect agricultural machinery at the 34th Inner Mongolia International Agricultural Expo in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Tuesday. The expo has attracted over 900 agricultural, forestry, animal husbandry and water-related enterprises and institutions from 24 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions. DING GENHOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

HK chief vows to boost national security education, economy

Lee says city will implement measures proposed in policy address and budget

By XI TIANQI and GARY CHIU in Hong Kong

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said on Tuesday that the special administrative region’s government will focus on economic development following the enactment of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, while continuing public education and explaining the law.

Speaking to reporters before a weekly Executive Council meeting, Lee said the implementation of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance fulfilled the SAR’s constitutional responsibility, and the milestone meant Hong Kong could now shift its focus toward comprehensive economic growth and development.

The ordinance, which received unanimous support from the Legislative Council on March 19, came into effect on Saturday. It was created to prevent and punish five types of acts that endanger national security, including treason, theft of State secrets, and espionage.

Lee told reporters that the city

will implement the measures proposed in the policy address delivered in October, and the 2024-25 budget, announced in February. He said special focuses will be consolidating and developing Hong Kong as set out in the nation’s 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), building a megaproject to develop the city’s boundary regions, and establishing industry-oriented development strategies.

As the world’s economic focus shifts toward the East, Lee said that the government will actively explore Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern markets — two emerging economic engines — while strengthening financial and regional economic cooperation.

Lee also pledged to integrate the city into the nation’s development, and enhance connectivity among cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Lee reaffirmed the government’s commitment to attracting talent and businesses, citing significant progress made over the past 18 months.

The government has assisted 101

101 companies

from the Chinese mainland and overseas have established or expanded their businesses in Hong Kong over the past 18 months.

Chinese mainland and overseas companies to establish or expand their businesses in Hong Kong.

The city has also successfully wooed nearly 50 key enterprises to establish footholds in the city with HK\$40 billion (\$5.1 billion) in investment. Their presence has created over 13,000 job opportunities, Lee added. Drawn by various government talent programs, over 100,000 skilled personnel have arrived in Hong Kong since last year, Lee said.

He also underscored the importance of boosting the local economy, including tourism, consumption and investment. Lee said Hong Kong is expected to welcome 50 million visitors this year, and authorities will organize grand events to spread awareness of Hong Kong’s openness, diversity, vitality and opportunities.

In addition to economic growth,

Lee said the government will continue to inform people about the new security ordinance and promote national security education.

He said the primary objectives of the ordinance are to prevent, suppress and penalize activities that pose a threat to national security.

Government departments will also expedite training programs to enhance their abilities in intelligence collection and analysis, Lee added.

The government will continue to organize meetings with local and overseas chambers of commerce to explain the law, he said, adding that when government officials visit foreign countries and regions, they will seize opportunities to engage with the business community and inform them about the ordinance.

Authorities will also enhance national security education by combining it with patriotism education and Chinese culture education, in a bid to prevent national security risks while enhancing people’s understanding of Chinese culture, history and the country’s development, he said.

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Sky farming



Students grow vegetables during a spring agricultural practice activity organized by Zhonghe High School at the “sky farm” on the roof of its teaching building in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Monday. LI XIANGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Protein markers tied to chemotherapy success

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Doctors in Shanghai have screened two protein markers to determine pancreatic cancer patients’ sensitivity to chemotherapy, which may rewrite current treatment guidelines and improve patients’ overall survival rate.

The team of researchers from Shanghai Ruijin Hospital said on Monday that the results of the study have been validated in three groups at home and abroad, showing strong clinical applicability.

A paper about the study was published as the cover article in the top international medical journal Nature Medicine on March 19.

More than 330,000 people die from pancreatic cancer worldwide each year, with an overall five-year survival rate of approximately 6 percent, according to the hospital.

By analyzing the data of 191

patients over more than three years of follow-ups, the researchers constructed a prognostic prediction model for pancreatic cancer, and identified two protein markers — NDUF8 and CEMIP2 — which are able to accurately predict patients’ sensitivity to chemotherapy.

Results of the study were independently verified among people with pancreatic cancer in and around Paris, France, and at Fudan University Shanghai Cancer Center and Shanghai Chang-hai Hospital.

“The research answered one of the two main queries that are current bottlenecks in the field of pancreatic cancer treatment: Which patients are sensitive to chemotherapy and which chemotherapy drugs are they sensitive to?” said Shen Baiyong, a professor at the Pancreatic Disease Diagnosis and Treatment Center of Ruijin Hospital and a leading researcher on the team.

Shanghai to boost students’ interpersonal skills

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai zhengzheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Shanghai recently unveiled an updated plan for evaluating the quality of compulsory education in the city, known as Green Indicators 3.0, which aims to provide a more comprehensive assessment of students’ overall growth, going beyond purely academic achievements.

The city’s education commission said the plan seeks to instill a scientific educational philosophy, foster a healthy educational environment, and drive the development of high-quality compulsory education through reforms in evaluation orientation, methods and result utilization.

Green Indicators 3.0 introduces fresh criteria, including personal character, legal awareness, life skills and innovation, to offer a more holistic view of student development.

It places increased emphasis on monitoring mental well-being by refining existing health indicators and incorporating additional met-

rics for mental competency.

In a bid to enhance students’ social skills, the new evaluation system has introduced a dedicated metric for assessing interpersonal relationships.

It also amplifies assessments related to social-emotional competencies, encompassing communication abilities, collaboration skills and emotional regulation capabilities.

According to the China Education Modernization 2035 Framework, social-emotional competencies are crucial noncognitive abilities that interact with cognitive abilities to comprehensively nurture adolescent development. Nurturing these skills is pivotal for the well-being and lifelong growth of young people.

Mei Bing, Party secretary of East China Normal University, noted the increasing global focus on emotional education in the past two decades.

Mei stressed the need for educational institutions to prioritize the cultivation of social and emotional skills, citing assessment results that highlight the significant

impact of schools and teachers on the social-emotional development of young people.

Mei proposed integrating social-emotional skill development into national education policies, plans and curriculum standards, and advocated leveraging schools as the primary arena for that purpose, along with enhancing teacher training to develop socio-emotional expertise for nurturing students’ growth.

Beyond these initiatives, Green Indicators 3.0 will also establish a data-sharing mechanism and intelligent analysis platform to improve the utilization of evaluation results. Schools must consider evaluation findings as crucial inputs for instructional improvements, with districts and schools demonstrating weaker performance indicators to receive enhanced guidance and support.

Professional institutions will spearhead implementation, while district education bureaus will collaborate with local teaching and research institutions. Schools will take on primary responsibilities

by forming quality assurance task forces led by principals.

To build a pool of evaluation experts, Shanghai aims to strengthen district-level agencies that monitor education quality and train specialized assessment personnel through regular programs. The city will also welcome contributions from professional evaluation bodies in researching new indicators.

To avoid increasing academic burdens, the city’s education commission said the evaluation results will not be tied to student graduation or advancement criteria. Instead, Shanghai aims to address societal concerns through in-depth research and publicly share relevant reports to create an environment conducive to educational development.

Shanghai introduced the green indicators in 2011 for evaluation of the quality of compulsory education. They have since played an important role in diagnosing problems in school education and promoting the comprehensive development of students.

WORLD



Palestinian men carry a mattress past the rubble of a building destroyed in a previous Israeli bombardment on Monday. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

UN's Gaza resolution welcomed

Despite global calls for cease-fire, Israel continues military attack on enclave

By JAN YUMUL and MIKE GU in Hong Kong

The much-awaited UN Security Council resolution to halt Gaza bloodshed was welcomed by the Asia-Pacific general community but resisted by Israel, which continued its military attack on Gaza targets on Tuesday.

A day after the adoption of Resolution 2728 that demands an immediate cease-fire this Ramadan, Israeli military bombed a house in Rafah, killing at least 18 people, including nine children, Al Jazeera reported.

Shortly after the resolution was passed, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled the planned visit of an Israeli delegation to Washington. The US had requested the meeting after expressing concerns over a proposed Israeli attack on Rafah, a city in crowded southern Gaza.

"The United States has abandoned its policy in the UN today," a statement from Netanyahu's office read. "Today's resolution gives Hamas hope that international pressure

will force Israel to accept a cease-fire without the release of our hostages, thus harming both the war effort and the effort to release the hostages," it said.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the resolution was "a step in the right direction" and called on the UNSC member states to fulfill their legal responsibilities to immediately implement it. They also stressed the importance of achieving a permanent cease-fire that extended beyond Ramadan, which is set to end in the Gaza Strip on April 9.

Palestinian militant group Hamas welcomed the resolution and said it stood ready to engage in an immediate swap of prisoners with Israel.

Sabri Saidam, a member of the central committee of Fatah — the largest faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization — told Al Jazeera that the consensus should pave the way for full recognition of the rights of Palestinians and the independence of the State of Palestine.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, or OIC, issued a statement, describing it as "an important step

by the international community toward assuming its responsibility to stop the crime of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people" that has been going on for about six months.

Arab nations, including the Gulf Cooperation Council countries — Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman — also welcomed the latest development.

Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, secretary-general of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, said he hoped the UNSC decision would lead to alleviating the suffering of the people of Gaza and called on Israeli forces to immediately comply with the resolution.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit emphasized that the adoption of the resolution signifies a notable shift in the international stance toward the aggressive Israeli military campaign in Gaza.

Notable shift

He said the shift was highlighted by the US choosing not to use its veto power, as he underscored the need for collaborative international efforts to effectively implement the resolution in a form that brings an end to the

ongoing bloodshed.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, in her social media post, said, "Australia welcomes today's UN Security Council resolution." And, "all parties to the conflict must comply with this resolution."

Haydar Oruc, a former researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Turkey, said the UN eventually adopted a resolution "thanks to the abstention of the United States."

"Although this decision was taken very late, it is truly hopeful as it is the only way to end the massacre in Gaza," said Oruc.

"The US' change in attitude is not about ending the suffering of the Palestinians, but about Biden's disagreement with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu," he added.

Ayman Yousef, a professor of international relations at the Arab American University in Jenin in the West Bank, said he felt the resolution was "weak."

"But it can put more pressure on Israel to be more realistic to be more pragmatic when it comes to their future negotiations," Yousef told China Daily.

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China airs concern over Japan's move to sell jets

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday expressed grave concern over Japan's latest step away from the pacifist constitution the country adopted at the end of World War II after the Japanese Cabinet approved a plan to sell future next-generation fighter jets to other countries.

It is reported the controversial decision to allow international arms sales is expected to help secure Japan's role in a year-old project to develop a new fighter jet together with Italy and the United Kingdom, but it's also part of a move to build up Japan's arms industry and bolster its role in global affairs.

Speaking at a regular news briefing in Beijing, the ministry spokesman Lin Jian said China has seen related reports, referring to Japan's latest decision and another revision to its arms equipment and technology transfer guidelines.

"Given Japan's not-too-distant history of militarist aggression, Japan's moves in the military and security fields have always been closely followed by its Asian neighbors, including China and the international community," Lin said.

The spokesman noted that in recent years, Japan has been dras-

tically readjusting its security policy, increasing defense spending year after year, relaxing restrictions on arms export and seeking military breakthroughs.

"These moves have triggered strong concerns from neighboring countries and the international community," Lin said.

Because of its wartime past as an aggressor and the devastation that followed its defeat in World War II, Japan adopted a constitution that limits its military to self-defense.

The country long maintained a strict policy to limit transfers of military equipment and technology and ban all exports of lethal weapons.

But in 2014, it began to export some nonlethal military supplies, and last December, it approved a change that would allow sales of 80 lethal weapons and components that it manufactures under licenses from other countries back to the licensors.

"We urge Japan to earnestly respect the security concerns of neighboring countries, deeply reflect on its history of aggression, keep to the path of peaceful development and earn the trust of its Asian neighbors and the wider international community through concrete actions," Lin said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Appeals court in New York slashes bond in Trump fraud judgment

NEW YORK — A New York appeals court on Monday agreed to hold off collection of former President Donald Trump's \$454 million-plus civil fraud judgment if he puts up \$175 million within 10 days.

If Trump does, it will stop the clock on collection and prevent the state from seizing the presumptive Republican presidential nominee's assets while he appeals.

The appeals court also halted other aspects of a trial judge's ruling that had barred Trump and his sons Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr, the family company's executive vice-presidents, from serving in corporate leadership for several years.

Trump said on Monday that he respected the decision, and cash or a bond would be put up very quickly.

Earlier, Trump's lawyers told the appeals court that it was impossible to post the bond in full and proposed a bond of \$100 million instead.

The judgment against Donald Trump and the other defendants in the case still stands, according to a spokesperson with the New York Attorney General's office.

Trump maintained on social media on Friday that he has almost \$500 million in cash, but he said at a news conference on Monday that he'd like to be able to use some on his presidential run.

He asserted that New York Attorney General Letitia James and civil trial judge Arthur Engoron, who's also a Democrat, "don't want me taking cash out to use it for the campaign."

Trump's social media company begins trading publicly on Tuesday. Trump Media & Technology

Group was acquired on Monday by a blank-check company called Digital World Acquisition. Trump Media, which runs the social media platform Truth Social, now takes Digital World's place on the Nasdaq stock exchange.

Hush money case

Meanwhile, Juan Merchan, another judge in New York, said on Monday that the criminal trial against Trump regarding election interference will begin on April 15 with jury selection.

Merchan had planned to begin the trial on March 25 but dismissed Trump's motion to toss out the indictment altogether or delay the trial further on Monday.

Arraigned in the case in early April 2023, Trump faces charges that he falsified business records during the 2016 presidential campaign to make "hush-money" payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels.

With the election race heating up in the country, Robert F. Kennedy Jr plans to announce his running mate on Tuesday as he races to secure a place on the ballot for his independent campaign for president.

In advance of an event on Tuesday in Oakland, Kennedy and his aides have circulated the names of several contenders, including celebrities with household names and no experience in politics. Those names include NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers and "Dirty Jobs" star Mike Rowe as well as former Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

NYC jarred by two more high-profile killings

By HENG WEILI in New York hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

New York City was stunned again this week by two stark instances of violence — a police officer was shot and killed, and a commuter was fatally struck after being pushed in front of a subway train.

The shooting happened around 5:50 pm Monday in the Far Rockaway section of Queens, police said, after Officer Jonathan Diller and his partner encountered a vehicle illegally parked at a bus stop.

As they approached, a man inside the vehicle shot Diller below his bulletproof vest, said Police Commissioner Edward Caban. Diller's partner returned fire and wounded the suspect.

Diller, who comes from a family of police officers, was taken to Jamaica Hospital Medical Center but could not be saved, officials said. He had been with the NYPD for three years, was married and had a 1-year-old son, the commissioner said on X.

"We lost one of our sons today, and it is extremely painful," Mayor Eric Adams said Monday, speaking at the hospital where the officer died.

The police department's chief of detectives, Joseph Kenny, said Diller and his partner had initially tried to order the vehicle's driver and

passenger out of the car, which was stopped on a busy, narrow street in a commercial district.

