

Relaxed ride

Children delighted by kids' corner activities on long train journeys

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Infinite possibilities

Iconic works from Scottish museum highlight 100 years of surrealist art

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CHINA DAILY

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WORLD WATCH
By Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan

Beijing plays key role in championing common security

The voices of the top diplomats of the United States and China at the 2024 Munich Security Conference were wake-up calls for the rest of the world, especially European Union countries and their policymakers, about lose-lose or win-win prospects for international security and peace.

"If you're not at the table in the international system, you're going to be on the menu," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at a joint occasion with German and Indian counterparts at Munich on Feb 17.

It is sad that, even in the face of the bitter reality of daily deaths in the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, the top US diplomat is resorting to law-of-the-jungle habits and coercive threats for others to follow the US pursuit of zero-sum thinking. And, ironically, it is the US that often breaks the rules-based order at the international table.

It is a good omen that China has provided stable policy expectations, acted as a responsible major power, and promoted win-win cooperation with its governance wisdom as well as its initiatives and proposals.

While giving a speech during the Munich Security Conference, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, highlighted China's vision for common security — in which each member's core concerns are indivisibly addressed — as well as China's role as a stabilizing force for world stability and peace.

Wang recapped China's political principle in promoting political settlements of the crises in Gaza and Ukraine. It has been proactively facilitating confidence-building measures and creating conditions for peace negotiations.

Wang specified that the United Nations' authority and central role are important and should not be weakened. Thus, enhancing multilateralism should be the joint response amid the challenges of protectionism and power politics.

Undoubtedly, China and its major policies firmly act as a stabilizing force in a turbulent world. China once again stands out in presenting a strategic road map for stability, sustainability, political harmony and peace in the world.

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Gigantic display



A gigantic *thangka* — Tibetan religious painting — is unfurled on Thursday during the Buddha Displaying Festival at the Langmu Monastery in Luqu county, Gansu province. The festival, which is observed on the 13th day of the first month in the Chinese lunar calendar, is the grandest local religious event and attracts a large number of residents who come to pay homage. YAO FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Drugmakers showcase prowess in innovation

Surge seen in approvals, foreign market inroads, trial-use applications

By WANG XIAOYU
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Chinese drugmakers have demonstrated growing innovative prowess and made progress toward breaking into the foreign market in the past year, according to drug regulators and industry insiders.

The National Medical Products Administration said in a report released earlier this month that 40 Class 1 new drugs were approved in 2023, compared with 21 the previous year. Class 1 new drugs refer to those that have never been marketed in China or abroad.

Fifteen out of the 40 innovative therapies target cancer, and the remaining can be used in treating chronic hepatitis C, gastric acid condition, diabetes, psoriasis and other diseases.

The number of clinical trial applications for innovative drugs reached 2,997 in 2023, up nearly 34 percent year-on-year, and the number of applications for market approval rose to 470, a year-on-year

increase of about 41 percent, the administration said.

"China's pharmaceutical research and development has shown strong innovation in 2023," it added in the report.

"With the accelerated development of the new round of technological revolution and continuous breakthroughs ... a new generation of treatments, such as cell therapy, gene therapy and small nucleic acid drugs, has become increasingly mature," it said.

Bi Jingquan, executive vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges and a senior political adviser, said China's biopharmaceutical industry has made great strides in the past decade, and its biopharmaceutical research and development pipelines account for 35 percent of the world total.

Moreover, 11 of China's domestically produced drugs have gained market approval in the United States in the past three years, while multinational corporations invest each year in an average of 30 R&D

projects led by domestic enterprises.

The second half of last year saw several domestically produced innovative drugs gaining direct market authorization from overseas authorities, including approval from US drug regulators.

Junshi Biosciences said on Feb 1 that its immunotherapy drug Toripalimab has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for treating nasopharyngeal cancer, and the company has submitted approval applications to drug regulators in the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia and Singapore.

The approval of Loqtorzi (the brand name of Toripalimab in the US) was "the first approval in the United States of a drug to treat nasopharyngeal carcinoma," said Richard Pazdur, director of the FDA's Oncology Center of Excellence, after the approval was announced on Oct 29.

On Nov 9, Shanghai Hutchison Pharmaceuticals said that its self-developed Fruquintinib, an oral drug for adults with metastatic col-

orectal cancer, was approved by the FDA.

The domestically produced drug was approved in China in 2018, and has benefited at least 60,000 patients. Plans to launch the product in Europe and Japan this year are underway, according to the company.

On Nov 11, Chinese company Yifan Pharmaceutical said that Ryzneuta, an injection used to treat the side effects of chemotherapy, was approved by the FDA.

Wang Xiaodong, director of the National Institute of Biological Sciences in Beijing, said during an event in Hong Kong in mid-November that China's innovative medicine development has reached a turning point, according to National Business Daily.

The R&D boom in China has resulted in a number of domestically produced, high-quality innovative drugs being added to China's medical insurance list, which has benefited many people, said Wang. He added that the increasing involvement of Chinese drugmakers in the arena of drug innovation could shake up the industry and play a major role in the future.

Bi, from the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, suggested reforming the pricing strategies for innovative drugs to boost the confidence of drug developers, as well as removing barriers to innovative drugs being used at hospitals and promoting international cooperation in the biopharmaceutical field.

'Old friends' in US hail Xi's call for partnership

Editor's note: China Daily is publishing a series of stories reviewing President Xi Jinping's visits at home and abroad in the past decade, to showcase his vision for development in China and the world.

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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Traveling from the American Midwest to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in California in November provided an opportunity to discuss how the United States and China can successfully work together, said Bob Holden, chairman and president of the US Heartland China Association.

Holden, along with the association's strategic adviser, Kenneth Quinn, and its executive director, Min Fan, were among a group of "old friends" invited to meet with Xi. They shared their thoughts on the meeting in an online discussion on Tuesday.

Holden said he had pleasant interactions with several people from China during the event.

"I read his (Xi's) speech on the way back to Missouri. (It was) very thoughtful, very insightful, and I think it very much focused on how we build a bridge that works for everybody going forward," Holden said.

He encouraged people to get a copy of the speech that Xi gave in California "so that they can hear his words and his thought process".

"I think we can build this foundation by looking at it from a win-win situation, not a win-versus-loss situation," Holden said.

Quinn, who is also president emeritus of The World Food Prize Foundation, said Xi's experiences have played a significant role in shaping China's approach to the US. Xi first visited the state of Iowa in 1985 as a county-level official from Hebei province.

"There is not going to be any future leader who will have had the kind of dramatic impact that President Xi had ... as a young man to Iowa," Quinn said.

Xi gave his old friends — many of whom are from Iowa — extra attention in California by having a private reception with them before a dinner banquet, where more than 200 other people from the US business community joined them, Quinn said.

He said that Sarah Lande, who hosted Xi in 1985 in the Iowa city of Muscatine, sat at the head table with the president, along with a veteran member of the Flying Tigers, the group of US volunteer pilots who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Chinese in fighting Japanese aggression during World War II.

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CHINA LEADS REGIONAL FIGHT TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

Developing countries look to learn from nation's efforts to boost growth while reducing pollution

By HOU LIQIANG
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Buildings are shrouded in heavy, yellow smog and there is a smell in the air most likely generated by burning coal and biomass fuels.

Chu Yangxi, an associate research professor at the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, remembers similar scenes in Beijing about a decade ago, which have since faded into memory.

He witnessed these pollution

problems again when he was in Lahore, the capital of Pakistan's Punjab province, with two other Chinese environmental experts from Jan 14 to 17.

Local authorities invited the trio to Lahore in the hope of learning from China's successful efforts to restore clean air and blue skies over Beijing in only a decade.

Chu had previously participated

in international exchange programs on air quality management. However, the trip to Pakistan was different.

"It was my first time visiting a country involved in the Belt and Road Initiative for an activity in which I'm in a position to provide scientific and technological support," he said.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

Change of scenery



A visitor in Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, snaps photos on Tuesday at an exhibition of photographs promoting Zhangjiajie, which is in Southwest China's Hunan province. LI MENGXIN / XINHUA

PAGE TWO

Air: Nation ready to offer knowledge to others

China's experiences can provide useful references for other developing countries as they are at a development stage China has gone through."

Zhang Mengheng, director of the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences' International Cooperation Center



Some students wear face masks as they walk to school amid dense smog in Lahore, Pakistan on Nov 24. ARIF ALI / AFP

From page 1

China has received an increasing number of requests from developing countries to learn from the country's experiences in improving air quality, as they themselves enter a development stage China has already undergone.

What makes China's efforts appealing to them is that the country has seen its air quality improve while it has expanded its economy at a similar pace, experts said.

The different strategies deployed to control air pollution, which take into account complex national conditions, also make China a good exemplar of air quality management solutions, they said.

Sharing ideas

In November, Chinese experts were asked to speak about the country's air pollution control efforts with senior officials in Punjab via an online meeting. However, the Punjab government was still eager to arrange a field visit for them for more exchanges, Chu said.

During their stay in Pakistan, the Chinese team had exchanges with nine departments and visited industrial enterprises. They also met Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Punjab's caretaker chief minister.

Chu said Punjab has great potential to tap end-of-pipe pollution control, an approach that concentrates on effluent treatment or filtration before waste discharges into the environment. The province, for example, has not yet taken adequate measures to control sulfur dioxide emissions, Chu said.

In another example of a fruitful exchange, the research academy was visited by a group of 85 military officers from across the globe on Jan 19 who were visiting China to take part in a workshop. Zhang Mengheng, director of CRAES' International Cooperation Center, said one of the topics that interested the officers the most was Beijing's air quality management.

"Some officers said they had heard a lot about the severe air pollution in Beijing before they came to the capital city," she recalled. "They said it was beyond their expectations when they saw blue skies instead of smog and they were curious about how China managed to make this happen."

The session at the academy was scheduled to run for two hours but was extended by 30 minutes as officers kept raising questions, Zhang said. Many of the officers asked for copies of the PowerPoint presentation the academy had prepared for a lecture, which focused on China's practices and progress in environmental protection.

"China's experiences can provide useful references for other developing countries as they are at a development stage China has just gone through," Zhang said.

She added that China's experiences should be localized in other developing nations so they cater to the actual needs and conditions of those countries.

However, Zhang also believes it's relatively easy for Chinese scientists to localize the nation's solutions on air pollution control in other coun-

tries given their vast experience in coping with the problem.

"While promoting the Beautiful China Initiative, China has also called for building a global community of shared future. So we are willing to share our experiences with the international community," she said.

Alliance suggested

Rajendra Shende, the founder director of the India-based Green TERRE Foundation, said in an interview with China Daily: "In a bid to make speedy progress in economic development, every emerging country faces the problem of air pollution due to the burning of fossil fuel."

He said China, India and other emerging economies in South Asia should establish an alliance to combat climate change and air pollution and share the lessons they have learned.

Wang Shuxiao, a professor at Tsinghua University's School of Environment, said there is high demand from the Global South to learn from China's knowledge on curbing air pollution.

She helped prepare "The Air Pollution in Asia Pacific: Science-based Solutions" report for the United Nations Environment Programme, and since 2015 has collaborated on air quality management with India, the Philippines and Thailand.

The professor has seen many experts and officials from other nations come to China to learn about the country's air quality management experiences.

Wang said a major attraction of the Chinese approach was that "the country has seen rapid air quality improvement, while simultaneously its economy has kept growing at almost the same pace".

Instead of following a one-size-fits-all approach, regions have rolled out different measures based on their local circumstances, she said.

Many developing countries may still be able to find air pollution control strategies in China that will also meet some of their needs despite having different national conditions, Wang said.

What amazes other developing nations is that China has seen significant development in technologies for air quality management, which have provided solid support for the government in its drafting of air quality policies and upgrading standards, she said.

China now leads the world in developing high-resolution emission inventories and the technology for source apportionment — the practice of deriving information about pollution sources and the amount they contribute to ambient air pollution levels. In addition, China has also made great progress in air quality forecasting technologies and integrated assessment modeling.

Challenges ahead

Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, a Finnish group, said that while China still has a lot of work to do to reach good air quality across the entire country, the exceptionally rapid progress made over

the past decade offered important lessons that applied to most regions struggling with air pollution.

"China substantially strengthened the emissions standards for power plants and industry," he said. "This has made a major difference in air quality over the past decade."

"Most developing countries have weak emissions standards that allow more than 10 times as much emissions from power plants and industrial plants as China's current standards," he added.

To implement stronger standards China had to improve emissions monitoring and enforcement to ensure companies comply. This is an area severely lacking in most developing countries, Myllyvirta added.

Zhang Hongliang, a professor at the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering, Fudan University, said developing nations should not forge ahead with air pollution control measures without first considering the costs and potential impact on people's livelihoods.

While this is never easy, China's success has set an example for countries in the Global South on how to address air pollution in a comparatively short period of time.

"US and European countries took about half a century to resolve their air pollution problems. Many people hold that the process may last for a century in China, considering that the country was confronted with a much worse air pollution situation," he said.

However, China's experience has proved that "if they are determined to address the problem, they can also make it in 30 to 50 years or even a shorter period," he said.

Zhang, who initiated a China-India

Association of Atmospheric Scientists in 2018, said air pollution is a problem that nobody is immune from, therefore, both the political elites and the public in developing nations should be willing to address the issue.

However, developing nations' governments still need to draw a clear picture of the measures they plan to introduce and how much they will cost.

"A key issue for developing nations is that they need to strike a balance between economic development and pollution control," he said, adding they need to ensure people's livelihoods will not be significantly affected by their air pollution campaigns.

Muhammad Zamir Assadi, a Pakistani political analyst and an editor with Internews Pakistan based in Islamabad, said he is impressed by the steps China has taken to improve air quality, including efforts to control the capacity in smokestack industries, such as iron and steel, and to promote new energy development.

Pakistan is looking forward to support from China to remove contaminants and pollutants so people can breathe clean air, Assadi stated.

He also said there is great potential for China to cooperate with other developing nations on tackling climate change.

"China, being a developing country, has had good success in tackling climate issues, so this experience can also be shared with the developing countries like Pakistan who are facing serious climate issues," he said, adding China's climate change solutions are practical and also recognized by the international community.

FACT BOX

China has seen significant improvement in its air quality in the past decade. Beijing, for instance, saw its average density of PM2.5 particulate matter decrease from 89.5 micrograms per cubic meter in 2013 to 32 mcg/cubic m last year.

On Jan 11, the country's central authorities unveiled a guideline for promoting the Beautiful China Initiative, a development blueprint detailing specific targets for a wide range of sectors for the nation's green and high-quality growth.

The document vowed to further reduce the average PM2.5 density across the country to below 28 mcg/cubic m by 2027 and then

below 25 mcg/cubic m by 2035.

The average density of the pollutant in the country's 339 major cities stood at 30 mcg/cubic m in 2023.

Air pollution control is one of the major concerns of the Chinese leadership. In an article published in January in Qushi Journal, President Xi Jinping stressed that blue sky protection was the top priority of China's pollution control campaign.

The regional coordination for air quality management should be further enhanced and more comprehensive measures should be rolled out to accelerate the eradication of heavy air pollution events, he noted.

Tailored strategies from experts help clean up cluster

By HOU LIQIANG

A national mechanism for tackling air pollution — which features a team of experts dedicated to hammering out tailored measures for cities — has played a remarkable role in significantly improving air quality in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei province cluster.

The mechanism gathers scientific research resources on air pollution control from across the country. It has helped the region achieve victories in environmental protection and high-quality development, said Zhang Wenjie, deputy director of the operations management department at the National Joint Research Center for Tackling Key Problems in Air Pollution Control.

The mechanism was initiated following an executive meeting of the State Council, the country's cabinet, in April 2017, after the region suffered from heavy smog that lingered from the end of 2016 to early the next year.

According to a statement released after the executive meeting, government agencies — including environmental protection authorities — academies and institutions will work together to integrate resources for air pollution control.

The State Council allocated 575 million yuan (\$81 million) from the central budget to support the joint efforts.

A joint center was established in September 2017 under the mode of "1 plus X", with "1" representing the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, an affiliate of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, and "X" representing a number of key research institutes, Zhang said.

The center's work is supported by over 2,900 researchers from 295 institutions, including the China National Environmental Monitoring Center, the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning, Tsinghua University, Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"Previously, some local govern-

ments might have made impulsive decisions when working on air pollution control, as they lacked support from scientific researchers," she said, adding the mechanism has significantly helped address the problem.

Following the establishment of the center, a scientific research team was set up for each of the 28 key cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, Zhang said.

Many of the teams were led by academicians from the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The teams were stationed in the cities and carried out research, monitoring and surveys. This information was used to develop tailored air pollution control measures, she said.

The teams have also played a role in supporting local governments' efforts to deal with heavy air pollution. In addition to making suggestions to local governments on air pollution warning levels, they also analyzed the causes of heavy haze and then detailed measures that should be rolled out by different sectors to relieve the situation.

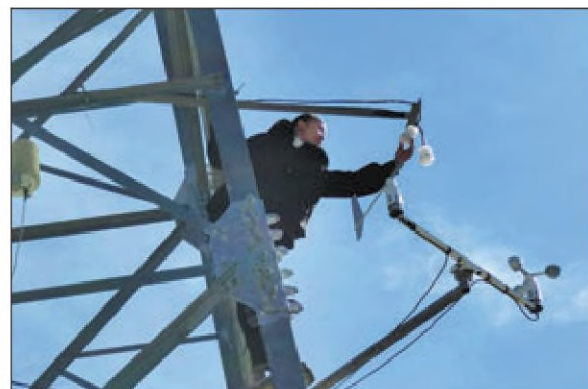
China has a three-tier color-coded warning system for air pollution, with red the most serious, followed by orange and yellow.

The efforts of the joint center have paid off, Zhang said.

In Beijing, for instance, the average concentration of PM2.5 particulate matter decreased from 89.5 micrograms per cubic meter in 2013 to 30 mcg/cubic m in 2022. The number of days with heavy air pollution went down from 58 days to only three days during the period.

While registering a drop of 64 percent in the average concentration of PM2.5, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region saw its GDP grow by 61 percent over that time, Zhang said.

"We managed to achieve a win-win in environmental protection and high-quality development in the region," she said.



