

Growth drivers

Nation sharpens focus to develop new quality productive forces

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# CHINA DAILY

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## Xi extends condolences to Russia

World leaders condemn terrorist attack at concert hall near Moscow

By REN QI in Moscow  
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President Xi Jinping extended condolences on Saturday to Russian President Vladimir Putin over the terrorist attack that caused heavy casualties on Friday near Moscow.

In his message, Xi said he was shocked to learn that the serious terrorist attack had occurred at a concert hall in Russia's Moscow Oblast.

Xi, on behalf of the Chinese government and the Chinese people, expressed his deep condolences for the victims, and extended his sincere sympathy to the injured and the bereaved families.

He emphasized that China opposes all forms of terrorism, strongly condemns terrorist attacks, and firmly supports the Russian government's efforts to maintain national security and stability.

The attack by gunmen on Friday evening at the Crocus City Hall northwest of Moscow claimed the lives of at least 137 people, according to Russian authorities.

Anastasia Rodionova, a survivor of the attack, told China Daily on Saturday that the assailants were "gunning down everyone methodically in silence" inside the venue on Friday night.

"We went down to some kind of ground floor, some dark room, and I saw only 'exit' word shining in the darkness, and we just did not know whether to run or not. Who is there in the dark? What is there in the dark?" she said after she laid flowers at the Crocus City Hall on Saturday morning. The woman was quickly surrounded by international media as she tried to describe what happened on the night of terror.

"China is deeply shocked by the heavy casualties inflicted by the severe terrorist attack," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in an online statement, expressing deep condolences for the victims and sincere sympathy to the injured and bereaved.

"China opposes all forms of terrorism, strongly condemns terrorist attacks, and firmly supports Russia in safeguarding its national security and stability," the statement added.

According to Russian state media Tass, four suspects were



People lay flowers and mourn for victims near Crocus City Hall in suburban Moscow, Russia, on Saturday. REN QI / CHINA DAILY

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detained in the Bryansk region and taken to Moscow and were in the custody of Russia's Investigative Committee.

One suspect said he was promised a reward of 500,000 roubles (\$5,400), according to a video posted on RT Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan's Telegram channel on Saturday.

The detainee added that half the money had been transferred to his card, while he had been promised he would receive the other half later. He lost the card while trying to escape from law enforcement officers.

The terrorist group ISIS claimed responsibility for the deadly incident.

Leaders around the world expressed their condolences and condemned the terror attack.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the attack, saying on Saturday at a news conference at El Arish Inter-

national Airport in Egypt that ISIS is a significant global threat.

Putin linked the attack, which he called "barbaric", to Ukraine in a video statement released on Saturday, as he expressed deep condolences and declared Sunday a national day of mourning.

On Ukrainian national TV on Saturday, Andrii Yusov, spokesman for Ukraine's Defense Intelligence, firmly denied that his country had anything to do with the terror attack.

United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken denounced the Moscow attack as a "heinous crime" and said Washington condemns "terrorism in all its forms".

"We ... stand in solidarity with the people of Russia in grieving the loss of life from this horrific event," Blinken said in a statement on Saturday.

Earlier, the White House had called the attack "terrible" and offered condolences.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a post on social media platform X on Saturday that she "strongly condemns" Friday's concert hall attack.

"My thoughts are with the victims



Firefighters work inside the gutted Crocus City Hall concert venue in suburban Moscow, Russia, on Saturday. Search operations continued inside the damaged building. INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE OF RUSSIA VIA AP

and their families during this tragic time," she said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent his condolences to the Russian government and denounced the attack as well.

"Regardless of the origin of the suspects, terror cannot be accepted," he said.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said he spoke with Russia's ambassador to Israel "to convey — on

behalf of the Israeli people — my condolences to the families of the victims, to the Russian people and its leadership for the terrible loss of life", adding that he "wished a speedy recovery to all those injured".

Other European leaders, including those of France, Poland, the United Kingdom and Germany, also denounced the attack.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Nation set to create more opportunities for world, premier says

By CAO DESHENG, LIUZHIHUA and FAN FEIFEI

China will take pragmatic and effective actions to promote its high-quality development, injecting greater certainty and more positive energy into global economic recovery and stability, Premier Li Qiang said on Sunday.