"He was asked to leave the car," Kenny said of the alleged gunman, identified as Guy Rivera, 34, a passenger in the car. Rivera has 21 prior arrests, and was imprisoned for five years on drug charges, according to the New York Post. He was released in 2021 and off parole the next year.

"He was given a lawful order numerous times to step out of the car. He refused. And when the officers took him out of the car, rather than stepping out of the car, he shot our officer."

The driver of the car, Lindy Jones, 41, has been arrested at least 14 times, including for an attempted murder, for which he was sentenced to a decade behind bars, the Post reported.

Neither man had been charged in the case as of Tuesday.

"We have a real recidivism problem with these two individuals," the mayor said Tuesday.

Kenny said Diller "stayed in the fight" after being wounded and tried to disarm the shooter.

"The gun hit the ground. And as the perpetrator was still reaching for it, this cop was able to grab it, although he was still shot," Kenny said.

Another witness, Deon Peters, told the Post he saw Diller on the ground. "He was moving, he was saying 'I'm

hit, I'm hit,'" Peters said.

"Can I say it any clearer? It is the good guys against the bad guys," said Adams, a former city transit police officer. "And these bad guys are violent. They carry guns. And the symbol of our public safety, which is that police uniform, they have a total disregard for."

Patrick Hendry, president of the Police Benevolent Association of New York, expressed his anger.

"These attacks on New York City police officers have to end right now," he said. "We have a family upstairs that's devastated. We have police officers in this hallway who lost a brother."

In the other deadly incident, Jason Volz, 54, of the Bronx was pushed onto the tracks inside an East Harlem subway station in Upper Manhattan shortly before 7 pm Monday, police said. The operator of the oncoming train was unable to stop, and Volz was killed, police said.

The suspect, Carlton McPherson, 24, was arrested on a murder charge, a police spokesperson said. McPherson was awaiting arraignment in Manhattan criminal court on Tuesday.

The suspect "timed it perfectly" with an oncoming train and "pushed with all his might," a witness told the Post on Tuesday.

"And as the train was approaching, he just snuck behind the guy and just

cocked back and pushed him with, like, all his might," Andriel Recio, 28, told the Post. "The guy just like flew onto the tracks."

Daquan McPherson told the Post that his younger brother "just got out of the hospital two weeks ago. We begged them to keep him, but they said he wasn't a threat to himself or others so they couldn't keep him and they let him go."

"In New York City, the mentally ill have two options — either they go to jail or do something that lands them in the newspaper," he said.

Monday's fatal push happened on the same day that city officials announced a plan to send 800 more police officers into the subway system to stem fare evasion.

Also on Monday, a man was stabbed multiple times on a subway train in a dispute over smoking, police said. A suspect was arrested.

Adams said on Tuesday that although acts of violence like the fatal shove fuel the perception of lawlessness, subway crime is down nearly 6 percent since 2022.

"We hear this over and over again: The city's out of control. It's just not true," Adams said at a City Hall news conference.

Agencies via Xinhua contributed to this story.

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An overturned truck in Antipas, North Cotabato Province, Philippines. At least 13 people were killed in the southern Philippines on Monday after a collision between a dump truck loaded with sand and a passenger van, local authorities said.

MARK DALE REQUITA MONTENEGRO / AFP

WORLDUS

Kennedy has running mate

Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr gestures next to Nicole Shanahan as she is announced as his vice-presidential running mate in Oakland, California, on Tuesday.
LAURE ANDRILLON / REUTERS



Fallen bridge disrupts key port

By AI HEPING in New York
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Some 95,000 tons of a modern cargo ship collided with part of America's aging infrastructure early Tuesday, and the Baltimore bridge it rammed into collapsed, disrupting one of America's busiest ports.

It is unclear whether the collapse of the Francis Scott Key bridge into the Patapsco River was due to any fault in the structure itself. Officials have said the crew of the 9-year-old *Dali* ship warned Maryland officials of a possible collision because they had lost control as it went off course and seemed to lose power.

The *Dali* is a 984-foot-long container vessel built in 2015 by Hyundai Heavy Industries in South Korea.

To some bridge experts, the collapse of the bridge after it was hit by the cargo ship was inevitable because the span was never built with modern container ships in mind.

"When a vessel as heavy as the Singapore-flagged *Dali* collides with such force against one of the span's super columns, or piers, the result is what took place early Tuesday," said Dan Frangopol, a bridge engineering and risk professor at Lehigh

University in Pennsylvania, who is president of the International Association for Bridge Maintenance and Safety.

"If the column is destroyed, basically the structure will fall down," he told The Washington Post. "It's not possible to redistribute the loads. It was not designed for these things."

The collapse of the bridge that opened in 1977 has left six construction workers who were repairing potholes on the bridge still unaccounted for and has revived scrutiny of the overall health of the 300,000 bridges across the United States.

President Joe Biden said during a news conference Tuesday at the White House that the federal government would "pay the entire cost of reconstructing" the bridge "and I expect the Congress to support my effort."

In 2021, he pushed through Congress the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to renovate and rebuild aging infrastructure such as ports, roads and bridges. It includes \$110 billion to upgrade roads and bridges.

US Representative Nancy Mace of South Carolina told Newsmax that Congress has to "be smarter" about how it spends money.

"Why — after all these bills, after the money — do we still have really old bridges and really old roads?" asked Mace, who voted against the infrastructure act. "Because we're not spending it on roads and bridges," she said, noting that only \$110 billion from the act went toward that purpose.

Maryland Governor Wes Moore has said the bridge was "fully up to code".

The bridge is listed in "fair" condition in the Transportation Department's National Bridge Inventory.

No bridge pier could withstand being hit by a ship the size of the *Dali*, Benjamin Schafer, a professor of civil and systems engineering at Johns Hopkins University, told the Post.

The Federal Highway Administration has said that the condition of US bridges has slowly improved in recent years, the association said, but more than 43,000 are still considered to be in poor condition and classed as "structurally deficient", risking potential collapse in the future.

Ship traffic in the Port of Baltimore has been suspended until further notice. The Army Corps of Engineers will help lead the effort

to clear the channel.

The Port of Baltimore is one of the nation's largest shipping hubs, Biden said, and it is "the top port in America for both imports and exports of automobiles and light trucks. Around 850,000 vehicles go through that port every single year. More than 30,000 vehicles cross the bridge on a daily basis," he said. "It's one of the most important elements for the economy in the Northeast."

The port provided more than 15,000 direct jobs in 2018, according to the Maryland Transportation Department.

The *Dali* arrived in Baltimore on Sunday from the Port of Norfolk in Virginia. Before that, it had been in New York and had gone through the Panama Canal.

The ship was involved in at least one prior accident, when it collided with a shipping pier in Belgium.

That 2016 incident occurred as the *Dali* was leaving port in Antwerp and struck a loading pier made of stone, causing damage to the ship's stern, according to VesselFinder.com, a site that tracks ships across the world. An investigation determined a mistake made by the ship's master and pilot was to blame.

Chinese film about boxer a surprise hit in North America

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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Chinese actress Jia Ling was surprised at how widely her latest film has been received in the US.

"I believed my film would primarily resonate with Chinese audiences, so its reception among US viewers exceeded my expectations," Jia told China Daily during a special screening at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, California, last week.

Jia, known for her comedic roles, never imagined collaborating with Hollywood giant Sony Pictures years ago. Their partnership goes beyond distributing her latest film, *YOLO*, which has had huge box-office success in China.

Co-produced by New Classics Pictures and Yüwen Media, *YOLO*, meaning "you only live once", is a comedic drama directed by and starring Jia. It follows the story of Le Ying, an unemployed woman who discovers boxing, leading to a transformative journey.

Distributed by Sony Pictures Releasing International, *YOLO* made its North American debut on March 8 and has garnered more than \$1.5 million during its 10-day run on that continent since its release in the US and Canada. Sony Pictures is also set to remake her breakthrough work *Hi, Mom*.

Since its opening on Feb 10 in China coinciding the Spring Festival, the film has taken \$480 million at the box office. Moreover, it has secured the top spot for worldwide box office earnings so far this year.

Jia initially expressed surprise at Sony's decision to release the film globally without tailoring it for the North American audience. However, she was pleased to learn of its positive reception, especially among young people in the United States.

YOLO premiered in more than 200 theaters across North America, the highest number for Chinese films in the past decade.

"We are proud to bring this film to audiences worldwide," said Steven O'Dell, president of Sony Pictures Releasing International. "*YOLO* is special to us, and Jia Ling is a remarkable filmmaker. I hope you all enjoy the movie."

Gaining recognition

While praising the film's influence, experts believe the significance of its appearance in major movie theater chains in the North American market extends beyond box office earnings. It represents a new avenue for Chinese films to reach global audiences and gain recognition.

"This Chinese movie is really impressive," said Georges Chamchoum, film director and organizer of the Asian World Film Festival. "I hope a lot of people will go see it, and we'll have a broader release in the US."

As an actress from a comedic background, Jia's transition to the global stage is a testament to the power of storytelling and the universality of human emotions.

Actor Alexander Manko told China Daily that it is an inspiring film that tells stories transcending languages and countries.

Producer Janusz Mazur echoed that it is a fundamental human



Jia Ling chats with the audience during a special screening at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, California, on March 20.
ZHANG SHUO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



I believed my film would primarily resonate with Chinese audiences, so its reception among US viewers exceeded my expectations."

Actress Jia Ling

nature story.

"When you're in the ring, it's just you against the other fighter, and there's nothing else. It doesn't matter your gender, your culture, anything. It's you against the other fighter," Mazur said.

Craig Dehmel, head of Global Distribution at IMAX Entertainment, lauded the film's success in China and expressed interest in future collaborations with Jia.

"It was IMAX's highest-grossing movie during the Chinese New Year. So, we hope to release more of her movies, and maybe someday she'll shoot with our IMAX cameras," he told China Daily.

Stanley Rosen, a professor of political science and international relations at the University of Southern California, has extensively researched the performance of Chinese films in the international market. He mentioned the challenges faced by Chinese films in reaching global audiences, including issues with subtitles, themes primarily focused on domestic audiences, and difficulties with dubbing for global release.

However, Rosen noted that in recent years, Chinese filmmakers and production houses have been actively pursuing international recognition and success. Strategies include co-productions, collaborations with international distributors, and storytelling that transcends cultural boundaries, which are crucial to achieve global appeal for Chinese films.

"This shift reflects a concerted effort to overcome barriers and broaden the reach of Chinese cinema on the international stage," he told China Daily.

Georgia may limit farm purchases by China 'agent'

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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The Georgia House of Representatives has passed and sent to the state Senate a bill that would ban any "agent" of China from buying farmland or land near military sites.

The House bill — SB420, passed on March 20 — is different from the one passed previously in the Georgia Senate.

The Senate bill would have expanded the ban to all foreign nationals who are not legal US residents, to China and four other countries.

SB420 is similar to legislation attempted or passed in a few other states that aim to limit land ownership by citizens from China and several other countries.

The vote in the Georgia House

was 97-67 along party lines, with most Republican members voting for it and most Democratic members against it.

Even though the bill bans "agent of a foreign government designated as a foreign adversary by the United States secretary of commerce", the house debate prior to the vote was primarily directed at China. By its definition, the foreign adversaries currently include China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Russia.

"An agent" is defined as a person who acts on behalf of the foreign government or a business domiciled in the country. The ban doesn't apply to residential property.

Democratic Representative Michelle Au questioned how to determine if someone is an agent of an adversarial government and accused the bill of being racist.

"Who's doing that investigation? What would trigger that suspicion? And would that be applied equally to everyone looking to buy or lease property?" Au asked. "These bills aim to weaponize racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment while wrapping itself in the cloak of national security and patriotism."

Representative Sam Park also questioned the logic of the bill. "I remain equally perplexed in that multiple Republican legislators have stated that this bill is focused on Chinese nationals while at the same time China remains one of the top trading partners for Georgia's agricultural exports that exceeded \$5.8 billion in 2023," he said.

"If you all really believe all the rhetoric that China is coming after

America, would it not make sense for the state of Georgia to divest entirely and stop all trade with China? Or is that a step too far because it hurts your bottom line?" Park continued.

"Passage of this bill will cast a shadow of suspicion on any Asian or Hispanic-looking person who may want to purchase agricultural land or land near a military installation even if that person may be serving in our armed forces," he said.

Similar land laws passed last year in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana and Arkansas. The Florida land law was challenged in court, and the case is now before the 11th US Circuit Court of Appeals.

While the court is scheduled to hear the argument in April, it has also temporarily blocked its enforcement on the grounds that it might be preempted by federal law.

Arizona bill would allow students to appeal grades 'influenced' by political bias

By BELINDA ROBINSON in New York
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Republican lawmakers in Arizona have proposed a bill that would allow students at state universities and colleges to challenge their low grades if they believe their teacher was swayed by political bias.

Senate Bill 1477 — a first in the nation — would create a "grade challenge department" run by the Arizona Board of Regents, a body that oversees the University of Arizona (UA), Arizona State University (ASU) and Northern Arizona University.

If the department determined that a student's grade had been influenced by a teacher's bias, the faculty

member could be required to regrade the student's work.

State Senator Anthony Kern, a Republican, introduced the bill by telling the state Senate in February that it was because "a lot of students that I met with at ASU, they do not feel they can debate issues according to their politics or according to what they believe because they're afraid their grades are going to be lowered".

The policy would task the Arizona Board of Regents with selecting the staff of volunteers to run the challenge department.

Any student who lost the case with the challenge department would be able to launch an appeal by contacting the Arizona Board

of Regents.

The board would then be able to "order any faculty member of a public university to regrade a student's assignment or reevaluate a student's overall class grade consistent with the Board's guidance".

UA, ASU and the Arizona Board of Regents didn't respond to a request for comment.

In February, the proposed legislation passed in the state Senate 16-12. House education committee members passed it 4-3. To become law, it would need to pass the full Arizona Legislature next, then be signed into law by Democratic Governor Katie Hobbs, who would also have the option to veto it.

Concerns over the growing

influence of political bias in everyday life, including education, comes just months before the 2024 general election. The deeply partisan rematch will take place between former Republican President Donald Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden.

Arizona's Republican politicians decided to act to address a perceived bias at universities after the fall-out over a February 2023 event at ASU with conservative commentators Charlie Kirk, Dennis Prager and Robert Kiyosaki who visited ASU.

While the event was billed as being about "health, wealth and happiness", 39 of 47 faculty at ASU signed a letter to the dean condemning the gathering, accusing the hosts of

having a history of making derogatory comments about women, minorities and the LGBTQ+ community.

Prager is a conservative talk show host who founded the PragerU video website. Kirk is founder of Turning Point USA, and Kiyosaki wrote the book *Rich Dad Poor Dad* along with other books with Trump.

Ann Atkinson, former executive director of ASU's T. W. Lewis Center for Personal Development and organizer of the event, was ousted from her role shortly after it took place, and her center was closed. She believes it was because of faculty opposition to the event.

"I thought that Arizona State University, my alma mater and employer, was different from other

schools when it came to free speech," Atkinson wrote in The Wall Street Journal. "But beneath ASU's written commitment to intellectual diversity lies a deep hostility toward divergent views."