Above: A worker inspects the greenhouse gas inlet at a monitoring station in Yunnan province in March. WANG CHANGSHAN / XINHUA
Below: Workers spray water on roads in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, to suppress dust. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Private economy set to get boost from law draft

Nation's legislative effort will help to improve overall business environment, analysts say

By OUYANG SHIJIA and FAN FEIFEI

China has taken a decisive step toward bolstering its private sector by starting to draft a law on promoting the private economy, marking the latest step in boosting business confidence and revitalizing the growth of the world's second-largest economy, analysts said on Thursday.

They said that this legislative effort will not only improve the overall business environment but also address the pressing concerns of private enterprises, providing practical solutions to the challenges they face.

While the forthcoming law signals a promising shift toward a more favorable legal framework for the private sector, analysts emphasize the need for continued efforts to address persistent challenges, including financing difficulties and higher business costs.

Their comments came as the Ministry of Justice, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress jointly hosted a legislative work symposium on Wednesday, at which it was said that work has started on drafting the law to support the development of the private sector, and the legislative process will be accelerated.

"By initiating the drafting of the private sector promotion law, China aims to foster a more favorable environment for the development of private enterprises while providing robust legal safeguards for their healthy growth," said Bai Wenxi, vice-chairman of the China Enterprise Capital Union.

"This reflects the government's strong dedication to nurturing the private economy, with a specific emphasis on addressing the fundamental concerns of private enterprises," said Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute.

"It signals a significant step toward creating a more transparent, stable and predictable business environment that ensures fair competition. These legislative measures will not only remove systemic barriers but also invigorate

business dynamism and foster the advancement of new productive forces," Hong said.

He said the private sector serves as a primary engine for economic growth, creating abundant job opportunities and substantially contributing to China's GDP.

"It plays a pivotal role in bolstering economic dynamism and facilitating transformation and upgrading, thanks to its robust innovation capacity and adaptable mechanisms," he added.

Private companies, a key driving force behind China's economic ascent over the past decades, contribute more than 60 percent of gross domestic product, 70 percent of technological innovation, and 80 percent of urban employment, official data showed.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said that while private companies have benefited from a series of supportive government measures, they still face difficulties in terms of a lack of funds, barriers to market access and obstacles hindering fair competition.

He said the law would help to tackle the issues faced by private companies, saying that will significantly boost business confidence, further drive their innovative development, help attract more private investment and foster high-quality economic growth.

Looking forward, Wang said the country needs to better implement the existing supportive policies and roll out more detailed steps to bolster the private economy.

Zhao Jiazhen, executive director and co-chief executive officer of Chinese online discounter PDD Holdings, said the authorities have rolled out a series of supportive policies in recent years to bolster the development of the private economy, which gives the company a sense of satisfaction and has promoted its high-quality development.

Zhao, who attended Wednesday's legislative work symposium, suggested that in the process of drafting laws, greater attention should be attached to protecting the legitimate rights and interests of small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in their overseas expansion.

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New Year celebrations continue



Mayor London Breed (fourth from right in front) and other guests pose for a group photo at San Francisco City Hall on Wednesday during an event to celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year of the Dragon. LIU YILIN / XINHUA

FM highlights positive signs in China-EU relations

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who recently concluded his six-day Europe tour, drew the attention of observers and leading media outlets as he highlighted the positive signs in China-European Union relations and the political solution to resolve the situation in Ukraine.

The senior Chinese diplomat traveled to Germany last week to attend the 60th Munich Security Conference, and then made visits to Spain and France.

Revitalizing collaboration between Beijing and Brussels and eliminating noises and disturbances in this regard were high on agenda when the minister met one-on-one with dozens of foreign officials during his trip, experts said.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday after wrapping up his Europe tour, Wang Yi said that "there is increasing rational perception of China in Europe," and they believe that China's development is in line with the logic of history, which Europe should not fear or reject.

“There is no reason for China and Europe to give up their established fruitful cooperation and shift to the path of competition and confrontation.”

Cui Hongjian, professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University's Academy of Regional and Global Governance

"The EU side has a positive attitude toward strengthening China-EU interactions at various levels, and is keen on deepening pragmatic cooperation," he said.

Analysts noted that in recent years, some politicians and media outlets in the United States and Europe have been hyping bloc-based confrontation and Europe's "de-risking" of China.

In contrast, Wang Yi defined Europe as "an important partner in the Chinese path to modernization."

Wang Huiyao, president of the Beijing-based Center for China and Globalization, pointed to the recent positive signs in China-EU ties such as the major celebrations hosted by Beijing and Paris to mark 60 years of diplomatic relations between China and France, as well as China's visa-free policy introduced recently for some EU countries.

China and the EU have great collaboration potential in areas such as climate change, energy projects, conflicts resolution and economic development, he said.

Cui Hongjian, a professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University's Academy of Regional and Global Governance, said that despite their differences, "China and Europe can be a constructive force for stabilizing the world."

According to Cui, China and Europe share similar positions and common views in many aspects in global governance. "There is no reason for China and Europe to give up their established fruitful cooperation and shift to the path of competition and confrontation," he said.

Speaking on the Ukraine crisis and the conflict in Gaza, Wang Yi said that although the situation is still unclear and the contradictions among parties are still prominent, "the consensus among various parties is increasing, and the willingness to work together is on the rise."

He warned that "a protracted, complex and expanding Ukraine crisis is not in the common interest of the international community." Citing history, he said "the end point of any conflict is returning to the negotiating table."

"China will continue to play a constructive role for peace and reconstruction, and support the building of a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture," he said.

During his talks with Wang Yi on Saturday in Munich, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said that Ukraine is willing to maintain friendly contacts with China, and hopes that China will continue to play a unique and constructive role in promoting peace.

Spice of life



Female workers toss dry red chili peppers near Raiganj, West Bengal, India, on Wednesday. The work is one of the main sources of income for their families. AVISHEK DAS / SOPA IMAGES / SIPA USA

Security: Initiative proposes strategic priorities for global peace

From page 1

However, Blinken said that regarding strategic competition, "there's no doubt that we have one with China". Furthermore, he said that "when it comes to other countries, the point is not to say to country X, Y or Z, 'You have to choose'; the point is to offer a good choice."

Ironically, the choice Blinken offers, either about Ukraine or Gaza, as evidenced again by the US veto of the most recent UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza, is not for a cease-fire or an end to conflict, but for prolonging the bombing, more deaths and destruction of cities and towns, more spending by US allied nations, and more money for the US military-industrial complex.

The choice, coupled with the economic bleeding of NATO allies in Europe, suggests that the US' transatlantic partners and like-minded countries should invest in defense and deterrence, while selectively restricting the pursuit of mutual benefits to politically like-minded states.

Instead, Chinese wisdom as summarized by the Global Security Initiative has presented doable strategic priorities to achieve global peace, stability and harmony. Commandably, China has been persistent in promoting cooperation among major powers, addressing global hot spot issues, enhancing global governance and accelerating global economic growth.

The Global Security Initiative's message is loud and clear that global cooperation and unity may

be achieved through creating and achieving win-win situations for all. The global powers should avoid self-destructive mentality and policies to undermine the common interests of others.

Furthermore, new dimensions of emerging security realms, mainly space, the deep sea and cyberspace, should be dealt with while maintaining a collaborative spirit.

China champions the concept of indivisible security for all in line with a human community of shared future. This is in sharp contrast to US-led Western military-centered formations to extend strategic hegemony at the cost of others' interests and even lives.

In an increasingly multipolar world, emerging global institutions and organizations are promoting the spirit of transnational

coordination and collaboration. BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, for example, continue to work on multilateral security alignments across continents.

The US and the EU should discard policies of hegemony and economic exploitation and avoid forming national narratives on the basis of false notions of national security. The world, with its varied crises, badly needs an end to conflicts, common security for all, inclusive development to eliminate poverty and unemployment, and joint efforts to fight climate change.

The author is executive director of the Center for South Asia and International Studies in Islamabad, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Ties: Beijing, Washington 'can be partners, friends'

From page 1

Through the seating arrangement, Xi "made the point that US-China relations were built upon these person-to-person and people-to-people relationships", Quinn said.

Fan said, "I think he truly enjoyed meeting his old friends." Quinn and Fan said they were particularly struck by the fact that

Xi talked about his own experiences in China's countryside when he was 15, and how that shaped his views toward eliminating rural poverty.

"When he talked about spending seven years in the countryside, he went off script. He talked about how much he really cared about people. I could feel that genuine emotion coming through," Fan said.

The three online panelists said that, in his speech, Xi asked, "Are we adversaries or partners?" and he said he wanted the two sides to be partners.

Quinn, who visited China twice in 2023, said China had initiated a series of programs in the past year to improve relations. He said that the US should have a discussion about how to answer the question that Xi asked.

"I believe that China is worried that the US and China are on a course to be adversaries, and that will lead potentially to some significant conflict, and they want the record to be clear if that happens, that they said, we can be partners, we can be friends," Quinn said. "So I thought the speech deserved a lot more attention than the American press gave it and that it was very significant for that reason."

Susan Thornton, the US Heartland China Association's vice-chair and moderator of the discussion, said the US needs to find ways to partner with China on a lot of things, because the two countries are the biggest global actors by far in areas such as economy, military, science and technology.

"I don't know if people are very aware of really how intertwined we are, how co-dependent we are in many, many areas, and how we're going to need to work together to solve a lot of the big challenges that the world faces," Thornton said.

Citing the concerns generated in the US by the economic rise of Japan in the 1980s, Thornton said national confidence could play a role in the current dynamic of US-China relations.

"I just hope that Americans can get confident enough to see that, basically, China is not a threat to our status, and our competitiveness, and our idea of ourselves," Thornton said.

"We can both find a place in the world that satisfies our idea of ourselves, find that common ground and win-win place."

CHINA

Many parents have long toiled over how to keep their children entertained during extended train journeys, fearing the wrath of both their restless young progeny and of disturbed passengers.

A trial to address the issue was introduced during this year's Spring Festival rush, as millions of travelers embarked on journeys during the holiday.

A temporary children's corner was introduced to provide entertainment for young passengers and offer a short break for their caretakers, with the aim to make journeys more enjoyable and relaxed, enhancing the travel experience for all passengers.

The service was initiated on Jan 26, coinciding with the start of the Spring Festival travel rush, on a sleeper train with a journey of about 2,500 kilometers and spanning nearly 23 hours between Beijing and Nanning, the capital of southern China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

During each service, the children's corner opens for two hours in the dining car. Train attendants inform passengers with children of the time and location, inviting them to join the activity.

"We set up reading, coloring, paper-cutting and block building areas at four tables. Children can engage in various activities according to their interests," train conductor Dong Liqiong said, adding that two attendants and staff from the dining car can assist the young passengers at the corner.

"Since the winter vacation began (in mid-January), there are many young travelers on our train. They are either traveling to pay a visit to the capital, or heading south to avoid the harsh winter in Beijing. The journey is about 23 hours and it is quite long for adults, let alone children. Many children just stare at phones or tablets on the train. We want to make their trips more fun," she said.

The train, with 18 carriages and one dining car, can take up to 984 passengers.

The Z5 service departs from Beijing at around 4 pm and arrives at Nanning at about 3 pm the next day. The corner opens at about 8:30 to 9:30 pm and 10 to 11:00 am the next day. On the Z6 service traveling between Nanning and Beijing, the corner opens at 2:30 to 3:30 pm and 8:30 to 9:30 pm.

"We select the time for when it is often less busy so that attendants can offer help. It is also when most people finish their meals and there is usually some vacancy in the dining car," Dong said.

On the Z5 service that departed from the capital on Jan 30, there were more than 200 children onboard, with many of them traveling with their grandparents.

"The train is a sleeper train, so it is particularly accommodating for both elderly and young travelers, making it very popular among families," Dong said.

On the train, almost every cabin had a child, and young travelers were often playing, running and talking in the corridor.

A pleasant experience for all

At about 8 pm on Jan 30, attendants on the Z5 collected dirty plates, cleaned tables and floors, and brought toys and books to set up the temporary kids' corner in the dining car.

At the same time, children eagerly awaited the opening of the zone, with some rushing to check the toys.

As soon as train conductor Dong announced the opening of the children's corner, kids dashed to the tables. Children and parents



A train attendant helps a young passenger put a commemorative seal on a postcard gifted by the train from Hangzhou to Cangnan county in Zhejiang province on Jan 26. ZHOU WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Kids' corner brings smiles to young passengers

Dining car activities assuage children's restlessness while cooped up on long train journeys. **Luo Wangshu** reports.



Clockwise from top right: Aboard the G1654 high-speed train from Xiamen to Shanghai, a group of young passengers, guided by a train attendant, play games on Jan 29. YAN ZHIHONG / XINHUA Children play with toys at the children's corner on the Z5 train heading to Nanning on Jan 30. LUO WANGSHU / CHINA DAILY An attendant reads stories to a girl at the children's corner on the Z5 train on Jan 30. LUO WANGSHU / CHINA DAILY



crowded the dining car, chatting, laughing, taking photos and sharing their travel experiences.

Each table was filled with excited children engaging in various activities such as paper-cutting, coloring books, building blocks, reading

books and playing with dolls. A mother surnamed Dai said her daughter greatly enjoyed the children's corner.

The mother was traveling with her 4-year-old and her mother-in-law from Beijing to Nanning to

spend the Spring Festival there. They were informed by an attendant about the activity when they boarded the train.

"She was so excited and interested in the activity that she kept asking me to take her to check if it had

started," the mother said. "It is the first train trip for my daughter, and it (the children's corner) is beyond my expectation, a true surprise," she said.

At the corner, the girl was carefully coloring a book while Dai was taking

photos to capture her first train ride.

Eight-year-old girl Huang Ziqin liked the soft-toy claw machine the best at the children's corner.

"I grabbed six dolls in four attempts," said the girl, who was traveling from Beijing to Nanning to visit her grandmother for the holiday.

"My grandson and granddaughter cannot sit still on the train, they were climbing up and down in the cabin, which is quite dangerous. We have to pay much attention to watching them. Now at the children's corner, they are so quiet and calm," said a passenger surnamed Geng, who was traveling with her 5-year-old grandson and 7-year-old granddaughter.

Deng Qingyun, who manages the dining car, assisted in preparing the corner.

"The children are very happy. When the time is up and we are about to close the center, they don't want to leave," she said.

"Although the area is pretty messy after the activity, I am more than happy to offer the service," she said.

Assistant train conductor Luo Huadong, helped the children with the building blocks and in catching dolls on the Jan 30 service.

"It is the most popular area today. When the doll catching machine turns on, the music attracts children's attention. Children are even lining up to catch dolls," the 27-year-old said, adding that he enjoyed spending time with the children.

Compassionate measure

The travel rush, which began on Jan 26 and will end on March 5, is expected to see 9 billion trips, with a total of 480 million railway trips expected to be made.

The expanding railway network and reasonable ticket prices have led to an increasing number of people choosing to travel by rail in China.

By the end of last year, China's railway network extended to 159,000 km, with 45,000 km of high-speed railway.

The handling of young travelers onboard trains has been widely discussed in China in recent years.

Many people have complained about children's disruptive behaviors onboard, including kicking the seats and making noise, while others have argued to be more tolerant of young travelers.

Conflicts, even fights, have been reported between parents and passengers without children.

"We hope the measure can also serve as a testament to the evolving landscape of railway services, catering to the diverse needs of passengers, including families with young children and passengers without children," said Ran Hui, an official from the passenger service department of China Railway Nanning Group, which introduced the children's corner.

While the initiative has been well-received, challenges remain, particularly concerning space limitations and accommodating all interested young passengers.

"At first, we broadcast the children's corner to all passengers. Children and parents flocked to the dining car, but due to the limited space, some of them could not participate in the games and the children were pretty upset. Now we've canceled the broadcast and informed passengers with children randomly. I hope we can find a balance to invite more young travelers to our activity," train conductor Dong said.

Contact the writer at luowangshu@chinadaily.com.cn

Online See more by scanning the code



Lost and found leaps into action during travel rush

By LUO WANGSHU

During this year's Spring Festival travel rush, Chen Lingling found herself busier than ever, diligently recording and returning lost belongings to absentminded passengers.

The 30-year-old manages the lost and found center at Fuzhou Railway Station in South China's Fujian province.

"Passengers have been misplacing all kinds of items, ranging from small essentials like ID cards, water bottles, mobile phones and clothing, to larger items such as backpacks and even suitcases," she said.

Chen's responsibilities include collecting lost items, documenting them, affixing labels and ensuring their safe return.

Since the beginning of the Spring Festival travel rush on Jan 26, the

number of lost items has notably surged. "During off-peak times, we typically handle 10 to 20 lost items a day, but during the Spring Festival travel rush, this number has increased to 40 to 50," she said.

"Passengers leave items behind everywhere, some in the waiting hall, some on the train and some on the platform," she said. Once these items are sent to lost and found, she meticulously inspects each one in an attempt to identify the owner's information. While she occasionally strikes it lucky and finds a clue, there are times when she patiently awaits inquiries from passengers.

Chen diligently records item details, including where they were found and the train number, and uploads them to an application, facilitating easier retrieval for passengers.

At the lost and found center in Fuzhou Railway Station, several four-tiered shelves house an array of everyday items inadvertently left behind by forgetful passengers.

"It's like a grocery store," she said. "While most items are reclaimed, less valuable ones are stored in the station's warehouse. Lost items are retained for a year before being sold or disposed of accordingly. Last year, Chen documented over 12,000 lost items."

Throughout the 40-day Spring Festival travel rush, China's railway network is anticipated to accommodate 480 million passenger trips.

To aid passengers in reclaiming their lost belongings, the railway department has added features on the 12306 application, the ticket purchasing and railway service platform.

Passengers can file reports via the application, providing descriptions and photos of the missing items, along with the location of loss and contact information. They can also track the progress of item retrieval. The railway department also disseminates information about missing items on the application, enabling passengers to stay informed.

He Jingting from the China Academy of Railway Sciences, responsible for developing and operating the 12306 system, said: "Once items are found, notifications will be sent out via a call or text message."

Passengers can also contact the 12306 hotline or seek assistance at the station or on the train. Upon retrieval, passengers can collect their items at the station or request railway staff to transfer them to a nearby



Chen Lingling (left) returns a bag to the owner of the lost property in Fuzhou Railway Station in Fujian province. JIANG QU / FOR CHINA DAILY

station. Alternatively, items can be delivered through parcel services.