When delivering the keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the China Development Forum 2024 in Beijing, Li also highlighted the nation's commitment to expanding opening-up. He said that China, with greater openness, will create more opportunities for the world to advance win-win cooperation.

The premier's remarks came amid consistent efforts made by the Chinese government to bolster economic growth despite multiple challenges.

The country has unveiled a number



Premier Li Qiang (front, left) talks on Sunday with Apple CEO Tim Cook after the opening ceremony of the China Development Forum 2024 in Beijing. The theme of the two-day forum is "The Continuous Development of China". FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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of policies and measures to address the difficulties that are hindering high-quality growth. Senior Chinese officials recently held a series of meetings with foreign business executives as part of the nation's efforts to boost the confidence of foreign investors in the vast Chinese market.

Li assured the participants at the meeting that China's economy remains resilient, dynamic and full of potential, with the fundamentals sustaining the country's economic growth in the long run staying unchanged.

The positive momentum of economic recovery has continued to strengthen with new industries, business models and driving forces growing rapidly, he said.

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## FLUENT FOREIGNERS SPREAD THE WORD ON DIALECTS

Skilled speakers of Shanghai's different language forms attract followers, promote understanding

By WANG XIN in Shanghai  
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Tobias Le Compte, a 35-year-old Belgian musician widely known as Tobias or Gao Yue, has become a sensation on social media for his excellent grasp of the main Shanghai dialect.

A multi-instrumentalist and the chief operating officer of Montreux Jazz Festival China, Le Compte has been sharing his everyday experiences, which he delivers in Shanghai dialect, on video-sharing and lifestyle platforms Douyin and Xiaohongshu, garnering thousands of followers and millions of likes.

In the videos, he speaks fluent

Shanghai dialect, which many non-locals believe is as difficult to learn and understand as a foreign language. He talks about walking on the city's streets, enjoying the food and music, and recording his daily life in the city.

"I started shooting and posting these short videos for my own practice purposes. I didn't expect so many people would be watching them, following me and sending me comments and encouragement," said Le Compte.

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### WORLD WATCH

By Khalid Taimur Akram

## US emerging as primary source of global risks

The world, in essence, seems to be on the precipice of a year marked by grave concerns and problems, due to the interconnected nature of some top risks with the actions and policies of the United States.

It is increasingly fair to assert that the US, in its mockery of international norms and values, has emerged as the primary source of global risks in 2024.

At present, the world is confronting numerous crises, each carrying a genuine risk of spilling over and escalating into an even more formidable challenge. Notably, there is a looming possibility of a broader conflict erupting in the Middle East, which would have an impact on global commerce and potentially give rise to supply chain-driven inflation.

The global landscape is marked by an interlocking series of crises, yet the collaborative and cooperative efforts to resolve them are falling apart. Consequently, any expectations of wise and farsighted political solutions to the myriad challenges confronting the world seem elusive. Instead, the prevailing scenario depicts a world besieged by escalating wars and conflicts, with the US adding more fuel to the fire.

Under President Joe Biden, the US is also persisting in adopting the same approach as his predecessors, therefore contributing to the global erosion and mockery of international norms and values. The Biden administration, rather than utilizing its resources and wisdom to address burning issues domestically, is contributing to the exacerbation of existing problems.

Recent geopolitical issues, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict, have led to complex and volatile regional security situations. The US-led role of fueling tensions with intensifying geopolitical games not only has a profound impact on the world pattern, but also disrupts global industrial chains, bringing about a serious impact on the world economy.

The notion of so-called "rules-based" international order that is invoked by the Biden administration, ostensibly promoting order, was written by Washington to allow the White House, the CIA and the Pentagon a free hand in their overt and covert actions.

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"For me, the tone of the Shanghai dialect sounds like music with fascinating waves," said the musician who enjoys learning languages and dialects. "I believe a dialect is the heart of a local culture."

In 2008, Le Compte, who is a percussionist, guitarist, bassist and piano player, visited Shanghai for the first time as a member of a music and dance group that participated in an arts festival in Baoshan district. He was enchanted by the city right away, and returned the next year and enrolled as an undergraduate student at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Like most expats in China, Le Compte first studied Mandarin and spent about half a year teaching himself the language.

"At first, I had little contact with the Shanghai dialect. People around me in the city could all speak Mandarin and it was enough for daily life and communication, so I didn't feel it was necessary to learn the dialect," said Le Compte.