After Atkinson criticized ASU, Kern and other Republicans expressed anger that the conservative panel faced widespread opposition. In November, the lawmakers formed a committee on "Freedom of Expression at Arizona's Public Universities".

Kern, the author of the bill, has described himself as "not a university guy," as they (universities) are "anti-American indoctrination camps", the Arizona Mirror reported.

BUSINESS

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Boao forum sees China driving global growth

By OUYANG SHIJIA and CHENG YU in Boao, Hainan

With China as a key growth engine, Asia will play a crucial role in bolstering the world's economic growth this year, given the Chinese government's strong policy support, a key report published on Tuesday stated.

While facing pressures from a gloomy global outlook and mounting uncertainties, China's economic growth will likely hit a relatively high level this year, sending a positive signal to the rest of Asia and the globe, the flagship report from the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024 said.

Themed "Asia and the World: Common Challenges, Shared Responsibilities", the four-day event kicked off on Tuesday in Boao, a coastal town in South China's Hainan province.

Asia stands as a cornerstone for global economic growth in the post-COVID-19 era, playing an important role in advancing equitable and orderly multipolarity and inclusive economic globalization, said Li Baodong, secretary-general of the Boao Forum for Asia.

"Asia will continue to remain the largest contributor to global economic growth (this year)," he told a news conference on Tuesday in Boao. "The Chinese economy enjoys strong resilience and great potential, becoming a major pillar of sustainable global development in the



A view of a bar area at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024 in Boao, Hainan province. ZHANG LIYUN / XINHUA

post-pandemic era."

According to the report, the weighted real GDP growth rate of Asia in 2024 is expected to be 4.5 percent, given the emerging macro policy effectiveness of China and major economies to boost demand and economic growth.

Dora Liu, deputy CEO and chief quality and transformation officer of market consultancy Deloitte China, said, "Asian economies have their unique advantages and prowess in key technologies and have a broad prospect in such applications."

Liu said that in many Asian markets, technologies related to new energy, like photovoltaics, wind power and energy storage, are accelerating iterations, thanks to policies, capital and applications.

In clean power, for instance, more than half of the global investment in the sector came from Asia last year, Liu said. "Asian countries, as a whole, are expected to bring safer, more eco-

nomical and more efficient energy solutions to the world."

The report highlighted China's key role in supporting both Asia and the world's economic growth. It said the country's GDP growth this year will likely reach 5 percent, the target for the year.

"On the one hand, the factors that constrain China's economic growth will change in 2024 ... On the other hand, the factors supporting China's economic growth will continue in 2024, including relaxed fiscal and monetary policies," the Boao report said.

The Chinese government, it said, has rolled out a series of policies to support real estate development, which will help restore consumer confidence under the investment and wealth effects of upstream and downstream industries.

On the export front, the report estimated that China will maintain its status as the world's largest automobile exporter, a tag it gained for the first time last year.

Zafar Uddin Mahmood, policy advisor to the BFA's secretary-general and president of the Understanding China Forum, expressed strong optimism about China's economic prospects this year.

He said he believes China's economy will expand by over 5 percent this year, remaining a key driver of the world's economic growth. "It's a very positive sign for the whole world's economy. I'm sure it'll play a very important role in further developing the global economy."

Dismissing speculation that China has reached its peak in terms of GDP, he said that for a huge economy like China, maintaining a growth rate of around 5 percent would be remarkable.

Looking ahead, he said there remains huge room for China's high-quality development in the future, marked by years of sustainable growth.

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Policy to hone in on trade performance

Hurdles include challenging external environment, anemic offshore demand

By WANG KEJU wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

China has been exploring a new set of policy measures aimed at spurring exports and imports, and will expedite the implementation of these measures as soon as possible, with the goal of consolidating the foundations of the country's foreign trade and achieving preset annual targets, officials said on Tuesday.

China's strong start in goods import and export performance in the first two months points to the country's solid foundation, resilience and vitality in foreign trade, said Guo Tingting, vice-minister of commerce, at a news conference held by the State Council Information Office.

From January to February, the country's two-way trade in goods climbed 8.7 percent year-on-year to 6.61 trillion yuan (\$916 billion), said the General Administration of Customs.

China's foreign trade sector boasts over 600,000 enterprises, with privately owned companies accounting for over 80 percent of the total. These enterprises have honed their growth and continuously enhanced their competitiveness in overseas markets, Guo said.

demand, increasing uncertainty and the proliferation of trade restrictions.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director-general of the World Trade Organization, said late last month global trade volume may not reach the WTO's 3.3 percent growth estimate for 2024.

On top of that, global trade growth in 2024 is expected to be only half the average witnessed in the decade before the COVID-19 pandemic, a World Bank report said.

The Chinese government is working diligently to expedite the introduction of initiatives to enhance foreign trade, with the goal of achieving tangible and positive outcomes as soon as possible, Guo said.

In addition to dedicated efforts to enhance the quality and quantity of foreign trade while ensuring its stability, the country also places strong emphasis on fostering new quality productive forces.

To this end, China will advance the transformation and upgrading of its traditional industries and drive their transition toward high-end, intelligent and green practices, said Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Moreover, China will actively promote the healthy and orderly development of emerging industries, including next-generation information technologies, aerospace and bioengineering, while proactively laying the groundwork for future-oriented industries, Zhao said.

In particular, China is set to make strides in infrastructure development by taking a proactive approach toward the construction of advanced technologies such as 5G and computing power, Zhao added.

Bayer sees healthy prospects in nation

By ZHENG YIRAN zhengyiran@chinadaily.com.cn

Acknowledging opportunities brought by China's pursuit of new quality productive forces, life sciences company Bayer AG said it is bullish on China's innovative business environment, and will continue to enhance its investment in the country.

"New quality productive forces" is a very important concept. It is easy to develop something by just spending a lot of money, but if you are looking to develop in a way that is more sustainable, both from a financial standpoint and an environmental standpoint, you have to find other sources of development, said Bill Anderson, CEO of Bayer AG.

Anderson made the remarks in an exclusive interview during the just-concluded China Development Forum held in Beijing.

He said that in China, he has experienced the country's innovative business environment, driven by new quality productive forces.

There are literally 100 new start-ups established in China everyday.



Bill Anderson

There are so many good ideas, which are the source of innovation. Innovation really flourishes in the startup environment of China, he said.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said that by September, there were around 215,000 innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in China. Among them, 12,000 "little giant" firms were nurtured, and over 90 percent of such ambitious enterprises are suppliers to well-known large companies both at home and abroad.

Little giant firms represent the novel elites of small and medium-sized enterprises that specialize in a niche market, boast cutting-edge technologies and exhibit great potential.

Jin Zhuanglong, minister of industry and information technology, said during the forum that China will actively offer support to foreign

enterprises to establish research and development centers in China, as well as cooperate with domestic firms to jointly carry out science and technology R&D and industrial application work.

Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said that China will take solid steps to accelerate the development of new quality productive forces, boost industrial innovation via technological innovation, speed up the upgrade of traditional industries and foster emerging industries.

New market demand, new investment opportunities and new cooperation projects will start to pour in, offering broad development space for enterprises of all kinds to achieve common development and win-win cooperation, Zheng said.

This solidifies foreign enterprises' confidence in further investing in the country.

This year, Bayer's Consumer Health business plans to establish a China Center for Innovation and Partnership in Shanghai. In collaboration with local partners, the center seeks to explore emerging technologies to bring more innovative products to the market. The company said the center is expected to invest 20 million euros (\$21.6 million) in accelerating innovation, with the potential to generate 1 billion euros in commercial value through innovation partnerships over the next decade.

Bayer has been continuously investing in innovation in China over the past few years. Last year, it inaugurated an Open Innovation Center in E-Town, Beijing, the first of its kind in China. Simultaneously, the Beijing plant of Bayer Radiology was also established. Additionally, the construction of a new supply center in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, with an investment of over 300 million yuan (\$41.6 million) from Bayer Crop Science and the government of Hangzhou's Qiantang district commenced last year. This center is expected to become operational within this year.

Online See more by scanning the code.



Briefly

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 53 pips to 7.0943 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

PBOC's latest CBS valued at \$705m

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, conducted a three-month central bank bills swap (CBS) valued at 5 billion yuan (\$704.79 million) on Tuesday, to improve the liquidity of perpetual bonds. The CBS is open to primary dealers for bidding at a fixed rate of 0.1 percent, the PBOC said in a statement.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Three oil giants set production records last year

By ZHENG XIN zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

China's three State-owned oil giants set new production records last year despite a slowdown in global economic growth and lower international crude oil prices, as they stepped up oil and gas exploration to ensure domestic energy security.

China National Petroleum Corp, or PetroChina, saw its oil and gas equivalent production reach a new high of 1.76 billion barrels last year, up 4.4 percent year-on-year, while that of China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, also known as Sinopec, rose 3.1 percent year-on-year to 70.92 million metric tons, also a historic high.

China National Offshore Oil Corp set records in both reserves and production last year, with net oil and gas production reaching 678 million barrels of oil equivalent, representing a year-on-year growth of 8.7 percent, a record for five consecutive years.

The compound annual growth

rate of net production reached 7.6 percent last year, marking the company as an industry leader in terms of production growth, it said.

The record oil and gas output is a result of accelerating investment in domestic oil and gas exploration amid rising energy prices in recent years, said Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute.

Luo said China's seven-year action plan for increasing reserves and production of oil and gas has yielded significant results in recent years, with the three major oil companies making notable progress by intensifying technological innovation and adjusting institutional mechanisms.

They have continued to increase investments, particularly in deep-water, deep-layer and unconventional oil and gas fields, resulting in effective advancement, he said.

Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF, said national oil compa-

nies have endeavored to ensure supply security, which is expected to support robust expansion of gas output in future.

According to Luo, amid the rapid development of the renewable energy industry at home and abroad, the oil majors are also accelerating their green and low-carbon transformation, laying out new energy-related plans as the country goes full throttle on its green energy transition to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

While PetroChina has been stepping up wind and solar power projects in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region, actively promoting carbon capture, utilization and storage, or CCUS, to enhance the conversion rate of clean electricity and grid connection, CNOOC has been vigorously promoting the integrated development of new energy and offshore oil and gas production,

including offshore wind power platforms and onshore photovoltaic projects.

Sinopec, aiming to become China's leading hydrogen energy company, has been focusing on hydrogen energy transportation, green hydrogen refining, and establishing hydrogen energy businesses, in addition to steady growth in wind and solar power generation.

Lu Ruquan, head of the China National Petroleum Corp Economics and Technology Research Institute, said new energy will grow by leaps and bounds in the next decade, helping the technology and manufacturing capabilities of the country to facilitate a faster global energy transition.

PetroChina saw its refinery crude throughput rise 15.3 percent year-on-year to around 1.4 billion barrels, compared with the previous year's 1 percent decline. It has vowed to continue promoting the refining and chemical business toward the middle and high-end of the industry



An employee checks a gas storage facility in Binzhou, Shandong province. DU PENGHUI / XINHUA

chain in the future.

Sinopec saw its crude oil processing volume and total domestic refined oil sales hit record highs in 2023, with crude oil processing volume reaching 258 million tons, up 6.3 percent year-on-year, and domestic sales of refined oil reach-

ing 188 million tons, up 15.8 percent year-on-year, it said.

In 2024, as the Chinese economy continues to recover and improve, the energy and chemical industry in the country will also accelerate its transformation, said Ma Yongsheng, chairman of Sinopec.

BUSINESS

Saudi Aramco eyes fresh biz opportunities

Oil giant looking beyond investment, cooperation in energy in China market

By ZHENG XIN
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Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil exporter, will continue to support China's long-term energy security and economic growth, eyeing greater investment and cooperation opportunities amid the country's high-quality development, its top executive said.

Aramco is proud to be one of the most reliable energy suppliers to China. This reliability is at the heart of the company's deepening mutual respect and cooperation, said Amin H. Nasser, president and CEO of Saudi Aramco, at the China Development Forum in Beijing that concluded on Monday.

\$6.4 billion

investment of Sabic in a major chemicals facility in Fujian province

"While energy remains a strategic pillar of our rock-solid relationship, Saudi Aramco is committed to expanding its presence in China beyond investing and cooperating in energy alone," he said.

Amid China's sharpening focus on developing new quality productive forces and promoting high-quality development, Aramco is also looking at other key areas where win-win investment and cooperation opportunities are expected to be enormous, including chemicals, as well as advanced composites and non-metallics, he said.

China is currently a powerhouse representing 40 percent of global chemical product sales. Eyeing the potential opportunities, Aramco signed two agreements last year for multibillion-dollar liquids-to-chemicals investments in China — the acquisition of an interest in the

Rongsheng Petrochemicals Co in Zhejiang province for \$3.4 billion and a partnership in Liaoning province at a cost of \$12 billion.

"We are also pleased that the partnership of Sabic, one of the world's leading chemicals players of which Aramco is a major shareholder, in Fujian province is on track to commence construction of a major chemicals facility at an estimated cost of \$6.4 billion," he said.

"Aramco is also actively developing additional investment opportunities with Chinese partners to help build a world-leading chemicals sector."

With chemical product demand in China expected to grow along with economic recovery, multinational chemical corporations like Aramco and BASF have been continuing to prioritize downstream assets in the country, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

China remains central to Aramco's strategy to diversify its portfolio into more specialized and high-value chemical products, Lin said.

More mutually beneficial cooperation between countries rich in resources and big energy consumers is expected, he added.

According to Nasser, China has a vitally important place in the global investment strategy of Aramco, which is also among the leading direct investors in China last year.

"We are not mere investors, and China is not just a market to us. We want to be a partner of first resort in China's economic development journey, as new opportunities clearly come into focus," he said.

"I have no doubt that elevating our relationship to undreamed-of heights would help turbocharge China's efforts to meet the hopes and ambitions of its people."

Home sweet new home



An employee of China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp arranges building materials at the construction site of a resettlement housing project in Yancheng, Jiangsu province. The State-owned builder said the newly developed project — Yantie Jiayuan Community — is a key livelihood one designated by the Yancheng government, and has completed evaluation and delivery last week. Local media reported that resettlement work has started in the community, where a total of 1,356 households will eventually settle in. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Shoppers visit Tianjin's Florentia Village in February. LI RAN / XINHUA

Designer outlet mall operator posts robust growth

By HE QI in Shanghai
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Florentia Village achieved robust growth in China last year, the operator of designer outlet malls said.

Maurizio Lupi, CEO of Florentia Village, said its seven villages in the country attracted over 25 million customers in 2023, a nearly 30 percent increase in footfalls.

As of end-February, the total membership of Florentia Village had exceeded 5 million.

Sales recorded in the villages increased by nearly 50 percent to more than 13 billion yuan (\$1.8 billion) last year, Lupi said.

"Our performance has been very successful over the last few years despite the COVID-19 pandemic. We have had consistent growth all over the Florentia villages in China ... This is an amazing journey that we

have had in China since 2011."

A unit of Italian luxury real estate developer and fashion retailer RDM Group, the seven villages in China cover a total of over 500,000 square meters, with over 300 international and domestic brands providing consumers with discounts of up to 80 percent.