"Every expression of gratitude from passengers upon reclaiming their belongings is deeply meaning-

ful to me. As most lost items hold sentimental value for their owners, preserving, locating and returning these items is a profoundly rewarding endeavor," Chen said.

WORLD

Japan urged to ensure nuclear safety measures

Latest Fukushima leak raises concerns, exposes lapses in crisis management

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

A radioactive water leak at the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant earlier this month has caused anxiety in Japan and abroad. The leak will also hinder completion of the plant's decommissioning.

Ken Saito, Japan's minister of economy, trade and industry, summoned Tomoaki Kobayakawa, president of the Tokyo Electric Power Company, or TEPCO, operator of the crippled power utility, to his office on Wednesday and urged the firm to treat the incident as a serious management issue and ensure thorough safety measures. Furthermore, Saito requested an analysis to identify any common factors contributing to the incident. He also urged the utilization of digital technology to prevent human errors, Japanese public broadcaster NHK reported.

On Feb 7, TEPCO informed the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, that water containing radioactive materials was found to have leaked from a cesium absorption tower at the plant.

TEPCO calculated that the leakage totaled around 5.5 cubic meters of water containing an estimated 0.022 terabecquerel of radioactive substances, according to the IAEA.

The water was assessed to have leaked from a valve left open during cleaning work at the absorption tower. Kobayakawa apologized and said this was an issue that should not have happened.

After his meeting with the minister, Kobayakawa said that TEPCO will consider effective measures with the help of external experts to prevent errors without human intervention.

Several safety incidents have occurred repeatedly at the plant. On Oct 26, TEPCO said two male workers in their 20s and 40s were hospitalized after being exposed to nuclear-contaminated water while cleaning piping at a water filtration facility at the plant.

During the operation, a hose used to transfer nuclear-contaminated water to a tank went loose, which led to approximately 100 milliliters of radioactive water being leaked, The Asahi Shimbun reported.

"At the site of nuclear-contaminated water treatment, various

accidents are possible. ... Many things are unpredictable," Masashi Goto, a former nuclear power plant engineer, said.

"Therefore, TEPCO should indeed take measures to prevent accidents at the site, and there should be a high level of vigilance. However, technically speaking, this is also very difficult to achieve."

Citing the case of workers who came into contact with liquid containing radioactive materials, Toshihiko Sasaki, a Chiba resident, expressed grave concern about such incidents.

He said people cannot trust TEPCO because the company manipulated information and reported false data.

In handling nuclear-contaminated water, accidents have occurred repeatedly, fully exposing the chaotic and disorderly internal management of TEPCO, a spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in Japan said on Feb 8.

Ineffective supervision

The accidents also demonstrate the inadequate and ineffective supervision measures by the Japanese government and once again prove the lack of long-term reliability of nuclear water treatment equipment, highlighting the need for international supervision, the spokesperson said.

Moreover, Japan has so far dumped approximately 23,400 cubic meters of nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima plant into the ocean since August. The fourth round of discharge is scheduled to commence in late February.

The plant suffered a triple meltdown during an earthquake and ensuing tsunami on March 11, 2011.

The Chinese embassy spokesperson stressed that the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima plant into the sea concerns the health of all mankind, the global marine environment and international public interests.

"We once again earnestly urge Japan to take seriously the concerns of neighboring countries and the international community, engage in sincere consultations with relevant stakeholders, fully cooperate in establishing effective international monitoring arrangements with substantive participation from stakeholders, and handle nuclear-contaminated water in a scientific, safe, and transparent manner," the spokesperson said.

Floral tribute



A woman arranges flowers at a monument for martyrs on the International Mother Language Day in Dhaka on Wednesday. Tributes were paid on the day to the people of Bangladesh who fought for recognition of the Bengali language. SAZZAD HOSSAIN VIA NEWS.COM



The company logo hangs over the door to an AT&T telephone store Thursday in Denver. DAVID ZALUBOWSKI / AP

AT&T restores service after outage

By AI HEPING in New York
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An AT&T wireless outage affected tens of thousands of customers in the US on Thursday, unable to place calls, text or access the internet as a US agency said there was no indication of a cyberattack.

AT&T hasn't said what triggered the nationwide service disruption that started early Thursday morning. By late morning, AT&T said most of its network was back online, and it confirmed Thursday afternoon that service was fully restored.

At about 5 am ET, the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) reported that there was no indication of a cyberattack, according to a confidential memo obtained by ABC News. CISA is an agency within the Homeland Security Department that monitors cyber threats.

John Kirby, National Security Council spokesman, said on a call with reporters Thursday that the Biden administration was told "that AT&T has no reason to think this was a cybersecurity incident", although he added that they wouldn't be certain until an investigation had been completed.

Several government agencies including the FBI and Homeland Security were looking into the incident.

Other major providers, such as T-Mobile and Verizon, also experienced disruptions, but they were more limited than the ones from AT&T, according to Downdetector, a tracking site.

When the outage first began, AT&T listed the cause as "maintenance activity".

The most likely cause of the outage "is a cloud misconfiguration", which is "a fancy word for saying human error", Lee McKnight, an associate professor at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, said in a statement to NBC News.

Some other cellular providers also reported outages.

When the disruption occurred, AT&T said, "Some of our customers are experiencing wireless service interruptions this morning. We are working urgently to restore service to them. We encourage the use of Wi-Fi calling until service is restored."

Throughout the day, cities urged residents to find alternative ways of reaching emergency or municipal services, like landlines or phones connected to Wi-Fi.

The San Francisco Fire Department said on social media that it was aware of an issue affecting AT&T users who were trying to call 911.

"We are actively engaged and monitoring this," the fire department said, according to The New York Times. "If you are an AT&T customer and

cannot get through to 911, then please try calling from a landline."

New York Police Department officials told CNN that they weren't able to make calls or use email on AT&T phones Thursday morning unless they were connected to Wi-Fi.

Massachusetts State Police warned people not to test their phone service by placing 911 calls.

"Many 911 centers in the state are getting flooded w/calls from people trying to see if 911 works from their cell phone. Please do not do this," the state police said in a social media post. "If you can successfully place a non-emergency call to another number via your cell service then your 911 service will also work."

More than 32,000 AT&T outages were reported by customers at about 4 am ET on Thursday, according to Downdetector. Outages then spiked again to more than 50,000 around 7 am and surged to more than 71,000 just before 8 am ET, with most reported in Houston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and Atlanta, according to the site.

Cricket Wireless, which is owned by AT&T and uses its network, also experienced cellular problems. More than 13,500 customers reported outages as of 8 am ET on Thursday. The number dropped to around 10,000 by 10 am.

China's light volleyball makes debut in US

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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Light volleyball, also known as balloon volleyball, made its debut in North America with a competition in Glendora, California, over the weekend.

In this Chinese New Year celebration event, 12 teams, consisting of nearly 120 players, helped promote the sport to the US, said, "We will be committed to hosting more international invitational tournaments in the future, bringing together light volleyball enthusiasts from China, the US, and even around the world."

The event marked a significant step in promoting the sport and fostering connections between athletes from different backgrounds. Matt Cacciato, president and CEO of the Los Angeles Sports Council, expressed his support for this game. "We are here to really support the spirit of sport. You can participate and enjoy the competitive spirit that we all have inside of us," Cacciato told China Daily.

He said it is "critically important" that China and the US are working together to improve the spirit of the Olympic movement. Olivia Cheng, senior director of marketing and brand engagement at LA28, the Los Angeles Organizing Committee for the Olympic and

Paralympic Games in 2028, said,

"Keep an eye out — you may witness it in the 2028 Olympics, if not sooner in Paris."

The inaugural games attracted former Olympians such as former women's volleyball national team player Alexis Crimes, who is now coaching the women's team.

"This is my first time being in light volleyball. It's different from regular volleyball, and the size and the weight (of the ball), so I'm excited to try it out," Crimes said.

Brian Gimmillaro, former head coach of the California State Long Beach women's volleyball team, emphasized the importance of athletes from the US and China building relationships, sharing cultures and fostering a positive connection between the two countries.

The China-originated sport has been successfully introduced in countries including Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The game took center stage and attracted nearly 150 teams from China and Australia during the 2023 Samaranch Cup Gas Volleyball Invitational.

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Fiery finish for satellite after 13-yr mission

By EARLE GALE in London
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A satellite, which finished its mission 13 years ago and had been slowly approaching Earth for a feared crash landing ever since, safely burned up in the atmosphere on Wednesday evening, with no debris known to have made it to the surface.

The satellite's fiery finish was a relief to some on the ground who feared it might impact a populated area.

The European Space Agency, or ESA, said its Earth Remote Sensing satellite ERS-2, which was about the size of a rhinoceros, burned up at around 5 pm over the Pacific Ocean, somewhere between the US state of Alaska and its island state of Hawaii.

The ESA had earlier predicted it would end its journey near the east coast of central Africa, thousands of kilometers away. But despite the confusion, the ESA insisted "the risks associated with satellite re-entries are very low". It said some small pieces of debris may have peppered remote parts of the Pacific Ocean.

ERS-2 was launched in 1995 and along with its sister satellite, ERS-1, it pioneered many of the technologies we now use widely to monitor the health of the planet, recording floods and measuring land and ocean temperatures, and helping scientists understand global warming.

Mirko Albani, head of the ESA's heritage space program, told The Guardian: "It provided us with new insights on our planet, the chemistry of our atmosphere, the behavior of our oceans, and the effects of human-kind's activity on our environment."

"In terms of technology, you can draw a direct line from ERS all the way through to Europe's Copernicus/Sentinel satellites that monitor the planet today," he said.

'A grandparent'

Ralph Cordey, Airbus Earth's observation business development manager, told the BBC the satellite was like a grandparent of modern planet monitoring systems.

"In terms of technology, you can draw a direct line from ERS all the way through to Europe's Copernicus/Sentinel satellites that monitor the planet today," he said.

ERS-2's mission ended in 2011 and it was subsequently moved into a low orbit, 570 kilometers above the Earth's surface, after having been orbiting 780 kilometers away. Its handlers knew it would then be dragged back to Earth over a period of around 15 years.

The satellite's uncontrolled descent acted as a reminder of the large amount of space debris orbiting the planet and its potential to disrupt future missions, or even pose a danger to people on the ground.

Since the launch of ERS-2, the ESA has adopted the Zero Debris Charter, which calls for redundant vehicles to be left in space for no longer than five years. The agency said it eventually plans to only launch vehicles capable of maneuvering themselves safely back to Earth.

ERS-1 malfunctioned while orbiting more than 700 kilometers from the Earth and will likely take around 100 years to return to the surface.

YouTubers split over OpenAI new tool Sora

PARIS — US company OpenAI debuted a tool last week that can generate highly realistic snippets of video from just a few lines of text, leading content creators to wonder if they are the latest professionals about to be replaced by algorithms.

Reactions to the tool, called Sora, have ranged from head-over-heels enthusiasm to alarm over the future direction of the industry.

YouTuber Marques Brownlee called it "frightening" and "threatening" to see AI do his job.

On the other hand, Caleb Ward, one-half of AI filmmaking duo Curi-

ous Refuge, told his YouTube followers he could not wait to get his hands on the tool.

But both Ward and Brownlee agreed that it was a massive moment for their industry.

"I can't stress enough how big a deal this is for the filmmaking and creative world," said Ward, who recently went viral with a trailer he created for a Wes Anderson-style *Star Wars* movie.

OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, said that Sora was not yet available to the public.

The announcement did not specify use cases, but said "a number of visu-

al artists, designers and filmmakers" had been chosen to help test it.

The firm accompanied its statement with sample videos, including a stylish woman walking along a Tokyo street, a cat waking up its owner in bed, and a group of charging woolly mammoths.

The internet immediately lit up with awe and praise, as is common with OpenAI products.

"I was shocked by their quality," Anis Ayari, an AI engineer and streamer known as Defend Intelligence, told Agence France-Presse.

But there were also plenty of dis-

senters who felt the videos were still firmly stuck in the "uncanny valley", where glitches in otherwise photorealistic images can leave viewers feeling queasy.

Commentator Ed Zitron wrote that in OpenAI's cat video, "the owner's arm appears to be part of the cushion and the cat's paw explodes out of its arm like an amoeba."

He wrote in his newsletter that AI video tools were too expensive and resource-hungry to ever be genuinely useful.

And styles of clips could not be harmonized, making the tools useless for creating anything other than tiny snippets.



In this photo illustration, a video created by OpenAI's text-to-video Sora tool plays on a monitor in Washington, DC, on Feb 16. DREW ANGERER / AFP

WORLD

Australia's 'expansion plan' for AUKUS raises concern

By LIU JIANQIAO
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Australia's eagerness to include Japan in the AUKUS security collaboration is expected to ignite further tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, according to experts. The move comes as Australia seeks to strengthen its alliance with Japan on technological advancements.

According to a report from Japan's Kyodo News agency on Sunday, Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles said Australia wants to "work more closely with Japan" on technological developments, acknowledging that the Asian nation is a "place of innovation" and is "at the cutting edge of technology".

"I think it is natural that we would be talking about a greater level of cooperation between the three countries — US, UK and Australia — and Japan, in terms of joint collaborations going forward," Marles said in an interview with Kyodo in the Australian capital.

By saying so, the minister is said to have expressed his keenness in Japan's participation in AUKUS, which has two pillars: the acquisition of nuclear submarines, and advanced capabilities in areas such as artificial intelligence and hypersonic missiles.

"As pillar two becomes more mature, which is going to take some years, ... I think there is an opportunity at that point to look at how we can cooperate with Japan in relation to that," he said.

Chen Hong, director of the Australian Studies Center at East China Normal University in Shanghai, said the potential expansion of the military collaboration scheme will introduce additional uncertainties in the region.

As Australia and its Western allies endeavor to establish military and technological barriers, Japan's push for remilitarization adds complexity and exacerbates regional tensions, according to Chen.

AUKUS, initiated in 2021, is a trilateral security partnership among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its primary aim is to equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines and counter China's growing influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Chen criticized Australia and Japan for exploiting the military collaboration for their interests.

"The 2024 US presidential cam-

aign is well underway and there is a federal election in Australia next year. AUKUS is faced with more uncertainties and Australia now is very anxious about whether Donald Trump would support the agreement if he were to be reelected as president in 2024," Chen said.

"Therefore, by inviting Tokyo into the second pillar collaboration of AUKUS, Canberra dreams of getting more solid support from US allies and obtaining some cutting-edge technology through the collaboration," he said.

Daryl Guppy, an international financial technical analyst and former national board member of the Australia China Business Council, highlighted that Australia's move aligns with Japan's aspirations to expand its military capabilities.

"AUKUS has a core nuclear component that is not available to others. This desire to work more closely with Japan is better placed in the context of the Quad agreements and the non-nuclear components of AUKUS," he said. Quad Security Dialogue, or Quad, is an informal strategic dialogue between India, the US, Japan and Australia.

'Arms race'

Guppy predicted that under current trends, military cooperation between Japan and Australia will likely expand to meet Japan's ambitions, going beyond the restrictions imposed by its pacifist constitution since World War II.

"This could potentially lead to an arms race, disrupt regional stability, and generate unease among other countries in the region," he warned.

Li Jianjun, director of the Australian Studies Center at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the fact that Marles has publicly welcomed Japan to use Australia's vast continent as a testing ground for long-range missiles is a clear indication of Canberra's support for Tokyo's development of military offensive capabilities.

"These actions would not only undermine security in the Asia-Pacific region but also tarnish Australia's long-standing international image as a country committed to peace," Li said.

Li mentioned that there are many voices in Australia that criticize the feasibility of AUKUS and doubt whether Australia needs nuclear-powered submarines and whether the trilateral plan will deliver them.



People take part in a Palestine Solidarity Campaign rally outside the Houses of Parliament in London on Wednesday as lawmakers debate calls for a cease-fire in Gaza. LUCY NORTH VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fears of famine loom on Gaza as aid stalled

Cease-fire negotiations resume as global worries increase over heavy casualties

GAZA/JERUSALEM — Heavy fighting rocked besieged Gaza on Wednesday as aid agencies warned of looming famine and new talks were held in Cairo for an Israel-Hamas cease-fire and hostage release deal.

Renewed talks involving mediators and Hamas continued and the talks raised the "possibility of progress". Global concern has spiraled over the high civilian death toll and dire humanitarian crisis in the conflict sparked by Hamas' Oct 7 attack against Israel.

Combat and chaos again stalled aid deliveries for desperate civilians in Gaza, where the UN has warned the population of 2.3 million is on the brink of famine.

The UN World Food Programme said it was forced to halt aid deliveries in northern Gaza because of "complete chaos and violence" — a move Hamas called a "death sentence".

More Israeli strikes continued to pound Gaza, with 118 people killed in the last 24 hours, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, which put the overall death toll at 29,313.

Abdel Rahman Mohamed Jumaa said he lost his family in strikes on Gaza's far-southern Rafah.

"I found my wife lying in the street," he told Agence France-Presse. "Then I saw a man carrying a girl and I ran toward him and ... picked her up, realizing she was really my daughter."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez became the latest to call for Israel's restraint in Rafah, telling reporters on a trip to Morocco that a ground offensive would be a "catastrophe".

Israeli war cabinet member Benny Gantz said the operation in Rafah would begin "after the evacuation of the population", although Israel has not yet given details.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted the army will keep fighting until it has destroyed Hamas and freed the remaining 130 hostages.

The conflict started when Hamas launched its surprise attack on Oct 7, which resulted in the deaths of about 1,200 people in Israel, according to Israeli figures.

Hamas took about 250 hostages, many of whom were released during a weeklong truce in late November.

US veto denounced

The White House sent Middle East envoy Brett McGurk for the truce talks, a day after a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire was blocked by the US, a move criticized by many countries.

In a statement released by Palestine's official news agency Wafa, the Palestinian presidency expressed its "surprise at the continued refusal of the US to stop the war" that Israel is waging against the Palestinian people.

Hamas said in a statement that the US administration bears respon-

sibility for obstructing efforts to end Israeli "aggression" in Gaza.

Hamas said its chief Ismail Haniyeh was already in Cairo for talks.