It was not until 2021, when Le Compte was back in Belgium and confined to his home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that he started learning Shanghaiese.

"When I was back in Belgium, I realized that many of my Chinese friends were from Shanghai and they had been talking in the Shanghai dialect. I have always loved studying languages and dialects, so I chose to learn some Shanghai dialect to fill the boring days at home during the pandemic," Le Compte said.

He was also motivated by the 2021 hit movie *B for Busy*, a tale set in Shanghai starring local stars who speak their lines in the city's dialect.

"I was not thinking too much when I started learning the Shanghai dialect — it was just for fun. I turned to my friends to speak and learn the dialect. I also watched TV series and movies in the Shanghai dialect, as well as Shanghai farces," he said.

Listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2011, Shanghai farce, or *huajixi*, is a traditional opera and type of comedic performance that originated in the city in the early 20th century.

Le Compte said when he uploaded the short Shanghaiese videos it was simply to practice the dialect and he didn't think much about it. "Gradually, and unexpectedly, many people saw my posts and sent me positive and encouraging comments, which made me dive deeper into the dialect and local culture," Le Compte said.

He settled back in Shanghai in January. Much to his surprise, when he arrived at the airport he was recognized by many people as "the foreigner who can speak fluent Shanghai dialect."

"Since then, I have been frequently recognized on the city's streets. People keep telling me 'thank you for promoting our Shanghai dialect' and 'we support you', which makes me feel that I am doing something very meaningful. I feel a greater sense of responsibility," he added.

### 'Brave' mistakes

Le Compte did not bury his nose in textbooks or undertake intensive study to learn Shanghaiese. He said his learning methods involved getting immersed in a language environment, having a positive attitude, and speaking bravely "without being afraid to make mistakes".

"Some people may worry too much about being looked down upon for their accent or using the wrong words,



## Shanghai: Foreigners dive into local linguistics



Musician Tobias Le Compte is fluent in the local dialect. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Academic Ding Dimeng has taught foreigners Shanghaiese for three decades.



Federico Demarco is studying other dialects in Shanghai.

which I think is not the right approach. Although non-native speakers can't grasp a language 100 percent, the more words you say, the more accurately you will end up saying them," Le Compte said.

However, he is worried that the dialect seems to be disappearing from common use.

"It's such a pity to know that many residents in Shanghai can't speak the dialect. There are many traditional customs and local cultures that are hard to describe precisely in Mandarin. Some of them can only be expressed and understood in the dialect, such as nursery rhymes and slang," said Le Compte.

Shanghai residents tend to be more welcoming to those who speak the dialect, he added. "I used to live in a *shikumen* (lane house) in Shanghai, where I got quite immersed in the city's authentic local life," he said.

Le Compte has also posted videos of himself speaking the dialect with Shanghai natives who live overseas.

"We share their stories and their life in another country, it's especially rele-

vant to Shanghai people who have not been to these nations," Le Compte said.

Many Shanghai people living overseas speak better Shanghaiese than the locals, especially the younger generations, he added.

Le Compte said he did not expect he would contribute to the promotion of the Shanghai dialect, but he hoped more people would end up speaking it. It would be an honor and pleasure if his posts encouraged his followers to learn and pass on the dialect, he said.

Le Compte, who rates his dialect skills 70 out of 100, said he hopes to one day be able to understand subtle variations in the dialect and also be capable enough to write a Shanghai farce.

### Deeper look

Argentine Federico Demarco, a post-graduate linguistics student at Shanghai University, is traveling even further along the path of understanding dialects in Shanghai.

The first Argentine to pass HSK 6, the Chinese-language proficiency test's

highest level, Demarco is researching a dialect spoken in Shanghai's Jinshan district.

Married to a woman from Shanghai, Demarco became fluent in the main Shanghai dialect while living abroad with his wife.

When he relocated to Shanghai in 2018, his curiosity and passion for Chinese dialects drove him to explore variants beyond the city's urban center. His enthusiasm led him to uncover the lesser-known dialect spoken in Jinshan, which is located an hour from downtown Shanghai.

Partnering with Jinshan resident Feng Xuanxin four years ago, Demarco began documenting the dialect's nuances through field research in rural villages. The pair made audio recordings and notes of pronunciations of words, vocabulary and cultural traditions. "We want to preserve the dialect before local knowledge disappears," Demarco said.