In China, its villages are present in Shanghai, Tianjin, Chongqing, Chengdu in Sichuan province, Foshan in Guangdong province, Ezhou in Hubei province, and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Strong ties with brands played a pivotal role in achieving success in the fiercely competitive Chinese market, Lupi said, as many international brands with an aim to increase presence in China settled in Florentia Village.

In addition, "our capacity of serving

Chinese consumers in ways they like, such as the architecture, shopping venues, entertainment, food and all the activities that we offer, are the reasons for them to come to us", Lupi said.

For example, eyeing the family consumer group, Florentia Village set up 2,000-square-meter family amusement centers in five cities, including Shanghai and Chongqing, and built them into comprehensive tourist destinations for shopping, leisure, entertainment and parent-child activities.

Lupi said the constantly growing market and rising local brands have given the villages more opportunities to continue investing and expanding in the Chinese market.

"The Chinese market is a super important, growing, and young and energetic market," Lupi said. "We will keep investing and enlarging our centers, because the requests from

both international and Chinese brands are becoming stronger."

Lupi said that the company will expand the third phase of Shanghai's village since all stores there have been rented out. Meanwhile, in addition to the expansion plans in Chongqing and Wuhan, the Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin will also be expanded soon.

The company said it will integrate more art elements into the villages.

Lupi said: "I think art is always attractive, especially for the younger generation. We are investing a lot in the arts because we think that fashion is an expression of art. And fashion, together with other expressions of art, is the right combination for our environment."

"We had a very satisfactory 2022 and an amazing 2023. And now we are looking to, hopefully, a super 2024."

Finnish lift firm sees rising prospects in nation

By MA SI
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Finnish elevator and escalator company Kone Corp plans to expand its business in China and aims to recruit thousands of employees over the next few years, as it sees big opportunities from the nation's commitment to opening-up, digital manufacturing and the transition to carbon neutrality, a senior executive said.

Joe Bao, managing director of Kone Greater China, said in an interview with China Daily that "China remains a strategic focus for Kone, and we understand that our success is tied to China's success."

Bao said the Chinese mainland is the Helsinki-based firm's largest individual market worldwide, accounting for 26 percent of its global sales in its fiscal year of 2023. The country also hosts Kone's largest manufacturing base and its largest overseas research and development center, which has over 200 valid patents to its name.

"Our manufacturing base, Kone Kunshan Park in Jiangsu province, not only meets the demand of the domestic market, but also exports products to over 100 countries and regions worldwide," Bao said.

He said China set a GDP growth target of around 5 percent for 2024, which demonstrates the nation's commitment to sustainable and

We are confident and positive about China's long-term development."

Joe Bao, managing director of Kone Greater China

stable economic growth. Considering the scale of China's economy, this growth rate is quite significant.

"We anticipate that the midterm and long-term growth drivers for China will include domestic consumption, digital manufacturing and the transition to carbon neutrality. These drivers present new investment opportunities for our company," Bao added.

When asked about his views on some Western media reports that China's economic development has reached its peak, Bao said: "We are confident and positive about China's long-term development. The economic fluctuations we observe are strategic responses to short-term challenges, aiming at steering China toward high-quality development over the long run."

Take the property sector, which is closely linked to the company's business, as an example. Bao said,

"While many discuss its decline, I believe this narrative overlooks the government's strategic readjustments aimed at ensuring stable and sound development in the real estate market."

This year's Government Work Report underscores such commitment by focusing on promoting stable and healthy market development through refined policies that emphasize "new urbanization", address essential housing needs, cater to the diverse requirements of housing improvements and steadily push forward with urban renewal initiatives, Bao said.

The senior executive also thinks highly of China's recent emphasis on cultivating new quality productive forces, which "emphasizes the strategy of valuing quality over quantity in China's journey toward realizing comprehensive modernization."

"They are the engines that ensure freeing the economy from traditional constraints and achieving high-quality development in the long run," he added.

The company is working to drive digitalization across its products, services and manufacturing processes. For example, the company has offered predictive maintenance services by utilizing AI technology. With real-time monitoring and intelligent analysis, potential

issues are identified before they cause disruptions, resulting in about a 55 percent reduction in elevator flaws and a 40 percent reduction in elevator entrapment, Kone said.

Meanwhile, in June 2023, Kone marked a milestone by becoming the first in the industry to achieve carbon-neutral manufacturing units globally, and the company is on track to meeting its ambitious goal of achieving carbon neutrality operations before 2030.

Jin Zhuanglong, minister of industry and information technology, said in a speech in Beijing on Monday that China will continue to expand high-standard opening-up, implement measures for complete removal of restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with companies across the globe.

Bai Ming, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said foreign companies are important forces in promoting industrial upgrade in China.

According to Jin's ministry, China has the most complete industrial system in the world. The country ranked as the largest manufacturer for the 14th consecutive year in 2023, when its manufacturing output accounted for nearly 30 percent of the global total.

the city's ethos, saying, "There is no 'best' business environment, only one that continuously improves".

"The most important thing is to enhance the outlook and confidence of private entrepreneurs vis-a-vis the future. Confidence building is a gradual process and cannot be solidified overnight. This is especially the case for innovative enterprises that require extended periods to grow and develop, so stable macro policies are needed to provide them with confidence and guidance," said Tian Xuan, associate dean of the PBC School of Finance, Tsinghua University.

Li Yihui in Guangzhou contributed to this story.

Jan-Oct foreign investment in Shenzhen manufacturing surges nearly twofold

By WANG XU
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Shenzhen in South China's Guangdong province remained a beacon for foreign investment in 2023, said a report by global consultancy powerhouse PwC, as the tech mecca welcomed 7,258 new foreign-invested enterprises during the past year.

The report, which was published on Monday by PwC, Nanfang Daily and the Shenzhen Federation of

Industry and Commerce, was based on a five-month study polling 134 perspectives from varying tiers of the city's government agencies, institutions and enterprises in order to offer a panoramic view of Shenzhen's business ecosystem.

According to the report, Shenzhen showcased its magnetic pull for foreign investment in 2023 with the city's endeavors to refine its business milieu to global standards and as a result, 7,258 new foreign-invested enterprises were set up in Shenzhen, which accounted for 15.1

7,258

number of foreign-invested enterprises settled in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, last year

percent of the total in the Chinese mainland.

The report said that from January to October 2023, a significant portion of foreign investment flowed into Shenzhen's manufacturing sector, which has seen an influx of 17 billion yuan (\$2.36 billion), marking

a 186 percent increase from the previous year. The high-tech sector alone saw a 16 percent growth, underscoring Shenzhen's allure for cutting-edge industries.

Meanwhile, the report not only charts the progress but also introduces five innovative features of Shenzhen's business environment reforms. It goes further to offer seven strategic recommendations aimed at alleviating market pain points, distilled from insights gathered through interviews with local businesses and investment officials.

Among them, the importance of maintaining a stable and supportive environment for existing businesses was emphasized because "tailored services throughout an enterprise's lifecycle can significantly boost investor confidence" and because feedback from 32.26 percent of the private enterprises surveyed suggested enhancing policy continuity and enforcement at the municipal level.

To this end, Guo Ziping, director of the Shenzhen Development and Reform Commission, encapsulated

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Milk tea brand proves all the rage in Hunan

Chayan Yuese winning fans nationwide with social media perking up sales

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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For many people, new-style tea brand Chayan Yuese has become synonymous with Changsha, Hunan province, an increasingly popular tourist destination among young people. Many travelers have taken to trying the milk tea when visiting the provincial capital and sharing photos of the tea on social media platforms.

In a recent interview with China Daily, founder Sun Cuiying said she credits the brand's popularity to favorable conditions including young people becoming more confident in traditional Chinese culture.

"Young people born after the 1990s are beginning to mature, and they are more confident in Chinese culture. They are also more patriotic so they like Chinese-style products," Sun said.

"We want to thank people for liking us and we feel the pressure is also somewhat intimidating given the product's popularity," she said, adding that the brand will work harder to win even more fans. She also believes the popularity of Changsha is not attributable to a single brand, but is the result of joint efforts from the government and other brands.

Sun and her husband Lyu Liang opened their first milk tea shop in 2013 in Changsha. They had tried other businesses, which all failed.

The company now owns more than 500 shops in 14 cities and employs more than 7,000 people. It expects to open more shops in four cities in Hunan in March and April.

Social media presence

Through its logo and marketing style, Chayan Yuese has a strong presence on social media platforms and is very active in communicating with its fans.

Most of its shops are in Changsha and the city has become a new "IT" city for young people to travel. Drinking Chayan Yuese and posting photos on social media platforms have become common practices for most tourists.

While most of its tea is sold for around 20 yuan (\$2.77) a cup, some people have shelled out several hundred yuan to manually carry larger quantities of the tea



An employee prepares milk tea orders at a Chayan Yuese store in Wuhan, Hubei province, in November 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

back to their hometowns.

When the company opened its first shop in Wuhan, Hubei province, in December 2020, the line of patrons stretched for hundreds of meters, leading to some having to wait up to eight hours for a cup of tea.

When the beverage brand opened a pop-up store in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in 2021, it was also met with unreserved enthusiasm among that city's young, well-to-do residents.

Police had to intervene to manage the crowds while scalpers were able to resell a cup of its signature tea — a black tea mixed with milk and topped with whipped cream and crushed pecans — for up to 300 yuan.

Feng Baoyi, 27, came to Changsha with her mother and son from Guangzhou, Guangdong, and the three became big fans of the beverage.

Yang Kun, 25, from Xi'an, Shaanxi province, said he likes the floral taste of the tea, which is also combined with the taste of tea and milk. He drinks one cup of tea from the brand every day in Changsha.

For Changsha University students Zhang Zhuyuan and Chen Huimin,

buying branded tea has almost become second nature when hanging out at shopping centers.

They also take pictures of the tea and are eager to post them on social media platforms to show their friends they have tried a new product.

"It tastes nice and not too sweet and it also looks pretty, perfect for social media," they said.

On different social platforms, there are a large number of posts, of which drinks and snacks from the brand taste the best with countless photos.

Some also give ratings for different drinks, while others say they enjoy several cups a day while visiting Changsha.

China's tea culture has undergone drastic changes in recent years as companies have rebranded the once-staid beverage as a high-end, fresh and healthy consumer experience. The resulting products, known colloquially as "new-style teas", are big business. According to research firm iiMedia Research, the value of China's new-style tea market is expected to reach 374.93 billion yuan in 2025, with 26.2 percent of consumers in 2022 likely to consume more new tea beverages in the future.



A Chayan Yuese store on Huangxing Road in Changsha in December. CHEN XIAORONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

sume more new tea beverages in the future.

Sun said that from the beginning, they wanted to incorporate traditional Chinese culture and aesthetics into its products. The brand logo is an image of a traditional Chinese woman and the company has chosen to give its products poetic names, while the decor of its stores

all reflect traditional Chinese culture, she said.

Meanwhile, the company also offers traditional Chinese service and treats its customers like guests.

The company did not hit the ground running at the outset. It really started becoming popular in 2018 and 2019 as more people born after the 1990s grow up and become

prouder of national culture, she said.

She also credits the company's success to the good business environment in Changsha, especially in terms of fiscal support.

As Changsha focuses on expanding its night economy and making it an even more popular travel destination, it has attracted more tourists to the city, she said.

To cash in on the tourism boom, the brand's stores in popular business centers are open till 2 am, while those in airports and railway stations open up at 6 am.

Meanwhile, the immense popularity of the brand has also created some misunderstandings and even criticism.

Sun said she has learned to view online critique in a more calm and objective way, but is more determined than ever to be her true self.

The company is not eager to expand its scale too fast and will continue to open direct sales stores only to control the quality of its products, she said.

Chayan Yuese is also diversifying its product range.

In 2022, it began marketing coffee brand Yuanyang, and in September, it launched lemon tea brand Good MoreNing. In Mandarin Chinese, *ningmeng* means lemon.

The coffee house now has more than 90 stores and the lemon tea brand has more than 30 sites, she said.

"They are doing okay as competition in both sectors is fierce, and we want to let our teams explore new possibilities," she said.

Meanwhile, the company is also busy launching a series of side products, such as snacks, tea bottles, clothing, bags, cards and tea bags.

Sun said these products are also making a profit and her team is working to diversify upcoming new products.

In September, the company invested 520 million yuan in building a research and development factory in Changsha.

Sun said the company views it as long-term investment to develop core technologies used in its shops.

She said the company does not have any plan to expand overseas for the time being and will only focus on direct sales.

However, she is optimistic about the milk tea industry, which is still far smaller than the coffee sector in terms of market value.



Online
See more by scanning the code.

Mixue's rags-to-riches tale inspirational for peer firms

By ZHENG YIRAN
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Can you get milk tea for under 7 yuan (\$1), or an ice cream cone for 2 yuan? One company based in Zhengzhou, Central China's Henan province, is winning the hearts of quality and price conscious consumers with good products at such low prices.

Mixue Group started from a small ice shop in Zhengzhou to now become a fresh-made beverage and snacks giant offering ice cream, milk tea, lemon tea, milkshakes and other refreshments to consumers not only in China, but also around the world.

According to China Insights Consultancy, in terms of the number of outlets and cup delivery, Mixue now ranks first among fresh beverage makers in China and second globally in the product category.

On Jan 2, the company applied for an initial public offering in Hong Kong, as it accelerates efforts to enhance consumer awareness and build a brand with an enhanced global cachet.

The company currently has two major brands — fresh-made tea drink brand Mixue and fresh-brewed coffee brand Lucky Cup. By September 2023, the number of Mixue's outlets at home and abroad surpassed 36,000. Mixue had sold around 5.8 billion cups of beverages in outlets in China and 11 other countries and regions around the world, said its IPO prospectus.

From a small shop to networks across the world, Mixue's story may vividly demonstrate how China's consumer goods brands go from rags to riches.

In 1997, Zhang Hongchao, founder and chairman of Mixue, opened a little ice shop in his hometown in Henan province. The store sold freshly made shaved ice. At that time, few beverage stores in China offered freshly made beverages.

After nine years of market exploration, Zhang successfully developed an ice cream cone made of milk, eggs, corn flour and sugar. Boasting a good taste, the ice cream cones — priced at 1 yuan at that time — enjoyed great popularity among consumers. At that time, ice cream cones were usually priced between 4 and 5 yuan. Now, Mixue's ice cream cones have become one of its best-sellers. According to CIC's report, in the first nine months of 2023, the company sold around 442 million ice cream cones in China.

In 2007, Zhang Hongfu, CEO of Mixue, joined the company. With rich experience in store operations, Zhang established a standardized operational management system and a franchise model for the company. During the promotion and development of Mixue's franchise model, Zhang has continuously optimized and upgraded a series of core capabilities for the company, including brand building, store operations, marketing and product management. As demonstrated in its IPO prospectus, by September

2023, Mixue had over 16,000 franchised stores around the world.

With rapid growth in business scale, in order to ensure product quality and stable supply of beverages and ingredients while optimizing costs and improving efficiency, the company decided to extend its business to the upstream manufacturing segment.