Israel's Gantz said there were efforts to "promote a new plan for the return of the hostages and we are seeing the first signs that indicate the possibility of progress in this direction".

Haniyeh has said Hamas would not accept anything less than a complete cessation of hostilities, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and "lifting of the unjust siege" as well as a release of Palestinian prisoners serving long sentences in Israeli jails.

Foreign ministers of G20 are gathering this week to discuss poverty, climate change and heightened global tensions, setting a road map for work to accomplish ahead of a Nov 18-19 summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira said Brazil was "deeply worried" by the proliferation of conflicts around the world — not just in Ukraine and Gaza, but in over 170 locations, according to some studies.

The conflict has set off clashes elsewhere in the Middle East, with fears growing of heightening regional tensions.

In Syria, state television said an Israeli missile strike killed at least two people in Damascus, a claim Israel declined to comment on.

Lebanon's Hezbollah movement fired rockets into Israel Wednesday, after an earlier deadly Israeli airstrike on south Lebanon.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Highflying Nvidia tries new AI chips for China

SAN FRANCISCO/BEIJING — Nvidia, whose stock was up more than \$100 a share on Thursday, is offering customers samples of its two new artificial intelligence chips aimed at the China market, its CEO Jensen Huang said in a bid to defend its market dominance in the country now threatened by US export curbs.

"We're sampling it with customers now. Both of them comply with the regulation without a license. We're looking forward to customer feedback on it," Huang told Reuters on Wednesday in an interview after releasing Nvidia's quarterly results.

Nvidia's earnings results on Wednesday sparked a global wave of record highs in stock markets on Thursday, including the first new peak for Japan's Nikkei since 1989.

The benchmark S&P 500 index and Dow Jones Industrial Average on Wall Street, along with Europe's pan-regional STOXX 600 index and MSCI's all-country world index also hit record highs as Nvidia shares surged 16.4 percent to \$785.38.

The chip industry newsletter SemiAnalysis reported in November that Nvidia was preparing to release three chips — H20, L20 and L2 — for the China market. The chips include most of Nvidia's newest features for AI work, but have had some of their computing power cut back to comply with new US rules, according to the newsletter's analysis of the chips' specifications.

The H20 was originally expected to be released in November but has been delayed due to issues that server manufacturers were having in integrating the chip.

Nvidia's business took a hit after Washington expanded export controls in October that included more restrictions on shipments of advanced Nvidia chips to China.

"This last quarter, our business significantly declined as we ... stopped shipping in the marketplace (for China)," Huang said during the earnings call.

For the fiscal fourth quarter which ended on Jan 28, the chipmaker recorded sales of \$1.9 billion in the China market, which includes Hong Kong, according to Reuters calculations based on the company's results.

"We expect this quarter to be about the same. But after that, hopefully, we can go compete for our business and do our best, and we'll see how it turns out," Huang said on the earnings call.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Nature's fury



People inspect houses damaged by a tornado in Sumedang, West Java, Indonesia, on Thursday. Indonesia was struck by a tornado of a scale previously unrecorded in the country that injured at least 33 people and damaged buildings, government officials said. TIMUR MATAHARI / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Seoul, Tokyo spar over territorial, wartime payment issues

SEOUL/TOKYO — South Korea protested at Japan's repeated territorial claim on Thursday, a day after Japan summoned South Korea's ambassador to protest a wartime labor compensation payment.

South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the South Korean government strongly protested at Japan's reiteration of the unjust sovereignty claim over Dokdo and sternly called for an immediate abolition of the so-called Takeshima Day event.

The Dokdo islets, which are called Takeshima in Japan, lie halfway between the two countries. Earlier on Thursday, Japan's Shi-

mane prefecture held what it called the Takeshima Day event, attended by a high-level official of Japan's central government.

The prefecture has held annual events to mark the day to claim its administrative sovereignty over the rocky islets since it designated Feb 22 as Takeshima Day in 2005.

South Korea restored sovereignty over the Dokdo islets from Japan after the Korean Peninsula's liberation from the 1910-45 Japanese colonization.

South Koreans have regarded Japan's claim over the islets as the denial of atrocities committed by Japan during its colonial rule.

The foreign ministry summoned Taisuke Mibae, deputy chief of mission at the Japanese embassy in Seoul, to lodge a protest against the renewed territorial claim.

It came as Japan summoned South Korea's ambassador to protest a compensation payment by a Japanese company related to the thorny issue of wartime forced labor.

The family of a South Korean victim who won a wartime labor case against Japanese shipbuilder Hitachi Zosen in December received money from the firm this week.

The money was retrieved from a deposit provided by the firm to a

court in Seoul after South Korea's top court in December ordered Hitachi Zosen to pay 50 million won (\$37,500) in compensation to the victim.

The indirect payment — the first of its kind — has drawn condemnation from Japan, which maintains that the forced labor dispute was settled in a 1965 treaty.

Japan's vice-foreign minister on Wednesday "summoned South Korean Ambassador to Japan Yun Duk-min and lodged a strong protest", top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Colombian rebel group halts peace talks

By GERMAN SANCHEZ in Bogota
For China Daily

Barely two weeks after agreeing with the government to extend a cease-fire for six months, Colombia's National Liberation Army, or ELN, rebels announced they were suspending peace talks being held in Cuba.

In a statement on Tuesday, the ELN accused the government of not keeping its promises, noting that while talks were supposed to be national in scope, parallel talks were being held at a more local level in Colombia's Narino region. The ELN said those parallel talks had thrown the current efforts into crisis.

The government of Colombia and the ELN agreed on Feb 6 to extend a six-month cease-fire deal for another 180 days, offering continued hope that the more than five decades of armed conflict may be nearing an end.

According to separate statements from the government and the ELN, the "bilateral, national and temporary cease-fire" would be prolonged but a permanent peace may prove challenging to achieve.

Colombia has a long history of violence linked to internal armed conflict. Since the 1960s, guerrilla groups like the ELN have waged war against the state while right-wing paramilitaries and drug trafficking

gangs perpetuated their own campaigns of terror.

The government of President Gustavo Petro started negotiating with the ELN in 2022 as part of a push to achieve what the administration called "total peace". There have been multiple rounds of talks in Venezuela, Mexico and Cuba since then.

Difficulties ahead

"This guerrilla group shows no real willingness for peace. While they call for a bilateral cease-fire, they fail to take even the first step toward one," said Ana Milena, a communications and political scientist.

Much of the difficulty in negotiat-

ing a definitive peace agreement comes from complacency within the government, Milena said.

In the meantime, some observers worry about the cost of peace. Among them is Diana Diago, a politician and councilwoman in Colombia's capital Bogota.

There are reports of ELN attacks on civilians, left and right, across many parts of the country, as seen in Cauca and elsewhere, she said.

"As the ELN continues to strengthen" through negotiations, the rebels "will increasingly arm themselves and regain territorial control. Unfortunately, this will likely plunge the country back into armed conflict", Diago said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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GLOBAL LENS



Citizens take photos with a 200-meter-long dragon lantern at Lotus Market as the Lunar New Year's first snow falls in Beijing on Tuesday. HAO YI / FOR CHINA DAILY



From top: Sanitation workers clear the snow on main roads in Suqian, East China's Jiangsu province, on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Rescue workers help a vehicle trapped in snow in Jiuquan, Northwest China's Gansu province, on Tuesday. GAO HONGSHAN / XINHUA Civilians and border guards maintain facilities in an extreme temperature of -33 C, in Altay, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Tuesday. LI MINGJI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Blizzard hits New Year

Northern China on alert for snow onslaught and record low temperatures

H heavy snow blanketed northern and central China on Tuesday after Spring Festival.

As a result, flights and intercity train traffic on which much of China's commuters rely were delayed or canceled on Wednesday. Authorities in the provinces of Hebei, Henan and Shandong have issued warnings of travel hazards and other cold weather dangers.

The capital, Beijing, which hosted last year's Winter Olympic Games, has seen temperatures drop to freezing.

Tens of thousands of workers with brooms and shovels were deployed, assisted by snow plows in the hardest-hit regions.

China's meteorological authorities renewed an orange alert for a cold wave on Wednesday, the most severe warning in its three-tier weather warning system, forecasting temperature drops in southern regions of the country.

From Wednesday to Friday, average daily temperatures or minimum temperatures in most parts of southern China will also decline by 6 to 12 degrees Celsius, according to the National Meteorological Center (NMC).

No fatalities from the latest cold wave have been reported.

XINHUA



Left: Blanketed Beihai Park in Beijing attracts many tourists to take photos on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** Tourists enjoy snow at the Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing after the snow on Wednesday. TIAN YUHAO / CNS **Below:** Snow-covered landscape is reflected on Kunming Lake at the Summer Palace in Beijing on Wednesday. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY



BUSINESS

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Speedier Customs clearances to propel consumption, trade

By ZHONG NAN

With China creating more favorable conditions to boost both domestic consumption and foreign trade, the country's Customs authorities have implemented a number of innovative measures to expedite Customs clearances for foreign goods.

Customs officials said these moves will not only boost people's capacity and desire for consumption, but also provide significant impetus to the sustained recovery of China's economy.

For instance, the Customs inspection site at Beijing Capital International Airport has provided an emergency processing service for order review during nighttime and weekend hours, providing 24-hour uninterrupted support for the timely Customs clearance of fresh products, including seafood, fruits and flowers, this month, thus better ensuring market supply during the Spring Festival period.

Similarly, Customs authorities at Beijing Daxing International Airport established a "one-to-one" liaison mechanism, proactively coordinating with importers and formulating quarantine supervision plans.

In addition to meeting the market demand in Beijing, fresh products entering the national capital through these two airports are also distributed to cities within the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, said Yin Haifeng, deputy head of Beijing Daxing International Airport Customs, a unit of Beijing Customs.

According to Beijing Customs, Beijing's foreign trade value reached 3.65 trillion yuan (\$507.37 billion) in 2023, up 0.3 percent year-on-year. Imports came in at 3.05 trillion yuan, the same as the previous year's, while exports reached 600.01 billion yuan, up 2 percent year-on-year.

Meanwhile, imports and exports of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region reached 5.03 trillion yuan, achieving positive growth for three consecutive years. The region's imports accounted for 20 percent of the country's total import value.

In Southwest China's Yunnan

province, 130,000 metric tons of goods valued at 345 million yuan were cleared for import and export through the China-Laos Railway during the Spring Festival holiday from Feb 10 to 17, according to Kunming Customs.

Exports mainly included steel, auto parts and household appliances, while imports were primarily bananas, durians, mangosteens and iron ore.

"We have actively strengthened collaboration with all parties, handled the arrival of goods in advance, reasonably allocated personnel for inspection and clearance preparations, and fully utilized high-tech inspection equipment to enable efficient and strict supervision," said Zhou Baohua, deputy head of Mengla Customs under Kunming Customs.

China's consumption market picked up steam during the eight-day holiday, said the Ministry of Commerce on Sunday. Sales figures from key retail and catering enterprises nationwide monitored by the ministry rose 8.5 percent year-on-year over the extended holiday.

The vibrant consumer market during the holiday once again demonstrated that there is still significant potential for consumption growth in China, said Ni Yueju, a research fellow of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

By adhering to the development trend and by making concerted efforts to diversify market supply, create innovative consumption scenarios and unleash consumption potential, China can foster a more robust and dynamic engine for high-quality development, Ni said.

Given the wide-ranging dietary needs of overseas Chinese and the booming development of trade in farm products, pickled Chinese cabbage has gradually become popular in overseas markets. Shenyang Customs announced that businesses served by Tiexi Customs, one of its branches in Northeast China's Liaoning province, exported 850,000 tons of pickled Chinese cabbage in January.



Customs officials check imported red wine at Beijing Daxing International Airport in mid-February. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Robots seen on the assembly line of automaker FAW Group in Changchun, Jilin province.

XU CHANG / XINHUA

SOEs' AI push may transform industries

Services, manufacturing, transport, energy to gain from many applications

By ZHONG NAN
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China's move to promote advancements in artificial intelligence technologies among its centrally-administered State-owned enterprises is likely to propel a new wave of industrialization, said analysts on Thursday.

These efforts are expected to have wide-ranging applications across various industries, including trade in services, manufacturing, energy and transportation, they said.

Zhang Yuzhuo, chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, or SASAC, said the government will push central SOEs to achieve better growth and play a greater role in the field of AI. He made the remarks at a meeting in Beijing on Monday.

The meeting emphasized that central SOEs should integrate the development of AI into their overall planning, actively promote industrial renewal, and accelerate the layout and development of the AI industry, information released by SASAC showed.

It was emphasized at the meeting that central SOEs should solidify the foundation for development by concentrating resources in the most needed and advantageous areas, speed up the construction of a number of intelligent computing centers, and better leverage the role of cross-central SOE collaborative innovation platforms.

Pan Helin, a researcher specializ-

ing in digital economy at Zhejiang University's International Business School in Haining, East China's Zhejiang province, said that the growth of central SOEs in the field of AI can enhance national competitiveness, and grasp technological discourse and initiative. Their abundant resources can inject vitality into the industry.

"At the same time, with the development of AI technology, central SOEs can also achieve transformation and upgrading, as well as reinforce their earnings strength," said Pan.

AI has been quickly integrated into various sectors. Earlier this month, United States-based AI research company OpenAI unveiled a new product model named Sora. It is able to generate "realistic" and "imaginative" 60-second videos based on brief text prompts.

Eager to maintain a key role for China in the global AI industry, the SASAC urged central SOEs to enhance demand-driven strategies, expedite support for key industries, establish high-quality multimodal datasets, and foster a comprehensive industrial ecosystem. This approach would encompass infrastructure, algorithm tools, intelligent platforms and solutions.

Central SOEs have already accelerated their layout in the field of AI. For instance, China United Network Communications Group Co, one of the country's three telecom giants, established an AI innovation center in Beijing in late January. The group views AI as a crucial strategic direc-

tion and is hastening its efforts to develop AI technologies.

SDIC Intelligence Co, a subsidiary of Beijing-headquartered State Development and Investment Group Co, announced on Wednesday that it will launch related products with multimodal AI capabilities based on market demand.

High-tech central SOEs are likely to increase their investments in the field of AI, including through mergers and acquisitions for key technologies, market share and talent, said Zhou Lisha, a researcher at the Institute for State-owned Enterprises of Tsinghua University.

She said this trend aligns with the global trend of businesses increasing their investments in the field of AI.

Central SOEs' investment in strategic emerging industries, including new energy, new materials, "new infrastructure" and biotechnology, totaled 2.18 trillion yuan (\$303.22 billion) in 2023, up 32 percent year-on-year. Their research and development expenditure amounted to 1.1 trillion yuan, SASAC data showed.

Central SOEs will undertake specialized integration in areas like information communication, new energy and equipment manufacturing this year, said Li Bing, deputy secretary-general of the SASAC.

"This will explore new avenues, seize fresh opportunities and cultivate new advantages," said Li, adding that deepening strategic cooperation within the industrial chain ecosystem and accelerating the development level of the modern industrial system will be priorities for central SOEs in 2024.

Innovative tech boosts mkt vigor

By FAN FEIFEI
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The Chinese mainland's capital market has shown strong vitality, with companies engaged in technological innovation, advanced manufacturing and green development expected to usher in new listing and development opportunities in 2024, mainly driven by the implementation of the across-the-board registration-based IPO system, said a new report released by global consultancy PwC.

The Chinese mainland is still leading the amount of financing in IPOs in global capital markets, despite the recent temporary tightening pace of IPOs nationwide. There are plenty of IPO opportunities for innovative enterprises that master key and core technologies, PwC said.

The report pointed out that the Hong Kong bourse's move to further lower the listing threshold for technology companies has demonstrated its determination to attract innovation-oriented firms to go public in Hong Kong.

The listing of innovative Chinese mainland technology, media and telecom (TMT) companies in the United States will likely further recover in 2024 amid signs of geopolitical tensions easing, it said.

There were 50 IPOs worldwide by Chinese mainland TMT enterprises in the second half of last year, down from the 66 IPOs recorded during the first half of 2023, PwC said. The total amount of financing for the 50 listings reached about 61.8 billion yuan (\$8.6 billion), it added.

The domestic capital market was the main listing option for Chinese mainland TMT enterprises, with 24 percent choosing to be listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's STAR Market and 32 percent on the Shenzhen bourse's ChiNext board in the second half of 2023, the report showed.

A total of 12 Chinese mainland TMT enterprises chose to list on the STAR Market, raising about 33.9 billion yuan and accounting for 55 percent of total financing, while there were 16 TMT industry IPOs on the ChiNext involving financing of almost 13.7 billion yuan, making up 22 percent of the total.

Another eight Chinese mainland TMT enterprises chose to list on the Beijing Stock Exchange, which received about 1.5 billion yuan, occupying 2 percent of total financing. Additionally, 13 Chinese mainland TMT enterprises, or 26 percent of the total number of IPO-bound enterprises, opted to list in Hong Kong and overseas, netting 6.8 billion yuan, or 11 percent of total proceeds.

Wilson Chow, PwC global TMT industry leader, said the Beijing Stock Exchange will enter a phase of rapid development in 2024 and will provide new listing options for small and medium-sized tech companies, along with optimized measures allowing companies to get listed directly.

The Hong Kong bourse issued a consultation paper on the listing system for special tech companies last year, which indicated firms that are still in initial commercialization stages or have yet to complete commercialization will be allowed to apply to be listed on the bourse. The Hong Kong bourse will continue to attract tech companies to list, the report said.

The number of Chinese mainland companies going public in the US rebounded last year, said Emily Liu, PwC China Assurance Partner. The supportive attitude of authorities toward qualified private enterprises to list overseas, as well as the maturity of regulations for the filing-based management of Chinese companies' overseas IPOs will pave the way for Chinese mainland TMT companies seeking public floats abroad, Liu added.

Briefly

Commercial banks' profits rise in 2023

China's commercial banks reported a profit growth of 3.2 percent in 2023, data from the banking regulator showed. Net profits of commercial lenders hit 2.4 trillion yuan (\$338 billion), according to the National Financial Regulatory Administration. The capital adequacy ratio of the lenders (excluding foreign bank branches) was 15.06 percent at the end of December, an increase of 0.29 percentage points from the quarter ending September.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 58 billion yuan (\$8.2 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's Bank of China said in a statement. A reverse repo is a process by which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Quant trading to be more effectively regulated

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Experts and market mavens applauded regulators' recently adopted tighter grip over quantitative trading, saying that it is conducive to the stability of the A-share market, better safeguards retail investor interests and marks another major step forward concerning the maturity of the Chinese capital market.