However, finding speakers of the dialect is becoming difficult as younger generations have shifted to speaking Mandarin, he said.

With his South American looks, locals are always surprised when Demarco speaks near-perfect Jinshan dialect. He also posts videos on Douyin, which have attracted hundreds of thousands of views, explaining different aspects of the dialect.

For the past four years, Demarco has taken long car trips to and from Jinshan on a regular basis to conduct interviews and make recordings.

He is intrigued by the structure of the Jinshan dialect. For instance, dialects spoken in Zhujing, Fengjing, and Xingta towns have eight tones, while dialects spoken in other areas of Jinshan have seven, and Shanghaiese has just five. "Languages are my passion. I hope that these unique dialects can be passed on," he said.

The pair are planning to turn their research into a book on the Jinshan dialect.

Demarco is also a co-founder of an online free dictionary for the Wu dialect, one of the main dialects spoken south of the Yangtze River.

### Conveyor of culture

Ding Dimeng, a Shanghai dialect expert and a retired associate professor of Chinese at Shanghai University, has written several books on the Shanghai dialect. Some include fun features such as games, riddles, tongue-twisters and poems, which have helped make them bestsellers.

Ding has been teaching Mandarin and the Shanghai dialect to Chinese and overseas students for three decades.

"Over the past 20 years, we have seen an increasing number of foreigners becoming interested in learning the Shanghai dialect," Ding said. Compared with Mandarin, foreigners can usually acquire the Shanghai dialect faster, as the pronunciations are easier for them, she added.

Foreigners are motivated by many reasons, including doing business locally, to learn Shanghaiese. However, some of them are intrigued by the unique and pleasing tones of the dialect. It also helps them better fit into life in Shanghai, Ding said.

Spaniard Mario Alonso, a pianist who has lived in Shanghai for seven years, said it would be a waste of time to live in China without immersing himself in the local culture.

He taught himself Mandarin, and is reasonably fluent, and now hopes to pick up some Shanghaiese colloquialisms. One expression he finds intriguing is "your forehead touches the ceiling", which is a way to describe a rare and lucky incident, such as winning the lottery.

After the release in December of *Blossoms Shanghai*, the hit television series of Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai, the Shanghai dialect has attracted even greater attention.

Ding is pleased to see the positive reaction, as well as foreigners sharing their dialect skills on social media.

"We used to have TV programs promoting the Shanghai dialect — and even speech competitions in the dialect — which were open to expats in the city. I think they (foreigners who speak the Shanghai dialect) are a positive influence on both domestic and overseas audiences," said Ding.

She welcomed foreigners learning the dialect as well as Shanghai people, both at home and abroad, promoting it. "This is not only about the language, but also about Shanghai's culture and Chinese culture, as a dialect is the carrier of local cultures," Ding said.

Zheng Zheng and Zhang Kun in Shanghai contributed to this story.

## TOP NEWS

## Fortifying friendship

Members of the People's Liberation Army Guard of Honor participate in the Pakistan Day military parade in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Saturday. The day commemorates the Lahore Resolution passed on March 23, 1940, and the adoption of Pakistan's first Constitution on March 23, 1956. The 36-member PLA Guard of Honor participated in the parade at the invitation of the Pakistani military. MUHAMMED SEMIH UGURLU / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES



## Global CEOs reposing faith in nation's growth

Impetus for new quality productive forces expected to drive world economic recovery

By WANG KEJU, FAN FEIFEI and LIU ZHIHUA

China's commitment to nurturing new quality productive forces while promoting high-quality development is set to provide domestic as well as foreign investors with enormous market opportunities and vast development prospects amid the rising uncertainties in the global economic landscape, said senior officials and company executives.

They made the remarks on Sunday in Beijing during the opening of the two-day China Development Forum 2024, a few weeks after the world's second-largest economy unveiled its 5 percent growth target.

The Chinese economy has started the year on a positive trajectory, underpinned by effective macroeconomic policies. With stable production growth, sustained recovery in demand and other positive factors, the country is confident and capable of achieving its major economic and social development

goals, said Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission.

In particular, China's active cultivation of new quality productive forces not only promotes its own economic growth but also injects much-needed momentum into global economic recovery and expansion, Zheng said.

New quality productive forces signify a paradigm shift in productivity, primarily propelled by revolutionary technological breakthroughs, innovative allocation of production factors, and profound industrial transformation and upgrading.

