

Hope through fashion

Up-and-coming Kenyan designers find inspiration in Nairobi slum

WORLD, PAGE 6



Agricultural R&D key to country's food security

CHINA, PAGE 5



Bright outlook

New growth drivers, robust policy support to lift nation's economy

BUSINESS, PAGE 8

# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

## Protests grow in Germany



Participants walk with a banner that reads: "Stop the AfD", a reference to the Alternative for Germany party, in Erfurt, Germany, on Saturday, during nationwide demonstrations against right-wing extremism. The large crowds were the latest in a series of demonstrations that have been gaining momentum in recent days. JACOB SCHROETER / DPA VIA AP

## China's streamlined visa rules hailed in US

Convenience, flexibility aim to spark new boom in exchanges

By MAY ZHOU in Atlanta  
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

People from the United States who travel to China have expressed satisfaction with the country's newly streamlined visa policies.

Beijing has made it easier for US residents to travel to China by no longer requiring certain documents for a visa application as of Jan 1.

"I was happy when I saw the announcement that they would no longer require proof of round-trip airfare, hotel bookings and itinerary for tourist visas," a tourist who asked to be identified only as George told China Daily.

George applied for a tourist visa at the Chinese Consulate General in Los Angeles earlier this year. He went to the consulate on a Monday morning. "I didn't have to make an appointment; I just walked in," he said.

He was roughly 15th in line, and his name was called about an hour and a half later.

"After I went up to the window, it

was done in about five minutes. I wasn't asked for any of the paperwork, and I was told to come back in four days to pick up my visa. The whole process was smooth sailing."

George, a computer engineer, said he plans to travel to China in March for about two weeks.

"I appreciate the new visa policy because it provides me with flexibility. I have only booked hotels for the first week. I do have a plan, but who knows, I might want to visit a place I haven't thought about while there. It's nice to be able to be spontaneous."

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng announced the streamlined visa process at a forum earlier this month in Atlanta, Georgia.

"Tourist visa applicants within the United States will no longer be required to submit round-trip air ticket booking record, proof of hotel reservation, itinerary or invitation letter," Xie said at a forum celebrating the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Xie said it is important to remove obstacles and spark a new boom in exchanges.

"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and worsening China-US relations, a chill loomed over people-to-people exchanges in the past few years," he said. "When travel went down, estrangement and misunderstanding went up."

Elizabeth Hin, president of The White Rose Foundation, a nonprofit that promotes understanding and harmony among the world's religions, said the change represents the deepest value in US-China relations, which is "trust and reciprocity of trust."

Hin, who attended the Atlanta forum, said she first visited China in 1978, when the country began to open up, and has gone back and forth since. "It's not that difficult to do the application and have an invitation letter," she said. "But there is a welcoming sense (in foregoing such a requirement)."

Blaine Glass, director of The White Rose Foundation, said the discussion at the forum stirred his

desire to visit China again, and the easier visa application is certainly welcome. The last time he visited China was more than 20 years ago, when he toured the Xizang autonomous region. "I wanted to learn tai chi," Glass said.

As China moves to improve people-to-people contact between the two countries, Xie, the ambassador to the US, said that Beijing hopes "the US side will work with China in the same direction by taking measures to clear obstacles in travel, visa and border-entry policies, further increase direct flights significantly, and adjust the China travel advisory as soon as possible."

Jing Quan, minister of the Chinese embassy in the US, told China Daily that due to a shortage of wide-body planes among US airlines, it has been difficult to increase the number of direct flights between China and the US.

In China, the wait time for a US visa application interview is about six months. "It's just impossible to arrange your itinerary with such a long wait," Jing said.

Dennis Wilder, a senior fellow for the Initiative for US-China Dialogue on Global Issues at Georgetown University, agreed that the long wait period for a US visa interview is a big problem.

"The problem is we need more American officers to do the interviews, and we don't have enough State Department people," Wilder said. "It is not easy to solve, because for Congress, it's not a priority."

## XI'S VISION

# Winter tourism gets Olympic boost from legacy of 2022 Games

By XU WEI in Beijing and ZHOU HUIYING in Harbin

Li Yuanyuan, a photographer, has been working very hard over the past few weeks to help holidaymakers from across the nation capture their memorable moments in front of the Saint Sophia Cathedral, one of the iconic buildings in Harbin, Heilongjiang province.

Having stayed in Harbin, often dubbed "China's ice city", for four years, the 23-year-old said he has never seen its streets "packed with so many people".

With temperatures dropping well below -20 C, Li said the city has been trying its best to offer visitors a warm and welcoming experience.

"We have been trying to make our pricing as transparent as possible. Personal recommendation matters a lot in our business."

Over the past two months, winter tourism has been booming in Northeast China — Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces and part of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region — providing a much-needed boon as the region seeks new growth drivers and channels of job creation.

Analysts have highlighted an overarching vision from President Xi Jinping to get 300 million people involved in winter sports, set out during the bidding stages of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, as playing a key role in driving public enthusiasm for winter tourism.

Xi has championed fully exploiting the nation's ice and snow resources, saying on multiple occasions that "ice and snow are also as valuable as gold and silver".

"The Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics are like a springboard that can propel the leapfrog development of winter sports and the ice and snow industry in our country," Xi told officials during a meeting in 2021 on the preparation of the two global events.

Han Yuanjun, an analyst at the China Tourism Academy, said, "Before the vision was set out by the president, few people could foresee the huge economic potential from the ice and snow sector."

The vision to bolster the growth of winter tourism has led regions with rich ice and snow resources, includ-

ing Northeast China and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to come up with respective plans to improve their infrastructure and related sectors, he added.

This winter was the first time since the outbreak of COVID-19 that many Chinese tourists enjoyed their winter vacations without worrying about lockdowns and infections. It also saw the potential for winter tourism being fully unleashed across the nation.

During this year's New Year holiday, Heilongjiang was the destination of over 6.6 million tourist trips, a year-on-year increase of 173.7 percent, while Jilin saw an overall growth of 110 percent in tourism and Liaoning welcomed a total of 7.376 million tourist trips, representing a remarkable year-on-year growth of 203.8 percent.

The China Tourism Academy predicted in a recent report that the winter season from late 2023 to early 2024 will see traveler numbers exceed 400 million for the first time, bringing in tourism-related revenue of 550 billion yuan (\$77.29 billion).

Han said the strong public enthusiasm for winter sports, part of the legacy of the Beijing Winter Olympics, coupled with the highly unique tourism resources in Northeast China, has contributed to the tourism boom.

Xi has made specific instructions on the development of winter tourism during fact-finding trips to Northeast China, highlighting the importance of "enabling the picturesque landscapes of the northern borderlands and the wealth of ice and snow resources to provide an inexhaustible source of income for the residents".

At a symposium in Harbin in September, he told officials that the region must vigorously develop tourism with distinctive features. Authorities in the northeast should treat the development of the ice and snow economy as a new growth point, promoting the development of whole industry chains, including ice and snow sports, ice and snow culture, ice and snow equipment, and ice and snow tourism, he added.

See *Tourism*, page 3

## Visit tradition highlights bonds of friendship with Africa

WORLD WATCH  
By Elizabeth Michael Mitchell Omoruyi

African countries. This in turn will help to restore the momentum of Africa-China cooperation, as well as extend China's foreign policy regarding its relationship with the continent of Africa.

The Chinese government has extended its help to Africa by not only building infrastructure but also by championing development as one of the best ways to support Africa in overcoming the continent's security challenges.

Foreign Minister Wang's visit to these four African countries promoted the implementation of the outcomes of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and coordination with African countries on the FOCAC meeting to be held in China later this year. It was also intended to strengthen economic and security cooperation with African countries.

His trip highlighted the great importance that China attaches to its traditional friendship with African nations and reflected China's continuing engagement with North Africa and West Africa. It also displayed China's willingness to cooperate with

See *Visit*, page 3

## PRIVATE PLAYERS MAKE THEIR MARK WITH SPACE MISSIONS

More Chinese companies embark on satellite and rocket ventures

By ZHAO LEI  
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

The first launch service tower was completed at Hainan International Commercial Aerospace Launch Center in Wenchang, a coastal city in the island province of Hainan, on Dec 29, the last work day of 2023.

However, work continues at the center for its maiden launch, which is expected to take place around June.

When put into operation, the center will become the fifth ground-based launch complex in China and the first dedicated to serving commercial space missions rather than government-funded programs.

In China, a commercial space

In-depth

mission generally refers to a space activity paid for by a business entity rather than a government department.

Construction of the new center, which began in July 2022, was undertaken by China Aerospace Construction Group.

The No 1 service tower is about 90 meters high and incorporates the latest rocket-launch technologies. It is specifically tasked with servicing Long March 8 carrier rockets.

See *Launches*, page 2



Gentoo penguins at Harbin PolarPark attract visitors on Sunday in the capital city of Heilongjiang province. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

INSIDE  
China a key player in advancing Global South cooperation  
Global Views, page 13

www.chinadailyglobal.com  
A member of ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Newsstand prices:  
US \$1 Canada C\$1  
UK £1 EU €1  
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling  
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120  
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;  
Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee



# PAGE TWO

# Launches: Successes pave way to the future

From page 1

Developed by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, a subsidiary of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, the Long March 8 family consists of multiple medium-lift launch vehicles designated for commercial space missions.

Yang Tianliang, chairman of Hainan International Commercial Aerospace Launch Co, owner of the new center, said the complex's debut mission scheduled for June will be performed by a Long March 8 rocket lifting off from the No 1 service tower.

The new center project is a joint venture by the Hainan provincial government and three State-owned space conglomerates — China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp, and China Satellite Network Group.

There is already a launch complex in Hainan — the Wenchang Space Launch Center. Like the other three such centers in China — Jiuquan, Taiyuan, and Xichang — it is administered by the central government and is primarily tasked with serving State programs such as lunar explorations and manned spaceflights.

The Hainan provincial government has said it intends to make the new site a leading launch facility that will be fully commercially managed to support the long-term growth of the nation's commercial space industry.

Thanks to the central government's encouragement and favorable policies, more Chinese private companies have become involved in satellite businesses ranging from design and manufacturing to in-orbit operations and data processing, generating huge demand for commercial launch services.

Several private enterprises have announced or begun to implement plans to establish space-based networks with tens or even hundreds of satellites for broadband internet or data collection businesses.

Hu Shengyun, a senior rocket designer at China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp, said the existing government-run launch centers are too busy to handle rising demand from the commercial space sector. It is also not uncommon for even a government-assigned mission to have to await scheduling at those sites.

Each of the existing centers has only one or two service towers, and important State missions such as crewed flights always have priority, Hu said.

"Moreover, the management and operational methods of these centers are specifically designed for State-funded programs rather than commercial missions, so carrying out numerous commercial launches will likely create problems or challenges for them," he added.

Yang said construction of a second launch service tower at the center in Hainan is expected to be finished next month.

Installation and fine-tuning work on this tower is due to be completed in May, he said, adding that it will be able to service as many as 19 types of rockets, most of them produced by private companies.

## New power

Private enterprises have become a new power in China's rocket industry, with their growth being fast-tracked. Last year, when the nation carried



**Left:** The Smart Dragon 3 rocket lifts off from waters off the coast of Guangdong province in December. ZHANG JINGYI / FOR CHINA DAILY  
**Center:** A Long March 2F rocket carrying the Shenzhou XVII spacecraft lifts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in October. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY  
**Right:** The Lingxi 03 satellite is carried into space in July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



facilities that are busy handling government-backed programs.

"This enables us to make more launches each year," Xia said.

To date, Galactic Energy has carried out 11 Ceres 1 launches, far outperforming other private competitors. Last year, it made seven launches — six of them successful.

## Satellite technologies

Private players have also come of age in the satellite field to become a flourishing seedbed for technological innovation and creativity.

GalaxySpace, a leading private satellite maker, built China's first satellite equipped with a flexible solar array and deployed it into space in July.

The satellite, Lingxi 03, is a plate-shaped communications satellite. It has a millimeter-wave multibeam digital payload, which features a transmission capacity of tens of gigabits per second.

Zhang Shijie, a senior spacecraft researcher and GalaxySpace's chief scientist, said the satellite's main task is to verify a next-generation low-Earth-orbit broadband communication system and other satellite technologies, including an ultra-large energy system and active thermal control.

He said the Lingxi 03's flexible solar wing is a major technological feat, because such apparatus has proved through the construction of massive satellite networks by foreign companies to be crucial in establishing an internet satellite system.

"The solar wing has been working well and the results of its trial run were better than we expected," Zhang said.

Zhu Zhengxian, chief technology officer at GalaxySpace, said the solar wing is extremely thin — each layer is only about 1 mm thick — and when the wing is folded inside the rocket before launch, it is only 5 centimeters thick.

"When fully unfolded in space, the array is about nine meters long and more than 2.5 meters wide. It is characterized by its small folded size, light weight and modular design," he said.

Deployment of the satellite also marked the first in-orbit verification of China's multisatellite stack deployment method, which is used when a rocket is required to put a number of plate-shaped satellites into orbit.

"This method will play a major role in the rapid deployment of multiple communication satellites in low orbit," Zhu said.

Last year, Ellipspace, another private satellite maker based in Beijing, launched four remote-sensing satellites in its Starpool 1 network, marking the start of its ambitious plan to establish a large space-based system consisting of more than 100 satellites.

Remote-sensing satellites are tasked with detecting and monitoring the physical characteristics of objects on land or at sea by measuring the targets' reflected and emitted radiation.

Di Fengping, president of Ellipspace, said the company plans to use the network to obtain data for users in businesses such as oil and electricity infrastructure patrol work, protection of animals and nature reserves, agricultural insurance, emergency response, disaster relief, and marine infrastructure maintenance. The network is due to be completed by 2027.

out 67 rocket launches, 12 rockets built by Chinese private companies were used to send satellites into space, far more than in previous years.

In April, the first TL 2 rocket, developed by the startup Space Pioneer, which is based in Beijing, reached orbit on its maiden flight, becoming the first privately built, liquid-fuel rocket in China to do so.

Lifting off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China, it placed a remote-sensing satellite in a sun-synchronous orbit about 500 kilometers above the Earth.

It was the first time any privately developed, liquid-propellant carrier rocket in the world had succeeded in its first orbital attempt — a powered flight that places a craft in orbit in outer space.

Before the TL 2, all liquid-propellant rockets developed by private enterprises, including SpaceX and Virgin Orbit in the United States and China's LandSpace, failed on their first orbital attempt.

The successful launch also saw Space Pioneer become the third private company in China to carry out an orbital mission.

Previously, i-Space and Galactic Energy, which are both based in Beijing, achieved the feat using their own solid-propellant rockets. Such rockets are easier to design and make than liquid-fuel rockets, but their smaller capacity means they cannot launch large satellites or deploy spacecraft to high orbits.

Wang Yanan, editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, said the TL 2's success is a milestone for China's space industry, as it shows that the nation's private players have grown strong enough to undertake important tasks previously only conducted by State-owned giants.

TL 2, which stands for Tianlong 2 or Sky Dragon 2, is 32.8 meters high, 3.35 meters wide and has a liftoff weight of 153 metric tons. Space Pioneer said the rocket can send satellites with a combined weight of 1.5 tons to a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 500 km, or spacecraft weighing two tons to a low-Earth orbit.

In July, the ZQ 2, short for Zhuque 2 or Rosefinch 2, a rocket developed by

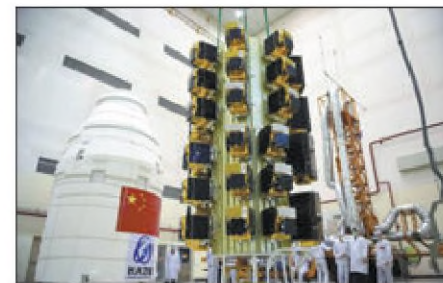
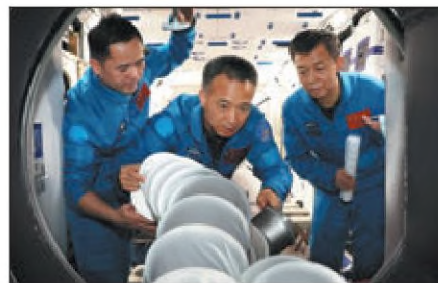


Researchers examine the capsule of the Shenzhou XVI manned spaceship after it touches down at the Dongfeng Landing Site in Inner Mongolia autonomous region in October. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

LandSpace, succeeded in its second attempt to reach orbit, becoming the world's first methane-fueled rocket to complete an orbital mission.

Last month, the third flight of the ZQ 2, now the largest and most powerful private rocket in China, was successfully conducted.

The maiden ZQ 2 flight took place in December 2022 from the Jiuquan center. The rocket successfully crossed the Karman Line, the globally recognized boundary between the Earth's atmosphere and the edge of space, but malfunctioned on its second stage and failed to reach orbit.



**From left:** The astronauts for the Shenzhou XV mission, Fei Junlong (center), Deng Qingming (right) and Zhang Lu, train in a simulated cabin in March 2022. XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY China's first man in space Yang Liwei (third from left) bids farewell to the Shenzhou XVII mission crew at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in October. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY Gui Haichao, the Shenzhou XVI mission's science payload specialist and the first Chinese civilian in space, receives underwater training. XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY A total of 41 satellites are placed inside a Long March 2D carrier rocket before their launch in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Chang'e 6 spacecraft poised for challenging mission to far side of the moon

By ZHAO LEI

The Chang'e 6 mission, China's next robotic expedition to the moon, is scheduled to take place later this year, tasked with bringing back samples from the far side of the Earth's satellite, the China National Space Administration said.

To facilitate communications

between the Chang'e 6 probe and Earth, a new relay satellite named Queqiao 2 is set to be deployed in a lunar orbit in the first half of this year, the administration added.

The Chang'e 6 spacecraft will consist of four components — orbiter, lander, ascender and re-entry module.

Hu Hao, a senior planner at the

administration in charge of the mission, said that if everything goes according to plan, the spacecraft will touch down in the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the moon to collect dust and rock samples. If the mission succeeds, it will be the first time that samples have been obtained from the far side of the moon.

The administration has offered

to carry 10 kilograms of foreign equipment on the mission's lander and orbiter.

After several rounds of selection and talks, it decided that the Chang'e 6 lander would carry scientific instruments from France, Italy and the European Space Agency, and that a payload from Pakistan would be mounted on

the orbiter, Hu said.

To date, the United States, the former Soviet Union and China have brought lunar substances back to Earth, but none of them obtained samples from the moon's far side.

Tidal forces on Earth slow the moon's rotation to the point where the same side always faces Earth. The other side, most of which is nev-

er visible from Earth, is the moon's far side.

Although the far side has been extensively photographed by spacecraft, starting with a Soviet probe in 1959, no probe had touched down on it until a soft landing made by China's Chang'e 4 mission in the Von Karman crater in the South Pole-Aitken Basin in January 2019.

## TOP NEWS

## Job situation improves for female workers

Long-term mechanism needed to promote sustainable, stable employment, expert says

By CHENG SI  
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

China's efforts to encourage women's employment have borne fruit in recent years, though women still face pressure from their families and society, which could weaken their resolve and ability to get jobs, said experts.

The National Bureau of Statistics recently published a report showing that 320 million women were employed as of 2022, accounting for 43.2 percent of the total working population. Around 67.66 million female workers were employed by nonprivate units in urban areas, which is 40.5 percent of employees in the segment, according to the report.

These two figures correspond closely with the goals set by a guideline on women's development that was released in 2021 by the State Council, China's Cabinet. The guideline, covering the decade through 2030, aims to maintain the proportion of working women in the total workforce at around 45 percent and seeks to ensure that the proportion of women employed in urban units can reach around 40 percent by 2030.

"Women's labor force participation rate in China is much higher than the world average, and also higher than that in some developed countries, thanks to the continuous efforts the government has made in promoting women's employment," said Pang Shi, director of the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Personnel Science's department of employment and entrepreneurship.