Both the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges announced late Tuesday a three-day trading ban on Lingjun Investment. The two bourses accused Lingjun of selling off a large volume of A shares when trading began on Monday, coinciding with quick slumps for both the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index and Shenzhen Component Index.

Such sell-offs have violated the exchanges' rules on quant trading that program-trading must not endanger exchange systems or normal trading order and are thus considered abnormal trading, said the two exchanges.

Founded in 2014, Lingjun is one of China's largest quant funds with assets under management of over

60 billion yuan (\$8.4 billion) as of the end of the third quarter.

Yang Delong, chief economist at First Seafrost Fund, said that the market has expressed major concern over quant trading, as sudden large sell-offs usually exacerbate downward trends. The exchanges' latest measures help to further regulate quant trading, which are conducive to the sound development of the Chinese capital market over the long run, Yang said.

Investors should have more confidence, as some quality A-share companies, whose prices have been irrationally pulled down, may create investment opportunities, he added. Quant trading uses mathematical models and programs to replace human beings to analyze securities prices and make investment decisions.

According to a report released by Guotai Junan Securities in early February, the size of mutual funds specializing in quant trading grew by nearly 674 billion yuan on a yearly basis in 2023 while another 3,077 quant trading products were released by private equity firms last year.

In general, quant trading is more favored by investors when actively

managed funds stage less-than-stellar performance, said Guotai Junan analysts.

In early November, the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, said it will strengthen monitoring and analysis of quant trading — especially high-frequency trading — to better supervise the practice. In a work conference in late January, the CSRC stressed that it will further consolidate supervision, crack down on violations and protect investor interests.

Regulations on quant trading took effect on the Shanghai and Shenzhen bourses on Oct 9. The two exchanges admitted in reports simultaneously released late Tuesday that quant trading has helped to provide more liquidity and advanced price discovery. But they also pointed out that retail investors are disadvantaged vis-a-vis quant trading, especially high-frequency trading, in areas of technology, information and speed. Quant trading could result in even higher market volatility down the road.

International experience shows that regulators will adopt stricter supervision over quant trading, especially high-frequency trading,

to avoid such technology-based trading activity exerting a negative impact on market order, said the two exchanges.

Therefore, the two bourses will further optimize the supervision mechanism, including regulating quant trading made by north-bound investors — those who purchase A shares via the stock connect programs linking the Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong exchanges.

Liu Yuhui, a council member of China Chief Economist Forum, explained that the prevalence of quant trading in the United States can be mainly attributed to the fact that financial institutions make up most of the investors. They need quant trading to further stimulate liquidity. But they paid a price in 2020 for higher volatility resulting from trading strategies based on algorithms and mathematical models. US regulators have since stepped up supervision and restrictions related to quant trading, Liu said.

But retail investors make up most A-share trading activity. Prudence and strict supervision is needed for quant trading to protect investor interests, he added.

BUSINESS

Robots rolled out to charge EVs during travel rush

By ZHENG XIN
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State Grid Corp of China — the world's largest utility company — has adopted an innovative approach to mobile charging solutions by using autonomous electric vehicle charging robots during the Spring Festival holiday this year.

At city charging stations and highway service centers, the robots have been busy locating vehicles and charging them when fixed charging slots are occupied. The attempt has not only helped in meeting the record-high road trips but also bolstered green charging services nationwide during the holiday that fell between Feb 10 and 17, the company said.

State Grid Wuhan Power Supply Co has used 20 mobile EV charging robots in high-traffic service areas this year to address the surge in demand.

The remote-controlled charging robots have been providing emergency charging services for new energy vehicles by traveling to the destination themselves within 2 kilometers. They are transported to the site with the help of staff members beyond 2 kilometers.

Each mobile charging station can simultaneously provide fast charging services for four NEVs, meeting the daily charging needs of up to 200 vehicles. The daily charging capacity can exceed 4,000 kilowatt-hours, providing crucial support to NEV owners during their return journeys, it said.

"Equipped with 60-kilowatt fast-charging capabilities, these mobile robots can efficiently charge six to seven vehicles when fully charged," said Yin Zhengsheng, deputy gener-



A State Grid employee (right) helps a driver charge his electric vehicle with a robot charger on a highway service area in Hubei province on Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

al manager of the public facilities management unit of State Grid Wuhan Power Supply Co.

The strategic deployment of these robots at busy highway locations is convenient for electric vehicle owners during their travels, streamlining return trips and marking a significant leap in charging efficiency, he added.

As the number of EVs in China is projected to reach 30 million units by the end of the year, the need for efficient charging facilities is more pressing than ever, highlighting the rapid growth of the EV market, said Zhang Yongwei, secretary-general of China EV100, an NEV industry think tank.

Recognizing the increased demand for EV charging infrastructure, State Grid is already coming up with autonomous EV charging robots in Tianjin, as well as Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei and Fujian provinces, and is poised for further expansion nationwide.

It will consider the traffic flow

and charging lines at public charging stations in service areas along expressways, tourist attractions and major travel destinations in advance.

Authorities have forecast that during the entire 40-day span of the Spring Festival holiday travel rush, which runs from Jan 26 to March 5, Chinese residents will make 9 billion trips, 80 percent of which will be through private vehicles.

An analyst said the company's approach is part of an initiative to understand the prospects of the country's NEV market.

The installation of mobile charging stations and the introduction of charging robots in high-traffic service areas were pivotal moves, demonstrating a commitment to optimizing electric vehicle charging processes and facilitating a seamless return journey for owners, said Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute.

As travel across China ramped up, leading to long lines of EVs at charging stations, the company's initiative will not only offer quicker charging services but also capitalize on the growing demand for EV charging solutions, he said.

To further facilitate the holiday travel, State Grid has asked its subsidiaries nationwide to organize service teams, conducting special patrols in expressway service areas before the travel rush, at tourist attractions and bus charging stations, to eliminate hidden dangers in charging equipment for reliable operations.

State Grid has also established an emergency response system for charging services, monitoring the operational status of charging equipment in real-time, through its vehicle networking platform and requiring duty workers to stand round-the-clock shifts, in a bid to meet NEV drivers' needs on time, it said.

New model to hike Huawei's market share

Competition in foldable smartphone sector fiercer as firm unveils Pocket 2

By MA SI
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Huawei Technologies Co unveiled its latest clamshell-style foldable smartphone series Pocket 2 on Thursday, after the company regained the No 1 spot in China's smartphone market in the first two weeks of 2024 amid the US government's prolonged restrictions.

The move also came as Huawei consolidated its position in the Chinese foldable smartphone segment as the top vendor amid intensified competition from players such as Oppo and South Korea's Samsung.

Yu Chengdong, CEO of Huawei's device group, said the Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based tech behemoth now accounts for 51.2 percent of the Chinese foldable smartphone market.

The foldable form factor has been heralded as the new frontier in mobile technology. Currently, clamshell-style foldable smartphones sell better than tablet-like foldable smartphones among female consumers.

Yu said the new model is priced from 7,499 yuan (\$1,042). Pocket 2 features cutting-edge camera lenses and artificial intelligence technologies which can help consumers capture better photos and videos.

Global foldable smartphone shipments are expected to pass the 100-million mark by 2027 from 13.1 million units in 2022, with a compound annual growth rate of 51 percent during the period, said market research company Counterpoint Research.

Tom Kang, research director at Counterpoint, said: "At the moment, foldable smartphones remain niche. But it is an important segment for brands looking to maintain leadership in innovation and a premium market presence."

Kang said China emerged as the biggest foldable smartphone market globally in 2022. "If you want to make it in foldable smartphones, you have to make it there."

A survey conducted by Counterpoint spotlights a strong interest in foldable smartphones among Chinese consumers. As many as 64 percent of smartphone users in the \$400 and above price bracket in China are considering foldable smartphones for their next purchase, with 20 percent already committed to the idea and an additional 44 percent weighing it as an option.

Meanwhile, as AI impacts all corners of the devices market, smartphones are expected to be the device driving the AI revolution into every home, said a report by global market consultancy IDC.

IDC's preliminary forecast suggests 170 million next-generation AI smartphones will be shipped in 2024, representing almost 15 percent of total smartphone shipments and a sizeable jump from the roughly 51 million shipped in 2023.

This share is expected to climb rapidly beyond 2024 as industry players push aggressively towards new chips and use cases that evolve further, IDC said.

IDC defines next-generation AI smartphones as devices with a system-on-a-chip capable of running on-device generative AI models such as ChatGPT more quickly and efficiently leveraging a neural processing unit.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association, said Huawei's comeback in the Chinese 5G smartphone market coincides with good timing, as AI smartphones are expected to trigger a new round of growth.

Huawei will cut into Apple's market share in China and also weigh down its domestic peers, especially Honor Device Co Ltd, a spinoff now independent from Huawei, which was formed three years ago, Xiang said.

In August, Huawei showcased its enhanced in-handset AI capabilities.

Jia Yongli, president of AI and smart full-scenario business department at Huawei's device group, said Celia, the company's voice-activated assistant, has become super smart.

For instance, Celia can quickly translate a 3,000-word English news report into Chinese, write a summary and provide relevant data so that readers can better understand it.

Celia can not only understand user instructions, but also assist users in creating videos and copywriting, and in providing personalized suggestions and recommendations, Jia said.

But as other companies have already discovered, two aspects — computing power and cost — pose the biggest challenges in integrating next-generation AI into smartphones, said Lu Yanxia, research director at IDC China.

Xinjiang set to boost air trip business

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing
and MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is speeding up the development of its air travel market by building more civil airports and raising connectivity, fueled by increased travel demand to and from the region.

By the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), the number of civil airports in operation in Xinjiang is expected to increase to 37 from 25 currently. Some newly built civil transportation airports have carried out preliminary work before being put into commercial operation, the local government said during a news conference earlier this week.

"Now, all cities in Xinjiang are located within 60 minutes' drive from airports. By 2025, 96.2 percent

of counties will be located within 100 kilometers from airports, an increase from 95.2 percent currently," said Zhang Tingyao, deputy director of the Civil Aviation Administration of China Xinjiang Regional Administration.

During the just concluded Spring Festival holiday that lasted from Feb 10 to 17, the total number of air passengers handled in China, including via domestic and international flights, reached 17.99 million, a new high, according to the CAAC.

The 40-day Spring Festival travel rush that began on Jan 26 and which concludes on March 5, has seen large passenger flows, including family visits, students, migrant workers and tourists.

Over the festival period, Tianjin Airlines added more flight capacities to connect other cities with Xinjiang. For instance, the carrier

added more flight frequencies connecting Xi'an, Shaanxi province and Korla, Xinjiang.

Going forward, taking Xi'an Xianyang International Airport as a main operations base in Northwest China, Tianjin Airlines plans to launch more flights or add frequencies that connect Xi'an with cities in Xinjiang and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, the carrier said.

"China's central and western areas boast the largest number of high-altitude airports. Domestic carriers should connect more smaller cities with their hub airports to build a competitive route network," said Li Guijin, a professor at the Civil Aviation Management Institute of China in Beijing.

"The sustainable growth of regional aviation is at the core of the Chinese airline industry's competitiveness. The country should also

build a group of specialized and scaled regional carriers," Li said.

By the end of 2023, the 25 airports in Xinjiang handled passenger trips of 40.95 million, cargo and mail throughput of 204,700 metric tons, and 527,300 takeoffs and landings, with year-on-year increases reaching 143.9 percent, 67.1 percent and 72.2 percent, respectively, the local government said.

Since 2023, a total of 22 international and regional passenger routes have operated in Xinjiang, covering 16 cities in 13 countries and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

In addition, Xinjiang has been building more general aviation airports, the local government said. Such airports are designed for civil aviation operations such as pilot training, agriculture, civil search and rescue, aerial survey and pollution control.

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国际爱护动物基金会





**Between heaven and earth,
together with other sentient beings, I live.**

—Zhuangzi, Philosopher, Late 4th century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一

——《庄子·齐物论》






BUSINESSFOCUS

NINGBO — When Ye Kaifeng, a Ningbo native, returned home in 2004 after studying abroad, he was initially reluctant to step into his father's shoes and take over the family papermaking business. Instead, he started his own hog-raising enterprise.

"As a returned overseas student, I believed I should do something different, suspecting that I wouldn't make any difference to my family or the papermaking industry," Ye said.

It took him over a decade to come to terms with failing to take the baton from his father's hands in 2018. Then, Ye was already a successful entrepreneur in the eco-breeding business.

The challenge of management transition is widely shared by tens of thousands of private enterprises in Cixi, a county-level city under the administration of Ningbo, Zhejiang province — with over 1.8 million residents and roughly 60,000 private enterprises.

It is also a common problem facing the country's bustling economic hubs where the management transition of family enterprises holds implications for regional economic prospects. Many second-generation entrepreneurs have risen to the challenge of maintaining continuity while seeking innovation.

Transition

The majority of private enterprises in Cixi were founded following China's reform and opening-up. Among them, over 2,000 are manufacturers of small home appliances. As the founding entrepreneurs have come to retirement age in recent years, a transition is inevitable.

Passing the baton to heirs is the most common choice in 95 percent of all cases in Cixi. Private enterprises have exhibited a great deal of prudence with the transition, which usually takes years.

Among 418 private enterprises with an output value exceeding 100 million yuan (\$13.9 million) in Cixi, 146 companies — or 35 percent of the total — have been completely or largely taken over by second-generation owners. About 200, or 48 percent, are still in the midst of transition, according to data from local authorities.

Innovation

Hog raiser Ye realized the importance of leveraging the financial market for corporate growth while studying abroad. Over the years, he's been persuading his father to get ready for public listing, but to no avail. His father was content with maintaining the status quo — a company with an annual turnover of 2 billion yuan.

After he finally decided to take over his father's company in 2018, he began pressing ahead with an initial public offering. The company is on the trajectory of going public in 2025. Ye, always eager to make a difference, has already envisioned ambitious plans for the company after its IPO.

In 2017, after finishing his studies in the US, Luo Lujin embarked on the journey of taking over the home appliance company his father founded in Cixi. "During my studies in the US and my visits to many other companies, I've learned plenty of good practices and managerial concepts that I cannot wait to put into practice in



Second-gen entrepreneurs take up family biz batons

Tech upgrades, e-commerce common campaigns undertaken by children of company founders



Above: A worker checks the quality of electric irons to be exported to the United States at a workshop in Cixi, East China's Zhejiang province, in December. **Left:** A worker loads small home appliances onto a truck at Zhejiang Huaguang Electric Appliance Group in Cixi in December. PHOTOS BY XU YU / XINHUA

“During my studies in the US and my visits to many other companies, I've learned plenty of good practices and managerial concepts that I cannot wait to put into practice in running my family company.”

Luo Lujin, a home appliance business owner in Cixi

XINHUA

running my family company," said Luo, 30.

"However, the company was running largely like a mom-and-pop shop back then," said Luo, adding that he was worried about seeing nothing he'd learned was being applied, and he was overwhelmed by the pressure of steering the company out of a tough period.

Fortunately, his father was willing to hear his opinions. He helped his father find the niche market of air fryers, and the company has embraced a period of rapid growth since then. Orders are rolling in, and new plants are about to be constructed, Luo said.

Shen Ze, 31, general manager of Kadiya — another home appliance firm in Cixi — foresaw the importance of e-commerce to the sector when still in college.

He took over the company after graduating in 2016 and wasted no time in building his e-commerce marketing team. Since then, the business of Kadiya heaters has boomed, and the sales volume of e-commerce represents over 60 percent of total sales.

In China's southern metropolis of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, many second-generation entrepreneurs are also navigating unfamiliar waters. Zheng Jiming has expanded the business map of the company his father founded from the construction sector to cross-border e-commerce, seizing the opportunity of Shenzhen to introduce an upgrading plan for its bonded area.

In 2012, Zheng turned an old factory building of his company in a bonded area into a demonstration and trading center for imports and exports, providing one-stop services for cross-border e-commerce trading. The company now boasts total fixed assets exceeding 2 billion yuan and more than 200 employees.

Government role

The succession and development of enterprises hold implications for the social and economic development of the region. Therefore, local authorities should play their roles, said Lin Jian, Party secretary of Cixi.

Cixi is a hub of small, closely intertwined home-appliance producers, and the fallout of any mistake may ripple across the entire industrial cluster, Lin said. "Most enterprises of small home appliances are small in terms of their scales and ill-prepared for risks, and government support could just come in handy."

Lin said with the current management transition, government agencies are supposed to provide services and guidance. For instance, local authorities have organized on-campus job fairs for enterprises. They've also invited new-generation entrepreneurs to watch business start-up road shows by college students, in the hope of galvanizing new ideas and matchmaking new teams for innovation.

According to data provided by local authorities in Cixi, about 80 percent of enterprises that have completed or are undergoing generational transition see the second generation stay in the same business lane as their parents. Most of them are pursuing innovations, introducing new products and new technologies, or carrying out industrial upgrading, breathing new life into family businesses.

Coffee craze in China's 'city of the future' brews up innovative spirit

SHIJIAZHUANG — Until a few years back, locals in China's Xiong'an New Area, also dubbed the "city of the future", were perhaps not much into drinking coffee. But nowadays, the perky brew has evolved into a daily staple for many, with local coffee shops serving as hubs for networking, business discussions and exchanging entrepreneurial ideas.

Migu Cafe in Xiong'an, Hebei province, is an innovative space, blending a coffee shop, reading nooks and a technology and innovation experience center by China Mobile. At the cafe's entrance, a coffee-making robot captivates the attention of passersby.

With its bulging body and flexible arms, the machine skillfully carries out the entire process of making hand-brewed coffee, including weighing and grinding beans, placing coffee powder and pouring hot water.

"Just wait a few minutes and you can enjoy a cup of coffee laced with technology. The robot can make as many as 500 cups of coffee per day,"

shop manager Wang Ying said, adding that since the opening of the shop in October, the robot has attracted many customers.