China is ramping up efforts to cultivate emerging industries, foster the deep integration of digital technology with the real economy and the convergence of advanced manufacturing with modern services, and create new growth engines in sectors such as biomanufacturing, commercial aerospace, new materials and low-altitude economy, Zheng said.

Ling Hai, president for the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, the Middle

East and Africa at Mastercard, said that China's fundamentals remain very strong for reasons including the ingenuity and creativity of the Chinese people as well as the government's commitment to reform and opening-up.

Furthermore, China's continuous efforts to boost innovation and technological development are key to unleashing its growth potential, he said.

Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said that China is at the forefront of emerging economies in terms of artificial intelligence preparedness, with well-developed digital infrastructure providing a head start.

Establishing a robust AI regulatory framework and strengthening economic ties with other innovative countries will help China power ahead, Georgieva said, adding that in the medium term, China will continue to be a key contributor to global economic growth.

Finance Minister Lan Fo'an said that China will reinforce fiscal policies in order to drive industrial upgrades, foster the growth of emerging industries and cultivate future sectors.

By adopting a region-specific approach to forging new quality productive forces, the government aims to shape new drivers and advantages for sustainable economic growth, he added.

Jin Liqun, president and chairman of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, said the development of new quality productive forces can benefit from proactive fiscal policies, although direct subsidies may not yield the most effective results.

Jin emphasized that it is essential to steer clear of fiscal policies that stifle the motivation for production and innovation, and the creation of wealth.

Raj Subramaniam, president of United States-based express courier service provider FedEx Corp, said the company's growth has been greatly empowered by the long-term commitment to invest in and grow with China. Over the past 40 years, China has become home to one of the largest FedEx operations in the world.

"We believe that open markets and collaboration are critical to expanding growth and prosperity for all. We're committed to exploring new opportunities in China, and leveraging our digital innovations to build the world's most flexible, efficient and intelligent network," he added.

Zhong Nan contributed to the story.

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## China's nearshoring seen as benefit for US

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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By strategically expanding its manufacturing to North America, China offers "substantial benefits" for the United States, host countries such as Mexico, and the global trade system — a move that a supply chain expert called "mutually advantageous".

This trend, known as nearshoring, involves relocating manufacturing closer to end markets. It has recently gained wide attention from industry experts who believe it is reshaping global production and distribution.

"By integrating on a local or nearshoring level, China is able to weave its methodology, standards, investment and distribution of products and philosophy at the microeconomic level, country by country, continent by continent," said Kerim Antoine Kfuri, founder of the US consulting firm The Atlas Network, which specializes in mass production, logistics and supply chains.

"China is always willing to evolve, adapt and seek out opportunity on a global scale. This is evident from the high level of foreign investment and global infrastructure built by the Chinese in the far corners of the globe," he said.

"The Chinese are practitioners of true globalization and the modernization of the same philosophies that led to the creation and proliferation of the Silk Road from the second century until the mid-15th century," Kfuri added.

The US stands to "gain significantly" from China's nearshoring strategy, he said. The presence of Chinese manufacturing can lead to more secure and reliable supply chains, potentially lowering costs for consumers and mitigating inflation, he said.

Other benefits of nearshoring include improved supply chain efficiency and responsiveness, economic growth and job creation in host countries, and technology transfers that contribute to a more interconnected global trade system, Kfuri said.

Host countries such as Mexico and Central American nations are poised for "substantial benefits", he said. For instance, foreign direct investment through nearshoring drives broader economic growth by fostering infrastructure development and bolstering other sectors.

This influx of investment and industrial activity translates into new job opportunities and greater economic stability for these regions, Kfuri said.

A recent report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas confirmed this observation. The report highlights a

China is always willing to evolve, adapt and seek out opportunity on a global scale. This is evident in the high level of foreign investment and global infrastructure built by the Chinese in the far corners of the globe."

Kerim Antoine Kfuri, founder of the US consulting firm The Atlas Network

significant increase in Chinese companies' presence in Mexico, evidenced by a surge in Chinese FDI directed toward manufacturing plants.

Chinese FDI in Mexico has grown from \$38 million in 2011 to \$386 million in 2021, becoming the fastest-growing source of the latter's foreign investment, the report said.

The FDI "boosts Mexico's economic growth through job creation, incentives for human capital development and technology transfers," it said.