She said that local human resources departments have organized job fairs especially for female job-seekers and channeled job vacancies for women in rural areas. "The government also offers free services such as introducing employment policies and vacancies for women who have been laid off, and organizes skills training sessions for women to help them improve their ability to get jobs," Pang said.

However, gender discrimination and concerns over work-life balance still hamper women's employment prospects and career progression, experts said.

"We are glad to see that more employers are emphasizing job seekers' ability and potential, rather than the gender. Women have also

become increasingly competitive in the job market in recent years," said Li Qiang, vice-president of the recruitment portal Zhaopin. "However, we find women still face challenges and problems such as work-life balance."

"We have done a survey that found that the average salary of female respondents was 8,689 yuan (\$1,210) per month in 2023, while for males it was 9,942 yuan. The difference is mainly due to gender discrimination or underestimation of women's abilities and the value they create."

He said that some women find themselves at a disadvantage in the job market due to their weak educational background and their less than perfect working skills.

"The stereotypical view that women are caretakers of the family rather than the ones assuming the main roles at the workplace has also resulted in low self-recognition for women and lower expectations of their work performance."

"Women are more vulnerable in face of social and economic problems such as poverty and unemployment, and face stricter recruitment restrictions, as males are preferred in certain situations," he added.

Pang, of the Chinese Academy of Personnel Science, said the nation needs to establish a long-term mechanism to promote the sustainable and stable employment of women.

"The government can figure out ways of improving women's participation in sectors requiring a higher level of knowledge or skills, including sciences, engineering, mathematics, research and politics," she said, adding that legal knowledge and gender equality awareness are also important, which "can help reduce the possibility of female job seekers being rejected due to their gender."

Li, from Zhaopin, added that in addition to the government's efforts, employers are encouraged to create a more friendly working environment for female workers so that they can gain equal opportunities in the promotion process and decision-making.

"Women can also win a bigger say at the workplace for themselves by improving their abilities and performance. They are encouraged to adjust career plans in accordance with the changing job market," he added.

## Colorful display



Visitors pick free tulips at Museum Square in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on Saturday. Around 200,000 tulips were arranged to mark National Tulip Day, which Amsterdam has celebrated for 12 years in a row. PETER DEJONG / AP

## Speedy link



Juan Carlos Munoz, Chile's minister of transport and telecommunications, speaks on Friday during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new Chinese-made train at the Central Station in Santiago, Chile. The electric-diesel dual-power train has been put into service on the Alameda-Curico section of Chile's national railway. With a maximum speed of 160 kilometers per hour, it is the fastest train in South America.

JORGE VILLEGAS / XINHUA

## Hebei rolls out red carpet for more global talent

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang  
zhangyu1@chinadaily.com.cn

Zhang Junxia expressed her deep gratitude after she returned to North China's Hebei province, where she got a great job to develop her talent.

"Upon achieving success in my studies, I, a native of Hebei, wanted to do something for my hometown and contribute to its development," said Zhang, 48, a professor at Hebei University's School of Life Sciences in Baoding.

Born and raised in Cangzhou, another city in Hebei, Zhang pursued her studies at the university in Baoding before embarking on a studying and working journey in 2005 that led her across the globe. During the period, she obtained Canadian citizenship and focused on the study of arachnids and insects' molecular phylogeny and biogeography.

"In 2019, I got an opportunity to work at my alma mater and join the university's arachnology research team. I was excited to return," Zhang said.

According to Hebei University, Zhang's participation has significantly enhanced the team's research capabilities in molecular phylogenetics and evolution.

Zhang received a total of 400,000 yuan (\$55,600) in project startup funds and settling down expenses in Baoding, as well as assistance from the university in arranging accommodation within a 15-minute walk from her laboratory.

"I never expected to receive such great recognition and support. I was deeply moved," Zhang said.

Since her return in 2019, Zhang has published 25 research papers in prestigious international journals

such as Cladistics and Systematic Entomology.

In 2022, in recognition of her contributions to scientific research and the development of Hebei, Zhang was conferred the Yanzhao Friendship Award, the highest honor given to foreign experts by the Hebei provincial government.

Alongside Zhang, 19 other foreign experts were also recipients of this prestigious award.

In recent years, Hebei has been dedicated to fostering a favorable working and living environment for professionals from all around the world.

To this end, a series of measures have been rolled out to promote the hiring of international high-end professionals.

In December, the province's foreign affairs office and department of education jointly unveiled eight

measures to promote the hiring of more international high-end professionals, initially for over 100 positions and specialties at 18 institutions of higher learning.

Meanwhile, a 1,000-person database of high-end foreign professionals was also established as a platform to match them with the needs of the province's universities.

Recently, the province's foreign experts bureau also issued measures to step up the recruitment of foreign professionals.

For key industrial parks in Hebei, efforts will be made to organize representatives from outstanding enterprises to conduct recruitment and promotion activities overseas. Priority support will be given to the introduction of core technical experts in areas such as advanced steel smelting and intelligent environmental protection.

## Tourism: Influx proves 'unprecedented test' for city

From page 1

In Mohe, China's northernmost city, the testing of vehicles under extreme freezing conditions has emerged as a key driver for the local economy.

Over 10 carmakers have been conducting tests of their vehicles in the city starting from November, and the city's car testing industry generates hundreds of millions of yuan in revenue for sectors such as accommodation, catering, retail and transportation.

Another key factor that contributed to the success story of Harbin, and Northeast China in general, is the unwavering commitment from the authorities to provide a welcoming experience for tourists, analysts said.

During his trip to Heilongjiang in September, Xi set forth wide-ranging requirements for the

region's authorities to improve the business climate, saying that a stable, transparent, regulated, and predictable legal environment must be created for various market entities.

Han, the analyst, said the unprecedented influx of tourists has presented the northeastern region's business environment with "an unprecedented test", both in terms of infrastructure and services.

In March 2019, Wang Wentao, the then governor of Heilongjiang, said that there were cases in which tourists were ripped off by service providers in the province, and the government set up a special fund to repay the tourists, even before the authorities launched investigations into the cases.

In one well-known case, a tourist complained in an online post about being ripped off by the owner of a

family inn near Xuexiang National Forest Park, triggering an outcry about the tourism environment in the northeast.

With local authorities scaling up efforts to protect the interests of consumers and improve the business environment, the resort, also known as "China's Snow Town", has welcomed over 720,000 guests since November, with tourist numbers also expected to be record-breaking this winter.

The improvement in Harbin's business environment has been so dramatic that Luisa Tam, a columnist for the South China Morning Post, wrote that Hong Kong must look to the city for lessons to "attract tourists again".

Yuan Baohong, a regional economy analyst with market research firm CCID Consulting, said the authorities in Harbin and other northeast cities have devoted con-

siderable efforts to providing tourists with a better travel experience, including free rides to scenic spots and a quick response to their complaints.

He explained that the booming winter tourism sector has also offered key lessons for the revitalization of the northeast, as the region grapples with challenges such as population outflows and economic slowdowns.

The booming ice and snow sectors have not only created jobs but also elevated the reputation and influence of cities like Harbin, he said.

"The development of cultural and tourism sectors can serve as a gateway for fostering new growth drivers and developing new productive forces," Yuan said.

Contact the writers at  
xuwe@chinadaily.com.cn

## Visit: China sees Africa as a place for multilateral cooperation

From page 1

China's engagement is important because it is meeting the needs of local people by creating jobs and providing security, among other things.

Wang's visit came at an opportune time. As a valuable contribution to sustaining China-Egypt economic ties, it was expected to have not only helped reinvigorate Chinese investments within the Suez Canal Economic Zone, but also to have further incentivized Chinese government decision-makers and Chinese enterprises to use joint ventures more

often as the vehicle for their investment in Egypt. Furthermore, it promoted Chinese-owned and Egyptian-owned enterprises' exports to Europe and the Middle East, as well as to China, thanks to the nation's tax incentives and its location as a juncture for Europe, Asia and Africa.

For Tunisia, amid developmental headwinds and an economic crunch magnified by external financing challenges due to heavy external debt, the country's economic ties stand as a vital pillar of its relationship with China.

Wang's visit enabled Tunisia to

look to China for continued investment in development projects that could spur economic growth.

As for Togo, its trade with China reportedly reached \$2.3 billion from January to July 2023, a 14 percent surge from the same period in 2022, demonstrating the thriving economic ties between the two countries. As a principal commercial partner and one of Togo's principal sources of investment, China has been supporting Togo in addressing its infrastructure challenges in a bid to help the nation with its ambition to double the mining sector and to

promote value-addition and industrialization.

Finally, as for Cote d'Ivoire, the nation has been enjoying considerable growth during the past two decades in its bilateral trade with China. During that time, exports to China increased at an annualized rate of 18.2 percent. The tight bilateral ties between Cote d'Ivoire and China are also symbolic of Africa's great support for the Belt and Road Initiative, thanks to the infrastructure investment push from the cooperation.

Therefore, Wang's visit not only offered an opportunity to under-

stand how the world should see Africa, encouraging countries to offer support to local African economies so that they can build up their economic strength, but it also demonstrated China's belief that Africa should be a place for multilateral cooperation, not for major power competition or geopolitical benefits.

Since China is aware that African people like seeing their economies treated as business opportunities rather than as recipients of foreign aid with political strings attached, it approaches negotiations with African nations as opportunities for

business cooperation rather than viewing them as solicitations for charity. This is one of the reasons African leaders and citizens have appreciated not just the material support arising from China, but also the sense of not being patronized.

Looking ahead, Africa and China will advance their cooperation to build a China-Africa community with a shared future, which will help unleash their development potential in the new era.

The author is executive director of the Center for Nigerian Studies at the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

# CHINA

## Survivors remember vicious act of violence

Oral report offers chilling accounts of terrorist attack in Yecheng, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in February 2012

### Death took toll on kin, victim's brother says

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou  
zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Mehmet Tursun, a native of Yecheng county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, said that the terrorists that attacked innocent people in the county in 2012 were "absolute monsters", and that he is still clueless as to how people could have carried out such unspeakable acts.

He was one of many survivors and families of victims of terrorist attacks who recently shared their stories in a special report titled *Victims and Survivors of Terrorism in China: An Oral History*, which was released by the Institute for Communication and Borderland Governance at Jinan University on Thursday last week.



Mehmet Tursun, a native of Yecheng county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, said that the terrorists that attacked innocent people in the county in 2012 were "absolute monsters", and that he is still clueless as to how people could have carried out such unspeakable acts.

Mehmet, whose brother was killed during the attack on Xingfu Road on Feb 28, 2012, said the incident has caused so much pain that he and his family still suffer to this day.

"It ruined my sister-in-law's entire family, and my dad was in constant pain and eventually passed away. I always feel great anger, and I would like to meet those terrorists who killed innocent people indiscriminately, and even if there is no way I can meet them, I just want to ask them: on what grounds can they kill those who have no grudges against them and those the terrorists don't even know?" said Mehmet, who did not name his brother.

After the incident, Mehmet said his family felt like they were on a train that was suddenly pulled off the track.

He recalled that the terrorists stabbed anyone they saw on the street indiscriminately. As they made their way along Xingfu Road, they came to the edible oil and grain shop where his brother worked.

"The wife of the boss of my brother's store had to run and hide under a table," he said.

Later, Mehmet said she told him that she saw employees trying to hide under tables as well, as the terrorists chased them.

"My brother punched the terrorists who attacked him in front of the store, and then he was hacked and killed by them," he said.

"When my brother's body was sent back to us, we found wounds on his head, neck, shoulder and left arm."

Mehmet said the whole family cried together in sadness.



People walk on Xingfu Road, a pedestrian street in Yecheng, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in July 2022. A deadly terrorist attack took place here in February 2012. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

### Wielding axes, 'they only wanted to kill'

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou

Survivors of a terrorist attack in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region 12 years ago shared their chilling stories in a special report that was released on Thursday by the Institute for Communication and Borderland Governance at Jinan University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

The report, titled *Victims and Survivors of Terrorism in China: An Oral History*, revealed the harrowing accounts of those who lived through the atrocities that took place on a pedestrian street in Xinjiang's Yecheng county on Feb 28, 2012.

Wang Tiancheng, the owner of a grain and cooking oil shop on Xingfu Road in Yecheng who was critically injured in the attack,



Wang Tiancheng

He was standing with his back against the rear door of his shop when terrorists armed with axes and machetes attacked him.

They looked menacing, he recalled. "Their axes were so big, and the hafts were so long," he said, adding that he was almost certain that he was going to die. "They only wanted to kill, so they attacked anyone they saw, especially the elderly, women and children."

Wang said he sustained grievous head and shoulder injuries in the

recalled the fateful day in the report.

Wang, 60, said he was feeling particularly unwell that day, because he had been in the hospital for a week to receive intravenous fluids.

attack and spent 46 days in a hospital. The local government covered all his medical expenses, which amounted to 20,000 yuan (\$2,800).

A doctor who examined his wounds later told him that his collar bone would have been fractured had the machete gone half a centimeter deeper.

He recalled hearing about other atrocities that occurred that day.

"An auxiliary police officer was hacked to death. I heard he was on traffic duty near the rear entrance of Xingfu Road. And a 60-year-old woman was sitting in front of a rice noodle shop across the street when three terrorists broke her jaw," Wang said.

Nine terrorists in three groups attacked people along the pedestrian street. Most of the victims were elderly, sick, disabled or women, he said.

### Shopkeeper describes fending off assailants

By LI LEI in Guangzhou  
lilei@chinadaily.com.cn

Chen Jizhong, a survivor of the infamous terrorist attack on Feb 28, 2012, in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, vividly recalls the chaos and bravery that unfolded on Xingfu Road, sharing his traumatic experience 12 years after the tragic event.

In the midst of a seemingly ordinary afternoon on the road in Yecheng county, Chen, a shopkeeper, found himself plunged into the chaos of atrocities that would leave an indelible mark on his life.

Speaking to researchers from Jinan University in Guangdong province, Chen recounted the events of that fateful day as part of a collective oral history documenting survivors of the "2.28 terrorist attack". His tale was among others featured in a special report titled *Victims and Survivors of Terrorism in China: An Oral History*.

Chen and his friends were playing cards in his shop when the tranquil atmosphere was shattered by shouts of people hacking others nearby. Confused and unaware of the unfolding tragedy, Chen and his companions struggled to make sense of the situation.

Chen, 48, a Sichuan native who had moved to Yecheng in the early 1990s, vividly described the chaotic scene. Shoppers ran, assuming it was a gang fight or a row caused by someone who was intoxicated.

Little did they know, nine terrorists were launching a killing spree on Xingfu Road, targeting unsuspecting passersby and shopkeepers.

Amid the mayhem, Chen priori-



Chen Jizhong

itized the safety of his son, swiftly moving him to an attic on the second floor and barricading the stairway.

Unbeknownst to him, the attackers, armed with machetes, were wreaking havoc just meters away.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, Chen and other bystanders armed themselves with improvised weapons to confront the terrorists.

In a desperate attempt to fend off the assailants, Chen and his group engaged in a fierce struggle. "We were scared, so we ran to the yard of the county government," Chen recounted.

In the ensuing chaos, Chen and his fellow defenders used mops, wooden sticks and fishing nets to fight back. Recounting the pivotal moment when they managed to subdue one of the terrorists, Chen expressed a mix of fear and determination.

The assailant, devoid of expression with dull, lifeless eyes, was eventually apprehended by the police, he said.

Chen, who sustained minor injuries during the confrontation, emphasized the collective effort that thwarted the attackers, preventing more significant harm.

He expressed hope that such a tragedy would never recur, acknowledging the considerable improvements in security over the years due to enhanced counterterrorism efforts in Xinjiang.

"This is undoubtedly what everyone wants," he concluded, sharing a sentiment of resilience and collective determination to prevent future acts of terror.

### Father's rage simmers as he tells tragic tale of loss

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou

Tursun Talip still grinds his teeth when he talks about the terrorists who killed his son Turghunjan, an auxiliary police officer, during a coordinated attack on a pedestrian street in Yecheng county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in February 2012.

Survivors of terrorist attacks recently shared their stories in a special report, *Victims and Survivors of Terrorism in China: An Oral History*, which was released by the Institute for Communication and Borderland Governance at Jinan University on Thursday.

"How young was my son when



Tursun Talip

"My son was only 28 years old at the time, and if not for the incident ... our family would have been very happy."

He said his daughter-in-law has raised their child and hasn't remarried.

Tursun was working at a school when the terrorist attack occurred at about 7 pm in Yecheng on Feb 28, 2012.

he was killed by the terrorist? He had just become a father, and his baby was only 6 months old," Tursun said.

"His wife was unemployed, and their family was ruined."

He recalled that he received a phone call and was told to close the school gate. He was told that nobody was allowed to leave the campus, as a terrorist attack had been reported on Xingfu Road nearby.

But what worried him the most was the safety of Turghunjan, who was on duty in the area where the attack occurred.

Tursun later rode a motorbike to the scene. He learned that the attack was over, the crowd had been evacuated and the police had begun to clean up.

He found out that Turghunjan had been sent to the hospital, so he immediately made his way there.

He broke down in tears when he was told his son had been killed. He was taken to identify the body.

"Outside the room, I saw the wounds on my son's neck, and here (pointing to his shoulder and neck), and there (pointing to his right arm)," he said.

"The county chiefs were at the hospital, comforting us," he recalled.

Tursun said he was grateful for the appreciation shown for his son's service by county officials.

"When we came out of the hospital, my daughter-in-law immediately broke down. The county leaders told us that my son honorably sacrificed himself for the

country's people, and they escorted my son's body back to my house," he said.

The county government organized a funeral for Turghunjan the next day, and all the county officials attended.

Tursun did not tell his wife about their son's death then, as she had just had eye surgery in Urumqi, the regional capital, and was resting at their eldest daughter's house.

Tursun said she was in poor health, and their daughter was taking care of her. He did not tell their other children, either.

"My son, who had been a hard-working person, was just doing his job that day, but ended up brutally killed," he said.

Tursun said he just wanted to ask those terrorists: "Don't you cherish your own lives?"



Nature Positive

# 人与自然和谐向好

呵护自然 你我有份

We are part of the solution #ForNature

## CHINA

## Agricultural R&amp;D key to food security

A string of extreme weather events last year worried many farmers. A cold spell in spring that affected some wheat-growing provinces was followed by record-shattering heat waves and flooding that inundated large swaths of rice fields in Northeast China. Then, an earlier-than-usual cold wave swept across much of the country in November, prompting authorities to warn vegetable growers of possible damage.

Despite the woes, the National Bureau of Statistics announced recently that China's annual grain output reached a new high of 695.41 million metric tons last year — a year-on-year increase of about 1 percent.

It was the ninth year in a row that the grain harvest topped 650 million tons, the benchmark set by the central government to ensure national food security for roughly a fifth of the world's population.

The increase is a bright spot against the backdrop of a global rise in hunger.

On a visit to China in November, Bram Govaerts, director-general of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, which is based in Mexico, described the state of global food security as scary and said the world's food supply system is fragile.

"One conflict can destabilize global wheat availability, and because of the conflict we had in one place, the world was suffering from increased wheat prices," he said, adding that countries need to revamp their food supply mix, produce more food locally and curb their reliance on imported grain — all things China has done in recent years.

Govaerts added that China's recent efforts to step up agricultural research funding were another reason the country was now more resilient when confronted with global food price increases and supply chain woes.

On multiple occasions, including before the harvest season in late October, senior Chinese agricultural officials said the greater use of high-yielding crop varieties — many also designed to thrive under extreme conditions — explained why the country's food output had remained satisfactory.

That cast a spotlight on the increasingly critical role technologies play in China's efforts to guarantee food supply as supplies of untapped arable land and other natural resources dwindle.

The harsh environment faced by farmers last year was noted at the annual Central Rural Work Conference in Beijing last month.