In 2012, Mixue pioneered a centralized factory system. A decade later, it had built five production bases with a total area of 670,000 square meters, covering a full range of raw materials including sugar, milk, tea, coffee, fruits and grains.

As of Sept 30, Mixue's annual comprehensive production capacity had reached approximately 1.43 million metric tons. It held 84 patents. Up to 60 percent of the ingredients supplied to its franchisees were self-produced and self-sourced by Mixue, while ingredients for its core products were 100 percent self-produced, according to CIC.

In order to meet the surging needs of franchisees to open stores nationwide and address concerns about long-distance logistics costs, in 2014, Mixue established its own logistics system and implemented a nationwide policy of free logistics fees for franchisees. This also blazed a trail in the freshly made beverage sector.

After nearly 10 years of efforts, Mixue's independently operated warehousing system and exclusive distribution network were able to support its wide store layout. By Sept

30, Mixue's logistics network covered 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government, 300 prefecture-level cities, 1,700 counties and 3,100 townships. Meanwhile, it had achieved 12-hour deliveries in over 90 percent of county-level administrative regions in China.

"Through a series of measures such as building a global procurement network, production bases and logistics system, we have created the largest and most complete end-to-end supply chain system in China's freshly made beverage sector, covering procurement, production, logistics, research and development and quality control. Our large-scale and highly efficient supply chain system is the key to maintaining high-quality and affordable products, as well as a strong guarantee for our cross-regional and cross-category expansion," said the IPO prospectus of Mixue.

Zhan Junhao, founder of Fujian Huace Brand Positioning Consulting, said: "The supply chain is the key to ensuring product quality and stability. The taste, quality, and safety of snack and beverage products are closely related to the quality of the raw materials. By building a complete supply chain, enterprises can ensure the quality of raw materials is controlled from the source, providing consumers with products with consistent taste and stable quality. Meanwhile, a sound supply chain can also reduce the risks caused by fluctuations in raw material quality



Consumers line up outside Mixue Group's first outlet in Sydney, Australia, on its soft opening day in February 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and ensure product safety."

Hong Yong, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute, said, "The optimization of supply chains and distribution channels is core to raising product quality and lowering costs."

In 2018, Mixue's first overseas outlet was opened in Hanoi, capital of Vietnam. Currently, it has opened around 4,000 outlets in 11 countries. According to CIC, its market share in Southeast Asia ranked the top.

In the same year, the company created "Snow King" — a cartoon-themed snowman — as its super IP and lifetime spokesperson. Snow King has now accumulated countless loyal fans from different countries, regions and cultural backgrounds around the world. By

Sept 30, the accumulated exposure of topics related to Snow King and the theme song of Mixue on major social media platforms in China exceeded 8.7 billion and 8.4 billion times, respectively. In 2022, sales revenue stood at 30 billion yuan, while in the first nine months of 2023, it had already reached 37 billion yuan, said the IPO prospectus of the company.

During this year's two sessions, Zhao Hongguo, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, and also general manager of Daka International, suggested revising dairy industry policy and industry access standards to promote the healthy development of the freshly made beverage industry. Daka International is a tea beverage supply chain enterprise and a wholly owned subsidiary of Mixue Group.

COMMENT

Editorials

Passing of UN resolution creates new hope for cease-fire in Gaza

The United Nations Security Council has finally passed a resolution demanding a cease-fire in Gaza. The resolution put forward by the 10 nonpermanent members of the UNSC demands a pause in the fighting for the rest of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month which will end on April 9, that it says should lead “to a permanent sustainable cease-fire”.

The resolution also demands the immediate, unconditional release of all the Israeli hostages that are being held, and emphasizes the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip. That the UNSC was able to pass a resolution on Gaza after multiple attempts was because the United States did not exercise its veto as it has done in previous votes, and all the other 14 UNSC members voted in favor of the resolution.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement that “we couldn’t support it” because the final text does not have key language that the US views as essential, notably a condemnation of Hamas. Nonetheless, its abstention marks a change of position, based on the recognition that Israel’s brutal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza is unconscionable.

It’s evident that Israel is aware that losing the US’ support for its military offensive, following repeated urgings from the international community that it not proceed with its planned ground attack on Rafah, is a potential game-changer. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz criticized the Benjamin Netanyahu government in an editorial for acting “as if Israel weren’t dependent on America to provide it with support, military aid and a diplomatic Iron Dome”.

Netanyahu, however, is sticking to his guns, with his office saying that the wording of the resolution was unacceptable because it didn’t explicitly make a cease-fire conditional on the release of hostages held by Hamas. After the UNSC vote, he canceled the scheduled trip to Washington of a delegation led by Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who is already on an official visit to the US, claimed Israel had “no moral right to stop the war in Gaza”.

The international community, including the US, thinks otherwise. It should be remembered that Resolution 2728 is legally binding and is expected to have its impact on the ongoing fighting in Gaza. Also it carries moral weight, as it conveys the international community’s horror and concern at what Israel is doing in Gaza to atone for the Netanyahu government’s security lapses.

A report from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a partnership of more than a dozen governments, UN aid and other agencies that determine the severity of food crises, has warned that “famine is imminent” in Gaza and the humanitarian situation in Rafah where displaced Palestinians are congregated is dire.

Gallant called the resolution “scandalous”, and told US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan that he would “make clear the importance of bringing down the Hamas regime and returning the hostages to their homes”. But those Israelis, such as Gallant, calling for more military actions should bear in mind that the several exchanges of Israeli hostages held by Hamas and Palestinians serving prison terms in Israel were all done via diplomatic efforts.

If the US is unwilling to supply fresh horses, the Israeli war chariots will find the going difficult. But to ensure lasting peace, it is necessary for Palestine and Israel to resume peace talks with the aim of formulating a concrete timetable and road map for the implementation of the two-state solution.

Now though, with Hamas having affirmed its “readiness to engage in an immediate prisoner exchange process”, it is imperative that the breakthrough of the UNSC resolution leads to the establishing of a functioning mechanism to expand the flow of humanitarian aid to the beleaguered Palestinians in Gaza.

US orchestrating the provocations

Every time the Philippines stirs up trouble in the South China Sea, it is with the backing or at the instigation of the United States.

Such was the case on Saturday when the Philippines sent a supply vessel and two coast guard vessels to intrude into the Chinese waters adjacent to Ren’ai Reef in a bid to send building materials to the old World War II battleship, BRP *Sierra Madre*, it illegally grounded on the reef in May 1999.

Two days before, US, Japan and the Philippines held a consultation meeting in Tokyo, during which they reiterated their collective commitment to “maintaining peace and security in the ‘Indo-Pacific’, including in the South China Sea and East China Sea”.

The aforementioned “commitment” to peace and stability is just a camouflage for such provocative moves. As happened when tensions between Beijing and Tokyo intensified quickly after the US sought to exploit the frictions between Beijing and Tokyo over the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea following the unveiling of its Pivot to Asia strategy in 2011, aimed at realizing “America’s Pacific Century”, tensions between the Philippines and China have also escalated rapidly, as Manila has been emboldened to provoke China after the US offered its support to it trying to stake a claim to Chinese territory in the South China Sea.

On Monday, Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong spoke with his Philippine counterpart, Maria Theresa Lazaro, over the phone, lodging a solemn representation regarding the Philippines’ illegal trespassing on Saturday. Chen hit the nail on the head when he said that the fundamental reason for the continuing escalation of tensions is that Manila has repeatedly gone back on its word. He urged the Philippines to honor its commitments, stop its provocations, and refrain from any unilateral actions that may complicate the situation.

It has been a long-time consensus among regional countries that the maritime disputes should be shelved for the common development of the region, and they can be and should be resolved through direct negotiations between the disputing parties. Another tacit understanding integral to that consensus has been that no external parties should be allowed to take advantage of the disputes to drive a wedge between regional countries.

It is that consensus which has enabled the region to enjoy a peaceful and secure maritime environment. Manila and Tokyo should know the ugly roles they are playing as the US’ accomplices will only damage the regional development environment. In playing the role of the US’ hatchet men, they are isolating themselves from other regional countries, which have either given the cold shoulder to the pair’s invitation to join them or spoken out in opposition to them dragging the region into bloc confrontation.

They are well aware they lack the moral support, legitimacy and ability to continue playing their dangerous game without the US’ favor. That’s why they repeatedly demand Washington guarantee the US’ China policy will not change should there be a change of occupant in the White House after the US presidential election in November. Both the Japanese and Philippine leaders will be hoping to get firsthand assurances to that effect from both candidates when they visit the US for a trilateral summit with US President Joe Biden next month.

Such assurances will no doubt further embolden them to continue their provocative actions. Manila’s recent gung-ho actions just expose its longing for the US’ assurances that it will not be left high and dry.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Boao sets the tone for development of a more equal and orderly world

Under the theme “Asia and the World: Common Challenges, Common Responsibilities”, the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024, being held in Boao, Hainan province, from Tuesday to Saturday, calls on all countries to jointly address global challenges and shoulder the responsibility of promoting peace and prosperity.

The forum’s agenda echoes the concerns of all parties, be it the world economy, scientific and technological innovation, social development and international cooperation, and aims to build up Boao consensus, contribute Boao wisdom, propose Boao solutions, and explore a more certain direction for the world economy.

The international community should uphold the spirit of inclusiveness, innova-

tion and win-win cooperation, rebuild confidence and trust, strengthen solidarity, and work together to meet global challenges and promote development.

Asian economies should work to maintain the stability of industry and supply chains and promote regional economic integration to provide important support for global economic stability and growth. Therefore, this year’s forum focuses on regional economic integration and growth in Asia, and will hold several sub-forums to discuss expansion of investment and deepening of financial cooperation in Asia.

The forum also sets a topic on the rise of the Global South, with the aim of deepening solidarity and cooperation in trade, debt, food, supply chain, science and technology, climate change and other fields in

the Global South, jointly addressing risks and challenges, and promoting the development of a more equal and orderly world.

The forum is an important window for the international community to observe and understand China’s future policy direction. Since its founding in 2001, the forum has provided an important stage for businesspeople around the world to identify business opportunities and seek cooperation with China and with each other.

The profound adjustments and changes in the international landscape and the global governance system highlight the greater need for countries to transcend political barriers and coordinate their macro policies to jointly address emerging challenges.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

Promoting a stable business environment in Hong Kong

In just two decades of the 21st century, the United States has enacted several laws on national security, for example, the USA Patriot Act of 2001, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and the Protect America Act of 2007.

Yet when the Legislative Council of China’s Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passed the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance last week, which represents the effective implementation by the HKSAR of an instrument to fulfill its constitutional duty as stipulated under Article 23 of the HKSAR Basic Law, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed “deep concern” and said the law would have “broad implications for the people in Hong Kong as well as US citizens and companies operating there and threatens to further

undermine the rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong”.

While the US weaves an almost airtight web of national security, it points a finger at the HKSAR legislature for enacting its first law on national security in the past 27 years. Why such a double standard?

Contrary to what Blinken said, the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance targets a very small number of criminals who endanger national security, while protecting the human rights and freedoms of the vast majority of people. The ordinance clearly defines what constitutes an offense, distinguishes between crimes and non-crimes, and stipulates principles such as presumption of innocence that are in accordance with the rule of law.

Also, contrary to his claim about foreign companies operating in Hong Kong, the ordinance is expected to curb the destructive attempts of certain external forces to interfere in Hong Kong’s internal affairs through infiltration and sabotage, thus creating a safe and stable operating environment for businesses.

The day after the legislation was enacted on Saturday, several companies from the US signed contracts with the HKSAR government to establish offices and settle there. Most of these companies are engaged in the innovation and technology industry, with overseas companies aiming to establish a foothold in Hong Kong to expand into the Asian market.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Supervision only way to break soccer’s corruption cycle

Several senior officials in the country’s soccer administrative system were sentenced to prison after being found guilty of corruption and power abuses on Tuesday.

Among those convicted were a former deputy minister of the General Administration of Sport of China and former chairman of the Chinese Football Association, who were sentenced to 13 years imprisonment and lifelong imprisonment respectively. This has provided Chinese soccer fans with the opportunity to vent their anger at the state of the game in the country.

But since this has been the third large-scale anti-graft campaign in the soccer sector over the past 30 years, during which the Chinese national soccer team has fallen in FIFA rankings from around 40th to around 90th, the question is how the world’s most popular sport can be put onto the right track in the country that has the largest number of soccer fans in the world.

The details of the soccer officials’ graft

unveiled by the judicial authorities clearly indicate that due to the lack of effective supervision, their corruption can only be described as “unscrupulous”, as it spanned their whole careers in the soccer circle, and happened in almost every field they were in charge of, ranging from management of the various national teams and league matches at various levels to referee work and youth training.

Were it not for a club sponsor exposing the former national team coach’s “insatiable” embezzlement of the funds of the club he then worked for, more than two years ago, the whole systemic corruption involving dozens of major officials of the soccer system, as well as players and referees, would not have come to light.

The nation used to pin high hopes on the now revealed to be corrupt officials that have been put behind bars, as their appointments about 10 years ago were already the result of the previous two rounds of anti-graft campaigns and subsequent reforms.

For instance, they obtained their posts through winning fierce and open competition. Previously, they had accumulated rich soccer-related working experience and proved their abilities in the govern-

ment departments, clubs, universities, institutes, enterprises and media outlets respectively. They were all committed to using their professionalism to help reinvigorate the Chinese soccer. Some of them were also fierce critics of the corruption in soccer when soccer officials were mostly picked from the sport administrative system.

But as the fact shows, the power in a department concentrates only in the hands of the department head, whose authority in the respective fields was unquestioned. Having acquired a taste of power, they became addicted to it.

So instead of drawing the best from each other in terms of their expertise and professionalism, they formed an interest alliance to maximize personal gains by milking the Chinese soccer sport just as their predecessors did. And the huge popularity of the sport makes it a rich seam for speculators and opportunists seeking quick returns in various forms.

That being said, before an effective oversight mechanism is formed in the soccer system, its corruption cycle that is repeated every 10 years, the duration of two terms of CFA officials, will remain unbroken.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Mei Xinyu

Reform unlocks Xizang's economic potential

For centuries, Xizang has made exemplary economic and social progress every time it has taken measures to fully integrate into the national economic and social structure. From the arrival of Princess Wencheng, who brought with her a wealth of knowledge and technology from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) to Tibet to the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951 and the subsequent abolition of the feudal serfdom in 1959, to the present times, the Xizang autonomous region, which was founded in 1965, has undergone profound transformations and seen unprecedented economic development.

In the period between the First Opium War in (1840-42) and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China lost its position as a global economic leader as it turned into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal state. Tibet, being under an archaic feudal system, was in an even worse position.

At the time of its peaceful liberation in 1951, Tibet lacked modern infrastructure, schools and industry. Tibet didn't have a single modern road, a single school in the modern sense of the term, nor did it have any form of modern industry. Virtually, modern education, healthcare, commerce and technology were nonexistent in Tibet.