This, in turn, can potentially address the root causes of migration to the US by offering residents greater opportunities in their home countries and potentially slowing the exodus of economic migrants to the US, Kfuri said.

Through nearshoring, China is expanding "Chinese manufacturing expertise" to the host countries, he said, adding that "by establishing manufacturing hubs in nearshore countries, China transfers its efficient production capabilities, knowledge and technology, spurring economic growth, job creation and industrial development in these regions".

China's nearshoring strategy plays a "crucial role" in building "a balanced and resilient global supply chain" and also provides a model for collaboration between nations to drive economic growth, he said.

Kfuri called for cooperation between the US and China.

"I believe it will improve efficiency, reduce costs and will spur global GDP," he said. "I also believe that the effect is truly positive, as China's nearshoring efforts in the US and other places in the world will create jobs, promote local economies and establish efficiencies which holistically heighten global trade."

## Forum: Business leaders share increasing interest in investing in Chinese market

From page 1

Noting that profound changes are taking place in the international environment and the global economy is confronted with grave challenges, the premier pledged that China will take effective steps to contribute to world economic recovery with its high-quality development.

He emphasized that China will strengthen macro policy readjustment and coordination to drive economic growth.

Speaking of specific measures, Li said the nation will focus on expanding domestic demand, promoting construction of a unified national market, advancing new

urbanization, and driving large-scale equipment renewal and trade-ins of consumer goods.

China will also accelerate the construction of a modern industrial system, promote industrial innovation through technological advancement, and facilitate the upgrading of traditional industries, the growth of emerging industries and the cultivation of future industries to speed up the development of new quality productive forces, he added.

The premier underlined the importance of taking prudent and comprehensive risk prevention and control measures to ensure the long-term healthy development of the Chinese economy.

Highlighting China's deep integration with the global economy, the premier pledged to continue fostering a world-class, market-oriented business environment that is governed by a sound legal framework.

He said that China will further deepen reforms in key fields, continue to improve the efficiency of government services, protect the legitimate rights and interests of all types of enterprises in accordance with the law, steadily promote institutional opening-up in terms of standards, management and rules, and continuously connect with the world with a higher level of openness.

Approximately 400 participants, including World Bank President

Ajay Banga, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and domestic and international experts, as well as business leaders and government officials, attended the opening ceremony of the two-day event.

Pascal Soriot, CEO of United Kingdom-based biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, said that Li's speech underlined the Chinese government's confidence in the nation's economic growth prospects.

"We recognize China's numerous strengths in accelerating global healthcare, innovation and sustainability, and we look forward to advancing further partnering opportunities with Chinese enterprises,

both to promote Chinese innovations overseas and to advance scientific research in our own laboratories," Soriot told China Daily.

Bill Winters, CEO of Standard Chartered, expressed his full confidence in China's 5 percent growth target this year, saying the nation is "still the biggest single contributor to global growth".

He said the number of foreign CEOs attending this year's China Development Forum is roughly double that of last year or even more. "I think that reflects the level of ongoing interest in the Chinese market and in investing in China."

Denis Depoux, global managing director of market consultancy

Roland Berger, said he understands China's emphasis on developing new quality productive forces is all about the transformation of its economy.

Foreign companies can play a bigger role in supporting China's economic transformation in fields such as decarbonization, automation and digitalization of industrial and supply chains, Depoux said, adding that China's efforts to develop new quality productive forces will attract more foreign companies to bring more investment and technologies to the world's second-largest economy.

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## Risks: Concern growing over escalation of conflicts

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The US government has provided unequivocal support and military aid to Israel's military offensive in Gaza, which is against the global order and system of rules. The consequences of Israel's actions over the past few months, backed by the US, cast doubt on the sincerity of the rules supposedly underpinning the international order.

The attempted justification implies that these "rules" potentially allow states to inflict collective punishment, use starvation as a weapon, and indiscriminately bomb civilians and essential infrastructure, all with total impunity. Such outrageous behavior poses a direct challenge to

international peace and stability.

Furthermore, the actions undertaken challenge established norms, such as waging or preparing for wars of aggression and leveraging technology and supply chains for coercion and repression. This deviation from principles that uphold peace and stability presents a grim perspective on the world order. It appears to be a system wherein participating nations inadvertently endorse and perpetuate actions that contravene international law.