The high-level gathering reviews progress on rural-related work in the previous year — including food production — and decides priorities for the next.

It was agreed at the meeting that despite "multiple negative factors including severe natural disasters", national grain output had not suffered, rural incomes had grown more quickly, and the countryside was harmonious and stable, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The meeting also called for more breakthroughs this year using the "dual drivers of technology and reform".

China is racing to boost domestic food production and reduce its reliance on imported soybean and corn as geopolitical conflicts threaten to

China's record grain output last year was the result of efforts on multiple fronts. **Li Lei** reports.



**Clockwise from top:** Employees cultivate sweet potato seedlings at a plant factory in Puyang, Henan province, on July 14. WANG YOUHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY A worker checks the quality of tomatoes at an agricultural industrial park in Rizhao, Shandong province on May 25. WANG HAIBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY Harvesters load a truck with newly-harvested rice in Liuyang, Hunan province, on Nov 1. CHEN ZEGUO / XINHUA

**2023**  
year in  
**Review**

disrupt the global trade in food.

To shield the nation's food supply from external factors, authorities have ramped up a long-running mission to stabilize the area of farmland and have increased penalties for those repurposing it for nonagricultural use.

They also started a campaign more recently to vitalize China's sprawling but uninventive seed sector, urging plant researchers to focus on fields such as fundamental technologies, core germplasm resources and key machinery and equipment to increase agricultural efficiency.

Germplasm, the genetic resources found in things like seeds or animal tissue, is used by scientists to breed better crops or farm animals.

There have been growing calls among researchers for governments around the world to allow for unimpeded flows of such knowledge to slow the decline in crop biodiversity



Farmers check the progress of hydroponic vegetables in Xingtai, Hebei province, on Oct 31. ZHANG CHI / XINHUA

induced by climate change. It would also aid genetic research aimed at producing higher-yielding crop varieties able to cope with the harshest environments.

Felix Dapare Dakora, former president of the African Academy of Sciences, said during a visit to China in November that the increasing frequency of extreme weather events such as wildfires and flooding is putting the preservation of crop biodiversity under pressure, but the free exchange of germplasm

could mitigate the impact. "If we work together, we will not destroy," he said. "If we don't work together, we will destroy the planet."

China's push to bolster germplasm exchanges is part of its shift to a more technology-driven approach to addressing food security problems at home and abroad.

Sharing starts with conservation. In 2015, the agriculture ministry launched a national census of crop germplasm as part of a broader effort to rescue vanishing crop species. It

involved more than 30,000 grassroots officials who collected about 12,000 germplasm samples over the course of about three years. Without that effort, there was a risk the genetic material could have become extinct.

China has also ramped up the construction of facilities to store such assets. In May, it finished a national germplasm bank for wild rice species in Sanya, Hainan province, that its builder called "the world's largest repository for gene resources of wild rice varieties".

Experts said its location, in a free tradeport, helps with the sharing and use of germplasm across borders.

Three months later, the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and authorities in Beijing and Hainan launched the genome-to-phenome program, an attempt to bolster the sharing of germplasm with global partners.

The project has won widespread recognition, with Govaerts calling China a flag-bearer on that front. "China is really getting together all the international actors," he said.

Seed research is also central to growing food in once unimaginable places such as saline-alkali land, another part of China's quest for increased food security.

Central authorities called last

year for scientists and technicians to screen and nurture crop seeds that can withstand saline-alkali stress. Better seed, coupled with soil improvement methods, fertilizers and irrigation, would make a difference, they said.

In recent years, China's top legislature has formulated laws aimed at bolstering the country's seed research and development capabilities.

After three rounds of revisions since 2022, the National People's Congress Standing Committee passed the National Food Security Law late last month.

The 11-part law, which will come into effect in June, will give strong State backing to invigorating the seed sector and ensuring seed security.

In one part dealing with seed production, the law stipulates that the Chinese government is obliged to conserve food germplasm resources. It also says it must support efforts to commercialize next-generation breeding techniques and roll out homegrown food species that are free from the threat of embargo by agricultural powerhouses in the West.

At the NPC Standing Committee session that passed the law, China's top legislator, Zhao Leji, briefed lawmakers on the findings of a high-level inspection that was carried out from May to November last year to assess the progress in the seed sector since the Seed Law was last revised in 2022.

He listed a number of highlights in agricultural technology advancement, including the improved research prowess of seed companies, whose investment in research and development climbed to 6 billion yuan (\$839 million) last year, an increase of more than 50 percent from 2015.

But he also said the supply of quality seed was inadequate and that even though the preservation of germplasm resources had been improved, efforts to use them were still lagging.

Zhao said there had been an over-reliance on crossbreeding to enhance existing crop varieties, with insufficient attention paid to research powered by next-generation techniques such as gene editing and artificial intelligence, and that despite the explosive growth of seed companies since 2016, many lacked research capabilities.

That situation — coupled with a lack of knowledge transfer between companies and researchers — had hampered progress toward a market-oriented breeding environment, Zhao said, citing the example of Gansu province, where 85 percent of seed companies operated by conducting trial planting of new food varieties developed by their clients rather than designing them in-house.

"Most companies are unable to conduct R&D," he said.

Zhao reiterated China's commitment to the protection of corporate seed breeders' intellectual property rights. In the past they have had to grapple with lengthy and costly legal procedures to seek compensation when their interests have been jeopardized.

"The seed industry is one of national strategic importance," he said. "We must fully implement the Seed Law and promote the sector's vitalization with legal provisions."

Contact the writer at [lilei@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:lilei@chinadaily.com.cn)

By **LI LEI** in Sanya, Hainan

In the 1950s, Chinese crop scientists would travel for many hours each winter from regions at higher latitudes to tropical locations such as South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Hainan province.

Their journeys — using trains, buses and ships — could take days, but they were not heading south for vacations.

Instead, they flocked to warmer — but usually remote and poorly resourced — places to conduct trial planting of higher-yielding crop varieties.

Falling temperatures made such endeavors impossible at home.

Before new crop varieties are approved for commercial production, they need to go through multiple rounds of trial planting to ensure their favorable traits are sufficiently stable to be passed down through generations.

By making such trips, the researchers could avoid having tri-

al plantings terminated by seasonal factors and shorten the process of perfecting new varieties by years, fast-tracking the commercialization of better-performing crop varieties to ease food shortages.

But such seasonal travel has become history in recent years.

Many agricultural institutes have moved their research bases to Sanya, a resort city on the southern tip of Hainan Island better known for its palm trees, luxury hotels and duty-free shops.

Zhang Guangheng, who graduated from an agricultural university in Zhejiang province in 1996, was one of the many plant scientists who used to make such trips each year.

He visited Hainan for the first time in the winter of 1997 as a seed quality controller at the China National Rice Research Institute,

## Sanya sets pace as base for plant breeding



Zhang Guangheng checks the performance of hybrid rice seedlings in Hainan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

based in Zhejiang's provincial capital, Hangzhou.

He carried a large trunk, sealed with a label bearing the red stamp

of his employer, that contained several different varieties of hybrid rice seeds waiting to be planted in experimental fields to see if their

quality was up to standard.

"I usually arrived in November to plant such seeds," Zhang said. "The test results would determine if such seeds would be used in the rice planting season in April."

For decades, Sanya served as his wintertime testing ground.

When spring brought higher temperatures to Hangzhou, Zhang, who later became a rice breeding expert, would return to his better-equipped laboratory there to analyze data, produce papers and attend seminars.

"That was the routine for almost all my career till recent years, when many research bodies set up breeding complexes in Sanya," he said, adding that well-equipped breeding laboratories, germplasm banks and other state-of-the-art research facilities have mushroomed in Sanya since 2018.

Zhang now conducts research at

a laboratory in Sanya owned by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, a partner of the rice research institute, and spends more than eight months a year there.

Zhang is among a growing number of plant breeding experts who are spending more of their working hours in Hainan as the central authorities seek to remold Sanya into a global agricultural research hub whose importance in the farming world could rival that of Silicon Valley in the tech industry.

Thanks to the island's visa-free policy, tropical climate, biodiversity and cutting-edge research facilities, it is becoming a major draw for rice researchers from around the world — and especially those from Africa.

"I expect more cooperation with researchers from Africa and Southeast Asia," Zhang said. "Sanya will give them access to some of the best research facilities and help them address food problems back home."

## WORLD

## Where poverty holds sway, fashion riches to fore

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya  
otiato@chinadaily.com.cn

David Ochieng, popularly known as Avido in the fashion world, was born in Kibera slum in Nairobi.

The 2.5-square-kilometer slum has an estimated population of 250,000, making it the densest settlement in Kenya, according to United Nations Habitat.

He was raised by a single mother alongside two brothers and a sister, his family could not make ends meet and he dropped out of school when he was 11. While growing up in the slums, he said, he yearned to escape life on the street, and most of his childhood friends lost their lives through crime or drugs.

His journey into fashion was accidental. Having joined a dancing troupe to avoid delinquency, it was his task to ensure his team had the right costumes, and through working with those who made the costumes his interest in tailoring was roused.

"I started engaging in fashion around four years ago, and my motivation was not to become a renowned designer but to express myself and create opportunities for people around myself in the community.

"That's why I later engaged in activities like training deaf women and young mothers in the slum in tailoring so that they could earn a living.

"Initially I never had any interest in fashion. My dream as a young kid was to become an electrical engineer, but I could not make it due to educational challenges. Before getting into fashion I tried different things like rap music, poetry, soccer and dancing."

Being an artist at heart, he was drawn to the African fabric known in East Africa as kitenge, because he said the bold patterns and prints on the fabric reminded him of ancient African tattoos and skin markings. His unique style using the African fabric started turning heads and eventually caught the eye of the Jamaican reggae singer Don Carlos, who was visiting Kibera on the sidelines of a concert in Kenya in 2017.

Avido offered Don Carlos a shirt he had made from kitenge, which the musician donned during a performance in Kenya, giving Avido both national and international recognition. This led to the birth of his fashion house Looklike Avido.

"Since Don Carlos performed while wearing my shirt, my phone



Models showcase collections at the second edition of Kibera Fashion Week on Oct 14. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

has not stopped ringing," Avido said. "Many international artists started looking for me to make them costumes for their performances, and I have worked with the likes of Bruno Mars, the reggae singer Chronixx, the Coldplay frontman Chris Martin and Beyonce, who commissioned Avido and other African designers for her *Black is King* project."

Being a believer in what he calls "conscious fashion", Avido decided to use his new-found fame in fashion to help upcoming designers from Kibera slum while highlighting the issues facing the community at large.

"My intention is to invite people from all walks of life into the slum so they can see for themselves that Kibera people are not thugs and hopeless, as is often portrayed."

Others in the slum have also made a career in fashion, including Crescentiah Owuor, Millicent Ogola and Brilliant Lutomia. Having studied and graduated in fashion and design at Passion to Share Foundation, an organization in Kibera, the three received an invitation from Avido to exhibit as a group at Kibera Fashion Week in October.

Though they are pursuing individual ambitions, the three showcased their designs at the fashion week under the name Simbi Nyaima. They decided to go by the name because it comes from a local legend about a

woman who was treated with disdain by the village, but her wise counsel ended up saving them from calamity, Ogola said.

"As an upcoming designer, Kibera Fashion Week helped me to learn a lot because I came to know my strength and realized that I should not look down upon myself because whatever I was afraid to bring out is what people want to see," said Ogola who runs the fashion brand Emaryan Bespoke.

"I have also been able to meet different people, different designers ... and it has helped me to tell people about my brand."

#### Showing inclusivity

Her colleague Owuor, who runs Style by Chris fashion house, said they use fashion to tell people their stories and about the pain they go through. They also use their designs to talk about social standards because many girls and young women from Kibera have been denied job opportunities because of where they come from.

"Most people think that people in Kibera slum are thieves, and we have been denied jobs because of that," Owuor said. "When we came up with our collection, the fabrics tell a lot about our stories. We can combine a sack with other fabric to make a dinner dress to show inclusivity because Kibera Fashion

Week is all about inclusivity."

Lutomia, now in the process of setting up her Taraji Collection brand, said that unlike well-known fashion events such as New York Fashion Week and London Fashion Week, the Kibera one is open to all. It serves as a platform for helping people especially from Kibera tell their stories.

"Kibera Fashion Week gave young talented people an opportunity that normally takes years to achieve," she said. "The fact that it happened in Kibera within the ghetto was so helpful for our people. I was happy to be a part of it because being a woman in Kibera is not that easy, especially if you do not have education or any skill."

The fashion event in Kibera in October attracted more than 7,000 people, including foreign visitors and local and international artists, Avido said. Since remuneration is a major challenge for local fashion designers, especially those from underprivileged areas such as Kibera, Avido said he sought sponsors to ensure that each designer pocketed \$1,000 and that each model pocketed up to \$500.



Online  
See more  
by scanning  
the code.

## South Summit calls for elevated collaboration

Delegates emphasize unity and growth, and advocate global financial reforms

By WANG XIAODONG  
in Kampala, Uganda  
wangxiaodong@chinadaily.com.cn

Leaders from developing countries and the United Nations have called for intensified cooperation to achieve common development for the Global South and build a more just global governance system.

Speaking at the opening of the Third South Summit, organized under the framework of the Group of 77 and China, in Uganda's capital Kampala on Sunday, Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong said countries of the Global South have great potential for high-quality cooperation.

"Countries of the South are at various stages of development and with diverse endowments of resources, and enjoy considerable complementarity," Liu said. "We need to seek strength through unity, enhance the synergy of development strategies and continue to unlock the potential for cooperation to make South countries more competitive as a whole."

China stands ready to focus on practical cooperation and capacity-building with other developing countries, and to conduct cooperation in a broader way and in more areas to help them unleash the potential for growth, address challenges holding back their development, and improve people's well-being, he said.

Dennis Francis, president of the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly, said that as multilateralism faces severe challenges globally, with purpose dialogue, solidarity and cooperation in retreat, the summit provides a good opportunity for countries to recommit to core principles such as multilateralism and cooperation.

"We must harness the full power and opportunities for South-South cooperation, not to supplant our relations with the North but rather, to rebalance it and thereby magnify the global resonance of the stubborn unity and solidarity of the South," he said.

He called on the G77 and China to work harder to rebuild trust, reignite global solidarity and harness the power and potential of multilateralism to secure and deliver peace, prosperity, progress

and sustainability for the world.

Yoweri Museveni, president of Uganda, which took over chairmanship of the G77 and China from Cuba on Sunday, said South-South cooperation has played a critical role in supporting developing countries in their efforts to achieve self-reliance, adding they need to uphold this solidarity to safeguard their collective interests.

"Leaving no one behind cannot be realized without adequately addressing the challenges and needs by countries in special situations. In particular, African countries, landlocked developing countries and smaller island developing states, as well as specific challenges faced by many middle-income countries.

#### Targeted support

"In this regard, we support the call for the international community to provide targeted support to enable these countries to address their challenges. We also support the idea to reform the international financial architecture to ensure that it is fit for purpose to respond to the financial needs of the developing countries."

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the G77, the world's biggest organization of developing countries with more than 130 members.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said while South-South cooperation is strong and deepening, it does not replace the commitments of the Global North to sustained engagement to reduce poverty and inequality, support growth and build resilience in developing countries.

The existing international financial architecture also needs to be reformed to ensure it suits the reality today and meets the needs of developing countries, he said.

Li said more efforts are needed to build an equal and orderly multipolar world, and to reform the international financial system so international development agencies can be more efficient in supporting South countries.

"China will continue to take South-South cooperation as a priority in its cooperation with other countries, stand together with G77 members and contribute to the common development of South countries."

## CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK  
HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,  
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com  
readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

twitter.com/chinadaily  
facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th  
Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100  
Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100  
Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

## Japan's moon craft losing power after landing

TOKYO — Japan became the fifth country to achieve a soft lunar landing on Saturday, but said its "Moon Sniper" spacecraft was running out of power because of a solar battery problem.

After a nail-biting 20-minute descent, the space agency JAXA said its Smart Lander for Investigating Moon, or SLIM, had touched down and communication had been established.

But without the solar cells functioning, JAXA official Hitoshi Kuninaka said the craft, dubbed the Moon Sniper for its precision technology, would only have power for "several hours".

SLIM is one of several new lunar missions launched by governments and private companies, 50 years after the first human moon landing.

Crash landings and communication failures are rife, and only four other countries have made it to the moon: the United States, the Soviet Union, China and India.

As mission control prioritized gathering of data while it could, Kuninaka suggested the batteries might work again once the angle of the sun changed.

"It's possible that it is not facing in the originally planned direction," he said.

"If the descent was not successful, it would have crashed at a very high speed. If that were the case, all functionality of the probe would be lost," he said. "But data are being sent to Earth."

JAXA hopes to analyze data acquired during the landing, which will help determine whether the craft achieved the aim of landing within 100 meters of its intended landing spot.

Several things could have caused the solar panel problem, said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

"A wire came loose, a wire was connected the wrong way, or the

lander is upside down and can't see the sun for some reason," McDowell speculated.

"Hopefully", JAXA had been able to download images from the landing, he said, but an experiment to study the composition of moon rocks may be a lost cause.

Russia, China and other countries from South Korea to the United Arab Emirates are also trying their luck to reach the moon.

#### Failed mission

On Friday NASA confirmed the first flight of its commercial lunar delivery service carrying agency-sponsored payloads, as well as other customer payloads intended for the moon, has come to an end.

The US private company Astrobotic Technology said contact and then tracking was lost as its lunar lander, dubbed Peregrine, reentered Earth's atmosphere on Thursday, 10 days after its launch from Florida. It received confirmation on Friday from US Space Command that the spacecraft broke apart during its final moments, CEO John Thornton said.

A fuel leak shortly after liftoff had made any chance of a moon touchdown impossible.

NASA has also postponed plans for crewed lunar missions under its Artemis program.

Two previous Japanese lunar missions — one public and one private — have failed.

In 2022 the country unsuccessfully sent a lunar probe named Omotenashi as part of the US' Artemis 1 mission.

In April the Japanese start-up ispace tried in vain to become the first private company to land on the moon, losing communication with its craft after what it described as a "hard landing".



A model of the lunar surface robot, or Smart Lander for Investigating Moon, is kept at an undisclosed location. Japan successfully landed its spacecraft on the moon surface on Saturday, becoming the fifth country in history to achieve the feat. TAKARA TOMY VIA AFP

## Taking pledge



Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo attends the ceremony in which he was sworn in as president for a second five-year term, in the capital Kinshasa on Saturday. "Today, a new era is born, an era of maturity, a magnified era, an era transcended by the renewed oath 'Never betray the Congo,'" he said in his speech. XINHUA

## Marcos slammed for using helicopter to attend concert

MANILA — Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr has drawn flak on social media for his use of a presidential helicopter to attend a concert by the British rock band Coldplay in a province north of the capital Manila.

At the Philippine Arena, the world's largest indoor arena, there was an influx of 40,000 concertgoers resulting in "unforeseen traffic complications along the route," the Presidential Security Group said.

The traffic situation posed a security threat to Marcos, who attended the Friday night concert with his wife, prompting the use of the presidential helicopter, it said.

However, social media users criti-

cized the use of taxpayer money by Marcos, the son and namesake of the late president whose rule ended nearly 40 years ago in the so-called People Power Revolution.

"Using official resources, like the presidential chopper, for personal and nonofficial activities is generally considered an abuse of power or misuse of government resources," Facebook user James Patrick Aristorenas said in a post on Saturday.

"We paid for the use of the chopper, fuel and security, who knows even for the tickets for everyone," Facebook user Arvine Concepcion said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

# WORLDUS

## Holocaust refugees recall sheltering in Shanghai

Survivors of Nazism recount in detail how Chinese city offered them hope

By MINLU ZHANG in New York  
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

**J**erry Lindenstrauss is a 94-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives in an apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. People around him sometimes find it odd that the elderly Jewish man is able to speak a few Japanese words.