The only semblance of modern civilization was a 92-kilowatt hydropower station, which operated sporadically and supplied electricity exclusively to a privi-

leged few among the ruling elite. It is the democratic reform that facilitated the region's comprehensive leap forward, improving its economy, income levels, infrastructure and social governance far beyond that of its neighboring regions.

The ultimate goal and measure of socioeconomic development lie in the liberation and advancement of its people. The emancipation of more than 1 million serfs in Tibet marked a historic leap forward in the history of human rights protection and promotion. The democratic reform in Tibet, which ended serfdom, signifies China's commitment to protecting and promoting human rights.

Unlike many other countries, China moved away from a social structure that was dominated by slave- or serf-owners and established a society based on equality and competition, which created opportunities for talented individuals to climb up the social ladder irrespective of their familial background. This is a unique feature of Chinese society.

However, old Tibet, influenced by its natural environment and Indian religious traditions, adopted a socioeconomic structure with strong elements of the Indian caste system. A privileged few controlled everything, leaving the majority of the people in Tibet, primarily serfs, bereft of even the basic rights and freedoms. Only through the hard work of the central government

did Tibet break free from the shackles of poverty and backwardness, and the Tibetan people achieve emancipation.

From the Authorized Regulations for the Better Governing of Tibet promulgated in 1793 to the liberation of over 1 million serfs, history shows Tibet's integration into the mainstream Chinese governance system is the only way it can achieve progress. In this regard, socialism, inherently focused on liberating and developing productive forces, has significantly contributed to modern Xizang's economic development since the region's liberation and the launch of democratic reform.

In 1951, prior to the launch of democratic reform, the GDP of Tibet, which had a population of 1.14 million, was a mere 129 million yuan (\$17.88 million). By 1958, Tibet's GDP had increased by 33.3 percent to 172 million yuan, largely due to the influx of troops, central officials and technical workers into the region. The launch of the democratic reform in 1959 saw the region's GDP surge by 46.6 percent to 255 million yuan in 1960.

By 2023, Xizang's GDP had soared to 239.27 billion yuan. Xizang's economic and social

development now dwarfs some neighbors. Xizang has witnessed unprecedented growth and prosperity — a far cry from its previous state of deprivation. The condition that old Tibet was even much more backward than India has totally changed.

The rapid development fueled by China's economic miracle has lifted Xizang's average income and living standards above those of neighboring countries. In 2022, Xizang's per capita disposable income reached 26,675 yuan, 66 percent more than India's.

Such achievements have left even Indian influencers shocked, as evidenced by the overwhelming response to videos showcasing the splendor of Xizang. As China's economy and society continue to progress, Xizang's future will undoubtedly be brighter.

The author is a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Zhang Yongpan

Tibet's democratic development an inevitable choice

The azure sky, towering snow-capped mountains and clear rivers, these are all hallmarks of Tibet, the characteristic features of "Shangri-La." However, in the past, the feudal serfdom of Tibet was so dark, barbaric and cruel that it denied people even the basic freedoms and hindered social development. In 1904, Edmund Candler, a British journalist who visited Tibet, wrote that the Tibetan people were still in the medieval era, not only in their political and religious aspects, in their severe punishments, witchcraft, the practice of identifying reincarnated lamas, and enduring torture by fire and boiling oil, but also in all aspects of their daily lives.

The feudal serfdom in Tibet started in the late ninth century and matured after the 14th century, profoundly influencing the region's social structure and people's lives. In the first half of the 20th century, while slavery had been abolished in most parts of the world, the feudal system continued to dominate Tibetan social structure, subjecting the Tibetan people to suffering as serfs and slaves. From the local Tibetan people to Westerners, including literateurs, and officials from the interior visiting Tibet, they all meticulously recorded the suffering of the Tibetan people.

In old Tibet, the population mainly comprised serfs, slaves and serf owners, with the serf owners accounting for about 5 percent of the total population, while the remaining 95 percent were essentially serfs and even more misera-

The liberation of the Tibetan serfs is one of the landmark events in Chinese history, as well as an important milestone in achieving national unity and ethnic solidarity.

ble slaves. These serfs were destined to serve their "owners" from birth, and were subjected to oppression and untold hardship.

The serf-owners had almost all the powers in society, including the making of laws, which often were enacted to favor them. Worse, the serfs were subdivided into different categories, with the lowest ranks essentially no different from slaves.

As for the Dalai Lama, he used his theocratic position to hold the power of life and death over the serfs. No wonder US scholar Melvyn C. Goldstein said that religion and the monastic establishment were heavy shackles on Tibetan social progress.

In 1951, the Tibetan people welcomed Tibet's peaceful liberation. And the entry of the People's Liberation Army and a large number of central government officials into Tibet liberated the masses, with the Tibetan people praising the PLA personnel as "living bodhisattvas".

From 1951, Tibet's theocratic feudal society began to disintegrate. But the 14th Dalai Lama's group planned to launch a rebellion so it could maintain the feudal serfdom and enjoy its privileged position. But on March 10, 1959, the upper-level reactionary group in Tibet, with support from foreign forces, disrupted the "17-Article Agreement" and launched an armed rebellion. On March 20, 1959, the central government issued instructions on democratic reform, emphasizing that democratic reform must rely on the laboring people, and the land owned by the local government of Tibet must be distributed to the farmers. All debts, corvee, and feudal levies must be abolished.

On March 28, 1959, the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued an order to dissolve the original local government of Tibet, with the Preparatory Committee for the Xizang autonomous region exercising the powers of the local government of Tibet, and marking the disintegration of the old political order in Tibet and taking charge of the situation by a million former serfs.

The abolition of the feudal serfdom led to the emancipation of the former serfs, marking the end of the suffering of the Tibetan people and ushering in spring. The democratic reform in Tibet is a landmark event in Tibetan history. The Communist Party of China led the people in implementing extensive land reform and engineering social change, abolishing the feudal system and facilitating the rebirth of all ethnic groups in Tibet. The reform, needless to say, was wholeheartedly sup-

ported by the Tibetan people.

The liberation of the Tibetan serfs is one of the landmark events in Chinese history, as well as an important milestone in achieving national unity and ethnic solidarity. In commemoration of this historic event, the Xizang autonomous region designated the "Tibetan Serfs Emancipation Day" in 2009, in order to remember history, honor the martyrs, promote the national spirit and uphold the unity and progress of all ethnic groups in Xizang.

The Serfs' Emancipation Day is not only an important turning point in Tibetan history but also a milestone in the Chinese people's struggle for national liberation and progress. The day has been designated to review and commemorate the abolition of the feudal serfdom in Tibet and the historic moment of a million serfs gaining freedom.

The day also showcases the firm determination and positive achievements of the Chinese government in safeguarding human rights, promoting social development, and helping deepen the international community's understanding and recognition of China's development path. At the same time, the day portrays a good image of China on the international stage and lays a solid foundation for friendly cooperation between China and other countries.

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Wang Yaojing and Xiao Qian

When will US consumers be free to choose EVs?

Milton Friedman, the leader of the Chicago school of economics, made a famous speech about a pencil in a 10-hour PBS broadcast series called "Free to Choose" in 1980. The Economics Nobel Prize winner held up a pencil and explained how even a simple object like a pencil takes people's efforts and resources from across the world to make. When Friedman delivered the speech, trade accounted for only about 37 percent of the total global GDP.

Today, trade accounts for 63 percent of the global GDP. But the increase in trade's share of global GDP has also increased trade frictions and sanctions.

The US Department of Commerce has started an investigation to determine whether Chinese-made technologies, apps and tools posed a threat to US national security. But the so-called data security risks the US administration seems worried about can be addressed by implementing effective policies and regulations on cross-border data flow. But instead of finding a real and sensible solution to the problem, some US officials and congressmen are eager to block the import of Chinese-made EVs. The real reason behind all this is of course economic.

A recent Alliance for American Manufacturing report describes the EV competition as "China's existential threat to America's auto industry". Its argument, like all previous arguments in favor of blocking foreign goods from entering the domestic market, is all about domestic workers' job security and how imports would hurt the domestic industry. If that argument were true, we would have seen millions of US citizens losing their jobs and the US economy stagnating over the past 30 years when US imports from China increased by 3,800 percent. But that is obviously not the case.

If the US' moves targeting China and Chinese companies are not an economic issue, they have to be a political issue.

According to economic theories and empirical evidence, voluntary trade can benefit both the importer and exporter. Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, supported free trade and criticized protectionism. Forty years after the publication of Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, David Ricardo laid down the foundation of neo-classical theory by putting forth the law of comparative advantage in his book *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, which says that even a country which is good at making everything (in absolute terms) can benefit from free trade, and countries will specialize in their respective areas with comparative advantage.

Moreover, recent research shows the Chinese economy's integration with the world economy boosted the US' service trade. The US trade deficit gradually turns into surplus as Chinese cities exposed to trade liberalization send more and more students to study in US universities. This is a perfect example of comparative advantage, and explains why service trade with foreign countries will not kill jobs as some politicians claim. Instead, trade will create new demands and jobs.

If the US' moves targeting China and Chinese companies are not an economic issue, they have to be a political issue. With the presidential election less than nine months away, swing states such as Michigan and Ohio with their auto industries and Ford and General Motors factories happen to be some of the main political factors for candidates to consider.

It is fair to say that by restricting the movement of data across borders, the US will not only pose a serious threat to the global digital economy but also undermine its own ability to maximize the economic and social benefits of data-reliant technologies such as artificial intelligence. Worse, escalating trade tensions and decoupling from China will indeed hurt China, but they will deal a bigger blow to the US economy.

According to a report, titled "The Impact of China PNTR (Permanent Normalized Trade Relations) Repeal and Increased Tariffs on the US Economy and American Jobs", issued by the US-China Business Council and Oxford Economics in November 2023, the US economy suffered an estimated loss of \$121 billion in output (0.5 percent of GDP) and 245,000 jobs due to the 2018-19 trade war. The report also said that an increase in US tariffs "would likely" cause up to 300,000 net job losses by 2028, by which time US households could suffer a loss of \$11,100 a year in real income. Against such a gloomy background, it is unfortunate that 44 years after Friedman's speech on pencil, American consumers are still not "free to choose".

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GLOBAL VIEWS

LIU CHANGYU AND ZHOU TAIDONG

Nature-based emissions reduction

Innovative solutions are required to protect, restore and sustainably manage carbon sinks and reservoirs

In 2023, COP28 reached the UAE Consensus that encourages the use of nature-based solutions and other methods to mitigate the impact of climate change on ecosystems and biodiversity. Nature-based solutions are considered to be an effective means of offsetting carbon emissions



Liu Changyu



Zhou Taidong

Major countries and regions are taking action to include nature-based solutions in their national climate strategies and policy tools, including establishing a variety of voluntary emissions reduction trading mechanisms to promote the quantitative certification and trading of carbon sinks. By estimation, the global voluntary carbon market, a tool of mobilizing private sector finance toward nature-based solutions, will provide trading allowances of 2.6 billion tons of CO2 equivalent per year, as more and more multinational corporations take part in nature-based solutions programs and investment. In 2022, the total annual funds flowing to nature-based solutions reached \$200 billion, a year-on-year increase of 11 percent, of which public finance accounted for 82 percent and private financing accounted for 18 percent. At the same time, every \$1 million invest-

ed in nature-based solutions will create up to 40 jobs, which is almost 10 times the employment opportunities provided by an equal amount invested in fossil fuels.

China has made positive progress in improving the function of carbon sinks for decarbonization. Consolidating and enhancing the carbon sink capacity of ecosystems is listed as one of the top 10 actions for carbon peaking. Currently, the total volume of carbon reserves in China exceeds 10 billion tons. China has kept improving the national greenhouse gas voluntary market with the China Certified Emission Reduction program as the main body. Given the advantage of forest resources in promoting the ecological carbon sink function, China has focused on improving its forest carbon sink through increasing areas, reducing losses, and improving the quality. With "double growth" in both forest area and forest stock volume for 30 consecutive years, China has become the country with the fastest and largest growth in forest resources in the world.

China has also promoted the integrated protection and restoration of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grass and sand, and has created a large number of integral practices with ecological, economic and social benefits. The Saihanba Forest Farm, the world's largest artificial forest, releases 598,400 tons of oxygen and absorbs 860,300 tons of CO2, serving as an important ecological barrier. At the same time, the Saihanba National Forest Park receives 500,000 tourists every year, directly provides about 15,000 temporary jobs, drives the development of local tourism and generates a gross community income. On the international front, China has actively cooperated with the global community to create dem-



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

onstrations cases for the world and jointly promote the mainstreaming of nature-based solutions. In 2023, the Ministry of Natural Resources of China and the International Union for Conservation of Nature signed an agreement to co-establish the nature-based solutions Asian Hub, aiming to pursue sustainable development and ecological civilization through nature-based solutions research, practices and cooperation.

Nevertheless, China faces many challenges in developing carbon sinks. These include limited land area and high cost for afforestation, insufficient standards and monitoring methods, and inadequate institutional regulations and financial

inputs. Going forward, China can consolidate and improve its carbon sink capacity in three aspects to better achieve its carbon peaking and net-zero goals.

First, China can optimize natural resource management policies and motivate business entities with regard to their production and operations related to natural resources. Priority can be accorded to the carbon sink value of State-owned forests by improving the management system of State-owned forest farms, and promote the effective protection and scientific utilization of forests. China can deepen the reform of the collective forest rights system, clarify the ownership relationship between

forest property rights and forestry carbon sink property rights, and set up a reasonable benefit-sharing mechanism for carbon sink trading. China can also optimize forest and grassland resource development policies, improve the management of forest harvesting, promote the moderate-scale management of forest land, improve the value realization mechanism of ecological products in the forest and grass industry, and improve sustainable operations. As part of the incentive mechanism, China can comprehensively increase scientific and technological support for the forest and grass industry, enhance forestry and grass industry mechanization, promote the development of large-diameter timber and high-quality grass, develop wood and bamboo processing, forestry biomass energy and other industries, and explore greater space for the diversified development of the forestry industry.

Second, China can improve the design of the carbon offset mechanism and create an internationally leading voluntary emissions reduction market. The first is to accelerate the standardization of ecosystem measuring, reporting and verification, apply satellite and other information technologies, improve regional-scale ground surveys, gradually align national ecological carbon sink accounting with international standards, and improve the credibility of the voluntary carbon credit market. The second is to strengthen the supervision and information disclosure of carbon sink projects, improve the disclosure standards for enterprises to participate in carbon offsets, strengthen the informatization of carbon sink projects, and introduce third-party assessment agencies to improve the transparency of the voluntary carbon market. The third is to encourage Belt and Road coun-

tries to jointly build a large-scale voluntary carbon market with high transparency and high liquidity, and to form a stable price mechanism and avoid potential market risks.

Third, China can fully mobilize non-governmental capital to support the investment and financing of ecological carbon sink projects. First, it can introduce fiscal and financial support policies by developing bonds, insurances and other green financial products and financial instruments related to forest and grass, and explore other models such as public-private partnerships. Second, the government can guide enterprises and financial institutions to improve relevant rules and standards by considering incorporating carbon credits into the net-zero goals of institutions, enriching the environmental, social and governance evaluation system, and reducing the financing for activities with a negative impact on nature. Third, international cooperation in green finance can be promoted to include more nature-based solutions projects in the green finance catalog, encourage developing countries to explore nature-based solutions paths and practices suited to their respective national conditions, and clarify the relationship between the participation of developed countries in nature-based solutions project investments and their responsibility to finance climate change mitigation.