Cheng Bo, a staffer at China Mobile's Xiong'an office, has his office just above the cafe. "I prefer to talk with my clients in coffee shops rather than conference rooms, as they offer a stimulating environment with diverse elements," Cheng said.

When he began working in Xiong'an in 2018, it was hard to find a cafe. Now, alongside the burgeoning coffee scene, the city also boasts upscale hotels, he said.

Fueling the surge in coffee's popularity is a vibrant city bustling with activity in science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship.

China announced plans to establish the Xiong'an New Area on April 1, 2017, aiming to relieve Beijing of functions nonessential to its role as the national capital and to advance the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

China's leadership has pledged to



build Xiong'an into an innovative, green, smart and world-class city in line with the country's high-quality development path.

Li Yazhou, general manager of Hebei Xiong'an Luoshu Tech, said the cafe inside Xiong'an New Area Zhongguancun Science Park is a place he frequents.

"This cafe is a shared workspace

filled with the aroma of coffee and people's passion for innovation and creation. People exchange ideas and countless opportunities arise from there," Li said.

Located on the second floor of the office building in the science park, the cafe often serves as a meeting space featuring several sofas to create a cozy and comfortable atmosphere.

It could also be converted into a conference room, and a large, movable screen can be placed at the end of the long table to display PowerPoint presentations.

In November last year, a roadshow was held at this cafe to offer guidance to companies on how to improve their financing paths and optimize development plans.

Since its inauguration last August, ZGC Science Park has become home to many high-tech companies, including enterprises in fields such as artificial intelligence, smart hardware and biomedicine. The occupancy rate of the first phase of the science park has reached 90 percent.

"Xiong'an is an appealing city. I am honored to participate in the development of Xiong'an and grow together with it," Cheng said.

China Mobile is building a smart-city science and innovation center in Xiong'an, and plans to invite its partners to this center, Cheng added.

XINHUA

Left: An aerial view of the Xiong'an railway station in Xiong'an New Area, North China's Hebei province. ZHU XUDONG / XINHUA

“Xiong'an is an appealing city. I am honored to participate in the development of Xiong'an and grow together with it.”

Cheng Bo, a staff member at China Mobile's Xiong'an office

COMMENT

Editorials

Response to mainland's moves will show DPP's sincerity about cross-strait stability

It has become the norm that each time a new representative of the secessionist-minded Democratic Progressive Party is about to take office as head of the authorities on Taiwan island, some moves are made to test the Chinese mainland's bottom line.

This year it led to tragedy. Two fishermen from Fujian province drowned when their boat capsized after being bumped by a vessel of the Taiwan authorities which was chasing it from waters near Kinmen Island, which the latter claimed were "restricted" waters.

As a spokesperson of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council made clear, "Fishermen on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have been operating in traditional fishing grounds in the Xiamen-Kinmen maritime area since ancient times, and there is no such thing as 'prohibited or restricted waters'."

This was the first provocation by the DPP authorities ahead of the independence-minded Lai Ching-te taking office as head of the Taiwan authorities on May 20. How the DPP authorities handle the incident will likely set the tone for cross-strait interaction after Lai takes office.

As DPP chairman, Lai, on Wednesday, called for properly handling the aftermath of the tragedy, resolutely enforcing the law, and preventing similar incidents from happening in the future. This may sound consistent with his vow of prudence in handling cross-strait relations and desire for stable cross-strait relations. But how

the incident is actually handled by the DPP authorities will be the touchstone for the sincerity of such remarks.

To the bereaved families, the loss of their loved ones was doubly tragic as it occurred during the Spring Festival holiday, a traditional occasion for family reunions. Meanwhile, it cannot but inspire popular indignation that the DPP authorities did not acknowledge "multiple contacts" between their vessel and the boat from the mainland until a week afterward. The maritime law enforcement authorities of Taiwan have been abusive and dishonest.

A mainland delegation led by the Taiwan Affairs Office of Quanzhou, Fujian province, is now in Kinmen to investigate the case. Hopefully, the local Kinmen authorities will fully support the investigation and make sure the matter is properly resolved, so that any similar tragedy can be prevented from happening. The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council has called for a clear explanation of what happened.

The incident has once again raised concerns about the legitimacy of the DPP authorities' "law enforcement" actions in the waters, which excessively target mainland fishing vessels. With the mainland authorities having instigated patrols and inspections in the area in response to the tragedy, it is foreseeable that these will be regularized in the waters around Kinmen and other islets in the Taiwan Strait so as to maintain law and order.

Time for West to stop fanning flames in Ukraine

Feb 24 will mark the second anniversary of the start of the conflict in Ukraine. But instead of seeing any prospect for an end to the fighting in the heart of Europe, there are only fresh signs that the United States-led West intends to continue to fan the flames.

On Wednesday, the European Union approved its 13th round of sanctions on Russia since the latter launched its "special military operation".

With Ukraine having just suffered a setback in the key stronghold of Avdiivka and the US Congress dragging its feet on approving more military aid to Ukraine, the timing of the move is meant to reassure Kyiv that it still has the bloc's unwavering support.

Yet, the rising calls in many European countries for the money earmarked for Ukraine to be spent on addressing domestic woes suggest the EU policymakers are out of step with the public, who have grown increasingly frustrated by the lack of effort being made to bring an end to the conflict. This divergence is a growing test for the sustainability of the EU's pledge of support for Kyiv. Not to mention that the ongoing Gaza conflict has created another source of public consternation.

The conflict in Ukraine has become one of attrition with both sides paying a heavy price for even the smallest gain on the battlefield. The control of Avdiivka has given Russia the upper hand for the

moment, which only augurs that the fighting will drag on.

Such an undesirable prospect cannot possibly cater to European countries' interests, and it paints an even gloomier picture for its security outlook. Unlike the many economic and geopolitical gains Washington has reaped from the conflict, Europe has harvested only bitter fruit.

It is no secret that the biggest beneficiaries of the Ukraine crisis are the US arms manufacturers and energy companies. The conflict has been a bonanza for the US and it has no desire to kill the goose that is laying golden eggs.

But the US and other stakeholders in the conflict should look more to the bigger picture of regional and world peace and stability so that a peaceful settlement of the crisis can be brokered at an early date.

As the Russia-Ukraine conflict is poised to drag into a third year, the international community should step up efforts to promote peace. The territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be abided by and the legitimate security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously.

The earlier peace talks take place, the sooner the conflict can be resolved and the less long-term damage it will do the world.

Port cranes lifted into the realms of spy movies

The Joe Biden administration is reportedly going to issue multiple cybersecurity directives on Wednesday aimed at addressing what it calls "vulnerability" at US maritime ports. The move comes in the wake of claims by some US lawmakers that cargo cranes made in China pose potential security risks.

The US government plans to invest more than \$20 billion over the coming five years in new port infrastructure, primarily to replace the Chinese-made cranes in US ports with those to be built in the United States. Currently, about 80 percent of cargo cranes in US ports, and about 70 to 90 percent in major ports of other countries, are made in China.

But while ports are of great importance to national security, it is going too far to allege that China-sourced cranes could be controlled remotely and are therefore a threat to the country. It has even been suggested that the cranes may be collecting information from the ports about what is being shipped and to and from where. Which may be an imaginative premise for a Hollywood movie. But it is more alarming as a possible sign that it is part of the US efforts to "set the theater" with its scaremongering.

Taking it one step further, according to these voices crying the wolf at the door, anything connected with the internet poses a risk as it can potentially be accessed and exploited by hostile

hackers. Their concerns are misplaced as they should be worried about the network itself, the core of which is controlled by the US.

They should be reminded that the Chinese port crane manufacturers still rely heavily on hydraulic machines, frequency converters, electric machines, electric programmable logic controllers, machine vision control systems and various other core parts and technologies from the US, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Sweden.

That China's port crane industry has prospered quickly over the past decade is mainly due to its increasingly prominent advantages of scale rather than its control of the core technologies and parts. Previously, the cranes were mainly manufactured in Japan, the ROK and Europe.

If the US government really wants to localize the assembly and manufacturing of such large-scale port infrastructure and facilities, it will require a reshuffle of the global industry and supply chains in the sector.

The difficulties the US government has encountered in attracting chipmakers to relocate their production from China to the US by promising them subsidies, that have subsequently proved to be hard to get, suggest the port crane initiative is doomed to almost certain failure.

The Chinese port cranes are by no means Trojan horses but the results of market competition, the international division of labor and cooperation.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

China seen as largest engine for world economic growth

China's GDP exceeded 126 trillion yuan (\$17.52 trillion) in 2023, up 5.2 percent over the previous year, making it the largest engine of global growth. The International Monetary Fund recently raised its growth forecast for the Chinese economy.

Optimism about China's economic growth has also boosted confidence in regional growth. As China's growth is likely to exceed expectations, emerging Asian economies as a whole are projected by the IMF to grow by 5.2 percent this year, up 0.4 percentage points from the forecast in October. Goldman Sachs and UBS, too, have said the momentum of recovery will be sustained in China's consumption and service sectors this year.

According to the latest survey

report released by AmCham China, 50 percent of the US companies surveyed rank China as their top or among top three investment destinations. A survey by the European Chamber of Commerce in China found that 59 percent of companies see China as one of their top three investment destinations.

China is the only country with all the industrial categories on the United Nations' industrial classification list. Behind the significant advantages Chinese enterprises enjoy in innovation ability, iteration speed and manufacturing efficiency are the country's complete industrial chain and super large-scale market. As a major trading partner of more than 140 countries and regions, China is shifting from

growth driven by investment and infrastructure construction to growth led by innovation. According to an IMF study, every 1 percentage point growth of China's economy will drive the growth of other countries by 0.3 percentage points, and the country will remain the main contributor to global growth in 2024.

The IMF believes that China's economy can recover faster than expected if it continues to take steps to reform its property sector and boost consumer confidence. China's greater efforts to stabilize growth and nurture new growth drivers and open up wider to the outside world will offer tremendous opportunities for other countries.

—PEOPLE'S DAILY

Look before you leap into an AI tutorial

Soon after OpenAI launched the text-to-video model Sora, opportunists were selling "tutorials" about such artificial intelligence models on short video and e-commerce platforms.

While breakthroughs in AI have been rather significant, the technology is still in the exploration and iteration stage, with the applications already made public mainly focusing on demonstration, training and testing. In other words, how ordinary people will use AI remains to be seen.

Undoubtedly, the "AI courses"

that emerged overnight are of questionable quality. The producers are just exploiting the public's ignorance to make some quick bucks.

Some marketers of the courses even admit that those who do not understand the technology can still make money by selling courses about its concepts.

While technology experts remain cautious about the technologies they develop, marketers take advantage of the situation and hype up the concepts ahead of the developers. That's also why skepticism

and complaints against the AI-related courses are surfacing on social networking sites.

With AI technology entering a new round of global competition, how to address the continuous false information being spread by these speculators has become a new challenge for technology and marketing regulators. A good proposal is to encourage genuine pop-science works and reward technological innovators in this sector so that the general public can get the true information they need.

—BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

The Philippines puts itself on US menu

The China Coast Guard announced on Thursday that it had expelled a vessel from the Philippine bureau of fisheries and aquatic resources for illegally intruding into waters near Huangyan Island in the South China Sea.

This is the latest in a series of law enforcement actions by the CCG in the waters over the past three weeks. The actions to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity have been necessitated by the repetitive incursions of Philippine vessels into the Chinese waters.

As a close ally of the US in the Asia-Pacific, the Philippines is an example of a country falling victim to the "at the table or on the menu" choice Washington is offering countries.

At the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, while discussing with his Indian and German counterparts the United States' "strategic competition" with China, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "If you're not at the table in the international system, you're going to be on the menu" noting it was very important for the US to reengage multilaterally, which it has

done by pressuring countries to make a choice between the US and China.

Manila has put itself in a dilemma by giving in to such pressure. Over the past few months, it has done the US' bidding by incessantly provoking and confronting China. In doing so, it has damaged relations with its major trading partner, investor and friendly neighbor. By accepting Washington's word that it has its full support for its maritime claims, Manila has discarded the long-term tacit understanding it had with Beijing that their territorial disputes should not hinder Sino-Philippine economic and trade cooperation. Rather than being ushered to the seat "at the table" by the US, the Philippines has made itself a main course on the US' menu.

Compared with the other countries that also have maritime disputes with China in the South China Sea, such as Malaysia and Vietnam, which keep a good balance between their relations with China and the US, winning the respect of both sides, the one-sided pro-US policy the Ferdinand Marcos Jr government has recklessly

adopted seriously squeezes the strategic space for the Philippines to strive for its national interests amid the intensified interactions between China and the US.

Beijing's forbearance will wear thin if Manila persists with its frequent provocations. The otherwise booming Sino-Philippine economic and trade cooperation will unavoidably be affected to an extent that Manila will regret, as the US cannot fill the gap that will be left by China.

The Philippines only has some outdated patrol ships and planes, which the US requires the Philippines to reserve for the purpose of provoking China, and what the Philippines can obtain from the US is really quite limited.

Last but not least, the Marcos' call for regional countries to work together against China has largely met with cold shoulders demonstrates that those countries that are still at the table of the US have seen clearly how the Philippines has downgraded itself from the US' dinner guest to a consumable on its menu by surrendering its strategic autonomy.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Xu Wenhong

Global financial architecture needs reform

After the end of World War II, an international financial architecture was built with the aim of helping war-ravaged and low-income countries to recover and rebuild the global economies. At the center of this architecture were the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The international financial architecture's aim is to ensure the stability and smooth functioning of the global monetary and financial system. The international financial architecture had certain structural deficiencies at the time of its conception, but with the passage of time the architecture has become increasingly plagued by inequities and inefficiency. It is dysfunctional in the sense that it serves the interests of only a small group of Western countries and ignores, even neglects, the real needs of the world, especially of the developing countries.

For example, the existing global financial architecture allows the United States and the European Union to weaponize their currencies USD or Euro which have the global currency status, to plunder the wealth of other countries by tidal movements, a fresh case was in 1998 in Asian financial turmoil, to dominate international payment system to punish countries with different opinions, worse, even fund wars in other regions. It also allows the major Western economies to use their values and policies to influence the world order in the name of "promoting democracy" and "defending human rights".

The fact that the rest of the world does not enjoy the above privileges makes it very difficult for countries to manage their debt because of the exorbitant interest rates which is up to eight times more than those for developed countries. Also, the developing countries are struggling to address the dramatic challenges and budget deficits due to their limited access to financial resources.

About 60 percent of the least-developed countries are in or at the risk of debt distress today compared with 39 percent before the pandemic. Currently, 25 developing economies have external debt payments exceeding 20 percent of their total revenue. For them, this debt cycle will likely continue pushing millions more into poverty, unless the existing international financial architecture undergoes thorough reform.

An apt example of the IMF's discriminatory policy was evident in 2021. The IMF allocated more than \$650 billion in special drawing rights, but \$160 billion went to EU member states and just \$34 billion to African countries which are actually in need of financing. In other words, people in the EU received on average nearly 13 times more funds than those in Africa.

In addition, Washington, along with its

The old Western-centric international financial architecture needs urgent reform so as to adapt to the new realities and challenges to create a more inclusive, stable, responsive and accountable financial system to support the development of the world.

allies, is weaponizing the US dollar to maintain its global economic and geopolitical position. Washington has imposed economic sanctions on nearly 40 countries across the world, including Cuba, China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and Venezuela, affecting nearly half of the world's population and creating severe hardship for ordinary people and seriously disrupting those countries' economies.

Moreover, the US Federal Reserve's aggressive

tightening policy has made the dollar a much stronger currency. With the dollar continually gaining in strength, currencies around the world have been weakening, pushing up the prices of imported goods, including food, oil gas fuel and medicine, and exporting inflation to other countries.

A stronger dollar has increased other countries' borrowing costs and decreased the value of other currencies, putting more pressure on the central banks to raise their respective interest rates, which incidentally will raise the interest rates for home mortgages and other types of loans.

Many developing countries with big debts have been particularly hard hit by the strengthening of the dollar, because their external debt stocks and debt service payments are mostly denominated in dollars, making it very difficult for them to borrow from the open market to finance their budget deficits and address their emerging crises.

All these facts show that the existing global financial architecture needs to be

reformed to meet the needs of the world in the 21st century. The architecture has not been able to break a decade-long stagnation of debt in vulnerable, low-income countries, let alone help them achieve financial alignment in public spending as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and failed in its mission to provide a global safety net for developing countries.

As the world continues to change, the global financial architecture too must be changed through all parties' careful consideration, collaboration and cooperation, in order to ensure it remains effective and continues to support global economic stability and growth.

The old Western-centric international financial architecture needs urgent reform so as to adapt to the new realities and challenges to create a more inclusive, stable, responsive and accountable financial system to support the development of the world.

The author is deputy secretary-general of the Center for One Belt One Road, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Jean-François Arvis, Cordula Rastogi and Daria Ulybina

Will Red Sea trigger a new supply chain crisis?

In the near term, the global container shipping industry will likely absorb the shock to capacity caused by attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, because demand is generally soft in January and February. However, should the attacks persist into March and April, when global trade experiences a seasonal rebound, capacity constraints could trigger a supply-chain crisis like the one that occurred in 2021-22.

That crisis happened when container shipping proved unable to support the rebound of international trade starting in late 2020. COVID-19-related closures and staff shortages at ports kept ships waiting for days or weeks to unload their cargo, with the result that fewer vessels were available to ship goods. Competition for slots on ships sent on-the-spot shipping rates soaring; the increase was eightfold on routes between Asia and Europe or North America compared with 2019.

The source of supply-chain stress is different today, but the outcome could be similar. Major freight carriers, includ-

The rate for a journey from Asia to Europe has jumped to more than \$3,000 per 40-foot container, a three-fold increase over the lowest rate in 2023 (about \$1,000).

ing Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, have suspended operations through the Suez Canal to avoid the Red Sea and are rerouting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, adding 3,000 to 3,500 nautical miles (5,500 to 6,500 kilometers) and seven to 10 days to a typical trip between Europe and Asia. The extra distance could absorb from 700,000 to 1.9 million standard containers (twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs) of shipping capacity, depending on the estimate.