Whenever the topic arises, Lindenstrauss tells them the story of how his family fled Germany and traveled to Shanghai in 1939 to escape the Holocaust.

After Japan fully occupied Shanghai, all schools in Shanghai were obligated to teach Japanese — the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School where Lindenstrauss was located was no exception.

In 1939, one month before the outbreak of World War II, the 10-year-old Lindenstrauss arrived in Shanghai from Gumbinnen, a small town located in what was then East Prussia, Germany.

Stepping off the boat, the young boy was sweating profusely under the layers of his heavy German suits and shirts. Eighty-four years later, he still remembers Shanghai's brutally hot and humid summer.

Arriving with Lindenstrauss were about 18,000 Jewish refugees who fled Nazi-occupied areas of Europe and settled in Shanghai from 1933 to 1941 to escape the Holocaust, as the Chinese city was among the few places that Jewish refugees were guaranteed acceptance in the early days of the war, according to the Shanghai Jewish Museum.

Lindenstrauss' family did not realize it was time for them to leave until Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, happened in 1938 when the Nazis burned synagogues, vandalized Jewish homes, schools and businesses, murdered close to 100 Jews and sent thousands of Jewish men to concentration camps.

"The next day I went to school, and the school was no longer there," Lindenstrauss recalled.

However, the family had few options. In July 1938, representatives from 32 countries attended the Evian Conference in France, and none of them agreed to accept a significant number of Jewish refugees, including the US, UK and France.

Only two destinations were available to the Jewish family: Shanghai or the island of Madagascar off the coast of Africa. They chose to go to Shanghai, which was an open city where no visa was required for entry.

The family of Ellen Chaim, who later in her life changed her name to Ellen Kracko, had never considered leaving Berlin before Kristallnacht, a place where her family had been living for generations.

"We are Germans, my grandfather fought for the Germans during World War I. They considered themselves good German citizens. But then Kristallnacht happened, and they realized that they could not stay there anymore," Kracko said.

In 1939, Kracko's parents joined the more than 10,000 Jewish people who sought refuge in Shanghai before and after World War II.

### Life in Shanghai

Lindenstrauss was in Shanghai from the age of 10 to 17. He started to attend a Jewish school in Shanghai, where they had about 600 students and 17 teachers. He learned English in school, he started chasing girls, and he even made his best friend in Shanghai, Gary Kirchner, who was from Berlin.

The boys even joined the



Ellen Chaim, who later changed her name to Ellen Kracko, was born in 1947 in Shanghai while her parents sought shelter in the city. She received this teddy bear during their journey from Shanghai to South Africa in 1949, when Kracko was just 2 years old. PHOTOS BY MINLU ZHANG / CHINA DAILY



Jerry Lindenstrauss, a 94-year-old Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, sought shelter in Shanghai from 1939 to 1947.



Ellen Kracko stands in front of her collection of memories in Shanghai.

British Boy Scouts in Shanghai, which became an illegal organization after Japan declared war on the UK and the US at the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941.

But life was not easy for them in Shanghai. Sanitation was poor, and conditions like diarrhea were rampant in the Jewish refugee community.

In the cold, humid winter, Lindenstrauss' father died of pneumonia four months after the family arrived in Shanghai because of the lack of antibiotics. Following the death of his father, Lindenstrauss and his stepmother moved to Hongkew (now the Hongkou district of Shanghai).

Kirchner's family living situation was even worse than Lindenstrauss'. While Lindenstrauss' stepmother was able to manage a small place to live,

Kirchner and his parents lived in a big, barracks-like room that lacked privacy.

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, policies toward the Jewish communities in Shanghai grew increasingly worse, leading up to the Meisinger Plan, an agenda to kill all Jewish refugees in Shanghai.

In 1941, the Nazis tried to convince the Japanese, who were their allies, to exterminate all the Jewish refugees in Shanghai. In 1943, a compromise was reached with the establishment of a "Designated Area for Stateless Refugees".

A ghetto in the neighborhood of Hongkew was built, where all Jewish refugees had to relocate and were strictly isolated by Japanese soldiers. Jews could only leave the area with special permission.

**"I was a little girl, born in Shanghai, a place across the world. And now, I'm here (in New York)."**

Ellen Kracko, who was born in Shanghai after her parents had fled Germany during World War II

In the war-torn Hongkew District, Jewish refugees started establishing small businesses and set themselves up as doctors and teachers. People wanted to recreate what they were doing back at home, Kracko said.

Gradually, a Jewish area inside Hongkew came to be known as "Little Vienna" for its European-style cafes, delicatessens, nightclubs, shops and bakeries. Kracko's mother worked in a German bakery there.

Material conditions were austere in the Jewish ghetto. On Kracko's first birthday, her grandfather baked a cake. She had no idea where he got the flour. The eggs and strawberry jam were from neighbors. The cake was taken to the bakery, where Kracko's mom worked, to be baked.

Those memories were so deeply rooted in the family that many years after the war, when life had already gotten better, Kracko's aunt would still stop people from throwing out used tea bags and would steep them repeatedly to make tea until they turned plain.

Kracko, now 76, has short, light, blonde hair. She was wearing a pink shirt and silver earrings during an interview with China Daily in her house by the sea in Westchester County, New York.

She is quite familiar with modern technology and knows the iPhone well. During the day, Kracko's phone was full of family messages. The great-grandmother was preparing for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which was only a week away.

When asked about her place of birth, Kracko's husband would often quip, "You'd never guess where she was born."

Ellen would respond, "I was born

in 1947 Shanghai, after World War II." People would then look wide-eyed and ask, "How?"

It has been estimated that around World War II, more than 400 Jewish babies were born in Shanghai and were called "Shanghai Babies". Kracko is one of them.

Chinese, Japanese, Indians and other refugees from Germany and Austria lived in Hongkew. Shanghai at that time witnessed 1,000 monthly refugee arrivals, and Hongkew residents faced dire conditions since the start of the war in China in 1937, according to the Shanghai Jewish Museum.

In less than 1 square mile, the ghetto was home to some 10,000 native Chinese residents living side by side with thousands of Jewish refugees, the museum said.

The Chaim family lived next to a Chinese family. Kracko's mother would send cookies to the Chinese lady who lived downstairs, and the Chinese lady, even though she could not communicate with them, would give her some noodles in return.

Lindenstrauss also had a Chinese family as neighbors in Hongkew. The Chinese family lived downstairs with their children and chickens, while Lindenstrauss' family lived upstairs.

They were friendly with each other, but they did not understand each other's languages. Therefore, they communicated using pidgin English, a combination of English, German and Chinese words, Lindenstrauss said.

"Believe it or not, the Chinese (who lived in Hongkew) were (treated) worse than we were," Lindenstrauss said. "The Japanese treated them terribly. The Chinese had to bow (when they saw the Japanese). We didn't have to bow. But I've seen it. The Chinese didn't bow deep enough, boom, they were killed. It's terrible."

One school day, Lindenstrauss' class went to a public swimming pool outside of the ghetto. It was a hot, muggy day, and he and Kirchner spent hours in the pool. When it was time to leave, the two boys didn't hear the signal and were left behind, Lindenstrauss said.

They were picked up by a Japanese Army truck.

"We were very scared," Lindenstrauss said. When they finally arrived home, they found that Lindenstrauss'

stepmother was so worried that she blamed everything on Kirchner and his mother, and the two mothers had a big fight.

Sheltered in Shanghai, Lindenstrauss, along with many other Jewish refugees, did not know what had happened in Europe and the Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews across Europe were murdered, until Japan surrendered in 1945.

### New life

The day the war ended — at first nobody knew Japan had surrendered — Kracko's mother only remembered waking up early that morning, and it was very quiet outside. She had never heard such a quiet street.

Then, she heard people crying in the distance. Then came the laughter. Kracko's mother opened the door to find that all the Japanese stationed at the entrance of the ghetto had evacuated in the middle of the night — the war was over, Kracko's mother realized.

The Chaim family retained almost all evidence of their life in Shanghai, including a dog license issued by the Shanghai Municipal Council. The Jewish couple had a Pekingese when they were in Shanghai.

In 1949, when the Chaim family was preparing to leave Shanghai and packing their luggage, their dog, not knowing what was happening, chased after their car as they drove away. The small dog, of course, could not catch up to the car, and the Chaim family never saw the dog again.

After the war, Lindenstrauss traveled to South America and the United States. Soon after settling in New York, he founded his own company. In his later years, Lindenstrauss lived in an apartment three blocks away from his son's family.

Some 33 years later, Lindenstrauss returned to Shanghai for the first time, in the late 1970s, with his son. Unlike the Shanghai he had seen when he was 17, there were no more rickshaws and beggars on the roads, yet people were still playing mahjong on the roadside.

When he returned to his boyhood residence, an old Chinese lady living next door came out and said, "Ah, I remember him!"

Lindenstrauss' son, who was a university student at that time, witnessed it all and shed tears for his father's experience.

Lindenstrauss' boyhood friend Kirchner also went to the US after the war and settled in San Francisco. In their later years, the two old men visited each other and attended parties together.

Kirchner, who passed away recently, learned Chinese in San Francisco. "That's funny, not in Shanghai," Lindenstrauss said.

Lindenstrauss said his stories often end with a sentence that he tells his grandkids: "If it weren't for Shanghai, I wouldn't be here."

The Chaim family lived in Shanghai for 10 years, and then they lived in Israel for about three years while they were waiting for the paperwork to go to the United States.

In Israel, young Kracko still wore qipao and some of the traditional Chinese outfits from Shanghai. She played in the Israeli desert and even witnessed snow in Israel. If not for photos, she would have no memories of it all. Kracko's earliest memories of life began in New York.

By the sea in her yard, Kracko stood beneath the setting sun, watching seabirds on the nearby island flying back and forth, and watching the tide rise and fall. In the fading sunlight, ships were sailing back into a New York port.

Kracko said she often stands there and wonders how a girl born in Shanghai ended up living here.

"I was a little girl, born in Shanghai, a place across the world. And now, I'm here," she said.



A passport belonging to Mr Chaim when his family left Nazi Germany in 1939. The Chaim family sought refuge in Shanghai in the same year.



The Shanghai residency certificate of Jerry Lindenstrauss.



A picture of Ellen Kracko taken during her time living in Shanghai.

## BUSINESS

JOIN THE CONVERSATION; FOLLOW US ON TWITTER · CHINA DAILY



Wind turbines in the distance are at work before sunset in Rongcheng, Shandong province, on Jan 6. LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## How to foster tourism recovery the Chinese way

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Ouyang Shijia

As the shadows of the COVID-19 pandemic gradually lifted across China, I found myself propelled into a realm of exploration, an odyssey that transcended the boundaries of confinement and embraced beauty and culture.

The year 2023 became a canvas for rediscovery, as I spent a little fortune (all my accumulative savings from hard-earned monthly income) to traverse the picturesque landscapes of China.

From the historic streets of Jinan in Shandong province to the sun-kissed shores of Sanya in Hainan province, each destination held a unique allure that beckoned me. It was as if I had entered a phase of retaliatory consumption, a surge of unrestrained wanderlust, and a release of the travel desires suppressed during the pandemic.

As the nation gears up for Spring Festival in February, my excitement is palpable. Plans are meticulously laid out for the next chapter — a journey to Gubei Water Town in Beijing's Miyun district. Accommodations are secured, and the itinerary is crafted to create lasting memories, surrounded by the charm of this picturesque town. This time, it's going to be a family affair, as I plan to share the joys of travel with my parents.

I am probably just one among the hundreds of millions of Chinese consumers releasing pent-up demand in the post-pandemic era, fostering a steady recovery in the tourism sector.

This year, the three-day New Year holiday again proved to be a bumper time for tourism. It saw 135 million domestic trips, with a 155.3 percent year-on-year growth and an increase of 9.4 percent compared to that of 2019. Domestic tourism revenue reached 79.73 billion yuan (\$11.08 billion), up 200.7 percent year-on-year and an increase of 5.6 percent over the same period in 2019, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute, said the services sector has become a key driving force boosting China's economic development, and the latest figures indicate China's economy is on track for steady growth.

A private survey showed that China's December services activity expanded at the fastest pace in five months, indicating the economic recovery is showing more signs of gaining further momentum.

The Caixin China General Services Purchasing Managers' Index increased to 52.9 in December from 51.5 in November, media group Caixin said. A PMI reading of above 50 points to expansion, while one below that mark indicates contraction.

Hong said expanding consumption of services is essential to support economic growth, and services consumption and investment are expected to become new growth engines.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that sales of retail services in China grew by 20 percent year-on-year in 2023, outpacing the 7.2 percent year-on-year growth in retail sales last year. The investment in high-tech services jumped 11.4 percent in 2023, significantly higher than the 3 percent growth in fixed-asset investment.

Hong urged more measures to further support the development of service consumption and investment, such as accelerating the opening-up of the services sector and refining the supply of services.

Looking ahead, Lin Xianping, secretary-general of Hangzhou City University's cultural and creative research institute, said China's services sector will continue to pick up in the following months, saying more efforts should be made to create a better development environment for the services sector, improve the quality of the services and foster new types of consumption.

## Challenges abound, but can't dim 2024

New growth drivers, robust policy support to help China drive global economy

By OUYANG SHIJIA

ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

Despite pressures from a property downturn, lackluster demand both at home and abroad and a more complicated external environment, China's economic prospects this year remain bright; therefore, global business executives and economists said their confidence and optimism are undented.

They further said China's economy will perform better this year than in 2023, with the existing policies taking effect gradually and more stimulus in the offing, mainly fueled by a steady recovery in domestic demand. China will continue to remain a key growth engine for the world economy, given its ultra large domestic market, a complete industrial system and abundant high-quality workforce.

Cao Yang, global vice-president of Baker Hughes and president of Baker Hughes China, voiced confidence in China's future economic growth, saying China's manufacturing sector has demonstrated strong resilience and stability.

He said the global energy company has seen huge growth potential in the ultra large Chinese market, and the company has benefited from the continued recovery of the Chinese economy.

In recent years, Baker Hughes has maintained double-digit business growth in China, reaching a historic high in 2022. Cao highlighted that the company's procurement volume in China surged by over 60 percent in 2022 compared to 2021, underscoring China's pivotal role as a comprehensive supply chain hub.

"China is the world's largest producer of over 220 types of industrial products," he said in an exclusive interview with China Daily. The country boasts the biggest and most complete industrial system worldwide, he said.

Official data showed that China is also the only country to obtain all the industrial categories listed in the United Nations industrial classification.

Highlighting China's key role as a global hub for industrial manufacturing, Cao said the Chinese market is of great significance for applying the company's cutting-edge technologies.



Top: An employee operates machines at a company's digital manufacturing plant in Nanyang, Henan province, on Dec 15.

GAO SONG / XINHUA

Above: Workers from State Grid check and repair photovoltaic panels in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, on Jan 14.

YANG SHIYAO / XINHUA

Looking ahead, he said the focus will be on meeting China's need for energy in a better way and reducing carbon emissions as well as rendering improved services to China's manufacturing sector. "We firmly believe that the Chinese market will continue to be a crucial engine propelling global economic growth."

China's economy expanded by 5.2 percent year-on-year in 2023, above the country's preset economic growth target of around 5 percent, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed, indicating that economic recovery is steadily gaining momentum in the post-pandemic era.

Notably, the country's value-added industrial output grew by 6.8 percent year-on-year in December, following a 6.6 percent growth in November.

"The Chinese market is still huge with very great potential," said Fabien Pacory, vice-president

of the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China (CCI France Chine). "The country is moving in the right direction... I'm quite confident about China's economic prospects in 2024, as I can see many adjustments and many big efforts have been made by the provincial governments and central government. We will be able to see some improvements at the end of this year."

He said many French companies still think China is a very important place for production as well as a key market. "They are confident that China is working hard to make sure everything is going in the right direction."

Zou Yunhan, deputy director of the macroeconomic research office at the State Information Center's Department of Economic Forecasting, said China remains a key growth engine for the world economy, contributing around one-third of the global economic growth in 2023.

The momentum of China's economic recovery is poised to undergo further consolidation and strengthening this year, propelled by robust policy support, the advancement of industrial transformation and upgrading, and the continuous deepening of reforms, she said.

Zou anticipated that China's GDP will likely grow by around 5 percent this year, with a steady improvement in consumption and investment.

"As the Chinese economy gradually shakes off the impact of the pandemic, consumer spending recovery will continue to accelerate this year," she said. "In terms of investment, with the optimization and adjustment of real estate policies, the downward impact of real estate investment will weaken this year. And a forceful fiscal policy will drive robust growth in infrastructure investment, leading to steady growth in investment."

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics reflected the pressures facing the economy, including insufficient domestic demand and slowing external demand. China's consumer prices dropped for the third consecutive month in December, and the country's factory activity contracted for the third consecutive month in December.

The country's consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, dropped by 0.3 percent year-on-year in December after a 0.5 percent drop in November. Meanwhile, China's official purchasing managers index for the manufacturing sector fell to 49 in December from 49.4 in November, below the 50-point mark that separates contraction from growth, according to the NBS.

Experts said the official figures indicate that China's broader economy is still facing pressures, calling for further steps to boost domestic demand and foster new growth drivers.

Despite grappling with a complex external environment, inadequate domestic demand and risks linked to local government debt and the property sector, China still has plenty of room and sufficient policy tools to reinforce the growth of the world's second-largest economy, Zou said.

The tone-setting annual Central Economic Work Conference in December called for efforts to pursue progress while ensuring stability, consolidate stability through progress and "establish the new before abolishing the old."

It urged the introduction of more policies that will help stabilize expectations, growth and employment, as well as active

endeavors to promote the transition of growth models, structural adjustment, and quality and efficiency improvement, so as to consolidate the foundation of stable economic development with a positive outlook.

Zou said the meaning of "establishing the new before abolishing the old" refers to managing the relationship between the growth of new and traditional economic drivers during the process of economic structural transformation.

"It emphasizes the need to first establish and strengthen new economic drivers before gradually phasing out or reforming the outdated ones, rather than abolishing the old drivers before the new ones are firmly in place."

She further said emerging sectors like new energy vehicles and high-tech industries will serve as new growth drivers and sturdy engines supporting China's future economic development.

"I believe China's automotive sector is poised to experience substantial growth, particularly given its leading global position in the development of NEVs. And the country's high-tech industry is also undergoing rapid growth."

China saw its vehicle production and sales both exceed 30 million units in 2023, with the figures expected to grow by around 3 percent to 31 million this year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

China surpassed Japan last year as the world's largest auto exporter, with 4.91 million vehicles shipped overseas last year, up 57.9 percent year-on-year. The association estimates exports this year will reach 5.5 million units.

While facing a more complicated and grimmer external environment and a gloomy global outlook, China's booming new sectors will serve as new growth drivers supporting export growth and steady economic recovery, said Zhang Xiaoqiang, executive vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

Looking ahead, he said China has the conditions and capabilities to achieve around 5 percent GDP growth this year. So, more efforts should be made to spur both traditional and new types of consumption, he said.

More efforts should also be made to increase people's incomes and create a better consumption environment, speed up the building of a unified national market and accelerate the construction of a modern industrial system, which will help form a virtuous cycle between consumption and investment, Zhang said.

## BUSINESS



A pedestrian walks past the People's Bank of China in Beijing on Nov 20. JIANG QIMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Expert: Nation must aim for 5 percent growth this year

Target would boost biz confidence, helping avoid risk of overinvestment

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

China should aim for an economic expansion of "around 5 percent" for 2024, as that will help boost confidence and revive its recovery momentum, Bloomberg Economics' chief economist Tom Orlik said.

"I think a target of around 5 percent is probably sufficiently ambitious to boost confidence for businesses, and it is not too stretching so as to avoid the risk of overinvestment and over-stimulus," he told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

Orlik said China has the scope to keep monetary and fiscal policy supportive to help bolster recovery of the economy.