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HASSAN RAGAB

A different approach

China's experience demonstrates that the path to democratization can be adapted to local conditions

The West has long been promoting Western-style democratic systems globally. But from the "Arab Spring" to the "Arab Winter", and the recent series of political upheavals in African countries, it is evident that Western-style democracy often faces resistance and its shortcomings are increasingly exposed in developing countries. This demonstrates that forcibly imposing Western-style democracy often leads to outcomes contrary to the visions of peace, stability and prosperity.



Against this backdrop, China, as a country with 56 ethnic groups, a population of over 1.4 billion, a history of more than 5,000 years, and a different political system from the West, holds significant importance for democratic development. China's experience can strengthen democratic development in a multipolar world and provide new insights into the common values of humanity.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the country has undergone a unique process in democratic construction, gradually forming a socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics that suits its national conditions. First, China's democratic development has been a process of continuous exploration and reform. After its founding, China embarked on socialist reform and construction, exploring a democratic path suitable for its national conditions. Through a series of political movements and explorations, China gradually established a political system based on the people's congress system and implemented the system of the National People's

Congress. Meanwhile, China also established grassroots democracy, promoting village autonomy and grassroots democratic construction, laying the foundation for China's democratic system.

Second, the construction and evolution of China's socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics are integral to China's democratic practice. China has carried out a series of reforms and explorations in political systems, citizen participation, and rule of law, continually improving and developing its democratic system. In terms of its political system, China adheres to the leadership of the Communist Party, implements the system of people's congresses, and establishes a multi-level and widely participatory political consultation system. In terms of citizen participation, China has continually expanded the channels and methods for citizen participation by establishing and improving the system of people's congress deputies at all levels and village autonomous organizations. Regarding the rule of law, China has strengthened the formulation and implementation of the Constitution and laws, established a sound legal system, and safeguarded the legitimate rights and interests of citizens and social stability.

It is no surprise that China has secured such great achievements in democratic development. First, China has made remarkable achievements in democratic development primarily manifested in political stability, social harmony and the enhancement of governance efficiency. Political stability in China is a crucial guarantee for the socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics, ensuring the long-term stability and harmonious development of the country. Second, the construction of China's democratic system is becoming increasingly mature,



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

transitioning from consultative democracy to a system of "selection+election", from the decision-making mechanism of a "new-type democratic centralism" to various modern online political platforms. China's orderly leadership succession, the outstanding qualities and capabilities of China's governing team, and the smooth formulation and implementation of one five-year plan after another have improved the governance efficiency, achieved a transition from "rule of man" to the "rule of law", and ensured the scientific and normative governance of the country.

Furthermore, China's democratic path is becoming broader, and it actively advocates international cooperation in democratic development, contributing Chinese wis-

dom to the progress of human political civilization. In recent years, China has proposed initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, supported multilateralism and global governance, and promoted the construction of a new type of international relations through consultations, joint construction and shared benefits. This is not only a grand vision of China on the international stage but also a positive response to the significant problems and challenges facing the world today.

Therefore, China's democratic practices offer valuable insights for enhancing democratic development in a multipolar world and are relevant for other countries and

China's democratic practices offer a beneficial reference framework for other countries, especially those in the process of developing democratic systems.

regions. China's socialist democratic system with Chinese characteristics is not merely a replication of Western models but rather an innovative approach that has been developed based on China's national conditions and historical-cultural background. China's system fully respects the people's central role, achieving broad and deep citizen participation in political decision-making through mechanisms such as the system of people's congress deputies at all levels and grassroots democratic elections. Moreover, China actively promotes the rule of law, enhancing judicial independence and fairness to safeguard citizens' rights and freedoms. This system not only ensures political stability but also emphasizes social justice and citizen participation, providing a new approach to democratic development for other countries.

China's local democratic practices also offer a beneficial framework for other countries and regions. Particularly for countries with diverse cultures, ethnicities and extensive territories, borrowing from China's practices such as village autonomy can promote local-level democratic participation and autonomy, better meeting the needs of local residents. China's experiences in utilizing technology to promote democratic participation are also relevant for other countries.

For example, China's online platforms for citizen participation and e-government facilitate interaction between the government and the public, encouraging broader participation in political decision-making.

In today's multipolar world, Western-style democracy is neither the only nor the inevitable path for democratic development. China's successful democratic practices challenge the inherent notion that only Western democracy is genuine democracy. Although democracy originated in the West, it does not mean that other regions cannot develop democratic systems tailored to their own national conditions. China's experience demonstrates that the path to democratization can be adapted to local conditions, utilizing methods and approaches that suit the country's actual situation. Countries should learn from and borrow from each other, continuously improving their own democratic systems. China's democratic practices offer a reference framework for other countries, especially those in the process of developing democratic systems. By learning from China's experience, other countries can better address the challenges they encounter in democratic development, explore democratic development paths suitable for their own national conditions, promote consensus and practices of global democratic development, and advance the realization of shared human values.

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z



Dynamic answers to big questions

We may feel let down by some developed countries not joining or committing to some of the most important climate agreements. Are there any significant players who can also contribute to the fight against climate change?

— Chi Daoyuan, a student at the Experimental High School Attached to Beijing Normal University

I think Hong Kong is in a privileged position. It's an international financial center, and we don't experience the kind of political instability seen in many countries and regions. Depending on who the next leader is, these places may have oscillating policies, showing little consistency or accountability.

However, in Hong Kong SAR and China overall, I think the path and the determination are very clear.

Moreover, we have many other active players. For example, many business leaders can also make a huge difference. We are launching a collaborative platform to unite the most influential investors, whether they are family offices, traditional investors, or leaders of multinational companies, to collectively pledge capital, commit to supporting green technologies, and focus on sustainability training for their employees.

— Poman Lo, founder of the Institute of Sustainability and Technology

How do Rhodes scholars from so many countries build international bridges in addressing environmental issues?

— Michelle Zhou, a student from Tsinghua University High School

In the first few weeks when new scholars arrive, we enable them to get to know each other and build trust while acknowledging differences. We have retreats on character, service, and leadership, but we love seeing what scholars themselves come up with.

Climate change is a very interdisciplinary range, and recently, the scholars organized a technology and society conference focusing on how technical innovations serve the public good around the world. Indeed, we have Rhodes scholars studying enterprise, environment, and sustainable finance, but we also have engineers studying the latest battery technology advancements and how to make solar panels more efficient. They can connect across many disciplinary interests and learn from each other.

— Elizabeth Kiss, PhD, warden of Rhodes House and CEO of the Rhodes Trust

How can young people who are passionate about environmental protection make an impact?

— Gao Shilan, a student from Shanghai Qibao Dwight High School

Although individual actions may seem insignificant, especially given that young people have relatively limited reach, the collective choices and decisions of individuals do have the potential to be magnified. In our increasingly connected and interdisciplinary world, it is no longer a requirement to study biology or natural sciences to make an impact. The important thing is to keep our environment in mind no matter what course of study you choose to undertake, so that the next generation can take collective actions across all sectors of society.

We must change our outlook from anxiety to one of determined optimism. It's true that the state of our world can look discouraging, but it's equally important to consider the successes that have already been achieved. To make an impact, the next generation must continue to learn, advocate, and act with hope and the belief that an active commitment to a better future will bring about that very result.

— Marco Lambertini, former international general director and special envoy of World Wide Fund for Nature International



Poman Lo



Elizabeth Kiss



Marco Lambertini

Youth frontliners lead charge for green future

No longer content with taking a back seat to environmentalism, young Gen Z leaders are offering their own solutions to an urgent global concern.



Young representatives pose for a photo with Poman Lo (fourth from right in the back row) at the One Earth Summit in Hong Kong on March 25. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“Environmental issues should not be dealt with only by adults,” said Yan Leilei, 12, from Shanghai. Yan, a student at Shanghai High School, was among the over 20 young representatives at the One Earth Summit (OES) in Hong Kong on March 25.

Themed “Planetary Crossroads: Investing in Innovations for a Sustainable Future,” the summit served as a platform for international policy-makers, industry leaders, scholars, and youth to engage in discussions centered around sustainability. Its goal was to foster action-oriented dialogues aimed at achieving a net-zero, nature-positive transition both regionally and globally.

“Finally I have the opportunity to learn alongside such a diverse group of esteemed global figures in sustainability,” said Xue Leyi, a 16-year-old student from the High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China.

Before attending the OES, Xue participated in the 8th Model Climate Change Conference of Parties held by Tsinghua University and UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for East Asia. By playing the role of a delegate of India, Xue gained insights into the complexity of climate negotiations and global climate governance.

“Every country, whether developed or developing, has its own unique strengths, responsibilities, concerns, and needs. But ultimately, we all share one planet,” she said.

As China aims to reach its carbon peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060, the country also seeks to ensure economic stability and maintain energy and food security.

During last year's COP28 climate change conference, Liu Zhenmin,



Every country, whether developed or developing, has its own unique strengths, responsibilities, concerns, and needs. But ultimately, we all share one planet.”

Xue Leyi, 16, a student from the High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

China's current special envoy for climate change, said that China had done substantial work in carbon emission reduction as the world's second-largest economy. He highlighted China's breakthroughs in renewable energy, which have boosted the global energy transition, and said that China will continue to reduce coal's prominence among primary energy resources.

Youth are also actively contributing to the cause. Cui Huachen, 17, a student at the Affiliated High School of Peking University and an enthusiast of fashion and photography, found her calling during a school trip to the wetlands of the Zoige Plateau in Southwest China.

She was moved when she saw that the local people and government have invested decades of daily efforts into combating wetland desertification,

which is crucial for sustaining water conservation upstream of the Yellow River. Therefore, Cui dedicated herself to creating fashionable items using recycled materials. She started a school club named “Frame Design” to promote sustainable fashion among her peers.

Dealing with climate change also requires global collaboration. “Different oceans are interconnected,” said Li Yuqiao, a 17-year-old student at the Shanghai United International School, Gubei Secondary Campus, and a passionate scuba diver. During his visit to Koh Lipe in Thailand, he saw considerable coral bleaching and dying reefs due to pollutants and rising seawater temperatures.

Aspiring to pursue environmental science in college, Li has been working toward creating a cleaner and more vibrant ocean by initiating a series of activities with his friends worldwide. Together, they've organized 23 cleanup events in ocean waters, during which they collected a total of 907.8 kilograms of trash. Li also conducted workshops on marine ecosystem protection for younger students in his hometown of Shanghai and delved into studying both domestic and global public policies on ocean environment governance.

This group of young environmentalists, proudly self-dubbed as “Planet Pioneers,” combines lofty aspirations with practical measures. Through their interdisciplinary research and community-centered endeavors, they are committed to making tangible contributions toward mitigating climate change.

Zhou Zihan, 16, was inspired by historical figures like Guy Stewart Call-

endar, an English steam engineer and one of the earliest data-driven climate change pioneers. He was also intrigued by the “FuXi-Subseasonal” model, developed by scientists from the Shanghai Academy of Artificial Intelligence for Science, Fudan University, and China's National Climate Center. Still a student at Shanghai Pinghe School, Zhou aspires to become a data scientist who tackles global challenges by providing solid quantitative evidence and intelligible information to the public.

“Today, we have gathered the most influential business leaders, and leaders from the public sector, academia, and philanthropic sectors. Therefore, we can collectively drive this transition and foster public-private philanthropic partnerships to support technologies,” said Poman Lo, convener of the OES and founder of the Institute of Sustainability and Technology.

“They need not only capital, but also an ecosystem to help them scale, connect to all the resources and networks, and fine-tune their business models for our shared future and future generations.”

When questioned by Emily Ma, a student from Hong Kong, about the key messages Generation Z should bear in mind in the critical battle against climate change, Lo responded affirmatively, stating that young people should “understand the urgency,” “have hope that it's possible to do well by doing good,” and acknowledge that “we are all interconnected.”

Written by Zhong Yutong, a Schwarzman Scholar at Tsinghua University.

Z WEEKLY

As simple as a walk in the park

In a world where parks are often overlooked, a rising generation of enthusiasts is leading the way in rediscovering these public green spaces, **Gui Qian** reports.

Cheng Yuyan never expected that the interest group "We Love Strolling in the Park", which she casually created on Douban, a Chinese social media platform, four years ago, would now approach 100,000 members.

According to the 25-year-old from Shanghai, establishing this group was just a spur-of-the-moment decision, and she didn't invest much time in managing it afterward. However, park enthusiasts from all over China and even overseas have spontaneously made it their gathering community. From Fuzhou in southern China to Harbin in the northeast, from Tokyo in Japan to London in the UK, people share park experiences, post photos taken in parks, and offer recommendations and reviews about parks.

"The growth of this group is the result of organic development, just like a park, where people naturally come together. The surge in member numbers also indicates the increasingly important role that parks are playing in people's lives," Cheng said.

Within this group, there is a tag called "20 minutes for parks", which comes from a theory originating from the International Journal of Environmental Health Research. According to the theory, spending 20 minutes in a park daily helps to reduce stress, regardless of whether people exercise in it or simply take a walk.

With the help of social media, the theory has been gaining popularity among a great number of young people in China. Huang Bingbing, hailing from Hunan and now living in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, is a practitioner of this idea.

She said that Shenzhen boasts numerous community parks that are scattered in neighborhoods and between office buildings. Over three years ago, when she was still working at an advertising company, she used to frequently visit the small park downstairs during her weekday lunch breaks. "On that patch of grass, I could connect with living plants and animals, allowing me to refresh my mind and heal from the stresses of the workplace," Huang said.

Parks are private

Huang believes that parks are private and solitary spaces. She considers herself an introverted person, and parks undoubtedly serve as the perfect recharging spot for introverts. She often spends time alone in parks, free from worrying about social interactions.

"One can fully engage his or her senses and experience the growth of plants, the warmth of the sunlight, the gentle touch of breeze, and the energy of nature. These moments are very romantic. It's a time to completely be with oneself," she said. "In parks, one can be alone while being among the crowd."

According to Huang, the choice of park is also a matter of personal preference. "If you want to experience a lively atmosphere, you can visit a downtown urban park. If you seek tranquility, then a park in the countryside is ideal," she said. "The time, the season, and the mood with which you visit the park can all lead to different scenery and experiences. The process of exploring parks is also a journey of self-discovery."