Amid these dynamics, there is a growing concern about the potential escalation of conflicts and their spread to other regions. The risks of the US becoming directly involved in a multifront

war are on the rise, as exhibited in the Red Sea crisis.

Elsewhere, Washington's pursuit of the so-called "Indo-Pacific" strategy and the encouragement of allies to provoke them against China on South China Sea-related issues contribute to the escalation of tensions.

The US government's emphasis on competing for influence with other major powers in Africa, Latin America and Asia is increasing tensions. US interventionism aims at global dominance, breeding instability and violence across the world. The US must shed the Cold War mentality and cease interference in other nations' internal affairs.

In the current global landscape, the core objective for countries

worldwide engaging with the US should be to prevent the nation from bringing additional risks to the world.

The US government should embrace a more contemporary approach, fostering global cooperation instead of perpetuating outdated ideologies. Abandoning the Cold War mentality and respecting the sovereignty of other nations will contribute to a more harmonious and collaborative international system.

The author is executive director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future in Islamabad. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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# CHINA

## Scanning vacancies

Job seekers scan QR codes for recruitment information at a health and hygiene job fair at Lanzhou University in Lanzhou, Gansu province, on Saturday. Almost 300 medical and health institutions at the provincial, city, county and township levels offered over 3,200 positions at the job fair, which was conducted on-site and online. It attracted over 32,000 on-site job seekers.

PEI QIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



## Ocean-related economy expanding

China increasingly looking to waters as alternative source of food, energy

By LI LEI  
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Ocean-related industries expanded at a faster pace than the overall economy last year, and the country's expansive maritime area has become an alternative source of energy, food and fresh water, an official said.

The Ministry of Natural Resources said on Wednesday that the value of the ocean economy — an umbrella term covering sectors ranging from shipbuilding to ocean fish farming and freight services — topped 9.9 trillion yuan (\$1.37 trillion) last year, up 6 percent year-on-year.

That was higher than the 5.2 percent growth rate of China's overall economy last year.

The share of ocean-themed sectors in the national economy also inched up one-tenth of a percentage point to 7.9 percent of GDP.

"The ocean economy has rebounded fiercely and has helped the national economy recover," said Cui Xiaojian, deputy director of the National Marine Data Information Center, an affiliate of the ministry's State Oceanic Administration.

He said the amount of marine-derived crude oil extracted grew 5.8 percent year-on-year, while natural gas extractions increased 5.8 percent due to breakthroughs in marine oilfield exploration and have become a major contributor to China's increased energy yield in recent years.

Ocean-based wind power plants produced 17 percent more electricity than in 2022, serving as powerful support for the nation's energy generation, Cui said.

He said the rapid expansion of deep-sea fish farming has bolstered the supply of quality seafood, whose yield rose nearly 3 percent from 2022 to about 35 million metric tons last year.

Desalination projects are being constructed in coastal regions, including Tianjin and the provinces of Shandong and Zhejiang, with a combined capacity of 300,000 tons of seawater each day, he added.

The expansion of the ocean economy, especially deep-sea aquaculture, follows China's plan to step up its national food security efforts by diversifying its food sources.

In 2017, central authorities attending the nation's annual rural work conference urged officials to develop a "macro food perspective" and seek food supplies from unconventional areas of agriculture. As a result, grassland, forests, the ocean and even microorganisms have been listed as potential food sources to meet the country's growing needs for nutritious sustenance.

The push to develop a "macro food perspective" and diversify the country's food sources was reiterated at the most recent rural work conference in December.

China has, in recent years, also phased out offshore aquatic farms that clog shipping lanes and damage the health of mangroves, while simultaneously coming up with more deep-sea alternatives as the country looks to its expansive territorial waters for food supplies.

Meanwhile, the use of fish feed and antibiotics at enclosed farms dotting the coastline have long been blamed for pollution.

Authorities called last year for the rapid expansion of cage farming farther from the shoreline, with the help of box-shaped facilities that can feed and monitor fish populations remotely. It encouraged the manufacture and use of cages and fishing vessels that can be shuttled around to keep farms running.

## Sichuan and Yunnan to receive disaster relief

By ZHAO YIMENG  
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Two ministries will allocate 40 million yuan (\$5.5 million) from natural disaster relief funds to support the provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Emergency Management said in a circular issued on Sunday that they will allocate 20 million yuan to Sichuan for forest fire relief, while 20 million yuan will be allocated to Yunnan to tackle drought disasters.