In the monetary realm, a further reduction in the reserve requirement ratio as well as policy rate cuts will be likely in the following months, he said.

Orlik said a forceful fiscal policy will play a bigger role in stimulating domestic demand.

“I think a target of around 5 percent is probably sufficiently ambitious to boost confidence for businesses, and it is not too stretching so as to avoid the risk of overinvestment and over-stimulus.”

Tom Orlik, Bloomberg Economics' chief economist

The focus should be on spurring household spending and stimulating the development of emerging fields, including providing subsidies for households and increasing spending on city transport and green transition.

"I think the big remaining opportunity for China in terms of deliver-

ing stimulus is to leverage the central government's balance sheet. And that means a bigger fiscal deficit and a bigger role for fiscal policy in driving growth," he said.

Considering stronger policy support, pressure from a real estate downturn, and slowing global growth, Orlik anticipates that China's economy will expand by around 4.5 percent in 2024.

On the headwinds for the Chinese economy, he said policymakers have been doing the right thing and attempting to manage down the problem of oversupply without triggering a complete collapse in the property sector.

"In 2024, there will be enough stimulus, financing and support for homebuyers to prevent a collapse in the real estate sector," he said.

Looking ahead, he said it may take two more years of correction in the sector.

While the process may cause problems for some developers, banks and households with all or a lot of their wealth in property, China will have a real estate sector that is smaller as a share of the economy at the end of the process.

"It's more sustainable in terms of its future trajectory," Orlik said. "It

also means that China will have less productive resources, capital, workers focused on the real estate sector. So there can be more focus of productive resources on areas like electric vehicles, for example, where there are very strong growth prospects."

He said booming emerging fields, such as electric vehicles, sustainable energy and high-speed railways, will offer continued growth opportunities for the Chinese economy.

More efforts should be made to steadily get through the real estate correction as well as boost confidence of entrepreneurs and global partners.

Orlik also expressed optimism about China's medium- and long-term development prospects, saying there is huge growth potential. "China's overall GDP per capita is just one-third of the level in Japan, so China is still a middle-income country. That means there's a huge amount of development space left."

Going forward, Orlik said China will remain one of the biggest contributors to global growth, creating significant opportunities around the world.

## RCEP boosts trade ties with Thailand

NANNING — Thailand's coconuts, famous for their rich and sweet taste, have gained significant popularity in the Chinese market.

In recent years, the fruit has been extensively used in various foods and beverages in China, such as cakes, coffee and even hot pot, especially after the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement.

The RCEP, which entered into force on Jan 1, 2022, comprises 15 Asia-Pacific countries, including 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states and five trading partners, namely China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Two years on, many Thai industries in agriculture, textiles and automobiles have benefited from the RCEP.

Tariff cuts have further stimulated trade and investment growth of RCEP member countries. In 2022, Thailand's trade with other RCEP members rose 7.11 percent year-on-year to \$300 billion.

The agreement has also boosted trade cooperation between China and Thailand.

Han Zhiqiang, Chinese ambassador to Thailand, said that in the first 10 months of 2023, bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$105.1 billion.

China continued to be Thailand's largest trading partner for an 11th consecutive year and its largest agricultural export market, of which tropical fruits alone reached \$5.8 billion, accounting for 90 percent of Thailand's fruit exports.

Han said that Thai durian has transformed from a niche fruit to a "top shelf" product in the Chinese market. Chinese consumers favor Thai fruit, and the Chinese government supports Thai agricultural exports to China.

"As a fruit importer, the RCEP agreement brings real benefits to me. The growing popularity of Thai coconuts in China is also bringing me new opportunities," said Mo Jiaming, a fruit dealer in Nanning, capital of South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

Thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative and the RCEP, more diversified trade and transportation modes have been adopted, and more Thai goods have entered the Chinese market at favorable prices.

The transport of fresh Thai durian from Thailand to Southwest China's Chongqing municipality on the flagship BRI project — the China-Laos Railway — takes only four days. This is a vast improvement compared to the previous land-sea routes, which took eight to 10 days.

"Goods which could only be previously purchased during a trip to Thailand are now available in local supermarkets with a rich variety," said Huang Ying, a Nanning resident, adding that she has many Thai products at home ranging from rice and seasonings, to latex pillows and mattresses, and daily beauty and sun protection products.

The RCEP agreement has also enhanced the industrial chains of China and Thailand, bringing new opportunities to enterprises.

Construction machinery made by Guangxi Mesda Group Co Ltd has entered the markets of ASEAN countries like Thailand in recent years, and has been warmly welcomed by local customers.

Huang Kanghua, chairman of the company, said that ASEAN countries have great demand for China's advanced technology and products. "We are full of confidence in the ASEAN market," Huang said.

In the first nine months of 2023, Chinese enterprises applied for 264 investment projects in Thailand, up 196.6 percent year-on-year, with a total investment value of 97.46 billion baht (\$2.74 billion), up 116.5 percent year-on-year. China will continue to maintain its position as the largest source country of foreign investment in Thailand.

Kirida Bhaopichitr, director for the Economic Intelligence Service of the Thailand Development Research Institute, said that Chinese investments are driving the growth of industries such as electric vehicles in Thailand.

XINHUA



A customer picks Thai durian in a supermarket in Nanning, capital of South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Sept 7.

HU XINGYU / XINHUA

**CHINADAILY** 中国日报  
Public Interest AD: 012  
SONG CHEN AND MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

# BREAST DISEASE AWARENESS

EARLY DETECTION AND INTERVENTION CAN SAVE LIVES

# VITAL FOR WOMEN

Surveys show that a high percentage of Chinese women suffer from breast disease, and the life-threatening condition is now being found in younger women.

Many breast cancer patients did not recognize the early symptoms of the disease, and thus often receive diagnosis and treatment late. Medical experts suggest women aged above 30 should conduct breast self-examinations monthly and contact their doctor if they notice anything unusual.

## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## New fiscal system to better serve the country

EAGLE EYE

By Luo Zhiheng

According to the Central Economic Work Conference held in December, the fiscal system needs a new round of reform.

This reform has to, however, tackle several issues.

First, the unclear relationship and boundary between the government and the market have continuously expanded the government's bottom line responsibilities, which create a contradiction between limited financial resources and unlimited expenditure, leading to financial difficulties.

Second, there is also an unclear boundary between central and local government power and responsibilities, with local governments taking on too many responsibilities and expenditures while central government spending is far below the international average.

Under a system where decisions made by the central government are implemented by local governments, the debt of local governments continues to rise.

Third, lacking an established local taxation system, fiscal resources are not well allocated nationwide, and it is necessary to build a more incentive-compatible system to better enthrone local governments.

Besides, transfer payments are not standardized. In particular, the transfer payments for shared causes between the central and local governments are relatively huge.

Moreover, the reform of the sub-provincial fiscal systems needs to be further deepened, as the sub-provincial fiscal systems of different regions are not well regulated.

**Several challenges**

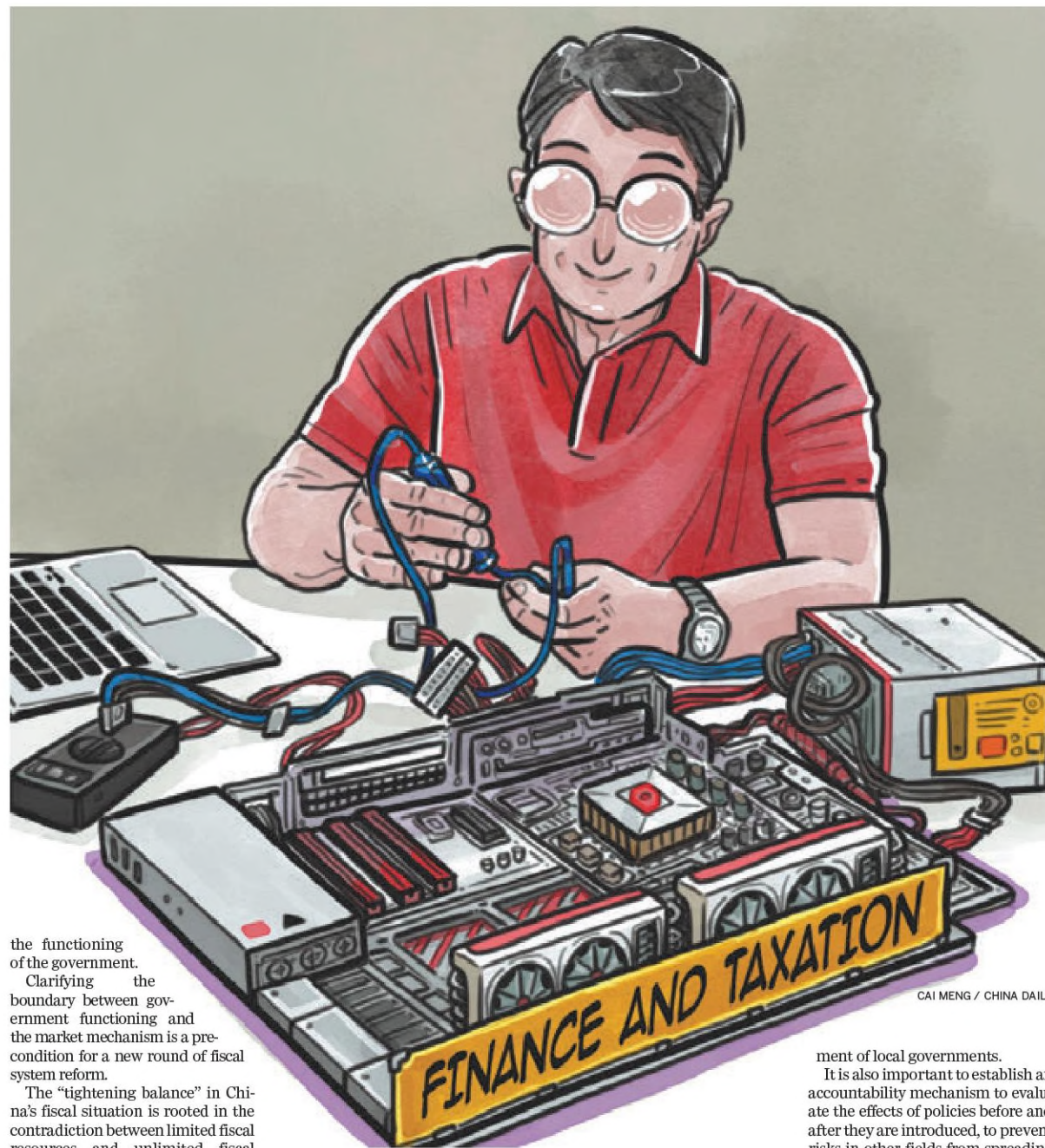
In the short term, the new round of fiscal reform needs to solve problems arising from a declining macro tax burden rate, tight fiscal balance, higher local government debt risk and the land finance issue.

Over the medium term, China needs to ensure fiscal sustainability through institutional reform and avoid fiscal crisis.

On a long-term basis, the country needs to build a new fiscal system to serve the national agenda, which includes common prosperity, high-quality development, a unified market, and development and security coordination.

For that, the country needs to motivate all parties, including the central and local governments, enterprises and scientists through reshaping of the incentive and regulation system, in order to achieve a balance between efficiency and fairness, as well as improving fiscal sustainability.

From an overall perspective, the crux of fiscal system reform is about



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

the functioning of the government.

Clarifying the boundary between government functioning and the market mechanism is a precondition for a new round of fiscal system reform.

The "tightening balance" in China's fiscal situation is rooted in the contradiction between limited fiscal resources and unlimited fiscal expenditure responsibilities, which to some extent is due to the increasingly unclear boundary between the government and the market, or the expanding responsibilities of the government, as reflected by fiscal activities to defuse economic and social risks.

To deepen reform, we must streamline administration and delegate power, lay off redundant personnel, and deepen the reform of the administrative system and social security system, as the fiscal reform needs coordinated reforms in other fields.

The first task is to clarify the relationship between government and the market and set clear government

responsibility and personnel scales.

Reforms in administrative institutions and public organizations must be deepened to strengthen the performance of the management. A large number of public institutions will either become nonprofit organizations or compete in the market to take responsibility for their own profits and losses.

The second task is to deepen reforms in the central and local fiscal systems, gradually transferring administrative powers and expenditure responsibilities to the central government and reducing local government expenditure responsibility

and financial pressures.

Local governments have neither the ability nor the motivation to handle affairs with strong externalities, or gradually improve public security, food and drug supervision, pension insurance and other matters under the vertical management of central government departments.

It is important to establish a performance assessment system and a financial evaluation system that match the multiple-objective governance system, to prevent continuously expanding local expenditure responsibilities due to the central government's performance assess-

ment of local governments.

It is also important to establish an accountability mechanism to evaluate the effects of policies before and after they are introduced, to prevent risks in other fields from spreading to the fiscal system.

**Tax reforms**

Tax and fee reductions must shift from pursuing quantity to effect, and structural tax increases must be conducted in areas that have little impact on ordinary residents but are conducive to promoting green development and narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

It is necessary to rethink and evaluate the effects of large-scale tax and fee reductions, and implement tax and fee reductions based on whether they are conducive to the construction of the new development pattern, to sci-tech innovation, or to

promoting market vitality and economic and social stability.

The country can also build a more pragmatic local tax system based on shared taxes, and promote the reform of personal income tax to reduce the burden on working people while strengthening tax collection and management, and ensure that the scale of personal income tax grows and better plays its due role in regulating income distribution.

It can also reform the excise tax and expand excise tax targets from tobacco, alcohol and automobiles to highly-polluting, intensive energy-consuming, or high-end service industries, such as high-end clubs and hotels, to move tax targets from the production side to the consumption side, and gradually decentralize tax power in regard to local areas and enrich local taxes.

Apart from tax revenues, incomes of the government as property owner should also be included in budget management, to reduce a situation where State-owned resources become exclusive revenue sources for only some places.

The country can deepen the reform of the social security system and avoid long-term overreliance on the general public budget subsidies for social security.

Fiscal expenditures must be standardized, and the performance and structure of fiscal expenditures should be further optimized, to raise expenditure efficiency and use limited fiscal funds wisely.

We should also further expand the scope of budget disclosure and improve the timeliness and normative uniformity of budget disclosure to help taxpayers better supervise the government.

Currently, provincial government budget disclosure has made great progress, but there are still problems such as untimely, insufficient, or nonstandardized disclosure at lower-level governments.

We must contain the hidden debt of local governments from growing further, address the existing implicit debt issue and improve the government debt management system.

For instance, we can optimize the debt structure among regions, and moderately relax the debt cap for urban agglomerations and areas with net population inflows, while strengthening debt performance management, and improving the match between liabilities and assets, and that between costs and benefits.

China can also optimize its debt structure, such as taking on more central government debt while reducing local government debt and special-purpose local government bond issuance, and issuing long-term treasury bonds for construction.

The writer is chief economist at Yuekai Securities.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Further opening-up key to attracting, keeping intl investment

MAIN STREET

By Hu Xiaolian

Over the past few years, China has made remarkable progress in promoting high-standard financial opening-up, with a total of 1,110 foreign institutions already entering the local bond market. However, there is still a long way to go before the Chinese financial market realizes a highly efficient allocation of global financial resources. The country needs to make further efforts in deepening reforms, improving the system, optimizing policies and promoting their implementation.

**Challenges**

Currently, China is facing several new challenges in further opening up its financial market.

A trend of anti-globalization is on the rise and some Western countries are hyping the "China threat" theory. In the name of "de-risking", they encourage foreign firms to exit the Chinese market. As a result, some financial institutions that mainly serve multinational corporations are shifting their business focus overseas as well, along with

the shift in both industrial and supply chains.

Some developed economies have also imposed restrictions on investment in China, and excluded Chinese enterprises from some well-known global and regional benchmark indices for stocks and bonds, thus gradually "decoupling" from China's financial sector.

In addition, China has encountered some temporary difficulties in its economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in economic transformation and upgrading, which has fomented some doubt in foreign investors' minds. They had grown accustomed to the long-term rapid growth of the Chinese economy, and thus the temporary slowdown can greatly affect their willingness to invest.

**Suggestions**

To address these challenges and further promote financial opening-up, China needs to make continuous efforts in the following five respects.

First, China should promote further opening-up in more financial subsectors, including technology finance, green finance, inclusive finance, pension finance and digital finance.

Currently, the country expects to make better use of credit, equity and debt to support innovation in the science and technology sector. In

the meantime, in some developed foreign markets, a variety of financial institutions with extensive experience in this area can provide the products China needs.

China is also actively seeking international cooperation in green finance, which has contributed to relevant product development, rule-making, as well as investing and financing activities. Having issued the largest amount of green bonds in the world, China remains quite attractive to international investors for this reason.

Promoting pension finance can be an effective way for China to cope with its rapidly aging population. With help from foreign investors, the country can better make plans for, and invest in, pension finance, as well as improve the pension insurance system.

The digital finance sector has seen fast growth in recent years. Countries rely on it to provide more financial services, forestall and control risks, and improve the efficiency of management and customer service. Moreover, cross-border financial data flows have now become a new focus for the setting of rules, cooperation and governance in financial markets worldwide. China must facilitate such flows while safeguarding the security of data transmission. It needs to classify all financial data and set stan-

dards to manage cross-border data flows accordingly.

Second, the country should attract and retain more foreign financial institutions, further enriching the modern financial system. Although the country has already formulated a number of policies to support foreign institutions operating or investing in China, there still exist some problems in said policies' actual implementation, such as the fragmentation of day-to-day regulation.

While unifying the management standards of local and foreign institutions to meet common needs, China should not forget to create sufficient conditions for foreign investors to leverage their special advantages. It needs to optimize relevant policies and provide more convenience for foreign firms based on their business expertise and overall strengths, making sure there is greater scope for them to grow.

Third, China must build a fully functional local financial market with comprehensive rules, reasonable structure and strong regulations. It should compare local financial market rules with those of advanced markets, so as to stay aligned with internationally recognized standards, effective rules and best practices. With China gradually improving the certainty, transparency and predictability of its policies, foreign investors will have

more confidence in the country's financial sector.

China also needs to develop high-quality investment products for the world by deepening reforms, strengthening supervision and improving corporate governance, as well as better protecting investors by balancing the interests of both supply and demand sides, and severely punishing violators of existing laws.

Fourth, China should provide more convenience for cross-border trade activities, as well as investment and financing. At present, foreigners who come to China to engage in business, tourism and short-term exchanges still have a number of difficulties in obtaining basic financial services.

For example, China's mobile payment penetration has reached 86 percent, ranking first in the world. While Chinese people can use mobile phones to make payments on almost all occasions, foreigners are less accustomed to such practices. China needs to connect its convenient mobile payment system with traditional payment methods such as credit cards, thus seeking common ground between payment systems at home and abroad.

In addition, Western countries are shifting industrial and supply chains to Southeast Asia, which is China's near neighbor and a region

actively engaged in the Belt and Road Initiative. China should actively carry out monetary and financial cooperation with the region to facilitate cross-border business by all varieties of entities.

Fifth, China should do its utmost to safeguard economic and financial security in the process of opening-up. It needs to fill in the gaps in financial regulation and further improve the precision and effectiveness of regulations. In addition, to manage financial risks, China must establish a more effective system, enrich the toolbox and make necessary preparations.

Promoting international cooperation is also an effective way to achieve financial security. After the outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis, major countries learned the lessons and cooperated to strengthen regulation of all banks. Today, the world needs to strengthen policy coordination in economics and finance, and jointly respond to developmental challenges, thus building a resilient international economy and a financial safety net.

The writer is former deputy governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, and former chairman of the Export-Import Bank of China.

The article is a translation of key parts of her speech to the 2023 annual conference of the China Wealth Management 50 Forum, a think tank.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Imperative all parties refrain from any actions that might worsen situation in the Middle East

The worsening of the situation in the Middle East is a worrying tendency that could threaten the very fabric of world peace and security.