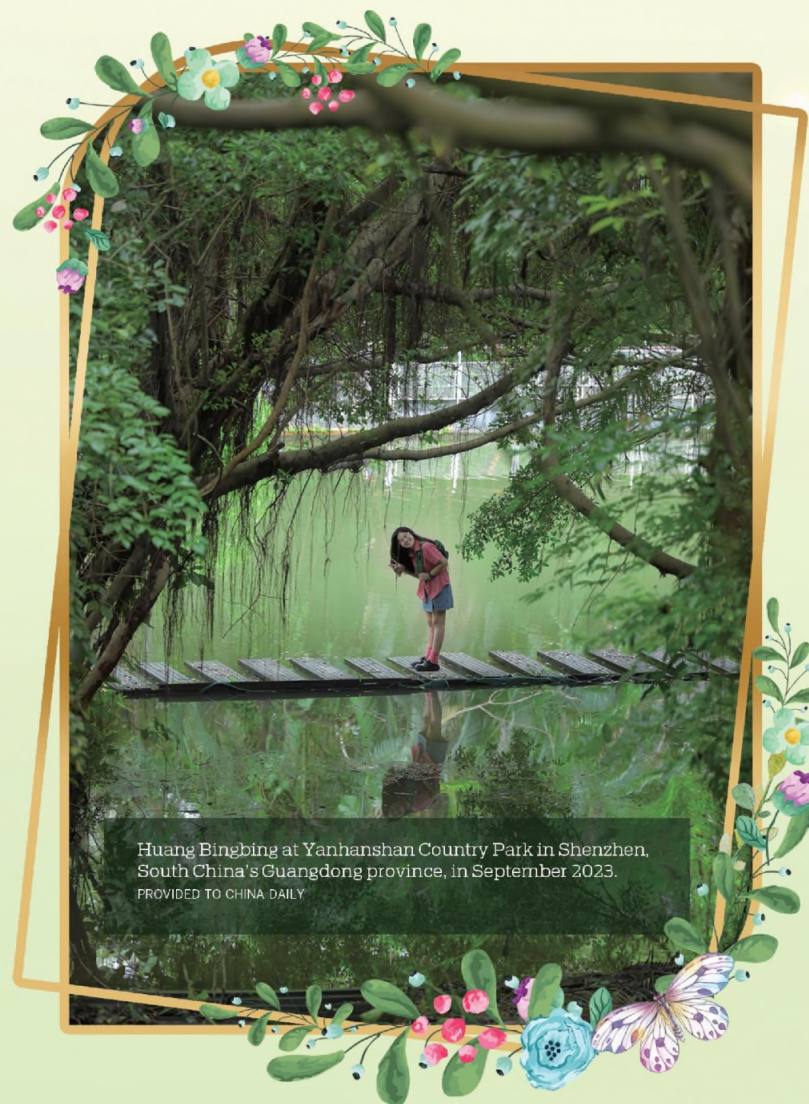
Liu Xi, from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is also fascinated by the peace and the sense of time slowing down that occur in parks.

As an art curator and stage designer, Liu launched the "In the Park" project in early 2020, inviting submissions of artworks inspired by parks. She aimed for these works to depict parks from a third-person perspective, simply observing the people and events taking place in parks, rather than orchestrating staged scenes. The project sought to showcase genuine moments captured within parks, excluding posed or selfie images.

Over the past three years, "In the Park" has received over 6,000 submissions, with more than 3,000 of these artworks displayed on social media platforms, representing nearly 1,000 parks from various corners around the world.

Parks are public

For many people, parks hold treasured moments of their personal lives, while



Huang Bingbing at Yanhanshan Country Park in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province, in September 2023.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Even our social outings with friends follow a predictable pattern: dining, shopping, and then catching a movie. Yet, in a park, you can do so much more — it's liberating and full of creativity."

Cheng Yuyan, a park enthusiast



Whether it's people strolling, boating, reading under the trees, or simply lost in thought on a bench, this project seeks to observe how individuals, amid the fast-paced urban life, find solace in these 'urban oases'."

Liu Xi, an art curator and stage designer

for a city, parks serve as public spaces, reflecting the distinct characteristics of the city.

When Huang first arrived in Shenzhen 10 years ago, she initially viewed Shenzhen as a moneymaking hub, but then she was surprised to discover its lesser-known side — a city of a thousand parks.

According to local government data, as of the end of 2022, Shenzhen boasts 1,260 parks.

Huang then set a target for herself — the "Shenzhen Thousand Parks Challenge". Starting in the spring of 2021, she has visited nearly 100 parks, documenting her experiences through vlogs, with over 20 parks featured so far. "This project is a long-term commitment for me. It's also a way for me to observe this city and connect with it," she said.

She noted that Shenzhen is a young city with a large population of young people, which is why many of its parks feature plentiful smart fitness facilities and children's play areas.

Shenzhen, nestled between mountains and sea, boasts its own unique charm. A few months ago, Huang found herself at a park at Shenzhen Bay that resembled an outdoor theater, waiting for the sunrise.

"The vast lawn slopes gently eastward, with the sea serving as a majestic stage and the sunrise its star performer. That was the most breathtaking moment I've experienced in a park," she said.

Cheng believes that people can deepen their interaction with parks even further, by fostering a sense of ownership.

She recalls her experiences of visiting parks in Japan. She noticed that many benches in the parks were donated by local residents, with the donors' nameplates affixed to them. Also, many parks have their own guidebooks, detailing the history, geography, and blooming schedules of the park's flora.

Cheng plans to encourage park enthusiasts within her Douban group to do the same. "I hope this group shows more social responsibilities. Each of us can become a guardian and contributor to the parks and our own city," she said.

Parks are rebellious

In the realm of public spaces, parks stand apart from places like shopping malls and cinemas for a particular reason, which, Liu believes, lies in the anti-consumerist essence of parks.

"Many people mistakenly suppose that they have to spend money to enjoy their leisure time, but parks offer a non-consumerist environment where one can find joy without opening their wallets," she explained.

She also sees parks as havens of equality, where people from all walks of life, regardless of wealth, can equally enjoy beautiful experiences.

In her "In the Park" project, Liu highlights the human ecological significance of parks. "Parks themselves are man-made landscapes, and it is the presence of people within them that gives these spaces meaning. This is why I do not accept purely scenic photos," she said.

"Whether it's people strolling, boating, reading under the trees, or simply lost in thought on a bench, this project seeks to observe how individuals, amid the fast-paced urban life, find solace in these 'urban oases'."

For Cheng, parks are a sanctuary from the mundane routines of daily life, brimming with unexpected possibilities. She has come across many European parks through posts in her Douban group, some even featuring graveyards.

"They offer me a fresh outlook on parks, prompting me to ponder the philosophical questions of life and death," she said.

"We modern people spend too much time indoors, trapped in repetitive work routines. Even our social outings with friends follow a predictable pattern: dining, shopping, and then catching a movie. Yet, in a park, you can do so much more — it's liberating and full of creativity."

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Z WEEKLY

Where fashion meets self-expression

Fashion designer Zeng Yue blends Eastern and Western influences, emphasizing self-expression, comfort, and inclusivity through her brand, **Li Xinran** reports.

What is fashion? For many, it may conjure images of ready-to-wear ensembles or high-end luxury brands, but for Zeng Yue, it is something deeper — a form of self-expression.

"Fashion is a statement; it's a way of expressing what kind of person I am or what kind of mood I'm currently in," said the 28-year-old graduate of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in the UK.

Zeng's fashion brand, Momonary, made its debut at London Fashion Week last month. She attributes the brand's success to its unique blend of Eastern and Western influences. In fact, some have described Momonary's style as "Eastern Rococo," drawing parallels to the ornate French art movement of the 18th century.

"We do tend to lean toward extreme complexity with bright colors and certain characteristics of the Rococo era, and many of our designs and printing do derive from traditional Chinese clothing and oriental flowers," Zeng explained, reflecting on how her experiences studying in China, Japan, and the UK have shaped her design ethos.

"However, our theme varies each season. For instance, our latest 2024 autumn/winter collection, 'Mappa Mundi,' takes inspiration from cartography, resulting in an overall color palette that is more subdued and low in saturation," she added.

Zeng founded the brand along with her partner, Fu Fanding, in 2019, after her graduation. According to her, "momo" is a cute nickname that means "peach" in Japanese while "nary" carries the undertone of "becoming."

"Peaches can symbolize something mysterious yet charismatic, and they can also represent the youthful and lively image of a girl. These are qualities that we aim to convey through our products," she said.

Zeng hopes that Momonary's clothes are effortless and comfortable to wear, and, more importantly, make people feel good about themselves.

"I hope that when our customers receive clothes from Momonary, they feel confident and excited to go out wearing them. I hope that we can all enjoy the present and the beauty in the world."

Zeng also emphasized the importance of the materials used. "I'm an active person myself and not a big fan of ironing clothes. That's why we tend to opt for lightweight and easy-to-care-for materials," she said. "In our latest collection, we've officially partnered with 3M's Thinsulate, a material we've extensively used in past seasons. Their cotton retains warmth, is not easily deformed, and can be washed in the washing machine."

Zeng explained that she and her partner are in charge of different aspects of the brand. "My partner is more composed and meticulous, so he handles structural design and production details. Since I'm more outgoing and expressive, I take charge of pattern design, branding, and event planning."

In 2020, Zeng curated the brand's first pop-up event in her hometown of Chengdu, Southwest China's Sichuan province.

"Pop-up events provide opportunities for people to directly and visually learn about the brand and the message we're trying to convey," said Zeng. "Many people attended, as such events were relatively novel at that time, and our designs are unique. It was held on a beautiful summer day, and everything fell into place perfectly."

Last year, Zeng also organized several events in London, which were more workshop-oriented compared to previous events. Participants gathered on a large carpet and they were provided with fabrics and materials featuring Momonary's distinctive elements.

"We always encourage our customers to create their own looks with clothes from our brand," Zeng said. "In our workshop events, we really emphasize this DIY aspect, urging them to get hands-on with our materials. It's truly amazing to see what some have created — from ties to small handbags."

Zeng oversees the design of prints, and she draws inspiration from everyday observations and experiences. "Inspiration doesn't come in a split second; more often, it emerges from what I've been



The style of Zeng Yue's fashion brand, Momonary, is dubbed "Eastern Rococo" for its ornate design. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

researching or reading about lately," she said.

While Momonary markets itself as women's clothing, Zeng has recently noticed an increase in male customers, who she believes have been pulling off their Momonary outfits with style.

"I don't believe in assigning genders to clothing," Zeng stated firmly. "For me, fashion is all about self-expression. There used to be rigid labels attached to clothing, but recent years have seen a shift toward breaking down these barriers. As long as our customers feel empowered wearing our clothes and expressing themselves, that's all that matters."

Zeng attributes her open-mindedness about fashion to her hometown. "In

Chengdu, it's easy to be yourself. You can dress however you like, and people won't judge you — at most, they might just be a little curious about your outfit."

As Momonary approaches its fifth anniversary later this year, Zeng reflects on what has been the driving force throughout her journey. She acknowledges that her passion for fashion design and the sense of accomplishment from completing each project have been her biggest motivators. However, she remains pragmatic about the business aspect of the industry.

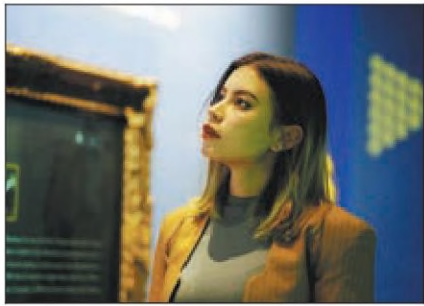
"To me, fashion design is more than just creativity — it's also about understanding that fashion is a business," she explained. "While it's a field where you

can express yourself, it still requires hard work and dedication to turn your dreams into reality."

Regarding Momonary's participation in London Fashion Week, Zeng sees it as a mutual selection process. "When we were students, we used to idolize the 'Big Four' fashion weeks. However, now with more experience, we've come to realize that these events are just platforms. What truly matters is the clothes we've crafted," she said. "We chose to apply for London Fashion Week because it embraces edginess and celebrates creativity, which perfectly resonates with the essence of Momonary."

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Global Insights



This openness and eagerness for exploration were refreshing for me, and it provided a wonderful opportunity for cultural exchanges and mutual learning."

Stefanie Perner, a German student at Tsinghua University

Skateboarding across cultures

I've been skateboarding since I was a child, and for me, it's much more than just a hobby — it's an integral part of who I am, connecting me with a vibrant community of like-minded individuals. Skateboarding isn't confined to skate parks for me, either — it's my way of exploring a city and forming a unique connection wherever I go.

Arriving in Beijing as a 20-year-old from Germany, I found skateboarding to be my compass in navigating this vast and unfamiliar city.

My first impression of Beijing was its blend of ancient buildings and modern, futuristic architecture, which provided an eclectic mix of skate spots. From the smooth marble grounds of historic landmarks to the sleek urban plazas in commercial districts, each location offered its own set of challenges and opportunities for creative expression.

This contrasted with the skate parks back home in Europe, which, while well-designed and functional, lacked the historical depth and aesthetic diversity found in Beijing.

The city's infrastructure, with its neatly built streets and smooth surfaces, is also more "skate-able" than the rough asphalt roads and old cobblestone streets of Europe.

The skateboarding community in Beijing has also taken me by surprise. I remember the first time going out on a street skating session with my Canadian friend, who introduced me to the local scene. I had some concerns initially, fearing that people might be a bit reserved around me — a foreigner.

Yet, my worries turned out to be unnecessary. The first thing that caught my eye was a beautiful backside flip done by Seven, a Beijing skater and bass player who had started his own skating brand, "Interesting". He and his crew were just as welcoming and free-spirited as any skaters I'd met in Europe. It's this shared passion for skateboarding that binds this community together tightly across the globe.

Even those outside the skateboarding community show curiosity and enthusiasm for the sport, which fascinated me. Passersby, especially elders and young children, often stop to watch us skate, with some even daring to try it out for themselves. This openness and eagerness for exploration were refreshing for me, and it provided a wonderful opportunity for cultural exchanges and mutual learning.

While China's skateboarding scene is still developing, it's expanding rapidly. Local skaters, many of whom have drawn inspiration from Western skate culture, are eager to carve out their own identities and make meaningful contributions to the global skateboarding scene.

Social media and the internet have played a pivotal role, enabling Chinese skaters to connect with their international counterparts, share experiences, and learn valuable insights from one another.

Reflecting on the history of skateboarding in China, it's evident that the sport has come a long way since its introduction in the late 20th century. Initially viewed as an obscure and somewhat rebellious activity, skateboarding has gradually gained acceptance and popularity, mirroring global trends and the shifting cultural landscape of China.

Now, with its inclusion in the Olympics, there is a growing recognition of skateboarding as a legitimate sport and a vibrant part of youth culture. I was both astonished and impressed to see toddlers effortlessly dropping into 3-meter-tall bowls in various skate clubs across Beijing and Chengdu, the capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province.

My skateboarding journey in China has truly been enlightening, one that bridges the gap between Eastern and Western cultures.

As I continue to navigate the streets and skate parks of Beijing, I do so with a deeper appreciation for the unique fusion of cultures here and the unifying power of skateboarding, which transcends borders and brings people together in the spirit of joy, freedom, and mutual respect.

Written by Stefanie Perner, a 20-year-old German girl who completed her elementary school education in China. Having grown up with a diverse cultural background, she is passionate and open-minded about all cultures. Now back in China, she is pursuing her bachelor's degree at Tsinghua University in Beijing.