The higher figure is comparable to the stalled capacity of 2021 at the peak of the COVID-19-related crisis, as measured by

the World Bank's Global Supply Chain Stress Index. The index is an estimate of capacity tied up when excessive delays are observed over historical port-to-port lead times. The index is highly correlated with freight rates, which are sensitive to short-term changes in supply and demand.

The Global Supply Chain Pressure Index jumped at the height of the COVID-19 supply-chain crisis, and it is forecast to rise again should the attacks on vessels in the Red Sea continue.

The additional costs of the trip around the Cape of Good Hope — which include up to \$1 million in fuel for every round trip — are being reflected in higher shipping rates. Maersk is adding a "transit disruption surcharge" of \$200 per TEU to books (both contractual and spot) for trips between East Asia, Northern Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, and the United States' East Coast. That's on top of a "peak season surcharge" of \$300 and \$1,000 per TEU. MSC, another global container shipping company, said it will impose a "contingency adjustment

charge" of \$500 per TEU on shipments from Europe to Asia and the Middle East.

Spot rates have risen even higher. The rate for a journey from Asia to Europe has jumped to more than \$3,000 per 40-foot container, a threefold increase over the lowest rate in 2023 (about \$1,000). This could mean that exporters in Asia are again competing for shipping slots in anticipation of major supply-chain disruptions.

Fortunately, January and February are seasonally quiet months for shipping, so existing capacity probably suffices to handle the longer route in the weeks to come. But the attacks on ships lasting into March could again have a significant impact on global trade and global value chains.

Jean-François Arvis and Cordula Rastogi are senior transport economists, and Daria Ulybina is a consultant with the World Bank. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

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Security meeting shows Western leaders no honest peace-brokers

The Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts topped the agenda at the 60th Munich Security Conference from Feb 16 to 18, but it is mission impossible for such a gathering to help end the conflicts. The reason is quite simple. The gathering is not representative, let alone being inclusive.

Russian and Iranian officials were not even invited to the conference despite the MSC's proclaimed Munich Rule: Engage and interact with each other: Don't lecture or ignore one another.

On the other hand, Ukraine was represented by President Volodymyr Zelensky, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, and other government ministers, parliamentarians and representatives of other institutions. The MSC is still a talk shop for the United States and its European and NATO allies, which all have taken sides with Ukraine and Israel.

Such one-sided conversation is not conducive to finding a way to end the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts simply because the other side has been ignored. The bigger problem is that none of the panelists was discussing a solution through diplomacy and dialogue, which is really the only way to restore lasting peace between the conflicting parties.

Continued fighting only means more destruction and bloodshed for both Ukrainians and Russians.

Every senior official from the US, NATO and the European Union focused on how to continue to provide military aid to Ukraine so it can "defeat" Russia. They blocked the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine in the spring of 2022 and have been pouring cold water on calls for a cease-fire and the peace plans proposed by China, Brazil, South Africa and many other countries to help end the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

They have done so despite knowing full well that the issue cannot be resolved on the battlefield. Continued fighting only means more destruction and bloodshed for both Ukrainians and Russians.

The same is true for the Israel-Palestine conflict. While the Hamas killed about 1,200 Israelis and foreigners in the Oct 7 attacks, the Palestinian death toll in the Gaza Strip hit 29,195 according to the Gaza-based Health Ministry on Tuesday, and a majority of them have been women and children, not Hamas fighters.

While many Western leaders at the MSC mentioned the number 1,200, none of them even uttered the alarmingly high number of Palestinian deaths. Many of them said they were horrified by the Oct 7 attack, but none was "horrified" by what has been happening in Gaza since then. In fact, the Western leaders, including US Vice-President Kamala Harris speaking on the opening day, did not even dare to mention who killed the thousands of Palestinians.

US Senator Chris Coons wore the number 133 during his panel speech, saying it is the number of days Israeli hostages have been held by Hamas. But will he ever wear the number of Palestinian children killed by the Israeli forces using many of the weapons supplied by the US? The number is more than 12,000 and counting.

Everybody knows who is responsible for the atrocities in Gaza given that on Tuesday the US vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in the Israel-Palestine conflict on humanitarian grounds. Thirteen of the 15 UN Security Council members voted in favor while the United Kingdom abstained. This was the third time that the US has vetoed a call for a cease-fire.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo is probably among the few Western leaders who said at the MSC that "every day 100 kids die in Gaza". He told former Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni sitting next to him that "we financed UNRWA and we will continue financing UNRWA", referring to the UN Relief and Works Agency that supports the relief and human development of Palestinian refugees.

Ending the conflicts and restoring lasting peace between Russia and Ukraine, and Israel and Palestine, call for honest peace-brokers, but most Western leaders proved themselves again at the MSC to be totally incapable of playing such a role.

GLOBAL VIEWS



Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategy Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.

ANDREW WILFORD

Lead by example

Larger states should work to harmonize regulatory practices and achieve greater regional economic integration in Asia-Pacific

Increasing geopolitical tensions and challenges to globalization make regional cooperation more important now than ever. Yet how this can be achieved remains unclear. Working to improve bilateral relations across the region is one way to support multilateral efforts to enhance the prospects for sustained cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.



The Asia-Pacific region is a vital engine for global economic growth. The various regional economic agreements, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity, all attest to its importance. However, further efforts to harmonize regulatory practices and achieve greater regional economic integration will require significant political effort to nurture the conditions for cooperation. China, Japan and the United States, the largest regional economies, play a crucial role and lead efforts to create commonly agreed-upon rules of cooperation. These rules help support smaller states to navigate the challenging geopolitical environment.

Many states are reconsidering their strategic priorities moving into the post-pandemic world, and in this context, it is not desirable for them to ignore challenges in their bilateral relations. It is also essential to be mindful of how such challenges are addressed.

For smaller states, commonly agreed-upon rules and norms help them protect their national interests. Sensitivity to their unique conditions and aspirations helps avoid interpreting their behavior through

the prism of competition between the larger powers.

The region's economic powers should better recognize the impact of their actions on smaller states and work to reduce tensions at regional and sub-regional levels. This is important for furthering economic multilateralism in the region. Dialogue is key, as is a willingness to make concessions for the greater good.

The China-New Zealand bilateral relationship is an example that shows how clearly delineated areas of engagement and cooperation have served both sides without giving rise to friction. Both countries have worked to build areas of complementarity while constructively engaging in dialogue around areas of difference. Reciprocity, respect and forthright dialogue form the bedrock of this "mature relationship".

This approach extends to regional cooperation efforts, which both countries have sought to strengthen.

Important efforts such as the APEC Aotearoa Plan of Action to implement the Putrajaya Vision 2040 reaffirm a commitment to an "open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful" Asia-Pacific. By following these principles, regional states can further economic integration and advance people-to-people exchanges.

The CPTPP is another grouping representing the highest standard of plurilateral trade agreements and a vital mechanism to enhance regional resilience and dynamism. It, too, is a means of overcoming regional economic and political headwinds.

Former New Zealand prime minister Chris Hipkins welcomed China's application to join the CPTPP during a visit to Beijing in June 2023. This underscores the importance of trust and confidence at the bilateral level for maintaining economic integration momentum at the regional level.

China has also sought to demonstrate its

commitment to these high standards. In 2023, it took steps to implement standards consistent with the CPTPP in several free trade zones. This is a promising sign, including efforts to ensure equal conditions for foreign and domestic firms and relaxing software source code regulations.

Whether these measures are implemented nationally remains to be seen. Successfully doing so would play an important role in shaping external perceptions of China's willingness to abide by CPTPP standards. Similarly, careful management of frictions with Japan, the Republic of Korea and Australia and the recent signs of relations getting back on track, create positive momentum at the regional level.

To maintain this momentum, larger powers should work collaboratively to further regional economic cooperation efforts to provide more stability and predictability for all countries in the region.

First, existing economic exchanges should be strengthened.

By implementing rigorous standards with selected bilateral partners on a mutually agreed basis, it would be possible to demonstrate capability and willingness at the regional level. Making concessions around tariffs and facilitating market access would build trust and signal a solid commitment to addressing regional issues.

Second, diplomatic dialogue should be enhanced.

Frequent leader visits and ministerial dialogues signal the importance of a relationship and inject impetus into cooperation. Frank and forthright discussions enable all sides to share their perspectives while mitigating potential miscommunication. This extends beyond the bilateral to multilateral relationships, creating ripe conditions for regional cooperation.

Third, regional concerns should be addressed.

Collaborative dialogue on pressing issues



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

such as climate change and energy security in existing and newly created forums builds the trust necessary to work collaboratively on thorny issues while also addressing problems that all states are facing.

The Asia-Pacific region's importance to the world economy cannot be overstated. The commitment by states to regional cooperation through existing agreements and emerging partnerships should be enhanced as a counterweight to growing geopolitical challenges.

Small states are both reliant on regional

collaboration and play a crucial role in fostering it. However, it is only with the support of the larger states that the region can come together through dialogue and pragmatism to ensure that regional cooperation remains resilient in the face of global uncertainties.

The author is a researcher at the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre. 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.

JIANG FANGFEI

Middle-ground advantages

By deepening cooperation, China and New Zealand can have a far-reaching impact on regional peace and development, and even the evolution of the international order

China and New Zealand are significant stakeholders, active participants and important contributors in Asia-Pacific regional economic cooperation. Whether at the bilateral or multilateral level, both countries have achieved a series of accomplishments in promoting the well-being of their peoples, regional economic development and global economic growth through practical cooperation.



In recent years, in spite of the COVID pandemic and intensifying US-China strategic rivalry in the region, China and New Zealand have maintained strong stability and pragmatism in their policies toward each other, and their trade relations have demonstrated strong resilience. In 2023, the total bilateral trade volume reached \$21.36 billion, nearly five times the scale in 2008.

At the regional level, China and New Zealand were among the first 10 members that completed domestic approval procedures and made the RCEP officially come into effect on Jan 1, 2022. Additionally, China submitted the application to New Zealand, one of the founding members to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership in September 2021, and has been actively communicating with New Zealand on related follow-up work. All these efforts reflect the determination of both countries to jointly promote the development of economic cooperation in Asia-Pacific.

However, with "Indo-Pacific" replacing Asia-Pacific as the "main battlefield" for the United States to comprehensively engage in economic competition and strategic games with China, the development of regional economic cooperation has been facing more challenges in recent years.

In May 2022, the US officially launched the "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity". The membership of the

IPEF overlaps with that of the RCEP but deliberately "bypasses" China, an active participant in regional economic cooperation. Its scope of cooperation does not involve trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, but mostly focuses on key strategic industries related to the US-China strategic competition and exclusive institutional arrangements targeting China's Belt and Road Initiative. These fully illustrate that the essence of the IPEF is not only an attempt by the US to create an "anti-China economic circle" in the region, but also a tool for the US to counterbalance China's increasing regional influence, rather than truly serving the development of the region.

In order to accelerate the IPEF negotiation process and persuade neighboring countries to "decouple" from China, the US is not only playing up the "China threat theory", but also launching a strong diplomatic offensive against various regional member states. This not only intensifies the sense of insecurity and vigilance among neighboring countries toward China, but also increases their contradictions and difference in policies toward China and the US. Moreover, it may further exacerbate com-



ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

For China, first, it is important to deepen its understanding of neighboring countries such as New Zealand and respect their difficulties in dealing with China-US relations.

petition and opposition between the IPEF and existing mechanisms such as the RCEP, CPTPP, and 10+3, and accelerate fragmentation of global supply chains and international division of labor.

To alleviate the pressure of "taking sides" caused by great power rivalry, small- and medium-sized regional countries such as New Zealand tend to engage in pragmatic cooperation with both China and the US in different areas and strategically participate in cooperation mechanisms led by different countries. In this way, not only can they maximize their economic benefits and hedge against potential risks, they can also enhance their own influence in regional cooperation. From this perspective, these countries have great potential to become the crucial "middle ground" for buffering China-US competition, and important forces in maintaining regional peace and stability and advancing regional economic cooperation.

In this light, by further strengthening cooperation under bilateral and multilateral frameworks, China and New Zealand can not only promote their own interests, but also have a far-reaching impact on regional peace and development, and even the evo-

lution of the international order.

For China, first, it is important to deepen its understanding of neighboring countries such as New Zealand and respect their difficulties in dealing with China-US relations. China should maintain a pragmatic and friendly approach toward them, and avoid forcing them to take sides. Second, China should further develop and open up the Chinese market, take more practical measures to achieve substantial results in economic cooperation and actively participate in regional climate governance together with New Zealand to enhance mutual trust between them. Third, China should fully leverage New Zealand's advantages in institutional design, and enhance exchanges and cooperation in regional institutional construction, making the RCEP more aligned with the development needs of all members.

For New Zealand, first, it should strive to maintain a pragmatic and relatively independent policy toward China, avoiding becoming a pawn of the US in containing China in Asia-Pacific. Second, it should deepen its understanding of the Chinese market and related regulatory policies. It should localize and improve its products exported to China based on Chinese consumers' preferences to enhance their competitiveness in the Chinese market. Third, in the process of seeking its own low-carbon economic transformation, it should strengthen exchanges and cooperation with China and other regional stakeholders in clean technologies, renewable energy, green finance, carbon emissions, and other areas, proposing more constructive solutions in promoting economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The author is an assistant research fellow of the Institute of World Economics and Politics and the National Institute for Global Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. 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.

CULTURE



From left: A visitor examines ancestors' portraits of Li Wenzhong's family at the *Legacy From the Prince of Qiyang*, a long-term exhibition at the National Museum of China that traces the ups and downs of the Li family from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). More than 70 objects are on show, including Chinese paintings. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

The Li family's ups and downs

A national museum is staging an exhibition dedicated to the eminent lineage instrumental in the vicissitudes of China's final two dynasties, **LIN QI** reports.

On a winter day in 1354, Li Wenzhong and his father Li Zhen finally made it to Chuzhou in Anhui province. This was where Zhu Yuanzhang — the younger brother of Li Wenzhong's mother — had stationed his rebel military force during the instability caused by the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

Setting off from their plague-stricken village a month earlier, the father and son survived hunger, exhaustion and fighting between different rebel factions on the way, which, on several occasions, almost claimed their lives.

Zhu, who would become the founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), was saddened when he learned that his sister had died of an illness and adopted his nephew, Li Wenzhong, providing him with care and education, and making him one of the few learned people in his orbit.

Zhu was not acting purely out of a strong sense of kinship, but also out of gratitude. Zhu came from a destitute family with many children, and when he had been younger, he had often been taken care of by Li Wenzhong's parents.

As the years passed, Li Wenzhong became a capable general, winning battles and helping his uncle establish his sovereignty. He went on to serve in a number of important positions in Zhu's court, and was later granted the title of the prince of Qiyang. This prestige was to benefit his descendants for generations over the course of the next six centuries.

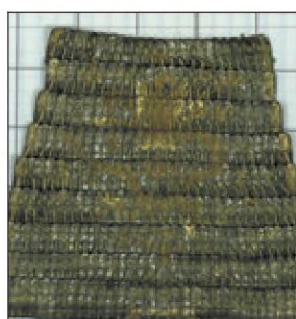
In time, the Li family amassed a trove of portraits, pedigree charts, ceremonial outfits, documents and other objects that belonged to their ancestors, as evidence of their glorious past. These objects later became part of the collection of several museums, including the National Museum of China, which has just mounted a new exhibition to show them.

Legacy From the Prince of Qiyang, a



long-term exhibition that gathers together more than 70 objects, traces the ups and downs of the Li family, starting with Li Zhen and Zhu Fonyu, Li Wenzhong's parents, right through to the political turmoil and drastic changes that resulted from the eventual fall of the Ming Dynasty, and its replacement by the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

The Li family enjoyed prominence and respect for so long — not just because of the close relations between Zhu Yuanzhang and Li Wenzhong and his parents, but also because several key family members consolidated their prestigious status with displays of courage, intelligence and loyalty, especially to Zhu Yuanzhang, whose mistrust of his court officials intensified in the years following his seizure of the throne.



Above: A leather piece of armor once worn by Li Wenzhong.

COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CHINA

Top: Objects, such as books and paintings, that were once owned by the Li family on show.

JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Zhu Yuanzhang ranked Li Wenzhong as the fourth statesman of great merit in the establishment of the Ming Dynasty, as during the early stages of the dynasty, he continued to pacify rebels, helping to stabilize his uncle's rule.

On display are two pieces of leather armor that once protected Li Wenzhong's chest and back and which symbolize his illustrious military service. "They are coated with black lacquer and seashell powder and patterned with gold," says Hu Yan, a curator at the National Museum of China. "The pieces of armor were restored before the show, and the last time they were on display was in the early 20th century."

After Li Wenzhong died, his two sons, Li Jinglong and Li Fangying, carried on the family's close relations with Zhu Yuanzhang. The emperor

entrusted the elder, Li Jinglong, with important military undertakings, and often called Li Fangying to court and to check his progress in mastering classic texts.

On one occasion, Zhu Yuanzhang was so pleased with Li Fangying's development that he rewarded the young man with a steamed bun wrapped in his handkerchief. That handkerchief was later venerated at the family's ancestral temple, and Li Jinglong wrote about it in a note which, together with the handkerchief, is also on display.

But as the old Chinese idiom goes, "serving an emperor is as dangerous and uncertain as being close to a tiger", and even Li family members related to the emperor faced challenging situations.

As the emperor aged, he became more suspicious and cruel. On several occasions, Li Wenzhong admonished him to kill less and be more alert to the over-participation of eunuchs in governance, which ultimately angered the emperor.

Hu says there were 12 generations of the Li family during the Ming era. Besides his military talent, Li Wenzhong was widely read and well-versed in poetry, and both became traditions carried on by his descendants.

By the time of the Qing Dynasty, the family no longer held a prince title, and paid as much attention as possible to education and the pursuit of morality.

Hu says that to give visitors a more vivid experience of the Li family's heyday, four different formal outfits once worn by senior family members have been restored to their original glory.

"The rise and decline of such an eminent family will help visitors to the exhibition to better understand the course of the two dynasties and evolution of history," Hu adds.