Since Jan 12, the Red Sea tensions have abruptly escalated after the United States and the United Kingdom launched rounds of air strikes against Houthi military targets in Yemen in retaliation for Houthi attacks on commercial ships in the international waterway. Then, as if a Pandora's box had been opened, different stakeholders in the region have one after another begun to act willfully and carried out attacks on their long-time bete noires.

On Jan 15, Iran launched ballistic missiles at what it said was a spy base for Israel's intelligence agency Mossad in northern Iraq and "anti-Iran terror groups" in Syria. Earlier, Turkey carried out air strikes targeting Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria.

In the past few days, tensions between Iran and Pakistan also flared up after the two neighbors traded attacks on "terrorist" hideouts on each other's territory near their border. Also last week, Jordan reportedly carried out air strikes on drug-traffickers in Syria.

These actions were emboldened by the US-led coalition's actions against Houthi militia. While a good example can influence people in good ways, the deteriorating situation in the region shows the toxic effect of a bad example should not be underestimated.

The latest US unilateral move, with no authorization from the United Nations Security Council, sent

the wrong, misleading message that a country can attack others at will in total disregard of either international law or others' territorial integrity and sovereignty. From Iraq to Syria, Libya, and now Yemen, the US has formed belligerent cliques to pursue its own strategic gains and to maintain its hegemony. Its reckless moves have once again inflicted endless turmoil, violence, and suffering on the Middle East.

Despite US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's multiple trips to the Middle East in the past three months to "put out the fires", conflict and chaos have only become more widespread and uncontrollable. Not only does Israel's military operation in Gaza show no sign of abating, its spillover effects are dragging more actors to be party to what has rightly been described as the eschatological death cult agenda of a cabal in Washington, casting an ever darker shadow on regional and world peace and stability.

All parties should reflect on how quickly the situation has flared up to its present state and exercise restraint. They should stop adding fuel to the fires as this only makes them agents of the evangelical "cleansers of the world" in Washington. It is imperative that reason prevails and concerted efforts are made to end the Israel-Palestine conflict, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region and safeguard the security of the sea lanes, so as to pave the way for a lasting resolution to the Palestinian issue.

## Tomahawks show Tokyo willing to be hatchet man

Japan signed a contract with the United States on Thursday to buy up to 400 Tomahawk cruise missiles from 2025 to 2027, allegedly seeking to acquire "the capability of striking an adversary's territory" with China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in mind.

That's undoubtedly a dangerous move deserving of the full alert of the region and beyond. For the first time since its unconditional surrender in the World War II, Japan will have acquired long-range precision strike capacity, something that it has long desired.

Tokyo was initially planning on obtaining the latest Tomahawk Block-V missiles in fiscal 2026 and 2027 and deploying them on its Maritime Self-Defense Force Aegis destroyers. But it has recently decided to start the purchase a year earlier by switching to the procurement of up to 200 of the previous version, the older Block-IV model. According to the Japanese Ministry of Defense, the change was made "in response to an increasingly severe security environment".

That's the cliché Japan uses whenever it purchases or produces advanced weapons. Japan is now the third-biggest military spender in the world, with plans to continuously increase its outlay every year.

The "security threats" that Tokyo keeps hyping up to justify its moves are only an excuse for it to push ahead with Japan's militarization despite its "pacifist" Constitution and the opposition of the Japanese public.

The Tomahawks have a range of about 1,600 kilo-

meters. That the missiles can be launched from the Aegis destroyers, with the intelligence support of the United States under their security treaty, will give Japan great advantages over its neighbors in carrying out surgical strikes from afar. Japan now has eight Aegis destroyers, and the number is set to rise to 12 by the end of the decade according to its defense plan.

Given the mobility of the missiles' launch base, it will by no means be only China and the DPRK that will be put within the range of Japanese missiles as they will be able to strike the inland areas of any country around the world, making Japan a new tool of the US' military mindset.

No wonder US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel, who attended the signing of the purchase agreement in Tokyo on Thursday, spoke highly of the move.

The US is eager to turn Japan into a regional hatchet man that can do much of the dirty work in the Asia-Pacific so that Washington can divert more power and attention to the conflicts it is stoking in the Middle East and Ukraine.

That the jump-the-gun deal was inked in a hurry makes it viable speculation that it was Washington that urged Japan to accept the old generation models first as it cannot transfer more forces to the region as Tokyo has urged.

By saying "there is a new Japan emerging, a more competent Japan", Emanuel has made it clear what role the US has in mind for Japan, which will only be at the cost of regional peace and stability.

## Australia's unease because of wrong perspective

The Solomon Islands and Kiribati switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 2019. Immediately following Taiwan's latest elections, Nauru said it was cutting diplomatic ties with the island and switching back to Beijing.

This was not only a diplomatic setback to the authorities in Taiwan, but apparently raised eyebrows in neighboring Australia. After all, following the recent clamor about the Solomon Islands' security and policing pacts with China, quite a few in Australia and other Western countries are concerned about the growing Chinese influence in the region.

Speaking of Nauru's diplomatic turnaround, Chinese Ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian told the media it was Nauru's "own choice" and it would not affect its relations with Australia. China's cooperation with the Solomon Islands "is not a strategy for military security", he said. "It's a strategy to help policing" to help maintain social stability and basic public order. Therefore, there is "no need for any so-called anxiety on the part of Australia".

China's engagement with the Pacific island countries is for the development of bilateral trade relations for which social stability is necessary. Although many in Australia see the Chinese presence as a potentially threatening development regarding the region as Australia's backyard, Beijing believes it should adopt a more open perspective.

"Pacific island countries are an area where China

and Australia can cooperate and can contribute together instead of asking them to choose between the two," Xiao said. Much of what China is doing actually aligns with what Australia and its Western allies claim they are committed to. In this sense, there indeed is plenty of room for cooperation, rather than strategic rivalry.

This is both possible and necessary as China and Australia are working to repair their relations. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's November visit to Beijing, the first in seven years by an Australian leader, was a turning point for bilateral ties. Xiao expressed China's desire "to continue the good momentum" in further improving the relationship. He even indicated bilateral collaboration should extend to security.

"The defense relationship between our two countries is an area really we need to put more inputs and work harder on," Xiao said. "This is an area that is so important to the mutual trust and confidence between our two countries and two peoples. If you can have trust between two militaries, you have real trust."

Defense cooperation may be hard to come by given the influence that the US exerts on Australia in this area. But if Australia stopped clinging to its Anglo-Saxon identity and found the courage to stop playing the role of a military outpost of the US, it would be better able to embrace the congruence of being an Asia-Pacific country and build trust with China.

Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## New forms of consumption should be fostered, expanded

China's total retail sales of consumer goods reached 47.15 trillion yuan (\$6.55 trillion) in 2023, an increase of 7.2 percent year-on-year. Of the annual economic growth of 5.2 percent, consumer spending drove 4.3 percentage points, contributing 82.5 percent to the country's annual growth.

In 2023, the service industry recovered quickly from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the effective implementation of various policies and measures to expand domestic demand.

That gave a big boost to services consumption. The annual growth rate of retail sales of services surged 20 percent last year, which was 14.2 percentage points higher than the growth rate of commodity retail sales.

In this process, the demand for upgraded and green products continues to be released, promoting the optimization and upgrading of the consumption structure. The quality of products and services has been improved too, providing

important support for consumption upgrading. The retail sales of new energy passenger vehicles exceeded 7 million units last year, an increase of more than 35 percent from that of 2022.

At the same time, the urban and rural consumer markets are growing together, and the proportion of the rural markets has increased. In 2023, retail sales of consumer goods in urban and rural areas increased by 7.1 percent and 8 percent year-on-year respectively.

With the continuous improvement of rural transportation, logistics, information and other infrastructure, the construction of the urban-rural integrated market system has accelerated.

But although the consumer market is recovering fast, the comparatively weak demand is still obvious. Affected by the high leverage ratio of the household sector and the rising propensity for precautionary savings, it may still take some time for residents' willingness to consume, spending power and con-

sumer confidence to recover to the pre-pandemic level.

At present, stabilizing employment is an effective means to improve residents' income and promote consumption growth. The focus should be on taking active measures to support the development of enterprises to create more jobs.

The construction of digital consumption infrastructure will not only help the digital transformation of traditional consumption, but also enhance the supply capacity of new consumption and promote the development of new business formats and new models of consumption.

The country should further enrich the content and expand the scale of services consumption to increase its proportion in overall consumption. The focus can be on the development of the cultural tourism consumer market, cultural entertainment and sports industries, medical and health services, etc.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## Awards reflect nation's emphasis on engineers

In a grand ceremony held in Beijing on Friday, the central authorities presented the National Engineer Awards to a group of accomplished engineers and engineering teams. A total of 81 engineers and 50 teams were recognized for their significant contributions spanning multiple sectors.

This is the first time these awards have been presented highlighting the great significance China attaches to the important roles engineers are playing in promoting the nation's high-quality development.

Although China has cultivated millions of engineers in various sectors, there remains a big gap between what the country wants from them

and what they can provide.

To fill that gap, the country needs to speed up the building of a large-scale team of outstanding engineers. The authorities should stimulate the enthusiasm of both universities and enterprises to improve the ability of engineers to solve complex problems in different environments.

School-enterprise cooperation should therefore be strengthened to form a collaborative engineer cultivation system, which is solution-oriented and can help enhance students' practical engineering skills.

Also some master engineers should be encouraged to set up

workshops to train disciples so that their knowledge and skills can be passed on to the younger generation effectively.

Meanwhile, the country needs to set up relevant platforms to vigorously promote international mutual recognition of engineer qualifications, international cooperation in engineering capacity building and pilot projects in key areas. It should support national societies and others in carrying out engineer competency evaluations, and build a continuous career development service platform for engineers that is in line with international standards.

— SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DAILY

## What They Say

## Partnership strong link between two hemispheres

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Brazil on the weekend is conducive to the two sides carrying on the positive momentum of the development of bilateral ties that was created by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's state visit to China in April last year, and the deepening of the China-Brazil comprehensive strategic partnership.

The largest developing countries in the Eastern and Western hemispheres, China and Brazil uphold multilateralism and a fair and just international order with the United Nations at its center. The two countries are playing important roles in not only stabilizing the global industry and supply chains but also promoting peaceful solutions to the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. To implement the impor-

tant consensus reached by the two heads of state, both sides should set the long-term goal of jointly building a China-Brazil community with a shared future so as to send a positive signal that China and Brazil are long-term and reliable strategic partners. Doing so can prompt those trying to drive a wedge between the two countries to give up the idea.

As countries that have great influence in Asia and Latin America respectively, the two countries should actively explore and deepen the all-round cooperation between China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and between China and the Southern Common Market, help Latin American and the Caribbean countries to unite and strengthen themselves, so as to move toward modernization together.

Also, the two sides can coordi-

nate with each other more closely to promote effective global governance under the framework of the UN, the G20 and BRICS.

Some have speculated that China has been strengthening its relations with Brazil in order to counter the United States' China-containment strategy. But that's not true. It has long been Beijing's policy to firmly support Brazil in accelerating its economic and social development, and to encourage it to play a greater role in international and regional affairs.

The development of Sino-Brazilian relations has great space and potential, and does not target at any third party. Rather, it focuses on promoting the common development of the world and a fair and just international order that is in line with the interests of all countries and peoples.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

**China Daily**  
15 Huixin Donglie Chaoyang District,  
Beijing 100029  
News: +86 (0)10 6491-8366  
editor@chinadaily.com.cn  
Advertisement: +86 (0)10 6491-8631  
ads@chinadaily.com.cn  
Subscription: +86 400-699-0203  
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn  
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

**China Daily UK**  
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK  
+44 (0) 207 398 8270  
editor@chinadailyuk.com

**China Daily Asia Pacific**  
**China Daily Hong Kong**  
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan  
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong  
+852 2518 5111  
editor@chinadailyhk.com  
editor@chinadailypacific.com

**China Daily USA**  
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,  
New York, NY 10036  
+1 212 537 8888  
editor@chinadailyusa.com

**China Daily Africa**  
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya  
+254 (0)20 242 8589 (Nairobi)  
editor@chinadailyafrica.com  
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com  
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

# COMMENT

## China and the World Roundtable | Taiwan Question

**Editor's note:** The Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests and the redline that should not be crossed in China-US relations. There the leadership election on the island will not change the basic landscape and development trend of cross-Strait relations, and the Chinese mainland will work with relevant groups on the island to advance the peaceful development of cross-Strait ties. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Pan Hsi-tang

### Potential risks follow Taiwan leadership polls

Democratic Progressive Party candidate Lai Ching-te may have won the leadership election on the Taiwan island, but he failed to get the majority of the votes (he won just 40 percent of the popular votes). The DPP, too, suffered a loss in that it failed to win the majority of seats in the local legislature. This "double minority" outcome shows, compared with the previous election, fewer Taiwan residents trust the DPP.

Despite the DPP's diminished standing in the local legislature, with none of the three parties having a majority, the intricate interplay and power dynamics among the three major parties will likely make political maneuvering and strategic calculations a routine affair.

Does the fact that the Kuomintang, along with its two independent allies, and the Taiwan People's Party together make up the majority in the legislature mean they will more closely supervise the DPP's policies and powers? Or will the DPP authorities ride roughshod over the opposition's suggestions and decisions? This scenario raises concerns over the overall impact of Lai's win on Taiwan's political landscape and cross-Strait relations.

Lai's 40 percent vote share primarily came from the DPP's core supporters, indicating dissatisfaction with the party's governance under the outgoing Tsai Ing-wen administration. And yet the fact that the majority of Taiwan voters signaled their desire for a change in leadership is not being adequately acknowledged on the island.

That Lai has been elected the island's leader on minority support poses a significant challenge to his political

authority compared with Tsai's "complete governance". With only 40 percent support, Lai lacks broad representation and will face obstacles in governance unless he collaborates with one of the two parties.

In the 113-seat legislature, the Kuomintang's 52 seats, along with its two allies, will not give it even a simple majority. But the fact that the DPP has a seat less than the Kuomintang could prompt the TPP, with eight seats, to leverage its position to foster a strategic alliance with either of the two major parties, adding another layer of uncertainty to Taiwan's political future.

Despite close ties between the Kuomintang's Han Kuo-yu and the TPP's Ko Wen-je, the TPP, under Ko's leadership, is expected to assert its autonomy, creating opportunities for both the blue (Kuomintang) and green (DPP) camps to form a front on specific issues. Thus the TPP could serve as check and balance for the DPP administration, and help stabilize cross-Strait relations and prevent turbulence across the Strait.

However, TPP leader Ko has added another layer of complexity to the island's politics, by emphasizing that he won't exclusively align with either the Kuomintang or the DPP and, instead collaborate with the party that supports a good cause. The TPP's possible oscillation between the DPP and



The author is a professor of cross-Strait relations and international relations at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan.

the Kuomintang risks creating distrust in both sides, because one of the parties will always be dissatisfied with the TPP's decision.

Incidentally, the TPP has proposed four "legislative reform" measures, demanding clear commitments from the blue and green camps. Although this strategic move places the TPP in a favorable position, engaging in opportunistic dealings with both sides could disappoint those who want to see a new political culture, especially those who reject the idea of trading positions to cooperate with a party.

Also, given his earlier call to "oust the DPP", Ko faces a dilemma: if he collaborates with the DPP in the legislative assembly, his 3.69 million voters may question his political commitment. Therefore, Ko must carefully consider the implications before fostering a DPP-TPP alliance.

More important, Lai's 40 percent vote share, coupled with his pro-independence stance, doesn't align with the

majority sentiment in Taiwan. The election's clear message is that supporters of the 1992 Consensus in the blue camp, along with those in the white (TPP) camp who advocate that both sides of the Strait are one family, expect renewed dialogue and peace.

Lai's pro-independence background and divisive stance, too, pose a threat to cross-Strait ties, and could escalate tensions across the Strait. The evolving cross-Strait scenario, distinct from past cross-Strait ties, and could escalate tensions across the Strait. The evolving cross-Strait scenario, distinct from past cross-Strait ties, and could escalate tensions across the Strait. The evolving cross-Strait scenario, distinct from past cross-Strait ties, and could escalate tensions across the Strait.

And regardless of the DPP's efforts to highlight "US-Taiwan friendship", US intervention in the island's affairs is likely to be limited as long as Beijing-Washington relations remain stable. This is because the common interests of the US and the mainland far outweigh those of the US and Taiwan.

In conclusion, the younger generation's strong support for Ko in the island's election is a rare phenomenon, although it fell short of helping realize the mainstream desire for a change in the island's political leadership. Now, with Lai's victory, uncertainties in cross-Strait relations are set to increase, and if Lai continues to promote his pro-independence ideology, restoring lasting peace across the Strait will become even more challenging.

The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Cao Xiaoheng

### Cutting cross-Strait trade ties bad for island's residents

Lai Ching-te won the recent Taiwan leadership election by a narrow margin, securing another term for the Democratic Progressive Party. But regardless of the shifts in the Taiwan island's political landscape, it is essential to remember the irrefutable fact that Taiwan is an integral part of China.

The Chinese mainland remains committed to maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait and making efforts to improve cross-Strait ties, in line with the principles outlined by the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the overarching strategy for resolving the Taiwan question and realizing national reunification.

Given the intertwined domestic and international factors constraining cross-Strait economic cooperation, the mainland is poised to implement the top leader's vision of deepening cross-Strait integration and consolidating the foundation for peaceful national reunification. The goal of the vision is to overcome challenges to develop a new paradigm for cross-Strait economic integration.

First, it is imperative that the damage caused by the DPP's eight-year rule to cross-Strait economic cooperation be repaired. Since taking office in 2016, the DPP has used various tactics to undermine cross-Strait economic ties. On the political front, it introduced measures such as the "anti-infiltration act" and the "five amendments to the national security laws" to punish individuals who promoted cross-Strait exchanges. And the "new south-bound policy" is aimed at decoupling the island from the mainland and severing the economic links between the two sides of the Strait.

Moreover, after former US president Donald Trump assumed office in 2017, the Tsai Ing-wen administration in Taiwan strengthened its "alliance" with Washington, violating World Trade Organization rules and breaching the terms of the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement.

In response, the mainland suspended tariff concessions on certain imports from Taiwan. If the DPP fails to take effective measures to correct its course, the mainland will be compelled to take further countermeasures such as suspending more tariff concessions. These steps are expected to improve the institutional environment for cross-Strait economic relations and steering cooperation in the right direction.

Second, cross-Strait economic development is driven by the people on both sides of the Strait. History shows that economic cooperation has served as a stabilizing force in cross-Strait relations. After more than 30 years of cross-Strait exchanges, the intrinsic dynamics and deep-seated foundations of cooperation have benefited both sides. But the Chinese island's actions undermine this relationship.

Data from Taiwan show the island had a total trade surplus of \$80.5 billion in 2023, while its trade with the mainland reached the same figure. That means without trade with the mainland, Taiwan would not enjoy any trade surplus. Although exports to the mainland hit a new low in 2023, Taiwan's dependence on exports to the mainland was still as high as 35.2 percent of its total last year.

A study conducted by Taiwan's institutions shows the mainland, along with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, remains the largest destination for both exports and imports of the island. Since this interdependence is difficult to change, industries and businesses on both sides of the Strait should expand exchanges while the two sides of the Strait need to resolve cross-Strait issues through negotiations.

Despite the DPP's efforts to spread anti-mainland sentiments, an increasing number of Taiwan residents have come to realize that "Taiwan independence" is a daydream and the future of Taiwan lies in reunification with the motherland. Seeing the mainland enter a new stage of high-quality development with new, emerging industries, facilities and platforms, Taiwan compatriots and businesses aspire to seize the opportunities that they offer.

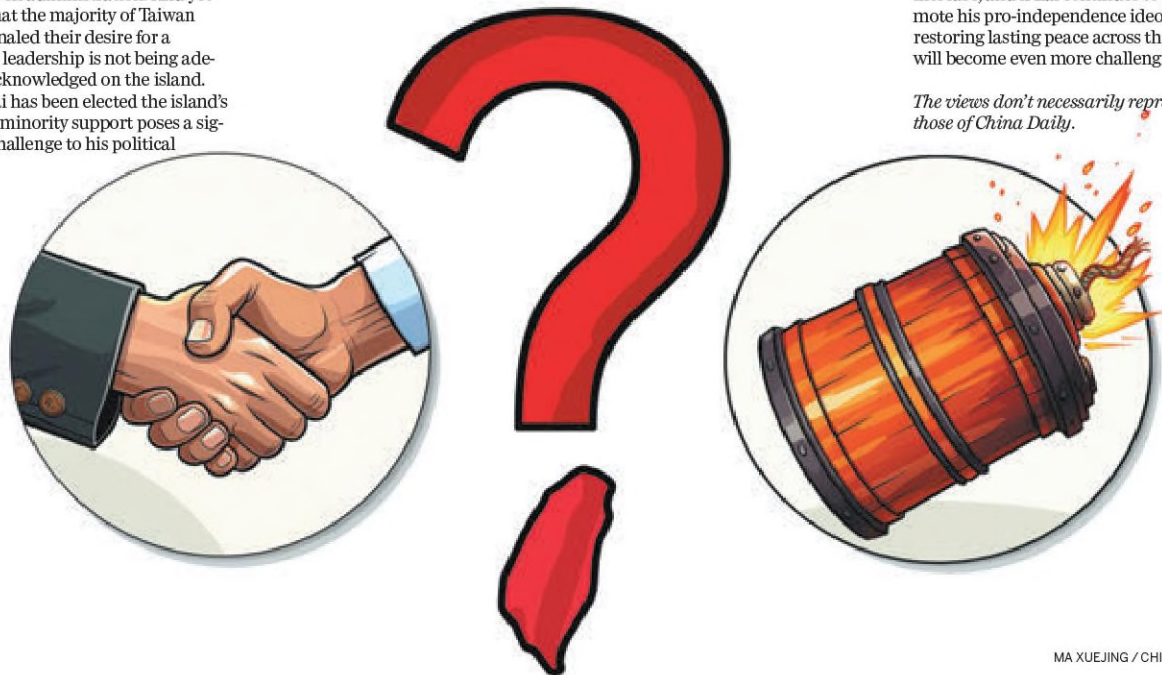
Third, creating a new framework for cross-Strait cooperation necessitates standardized practices. To facilitate cross-Strait economic exchanges and help Taiwan compatriots and businesses to benefit from the mainland's pursuit of high-quality development, efforts should be made to optimize the institutional framework for economic exchanges.

The mainland, to be sure, will continue to prevent the DPP from seeking "Taiwan independence" and violating established rules. The mainland will also seek dialogue based on the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China with relevant organizations and groups in Taiwan, in order to resolve economic and trade issues.

In other words, the mainland will build a demonstration zone for cross-Strait integrated development in Fujian province. Through a series of reforms, this zone will become the first home for Taiwan compatriots and businesses, providing services for learning, entrepreneurship, employment, social participation, judicial services and tourism. This initiative is aimed at creating a potent platform for personnel mobility, talent exchange and entrepreneurship, serving the interests of residents on both sides and setting new standards for cross-Strait economic integration.

As a saying goes, where there's a will, there's a way. By aligning with public sentiment, overcoming obstacles, promoting exchanges and standardizing cooperation, a new path for cross-Strait economic integration can be forged.

The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Marcus Vinicius De Freitas

### It's time Washington did the right thing

State sovereignty has its origin in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, when the treaty that ended the Thirty Years' War established that every state is sovereign and has the right to determine its domestic affairs without external interference, which has been the basis of international relations and coexistence for centuries.

Article 2 (7) of the United Nations Charter says that nothing shall authorize intervention in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state. This means every state has the right to govern itself without external interference (including the United Nations).

Former British prime minister Winston Churchill once said, "Americans will always do the right thing, only after they have tried everything else." To realize the veracity of this quote, one has to just look at the way the United States has handled its relations with China, particularly on the Taiwan question. The US' actions are dangerous because in such cases, a single mistake could lead to a global catastrophe, with profound impacts on international trade and global stability.

In a world still struggling to overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and military conflicts, the destabilization of the global supply chains will be a serious blow to humankind.

The US' provocative moves are nothing but an interference in an exclusively domestic matter of China. According to the one-China principle, widely accepted by the international community since the 1970s, there is only one China and Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. This principle is the cornerstone of Sino-US relations.

Nauru, one of the smallest countries in the world, recently changed its foreign policy, announcing severing its "diplomatic relations" with Taiwan and intending to establish official ties with Beijing after realizing how the one-China principle helps maintain regional stability and peace in the Pacific.

In recent years, to contain China, and even provoke a confrontation, the US and some of its allies have been encouraging, and goading the Taiwan island to take actions that would increase hostilities across the Taiwan Strait, ignoring the fact that Taiwan is an integral part of China.

Further, Lai Ching-te, who recently won the island's leadership election, could deteriorate cross-Strait relations if he pursues a separatist agenda. Needless to say such provocations are not beneficial to Taiwan, its people or the world.

The world has been close to nuclear winter on several occasions. Political forces, however, have acted in time to prevent the worst from happening. If China were to respond in kind to the US' continuous provocations, the world once again could encounter such a situation, which could cause enormous instability and upheaval.

On June 12, 1987, then US president Ronald Reagan delivered his most famous speech at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin. He said: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." It was a call from Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, then general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to break the Berlin Wall, which had been standing since 1961.

In contrast, Washington today, along with some of its allies, is building a wall against Beijing, by imposing trade sanctions on Beijing, expanding its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region and playing the Taiwan card. The US' actions, incidentally, are aimed at maintaining its global hegemony.

Despite knowing full well that Taiwan constitutes a redline in Sino-US relations, the US has been resorting to double standard, by on the one hand affirming the one-China principle and on the other doing the opposite by encouraging and supporting the separatists forces on the island. So before being swayed by the promises of support from the West, the island's leadership should read between the

lines to realize the West only makes empty promises.

The US' dirty, strategic machinations once again became public when Mitch McConnell, Republican leader in the US Senate, in an interview two months ago, said the Ukrainians were providing a low-cost service for the US in the competition for global power, as most of the resources the US announced would be dispatched to Ukraine did not leave the US. On Washington's global chessboard, Kyiv is nothing more than a US pawn in the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

The world does not need another military conflict to help the US maintain its global hegemony. The world is already facing one of its most complex and challenging times due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the brutal pounding of the Gaza Strip by Israel, the Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the fierce response of the US and UK. What the world needs is global peace and common development.

However, global peace and development also depend on healthy cross-Strait ties and Taiwan's peaceful reunification with the motherland.

If US President Joe Biden wants to enter the history books, he should comply with the one-China principle. While there is time, Mr Biden, do the right thing: tear down the wall the West is building around China!

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## GLOBAL VIEWS

KOSTAS GOULIAMOS

## Team player

China is advancing Global South cooperation based on bilateral, multilateral, regional and interregional synergies



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

China is playing an increasingly bigger role in the global, political and socioeconomic environment. Accordingly, many analysts worldwide believe that Beijing has emerged as a key player in international development cooperation.

South-South cooperation is a significant section of China's practice of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Such cooperation can be generally defined as synergy at the bilateral, multilateral, regional or interregional levels in order to promote economic and scientific development. In this sense, countries of the Global South should, on the premise of independence, increase their common interests and support for one another. Some countries should also use South-South cooperation to endorse "North-South" collaboration and uphold openness, inclusiveness and multilateralism.

The China-proposed initiatives, namely, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, are powerful engines for win-win synergy and, consequently, the modernization drive of countries which fall under the framework of the South-South cooperation. Besides, the four initiatives can be regarded as the pillars for building an advanced equilibrium of international relations, which lies in broader and deeper global partnerships based on equality, stability and peaceful coexistence. It is worth mentioning that China sticks to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in pursuing friendship and cooperation with other countries. Indeed, China works to strengthen harmonization and constructive interaction with other countries in order to generate peaceful coexistence, stability and a developmental equilibrium.

In view of this, China has become active in providing South-South development assistance to the Global South countries by taking into consideration their own unique features pertinent to the scale of and approaches to synergy, regional and sector distribution as well as aid management. In alignment with the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development 17 Goals set for all countries in the new era, China has set up a Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund with a total funding of \$4 billion.

Furthermore, at the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue in Johan-

nesburg last August, it is announced that Chinese financial institutions will soon set up a special fund of \$10 billion dedicated to the implementation of the Global Development Initiative. Undeniably, the integrated 17 Sustainable Development Goals underline the importance of South-South cooperation and development assistance. From

Asia to Africa, from the Pacific island countries to the Latin American and Caribbean region, over 200 cooperation projects have come to materialization, adding benefits to current and future generations. Since 2016, China has cooperated with over 10 international organizations, such as the UN World Food Programme, the UN Development

Programme, the World Health Organization, and the International Committee of the Red Cross in over 50 countries, which has benefited more than 20 million individuals. Meanwhile, cooperation mechanisms are increasing in domains such as poverty reduction, education and health, placing emphasis on finding equilibrium among

the economy, society and environment.

As the world is undergoing an accelerating rate of change, the international community, especially the Global South countries, may positively perceive the China-FAO South-South Cooperation Trust Fund and appreciate China's Food Production Enhancement Action along with the food assistance it provides and the agritech it shares with many developing countries. Similarly, it gives great value to China's initiative of a Global Clean Energy Cooperation Partnership with a view to achieving energy security. China has increased the connectedness, mutual trust and common interests among Global South countries. Guided by the principles of multilateralism and the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China is building stronger solidarity and cooperation with the Global South countries and, concurrently, safeguarding the common interests of the developing world. Particularly in recent years through such initiatives as the Belt and Road Initiative, China's engagement in foreign aid and related areas has been further heightened. As it takes a more proactive approach and, hereafter, protagonist role in the Global South cooperation, China is generating an advanced new model of international development cooperation that is correspondingly connected with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Besides, China is increasingly building spheres of synergies in the Global South regions, including synergy with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, constructing comprehensive strategic partnerships that in turn make advances toward a community of shared future. It is precisely this vision that strengthens the resilience, vitality and sustained common future between China and the Global South countries. This vision and approach have definitely contributed to enduring peace and shared prosperity in the Global South region and the wider world. China offers an advanced model for developmental equilibrium to other countries in their quest for development.

The author is a former rector of the European University Cyprus, an ordinary member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and director of the CASSEUC China Studies Center. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

HUBIN

## Leading light of cooperation

Mutual trust and support testify to the strength of China-Djibouti friendly ties

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Djibouti. The friendly cooperation forged between the two countries since then has set a model of mutual trust, reciprocal benefit and win-win progress with the times.

First, the two countries are closely linked by a common belief in taking their destiny into their own hands. China was one of the first countries to recognize Djibouti's independence. In 1981, just two years after the establishment of diplomatic ties, China began sending medical teams to Djibouti. The People's Palace, stadium, school, inland well drilling project, regional hospital, social security housing, and national library and archives are all monuments testifying to the strength of the 45-year friendship.

Since the establishment of their strategic partnership in 2017, the two countries have consolidated their strategic mutual trust and firmly supported each other on issues concerning each other's core interests. Increased people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two countries have strengthened the bonds of friendship. Confucius Institutes have sparked a passion for the Chinese language, the cultural essence of the two countries have enriched each other, and the cooperation between sister cities has made steady progress.

Second, the two countries are committed to seeking independent development paths suited to their own national conditions. Based on the high compatibility between Vision Djibouti 2035 and the Belt and Road Initiative, the two sides have jointly built flagship projects such as the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, Doraleh Multipurpose Port and Djibouti International Free Trade Zone, providing a strong boost to Djibouti's goal of being the "Red Sea lighthouse". The long-term cooperation between the two sides in a wide range of areas such as health, food security, safe water, school construction, social security housing, personnel training, job creation and a series of projects has greatly promoted the well-being of the local people. In recent years, the two



TONG JIAHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

sides have stepped up cooperation under the framework of the Global Development Initiative to promote sustainable and inclusive development.

Third, strengthening international solidarity and promoting peace and development are the two countries' common goals. Djibouti has always had an important position and influence in the Horn of Africa. China has put forward the Concept of Peaceful Development in the Horn of Africa to support regional countries in resolving African issues in an African way and promoting peace and sustainable development in the region. Cooperation on the implementation of this vision

**With the joint efforts of the two sides, China-Djibouti relations will open a new chapter, better benefit the two countries and their peoples, and make new contributions to peace and prosperity in the world and the region.**

opens up a new dimension of high-level cooperation between the two countries, from promoting bilateral cooperation to maintaining regional stability. In a turbulent and changing world full of destabilizing factors and uncertainties, as the largest developing country, China is well aware of its responsibilities. While striving for its own development and benefiting its own people, China is also committed to upholding world peace and promoting common development. In this regard, China has received valuable support from the vast number of developing countries, including Djibouti. In this sense, China, Djibouti and other develop-

ing countries that cherish national sovereignty and independence and pursue their own development in a more equitable and just international environment are important balancing forces for effectively responding to and restraining turbulence, instability and inequality in the world. China-Djibouti cooperation will undoubtedly make new contributions to regional and world peace.

As China and Djibouti commemorate their 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, a new era of collaboration and developmental opportunities emerges. At the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in December, China systematically expounded its position and propositions on promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, including advocating an equal and orderly multi-polar world and economic globalization that benefits all. Chinese modernization will make new contributions to addressing global challenges.

Over the past year or so, the two heads of state have met on multiple occasions including the China-Arab States Summit, the BRICS Plus Dialogue and the China-Africa Leaders' Dialogue, outlining a blueprint for further developing the strategic partnership between the two countries in the new era. The ninth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation will be held in China this year, when China and African countries including Djibouti will discuss the future development plan. China and Djibouti will hold a series of celebration activities, including closer high-level exchanges, promoting practical cooperation, and strengthening exchanges and cooperation between political parties, legislatures, sister cities and peoples. With the joint efforts of the two sides, China-Djibouti relations will open a new chapter, better benefit the two countries and their peoples, and make new contributions to peace and prosperity in the world and the region.

The author is Chinese ambassador to Djibouti. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

# LIFE

**L**arou, a type of cured meat, is an essential Chinese New Year's ingredient for people in Sichuan province, for whom it represents not just a festive tradition, but also the taste of home.

For those who've experienced the enchantment of a Sichuan winter, it's a season painted with the rich hues of smoky aromas — imagine cypress branches being used to ignite a bonfire, as tendrils of smoke gracefully envelop the cherished larou sausages.

In Beijing, the Meizhoudongpo restaurant chain, which is known for Sichuan cuisine, is offering diners a taste of authentic larou. Its annual larou offering, savored only once a year during the Spring Festival season, has long been loved by customers.

This year, the chain has upgraded its larou production by selecting the black pigs used in the meat's making, according to Zhou Miao, general manager of the chain's brand marketing center.

"Every year, many loyal customers eagerly await the release of our Chinese New Year goods. As soon as the larou products hit the market, we receive numerous orders," Zhou says.

As the Year of the Dragon approaches, the sale of Lunar New Year goods and especially food is brimming with festive spirit across the country. Gift packages and boxes with unique features are selling like hot cakes, with the post-1995 generation taking the lead in family Spring Festival shopping, driving a surge in online sales.

Restaurants and food merchants from different regions are striking a balance between tradition and innovation, providing customers with a mix of traditionally rich-flavored New Year goods and unique creative options, catering to the changing tastes of the market.

According to Zhou, Meizhoudongpo has been making Chinese New Year goods for more than a decade, and preparation of this year's larou offerings commenced as early as September. In addition to cured sausages, they include cured spare-ribs, pork belly, and a type of chicken that undergoes a distinctive air-drying process.

Elaborating on the meticulous 28-day process their larou undergoes, Zhou says that the fresh meat receives a spa-like rub with Sichuan peppercorns and salt. It then air-dries for five days, undergoes smoking with fruitwood, and then continues to air dry in the sun. After this journey, the larou emerges with a glossy appearance, crystal-clear texture, and the subtle fragrance of fruitwood. It can be enjoyed steamed, stir-fried, or stewed, making it an indispensable New Year flavor for Sichuan people, Zhou says.

"Unlike traditional outdoor household production, we take a

centralized factory approach. However, we meticulously replicate the temperature and humidity of Sichuan during December of the lunar calendar to ensure the quality of our larou. This way, the weather doesn't compromise the final taste," explains Zhou.

For the coming Year of the Dragon, Man Ho Restaurant in Beijing has rolled out a variety of Chinese New Year gift boxes. According to Dong Yan, the restaurant manager, this year's offerings include a diverse range of traditional New Year goods like pastries, rice cakes, sweet dumplings, braised items, and poon choi, along with stylish gift baskets.

"Poon choi, a traditional Cantonese dish, is in high demand, with many people choosing it as the main dish for their reunion dinner. It symbolizes joy and abundance, like a treasure trove," explains Dong.

"Another reason is because preparing poon choi is complex and time-consuming. Many families find it inconvenient to make themselves, so they buy it ready-made."

Dong also highlights the carp-shaped rice cake, a traditional delicacy made by their restaurant every year. The symbolic dish, representing surplus, is a household staple. "Traditionally, it's steamed, but we also suggest pan-frying for a unique flavor," Dong suggests.

The restaurant has also added Chinese-style snacks to the rice cake gift box, each with an auspicious name like "Good Things Happen" or "Prosperity in the Year of the Dragon".



**Above:** A gift box of glutinous-rice cakes shaped like carp and other traditional snacks. **Below from left:** A gift box from the restaurant Fengtian contains smoked, stewed items. The restaurant chain Meizhoudongpo sells larou, a kind of cured meat that's a must for Lunar New Year's feasts in Sichuan. A gift box of pastries features beef-tongue cakes and other handmade treats that evoke childhood nostalgia among many Chinese. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Younger crowds

Young people are increasingly turning to online shopping for their New Year purchases. The New Year Shopping Festival on Tmall and JD kicked off on Wednesday, accompanied by corresponding promotions on livestreaming platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou.

From a special cognac edition for the Year of the Dragon from France, and deep-sea fish oil from Norway, to local delights such as Xinghualou brand pastries, Altay white-spotted dogfish, and Chagan Lake winter-caught fathead fish, a range of global products is already available on Tmall in readiness.

In mid-January, Tmall unveiled a report on the flavor trends of the 2024 Tmall New Year Shopping Festival, revealing that over half of the users placing orders for New Year goods on Taobao were born after 1995, and are taking on the role as decision-makers for family New Year goods.

Zhang Peng, the head of the food and fresh produce industry at Tmall, explains that New Year's dinners organized by the post-1995 generation tend to include more new varieties compared to traditional hometown flavors.

More cross-regional cuisines are making their way to the table. For example, people from Zhejiang love to buy Inner Mongolian lamb, and individuals from southern regions are also developing a taste for northeastern fish, Zhang says.

Well-known, time-honored brands are also stepping up their game with a diverse range of traditional food gift boxes.

Huguosi Snack's flagship store, for instance, has put together a New Year's gift box featuring 10 classic Beijing snacks. This year, they've also introduced special pastries adorned with motifs like dragons, fish and symbols of prosperity.

Yuhuaatai Restaurant in Beijing is offering a 268-yuan (\$37) New Year combo that includes a delightful assortment of specialties such as jujube cake, a steamed bun assortment, rose buns and golden fish cake.