Contact the writer at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

What's on

Original strokes



Painting a New Chapter, a long-term exhibition that recently opened at the National Museum of China, brings together the work of 15 painters. On display are the three main genres of Chinese ink painting — flower-and-bird, mountain-and-water, and figurative — which have been painted for centuries, but which have also integrated techniques from foreign art. The exhibition explores recent developments in the classic genre,

as well as innovative efforts to promote it on the international stage. Featured painters include Niu Kecheng, who is also a senior researcher at the Chinese National Academy of Arts. Niu is known for his creative use of color, especially purple, which he uses to give to his landscapes a sense of expansiveness and a mystical feeling. Yuan Wu, a resident painter at the Beijing Fine Art Academy, focuses on figurative art. His painting depicts Qi Baishi observing a clutch of chickens, a recurring motif the late modern ink master revisited on numerous occasions, and hints at Qi's humble, rural background and lifelong pursuit of simplicity in art.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 16 East Chang'an Avenue, Dongcheng district, Beijing. 010-6511-6400.

Dream of Jiangnan

Ancient China's *wenfang*, or schol-

ar's study, was not just a place intellectuals read, wrote, painted or participated in other cultural activities, it was also a haven for enjoying solitude, where they could quiet inner worries, cultivate their minds and rise to a higher spiritual realm. *The Jiangnan Literati Space Exhibition* at the Yunjian Arts Center in Shanghai, which runs until March 31, attempts to re-create the soothing *wenfang* atmosphere once enjoyed by the literati of Jiangnan, the region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.



On show are objects of art and craft that have long been considered essential ornaments for scholars, including Chinese paintings and calligraphy. Also on display are ceramics, *guqin* (Chinese zither), incense burners, stands for unusually shaped rocks, furniture fashioned in the classical style and other creative items that accentuate grace and serenity. The three salons showcase the beauty of the cultured lives led by the ancient literati, and events held during the exhibition will allow visitors to sample tea, try to play the *guqin*, make calligraphy rubbings and learn about the types of incense popular in the past.

8:30 am-6:30 pm, closed on Mondays. 26 Renmin Nanlu, Songjiang district, Shanghai.

New life

As its name suggests, *Cheer for a Ton*



ofLight is an exhibition of contemporary art that explores the symbolic meanings of light in different contexts. Featured artists made full

use of waste and recycled materials to create work that explores different presentations of light. The exhibits pay homage to the greatness of nature, industrial development and art and, at the same time, reflect on issues shadowed by rapid development, such as overconsumption, pollution and the deteriorating environment.

The show, which runs through April 28, is a collaboration between the One Ton Project and Qing Tai Id-Land in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. The former is a platform launched five years ago to open up dialogue between artists, designers, scholars and factory workers on environmental protection and the collective wisdom needed to achieve sustainability.

10 am-6 pm, closed on Mondays. Qing Tai Id-Land, 2689 Chunshenhu Xilu, Xiangcheng district, Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

CHINA DAILY

LIFESHANGHAI



From left: *Exploting Raphaelesque Head* (oil on canvas, 1951) by Salvador Dalí. National Galleries of Scotland's director of modern and contemporary art Simon Groom presents the *Fantastic Visions* exhibition at the Museum of Art Pudong in Shanghai on Feb 1. *Threatening Weather* (oil on canvas, 1929) by Rene Magritte. A visitor appreciates, *The Message of the Forest*, by Toyen. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

SURREAL CENTURY

Scottish museum's collection of iconic works from the dreamlike genre shows perfect timing as the art movement celebrates its 100th anniversary, **Zhang Kun** reports.

From Salvador Dalí's celebrated *Lobster Telephone* to an antique python-skin print chair redesigned by Dorothea Tanning, the ongoing *Fantastic Visions: 100 Years of Surrealism* exhibition that the National Galleries of Scotland is presenting in Shanghai showcases the wild imaginings and infinite possibilities of everyday objects.

The show that opened at the Museum of Art Pudong on Feb 2 and runs until the end of August is the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of surrealism ever in China, says the Shanghai museum's chairperson Li Minkun.

It showcases more than 120 artworks by 50 leading surrealist artists and writers, including some of the most iconic works by the likes of Dalí, Tanning, Rene Magritte, Max Ernst, Joan Miro and Leonora Carrington.

Director of modern and contemporary art at the Scottish national galleries Simon Groom says it's fitting that the show is being staged this year — the movement's centenary, as marked by the publication of French poet Andre Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* in 1924.

The name surrealism literally means "beyond realism". The genre takes inspiration from dreams, the irrational, the unconscious and the world of imagination, Groom says.

"It allows us to dream, to imagine worlds that do not yet exist or alternative realities — to this end, it is profoundly human, which is why I think surrealism — of all the avant-garde movements of the 20th century — is the one that has had the most influence not just on artists but on society and culture in general, from film and fashion to literature and advertising."

One of the most iconic exhibits is *Lobster Telephone* by Dalí, who made 11 "lobster receivers" to fit the telephones at the house of Edward James, his friend and patron whose home he decorated.

"It's said that they were having dinner when a lobster shell accidentally fell on the telephone, and



Middle: *Primitive Seating* by Dorothea Tanning grabs the attention of visitors to the Pudong exhibition. Below: The *Lobster Telephone* (1938), which Salvador Dalí created for his patron Edward James, is a prime example of surrealist art.

that inspired Dalí to create the piece," Groom says, while guiding a tour at the preview of the exhibition on Feb 1.

"Personally, I don't believe it was true. But the idea of the story is that chance determines the work."

He explains how surrealists "put two things together and create a new reality."

Groom says that thanks to the acquisition of part of the Roland Penrose collection and archive, and the Gabrielle Keiller bequest of 1995, the Scottish galleries not only accumulated a fine collection of iconic surrealist artworks but also collections of rare illustrated books, catalogs, manuscripts and journals by these artists.

One of the first important surrealist's works to join the collection since the founding of the Scottish



National Gallery of Modern Art in 1960 was Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti's bronze statue, *A Woman With Her Throat Cut*, purchased in 1970. The piece shows a dying crea-

ture whose shape resembles a mantis or a praying mantis.

"We hope you enjoy this surreal journey that transcends time and space, exploring the whimsical

ideas of the surrealist masters and generating resonance with *Fantastic Visions*," says Li, chairperson of the Pudong museum.

"We also anticipate that this exhibition will further enhance the active role the museum plays in promoting cultural exchanges between China and the West, opening up new prospects for cooperation and development through culture."

The exhibition, which marks the first collaboration between the National Galleries of Scotland and the Pudong museum, isn't scheduled to tour other parts of China.

Groom visited the Shanghai museum's construction site in 2019.

"To say I was staggered by the size, scale and speed of the endeavor would be an understatement," he recalls.

"How remarkable the project was

If you go

Fantastic Visions: 100 Years of Surrealism From the National Galleries of Scotland

Feb 2-Aug 31, Mon-Sun,
10 am-9 pm.
2F, Museum of Art Pudong, 2777
Binjiang Avenue, Pudong New Area,
Shanghai.

became apparent during 2020, as I watched from home, via Zoom, in complete admiration and awe, as the building work continued when the rest of the world appeared to be frozen in motion. And then it opened on time in 2021."

These surrealist artworks have been displayed by major museums around the world, but Shanghai marks the first time this collection has toured in its entirety, Groom says.

"We hope that the Chinese audiences to the exhibition will find the works from this movement as powerful, charged, mysterious and relevant as when they were first shown 100 years ago."

The Pudong museum now has a full house of four exhibitions for the spring season — all accessible with one ticket.

Aside from the surrealist show on the fourth floor, *Xu Bing: Gravitational Arena* is running in the Exhibition Hall X, featuring a colossal vortex of characters that's over 30 meters high.

On the second floor, *Caravaggio: Wonders of the Italian Baroque* is running until April 12. Said to be China's first exhibition with this theme, it presents six original Caravaggio paintings alongside 54 other paintings by more than 40 Baroque artists.

Also ongoing is *Zeng Fanzhi: Old and New*, consisting of more than 60 paintings the Chinese artist created from 1988 to 2023, which continues through March 8.

Contact the writer at
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Arts fest announces 2024 extravaganzas

By ZHANG KUN

The China Shanghai International Arts Festival recently announced its plans for this year, including multiple shows by Germany's Berliner Philharmoniker and the Beijing People's Art Theatre.

It also named 10 winning productions of the 2023 CSIAF Impact Index Awards and announced that this year's 23rd installment of the festival will take place from Oct 18 to Nov 17.

Internationally acclaimed companies, such as Austria's Wiener Philharmoniker, the London Symphony Orchestra, Germany's Munchner Philharmoniker, Russia's Bolshoi Theatre and Mariinsky Ballet, and Ballets de Monte-Carlo "have all received our invitation and are expected to perform in Shanghai in the autumn", says CSIAF Center

president Li Ming.

"Aside from the main festival that takes place every year in the autumn, we have been actively exploring new possibilities to further enrich the artistic life in Shanghai throughout the whole year," says the center's deputy president Yang Jialu.

For example, the Berliner Philharmoniker will arrive in Shanghai in June, she says. It will present four symphony concerts at Shanghai Grand Theatre, led by its chief conductor Kirill Petrenko and pianist Yuja Wang. The company will have an exclusive residential program in Shanghai, which also consists of a series of chamber music performances and educational events. Tickets will be available by the end of February, Yang says.

One of the most esteemed theater companies in China, the Beijing



From left: The Berliner Philharmoniker. Pianist Yuja Wang will be featured in its Shanghai concerts later this year. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

People's Art Theatre, will present five productions during the upcoming festival, including its celebrated repertoire, *The Tea House*.

"Last year, we presented *Old Fashioned Comedy* at the festival. And the vivid performances by our leading artists, Li Youbin and Shi Lanya, won praise from audiences in Shanghai," says the company's presi-

dent, Qin Xinchun.

"The play by Russian author Aleksei Arbuzov premiered at our experimental theater in 2019, and the Shanghai tour marked its first show outside of Beijing."

Since its founding in 1952, the Beijing People's Art Theatre has made landmark tours in Shanghai in 1961, 1988, 2012 and 2014, she says.



Next year, the company will undertake its fifth large-scale tour in Shanghai, showing five productions while hosting colorful educational events and comprehensive collaborations with colleagues in the city.

And the festival will host a special campaign during the Edinburgh Festival, focusing on the

promotion of Chinese art and showcasing the Shanghai Culture Week during the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

The Shanghai event will also kick off new comprehensive projects with the International Society for the Performing Arts this year to build a new international performance-trading platform.

Moreover, it also announced 10 Impact Index Prize-winning productions selected from the 72 shows featured at last year's main festival, including *Der Ring des Nibelungen* by the Mariinsky Theatre, the *Old Fashioned Comedy* by the Beijing People's Art Theatre and *Brecht's Ghosts* by the Berliner Ensemble.

The last production features more than 100 puppets that director Suse Wächter designed to portray such figures as Franz Kafka, Luciano Pavarotti and Margaret Thatcher.

The performances at Theatre Young in Shanghai during the 22nd arts festival won critical acclaim. This year, the festival will promote the performance of the Berliner Ensemble in Shanghai for a second round show and help facilitate its tour to more Chinese cities, says Li.

LIFE

Residents of Guangnei Street in Beijing's Xicheng district have come to celebrate Du Xiaojie as a fixture of their community. They've grown fond of the 30-something, who has enlivened their lives over the past four years since he founded a cultural center on the street. His space has evolved into a hot spot among neighbors, who go there to read, play instruments and dance.

"They treat me like their close friend and often give me feedback about their experiences at the center, which helps me make improvements," Du says.

He usually arrives early in the morning to sort books and prepare events. He was still working according to a tight schedule, even as Spring Festival approached.

"Actually, we get busier when the holidays come," he says.

Since the neighborhood's children are on their winter semester break, Du has made a point of arranging more science popularization and handicraft classes.

"We're offering four to five classes a day in science, traditional culture and art," he says.

He invites experts to host the courses, which can be booked through social media for free.

"Each class attracts 120 to 180 people a day," Du says.

During the winter break, it usually takes only a few minutes before all the slots are booked.

The center has welcomed more than 380,000 visitors since it was founded in 2019.

"This figure has been uplifting to team morale," he says.

Many people from the area have made the programs part of their lives, he adds.

The municipal publicity department named him a Beijing Role Model in December in recognition of the role his entrepreneurship has played in enriching cultural life in the city over the past decade.

Trying trials

It has also shed light on touching legacies from Du's past and the consequential motivations that few of his friends or partners knew about.

Du came to the capital from a small village in Yantai in East China's Shandong province.

As a child, his family faced adversity since his mother lived with cerebellar atrophy, leaving her unable to care for herself. This unfortunate turn of events plunged his family into hardship.

Undeterred by the challenges, Du embarked on a journey to reshape his destiny through education. His academic efforts bore fruit in 2004, when he enrolled in the School of Arts at the Renmin University of China, where he specialized in digital media.

The financial constraints at home spurred him to juggle part-time work and student loans to finish his degree. In 2008, he managed to venture further into the realm of creative expression as a graduate student at Beijing Jiaotong University.

As a graduate, Du responded to the city's call for college students to launch entrepreneurship programs.

"We started a company to help universities and cultural enterprises to make and edit videos," Du says.

This also enabled him to make extra money to support his family and himself.

However, just as life was starting to improve in 2010, his father had a stroke. This, once again, disrupted the strides Du was making in life.

He had to postpone graduation and went home to take care of his dad for three months. After his father left emergency care, Du decided to take him to Beijing for rehabilitation, and he hired a caretaker to tend to his mother at home. "That was the hardest time of my life," Du says, adding that he carried all the pressure of caring for his parents and finishing school on his shoulders.

His video business shut down in his absence, and he spent all his savings on medical expenses.

Media picked up on his story in 2012, recounting how he had to bring his father all the way back to Beijing for treatment.

Soon after, Du received about 2,000 calls from good Samaritans.

However, he only accepted one offer which helped him get an appointment with a well-known doctor and a hospital bed for his father. He says he tactfully rejected all the financial aid.

"I felt as I have two hands, I should be capable of dealing with all the challenges coming my way," he says.

The heartwarming messages carried Du through this rough patch, and helped him decide to



A sense of service

Beijing has recognized a man from rural Shandong for his public welfare work at his community center in the capital, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



Public welfare work can be addictive. You feel needed because parents are very touched and feel that their children have received help, so they trust us. It's a sense of shared accomplishment."

Du Xiaojie, public welfare enthusiast

potent curiosity about ancient architecture during an event at a temple in the neighborhood.

"She was very interested in the explanations. She and other kids listened attentively and engaged in serious discussions with the teachers afterward," says Wang, who lives about a 15-minute motorbike ride away.

"When my daughter got home, she reviewed the information she'd learned and summarized it on her own."

Wang signed her daughter up for all six sessions at the temple, after which the girl was chosen as a young tour guide to explain the site to visitors with confidence.

The girl went on to join the rocket science class and made her own models, and learned about the Earth's composition and the food chain.

"I found that the children's interest in science is much stronger than I imagined. I'm very grateful to Du and his team for providing such a good learning environment," Wang says.

The center's curator, Yao Mengqi, has worked alongside Du for years and considers him to be a man of many talents.

"When unexpected problems emerge during projects, he can always handle them quickly," she says.

Yao says she and her colleagues only came to understand Du's motivation after the award spotlighted his past.

"He pays attention to employees' feelings, identifies the reasons behind their emotions and is willing to help solve their difficulties," Yao says.

"Perhaps, it's because he has been through the rain himself, that he's willing to hold an umbrella for others."

As the cultural center gets good reviews, more companies, including Chinese tech giant ByteDance, have sought Du's services in organizing public welfare events.

"Public welfare work can be addictive. You feel needed because parents are very touched and feel that their children have received help, so they trust us. It's a sense of shared accomplishment," Du says.

"I feel that Beijing is for all entrepreneurs. According to my own experience, the city welcomes anyone with open arms."

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

pursue public welfare.

"Back in school, I always enjoyed helping others because I came from a rural area, where people are accustomed to helping one another," Du says.

He believed that people would only accept him — a man from the countryside, overwhelmed by big city life — if he was genuinely helpful and sincere.

"Beijing was so big to me. I felt like I could make a mistake with every word I uttered," Du says, recalling his early times in the capital.

He would prepare the large drawing papers and boards his classmates used for their courses and make his college roommates' beds.

After graduation, Du threw himself into designing and carrying out public welfare projects to allow institutions of higher learning and companies to live up to their social responsibilities, such as those in rural areas of the Inner Mongolia and Xizang autonomous regions.

A perfect project

An opportunity knocked in 2017, when Du learned that a dance hall in Xicheng needed to be trans-

formed into a civic cultural center.

"It was a dream project for me," Du says.

The transformation was a public welfare project and fitted his art education background.

So, he and his team of 20 young people immediately began preparing to bid against big State-owned enterprises.

"I knew the only chance I had was to fall back on my previous charity experience and deliver a detailed plan that could really solve the residents' problems," Du says.

He and his team submitted a proposal that was "as thick as a brick" — in sharp contrast to his competitors, whose renovation plans featured a few pages on average.

Du's plan eventually won the hearts of the judges, and he wasted no time turning the 1,860-square-meter space into the Guangnei Street cultural center.

"Our advantage was that we knew many experts in various fields, who we could invite to give lectures," Du says.

He has contacts with more than 100 experts in various fields, most of whom are from the Chinese Academy

Top left: Beijing Jiaotong University volunteers talk about teenage psychology with residents at Du Xiaojie's cultural center in the capital's Xicheng district.

Top right: An expert demonstrates rocket science to kids at a temple in Xicheng. **Middle:** Du shows a child scientific devices. **Above left:** Children experience shadow puppetry at the cultural center. **Above right:** National Space Science Center expert Liu Yong gives a lecture to residents at the center.

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of Sciences, or are professors at institutes of higher learning, including Peking University and the Beijing Normal University. This network is the result of his relentless inquiries about their availabilities and their willingness to talk about their fields.

When local children wanted to watch shadow-puppet plays, he invited Fan Weiguo, a seventh-generation inheritor of Taishan shadow puppetry from Shandong province, to perform. When they expressed curiosity about outer space, he invited Liu Yong, a researcher at the National Space Science Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, to give lectures. Du also brought well-known traditional opera actors to perform for elderly residents.

Leading primary schoolteachers and principals also joined forces with the cultural center to offer parents advice about raising children.

As such, Du has come to serve residents of all age groups.

Eager engagement

Wang Liding takes her daughter to the center at least once a week. She was surprised by her child's