While the Feidachu Fried Pork with Chili restaurant chain is open for business as usual during this year's Spring Festival, serving authentic Hunan cuisine to customers nationwide, they've also introduced a special Chinese New Year gift box that blends food with cultural elements. It includes festive items like couplets, red envelopes, desk calendars and small couplet fridge stickers — all common elements of the Spring Festival. Renowned calligrapher Luo Jieliang has written the couplets, and there are nine red envelopes symbolizing the nine sons of the dragon.

The gift box is adorned with the Chinese character fu (blessing) on the front, and comes with a hook, making it easy to hang up as a decorative piece with the character fu proudly displayed.

Fengtian Restaurant in Shenyang, Liaoning province, known for its northeastern Chinese cuisine, has introduced two gift boxes featuring traditional northern Chinese New Year delicacies.

In the smoked, stewed items gift box, there are specialties like smoked, stewed pork knuckle, whole chicken, pig trotters and pig ears. Northeastern cuisine involves stewing meat in soybean sauce before it is smoked to give it a distinctive flavor.

After marinating in sauce, the pork knuckle is placed on a rack, and sugar and pine needles are placed on the bottom of the pot. As the pot is heated, the smoky aroma of sugar and pine needles infuses the pork knuckle. "Northeast China boasts a range of sauces, with each city in Liaoning having its unique taste," Ren Pangbo, the general manager, explains.

The pastry gift box includes six pastries like beef-tongue cakes, handmade oven pastries and walnut crisps. Luguao, or "oven pastries", are square, with a crispy outer layer, and their name comes from the baking process in an oven.

"Oven pastries are a traditional northeastern treat made from simple ingredients like eggs, flour, sugar, oil, baking soda and sesame. Since they're rare nowadays, we've combined various traditional pastries into a gift box, allowing customers to savor childhood memories," Ren says.

Contact the writer at [liyixue@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:liyixue@chinadaily.com.cn)

# A traditional feast's new tastes

As people born after 1995 come to set the Spring Festival menu, they're serving novel flavors, and more dishes from other regions and countries, **Li Yixue** reports.



## What's on

### Updated role



Rong Bao Zhai is a time-honored brand that began life as a small studio in 17th-century Beijing, selling paper, brushes and other materials used in Chinese ink art. It later evolved into a

destination where reputed artists, scholars and members of cultural circles came not only to purchase quality tools and materials, but also to meet like-minded people.

Now with its first *Youth Art Nomination Exhibition*, Rong Bao Zhai has taken on a new role as a launchpad for young artists. Dozens of pieces, including classical Chinese paintings, calligraphy and contemporary art, are currently on display at its location on the historical Liulichang West Street in southern Beijing. Mostly in their 30s and 40s, the artists featured represent the dynamics and diversity of art in China today. The exhibition will end on Jan 31. 9 am-5 pm, daily. 19 Liulichang Xijie, Xicheng district, Beijing. 010-6303-2398.

### Rites and wisdom

Home to a number of important archaeological discoveries, East China's Shandong province has an

abundance of artifacts from different periods that are of great historical significance and artistry. But what do these pieces of historical evidence suggest specifically? What clues to the development of Chinese civilization do they reveal? And what picture do they present of events in Shandong and how they've changed history? The answers to these questions are revealed at *The Evolution of Rites in the East*, an exhibition at Tsinghua University Art Museum that has gathered around 400 objects from the collections of several Shandong museums. Running through to Feb 18, the exhibition underscores the role of Shandong as one of the origins of Chinese civilization. Artifacts on show include color-patterned pottery and jade ornaments from the Neolithic Dawenkou culture, ceremonial bronzes and Buddhist statues from between the fourth and sixth centuries, and ceramics made in Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province.



9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. Tsinghua University, Haidian district, Beijing. 010-6278-1012.

### Hues of red

Passion, anger, love, dignity, mystery, supernatural forces ... the meanings of red, a color imbued with rich symbolism, vary from time to time and from culture to culture, and it is one of the colors most used to depict and express complex feelings and emotions. *Red East-West*, an ongoing exhibition at the Ici Labas gallery, investigates the diverse implications of red in the arts and in different cultures. On show are some 40 paintings, watercolors, prints, photos and installations in which varying degrees of red are presented, including images of animals, body parts, architecture and clothing. The show invites the audience to look back on the history of the use of red as a cultural and historical carrier, and to open up a dialogue between the East

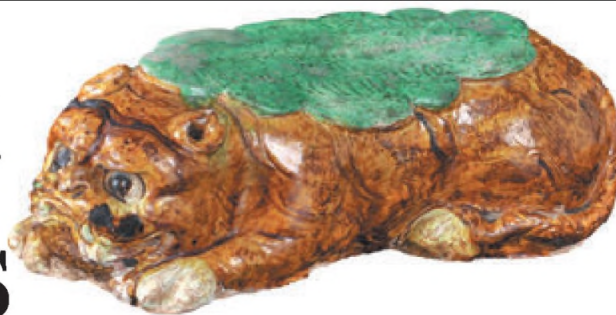


and West. The exhibition runs through to Feb 4. 10:30 am-5:30 pm, closed on Mondays. D10, 798 Dong Jie, 798 art zone, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 130-0117-0598.

LIFE



# Pillow talk that speaks volumes



**A**tiger on its stomach. A reclining woman. A lion with her cub. A bare-bottomed boy resting his chin on his hand. Some are cubes. Some are round. And some are polygons. Most are porcelain. An ongoing exhibition in Baoji, Shaanxi province, shows how pillows can be much more than just places to put our heads while we sleep.

The exhibition, which runs until April 10, displays 121 ancient pillows from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) until early 20th century. It's co-organized by the Baoji Bronze Ware Museum in Shaanxi and the Nanyue King Museum in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

In ancient China, pillows demonstrated aesthetic sensibilities and conveyed good wishes. Cat-shaped pillows, for instance, symbolized hopes that a couple would enjoy good health while growing old together. Ceramic pillows shaped like babies signified fertility. And so on.

"These pillows, made using various materials and designs, are not just daily items but also artistic creations with cultural and historical value," says Guo Jing, director of the exhibition department of the Baoji Bronze Ware Museum.

"They show vivid social scenes from different periods and interesting folk cultures, and contain memories of the past. We hope that these relics help visitors enter the world of the ancients," she says.

A particularly special exhibit is the pearl pillow unearthed from the tomb of the King of Nanyue, a kingdom that existed from 204 BC to 111 BC. It was established after the collapse of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), and encompassed what is now Guangdong, the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and surrounding areas.

The pillow is made of 470 unprocessed pearls, with diameters ranging from 0.1 to 0.4 centimeters, indicating its owner's elite status.

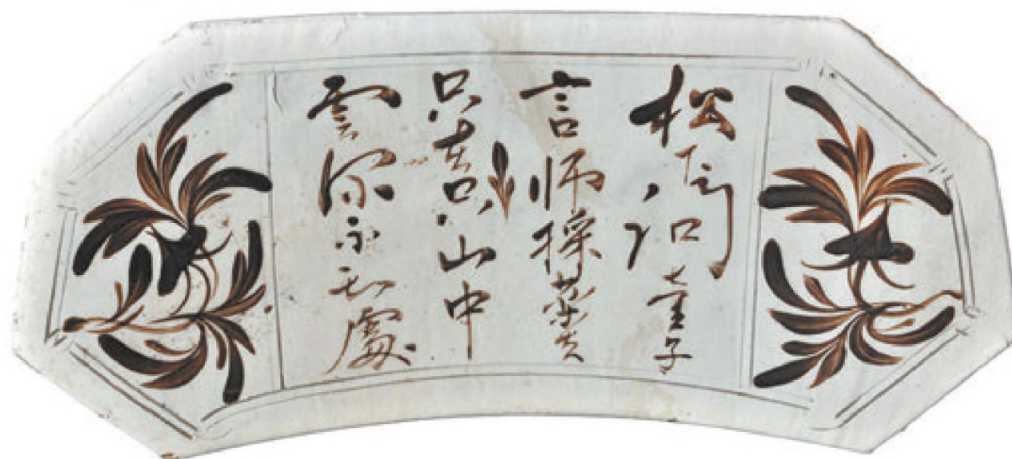
Another special exhibit is a tiger-head pillow, which symbolizes courage and strength, according to Guo.

"Tiger-head pillows are made in various ways," she explains.

"Some craftspeople embroider images of the head. Others carve or sculpt them from jade, wood or porcelain. In ancient times, these pillows were often for children, and represented good fortune and healthy growth."

Ancient craftspeople would often incorporate motifs like mountains, rivers, flowers

An exhibition examines what nighttime head rests say about social development in ancient times, **Qin Feng and Chen Meiling report.**



**Top left:** A brown tiger-shaped pillow with its back painted with peonies. **Top right:** A three-color tiger-shaped pillow. **Clockwise from top:** An octagonal pillow with a white background and black-brown patterns and poetry; a green leaf-patterned pillow engraved with words; and a pillow that resembles a bare-bottomed boy resting his chin on his hand. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and animals, or inscriptions of poems, literary passages or proverbs, when making everyday items.

As such, some pillows carry verses like, "your descendants have their own good fortune; do not work as horses and cattle for them", or portray scenes of lotus ponds with green birds, eagles catching rabbits, or children at play.

"Ancient people's harmonious relationships with nature is displayed within this small realm — a pillow," she says.

There are a few theories as to why ancient pillows are hard, rather than soft. One idea is that a gentleman's virtue was likened to jade and, as such, should be of a similar feel. Another is that hard pillows better support the neck, stabilize the head and improve blood circulation in the eyes and consequently improve vision.

Also, ceramic pillows are cooler and can help lower body temperatures, which is refreshing in the summer heat.

Li Ming, who visited the exhibition earlier this month, says he knows that ancient and modern pillows are different. He has watched some TV dramas in which emperors sleep on luxurious bejeweled pillows.

"I thought hard pillows might lead to problems like a stiff neck. But the guide mentioned that there are medical accounts suggesting that hard pillows can improve vision. That surprised me. I want to try it myself," he says.

Li says he'll recommend the exhibition to family and friends.

"It's interesting that we can learn about ancient social conditions and customs through pillows. It's like seeing a big world through a small object."

The earliest known pillows can be traced back to the Neolithic period, and the earliest physical evidence of pillows in China comes from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC).

In the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), nobles were buried with jade pillows. During the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, the ceramics industry flourished, and porcelain pillows emerged. The development of porcelain pillows peaked during the Song, Liao, Jin and Yuan dynasties (960-1368), gradually declining after the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911).

Contact the writers at [chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn)



**From left:** A total of 121 ancient pillows are exhibited at the Baoji Bronze Ware Museum in Shaanxi province, for visitors to learn the social customs and folk culture of different periods in ancient China; two cat-shaped pillows from the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to early 20th century; the entrance to the ancient pillow exhibition, which will run until April 10.

## Young lodgers bring joy to elderly nursing home residents' lives

By LIU MINGTAI and ZHOU HUIYING

After his final exam on Jan 11, Wang Yatao immediately moved into the Xiyangfu Nursing Home in Jilin city, Jilin province, becoming a special lodger among the group of seniors.

The 22-year-old sophomore at the Jilin Agricultural Science and Technology University decided to spend two weeks at the nursing home before returning to his hometown in Yingtan city, Jiangxi province.

"I was attracted by a short video posted on (video-sharing platform) Douyin in early January," he says. "In the video, the owner of the nursing home was recruiting young people as lodgers."

People who are younger than 35 and have a college education can get a single room, three meals a day and a monthly stipend of 300 yuan (\$42) with a requirement to do 20 hours of volunteer service

during that period.

Applicants should have a fixed job or study in college, and should not drink or smoke.

"In fact, what attracted me was not the small stipend but rather, the volunteer service," says Wang. "I thought it would be a good opportunity to have a different kind of volunteer experience."

Wang has participated in the volunteer team since he enrolled in the university.

"We initiated various volunteer activities across the city, such as visiting nursing homes, tutoring impoverished and 'left-behind' children of migrant workers, and teaching the public about environmental protection," he says.

"But I have never lived with so many seniors and delved so deeply into their lives."

Zhou Weihong, owner of the nursing home, hopes to build a platform for both the elderly and youth.

"Lots of young people have to leave their hometowns and rela-



A volunteer teaches a senior to use the smartphone at the Xiyangfu Nursing Home in Jilin city, Jilin province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

tives for study or work, so they may miss the chance to live with their families, especially their grandparents," says the 60-year-old.

"Living in my nursing home will

enable them to better understand and communicate with the elderly. And these younger people can bring new things and vitality to the elderly residents, who are... much happy-

er when their grandchildren visit."

Zhou's post recruiting lodgers has racked up over 1 million hits since he put it online in early January.

"I received hundreds of applications," he says. "After careful screening, I chose six, all of whom are college students from the cities of Jilin, Changchun and Baicheng."

"They will spend about two weeks of vacation before the Spring Festival in the nursing home," he says, adding that another 10 will come after the festival.

Zhou's nursing home opened in 2004 and houses around 100 seniors, aged from 50 to 100.

"There are 30 workers taking care of their daily lives, so I don't worry about labor," he says. "I just hope the volunteers will provide quality companionship."

Zhou says a growing proportion of the population is elderly, especially in the northeast.

"I hope young people will be able to alleviate their loneliness, understand their difficulties and deepen

their awareness while respecting and loving the elderly," he says.

Over 280 million Chinese, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the population, were above 60 years old by the end of 2022, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs. A further 210 million people, or almost 15 percent, are 65 or older.

Wang says he and the other volunteers have spent the last few days presenting performances, painting pictures and exercising with the seniors.

"I spent almost all of my time during the day with them. It was a really different vacation," he says.

"It gives me a warm feeling. They treat us like their grandchildren, and share their fruit and snacks with us. I'll continue to visit after I return to my university in the spring semester. And I'll spread the word about this among our volunteer team."

Contact the writers at [zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn)

# CULTURE

## All about Khon



Striving for the spectacular in Thailand's dramatic arts, Yang Wanli reports in Bangkok.



Top: Khon is considered to be the highest form of Thailand's theatrical arts. Performers can only take the stage after practicing for at least five or six years. Above from left: Khon practitioners wear the most dramatic costumes, perform in the most dramatic sets, and have the most elaborate props in Thailand's dramatic arts. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Khon includes a collection of manual arts for creating stage backdrops and performers' clothes. All decorations shown are handmade in the traditional Thai style. PHOTOS BY YANG WANLI / CHINA DAILY

**A**mong all forms of Thailand theatrical arts, Khon is considered to be the highest form that no other dance and theater can match its scale and complexity. "If you are a performing art fan, Khon will definitely be the choice that cannot be missed in Thailand," said Admiral Sumpao Polathorn, superintendent of the Khon Learning Center.

The center in Ayutthaya Province, is a place to conserve and demonstrate this traditional Thai masked dance, which was originated at the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767) and combines musical, vocal, literary, dance, ritual and handicraft elements.

The performance depicts the story of *Ramakien*, a Thai epic based on the Hindu tale of *Ramayana*. It tells the glory of Rama, the hero and incarnation of the god Vishnu, who brings order and justice to the world.

Admiral said there are many episodes depict Rama's life, including his journey in the forest, his army of monkeys, and his fights with the army of Thosakan, king of the giants.

In the performance, actors are divided into four categories, namely *phra* (lords), *nang* (ladies), *yak* (ogres), and *ling* (monkeys).

"In ancient times, all actors were required to wear masks. But in modern performance, Only performers of the yak and ling categories still adorn the elaborate masks. *Phras* and *nangs* now wear a stylized form of makeup influenced by Thai mural paintings," Admiral explained.

In many ways, he said the Khon performances of the past were more like a mimed show, as actors could not speak through the masks and the graceful body language was full of meanings and emotions.

Each character group possesses their own style of choreography — *phra* is regal, *nang* is graceful, *yak* is powerful, and *ling* is energetic, he said. As such, dancers are assigned character types early on in their training based on physique and motor skills.

The performing skill of Khon takes several years to master, according to assistant professor Anucha Thirakanont, who is also Dean of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts at Thammasat University.

He said professional training starts at a very young age at about 12. Performers can only trail on stage after practice for at least five or six years.

"The actors' bodies must be conditioned like that of gymnasts and the key to executing good moves are flexibility, strength, and attention to details. Once a learner choose to study the performance of one character from the four catalogs, he or she cannot change to others," Anucha said.

He explained that the four character

“The actors' bodies must be conditioned like that of gymnasts and the key to executing good moves are flexibility, strength, and attention to details.”

**Admiral Sumpao Polathorn**, superintendent of the Khon Learning Center

groups have unique art expression for different emotions. "An audience who is well-versed in reading Khon gestures can tell what the characters are saying even without having to hear the dialogues," he added.

Wongsamat Laoprasert, 29, who had learned Khon performance since 12 years old, said he love the art from the childhood. "Now, I am a teacher of those young actors and I feel so proud of passing this Thai cultural essence from generation to generation," he said.

### Beyond music and dance

The most unique features of Khon are the exquisite masks the performers adorn. The masks depict the four main categories of characters and also deities, hermits, beasts, and other beings.

There are more than 100 types of demon masks and 40 types of monkey masks for the ensemble cast, according to Anucha. Each mask is different in shape, color, and details, depending on the character's physical description, rank, status, and personality.

"The masks are produced by craftsmen who must be knowledgeable in many disciplines of traditional craftsmanship. It takes more than two months to finish a mask," Anucha said.

Average weight of a single mask is about 1 to 2 kilograms. For actors who play the role of monkey, he said it is even harder to wear a mask during more than one hour performance because they need to bite a string to prevent the mask from falling down.

Despite the exquisite Khon masks, equally notable in the performance also include jewelries and embroidered costumes, both require the highest skills in craftsmanship to create. The elaborate costumes are color-coded to symbolize different types of characters and the fabric used to create the costumes is a specialized type of silk with silver and gold brocade.

After that, the fabric is embroidered with metallic threads and glimmering ornaments, which will be taken by artists who

are skilled in stitching. Once the clothing is on, actors adorn themselves with jewelries.

"Each character possesses his or her own set of decorations, which are crafted by master goldsmiths and silversmiths. The way the clothes are wrapped and the intricacy of the jewelries indicate the ranks and statuses of the characters," Anucha added.

### Look into the future

Being eclipsed by Western-style entertainment, Khon was on the edge of extinction after the World War II. The efforts to revive Khon began under the support of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, who once famously remarked that "If no one will watch Khon, then I will watch it myself."

"The queen began to regularly stage performances not only for royal guests but also the general public," said Admiral. "Under Her Majesty's SUPPORT Foundation, students were granted scholarships to study various disciplines of craftsmanship, many of which are involved in the process of costume making."

Through Queen Sirikit's efforts, Khon became a thriving national heritage and source of pride for all Thai people. In 2018, the performance was inscribed on the representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the UNESCO.

"In order to attract more people to appreciate the performance, the performance will have new content, fresh characters with different costumes being added every year. Also, some modern technologies have been introduced to improve the viewing experience, such as the movable stage props and lighting," said Anucha.

He introduced that the annual Royal Khon last year was in the episode of *Kumphakan Blocking the River*, which was staged at Thailand Cultural Center for one month starting from Nov 5. "This time, audiences had seen new chapters in the stories and 30 percent of costumes were also newly designed. Moreover, the backdrops were new too," he added.

Recalling a decade ago when the SUPPORT Foundation staged its debut Khon performance in 2007 with few people appreciating this traditional theatrical art, he said more young people are now interesting in inheriting the art.

The performing group under the learning center conducts audition every November for recruiting new performers in 19 Thai dancing schools. In 2022, there were nearly 900 students who participated.

"In 2022, the group performed a total of 50 shows across the country, which is impressive and encouraging, as we knew that more people begins to enjoy the beauties of this traditional Thai performing art and the cultural treasure of our nation," Anucha said.



One major feature of Khon is its exquisite masks that are adorned by performers. Each mask is different in shape, color, and details, depending on the character's physical description, rank, status and personality. PHOTOS BY YANG WANLI / CHINA DAILY