The funds will be primarily used to address water shortages for urban and rural residents, and purchase or lease emergency equipment for water supply and purification.

Local authorities will use the funds to organize personnel to ensure water supply for residents, and provide assistance to those facing temporary living difficulties due to disasters.

The Ministry of Finance urged the finance departments of both provinces to expedite the disbursement of the funds to disaster areas and effectively strengthen fund management, the circular said.

In mid-March, a forest fire broke out in Yajiang county, Sichuan, while residents in drought-affected parts of Yunnan have experienced a shortage of water in recent days.

Major sections of the forest fire in Yajiang, which was caused by the use of fire at a construction site, have been extinguished.

The National Forestry and Grassland Administration and other departments issued a notice last week announcing the launch of a special action to effectively identify and rectify the hidden dangers of forest and grassland fires.

The action, which started on March 18 and will last until Nov 30, aims to eliminate major hazards of forest and grassland fires and investigate the illegal use of fire, the administration said.

Efforts should be made to regularly organize rectification of forest and grassland fire hazards, and inspect fire hazards in forest and pasture areas related to power transmission facilities, the notice said.

It emphasized the need to crack down on the unauthorized use of fire and failures to follow operational procedures for planned burning and fire drills in forests.

Local authorities have been urged to trace the origins of fires and rectify violations that endanger fire prevention and energy supply.

Strict measures will be taken to investigate major forest and grassland fires that have occurred since 2022, and crack down on arson and accidental fires, it said.

Those responsible for incidents in which planned burning and fire drills lead to significant failures in vital power facilities will be punished, it added.

By Tuesday, China had experienced 52 forest fires nationwide this year, according to the latest data provided by the Office of the National Forest and Grassland Fire Prevention and Control Command.

Spring is a peak period for forest fires, with data released by the office showing the number of fires in March and April accounted for

44.8 percent of the 328 that occurred nationwide last year.

Hu Xiao, chief meteorological analyst at Weather China, said rising temperatures and dry and windy weather in spring can trigger forest fires.

Forest fires are particularly frequent in southwestern parts of China with subtropical plateau monsoon climates, such as Sichuan and Yunnan.

During March and April, minimal rainfall in these areas leads to extremely dry air, and the warming weather and vegetation growth pose a risk of wildfires, especially on windy days, Hu said, adding that it is also more challenging for rescue equipment and personnel to reach fires in mountainous areas.

Firefighting teams have to hike uphill with equipment to extinguish fires, while the unpredictable wind speed and direction also increase the difficulty of rescue operations, he added.

From Wednesday to Thursday, strong winds are forecast in northern parts of North China, increasing the risk of forest fires.

## Standards set out for emergency medical response teams

By WANG XIAOYU  
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Each national-level medical emergency response team should have at least 60 members and should be ready within two hours of receiving orders, according to a regulation released by China's health authorities on Friday.

China's medical emergency response teams are responsible for emergency handling and on-site

health management in major and acute incidents. Such teams were previously regulated by a document released in 2010.

In the updated regulation, jointly released by the National Health Commission, National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, each team is required to have at least 30 emergency management and healthcare professionals and at

least 30 standby personnel.

It said these teams should be ready within two hours of receiving orders from health authorities.

The document also laid out minimum requirements for the capabilities of six different types of teams.

For instance, teams categorized as specializing in handling major epidemics should be able to complete laboratory testing of at least 1,000 samples, receive 200 outpatient patients and treat at least five severe

infected cases each day. They should also be able to transfer patients and perform epidemiological investigations.

Teams specializing in emergency medical rescue should be capable of performing 20 trauma surgeries, receiving 200 emergency and outpatient patients, and providing 20 observation beds each day. They should also focus on improving their trauma treatment capabilities.

The document emphasized carry-

ing out training and drills and improving teams' use of information technology.

Guo Yanhong, head of the commission's department of medical emergency response, told a news conference in July that China had set up 40 national-level medical emergency response teams and 6,500 lower-level teams.

By the end of 2025, the number of national-level teams will be raised to around 60 to 70, she said.

Wang Hesheng, director of the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, told a news conference this month that it has

established 20 national-level emergency response teams dedicated to dealing with acute infectious diseases.

"Whenever a major public health event occurs, these national teams can be dispatched immediately to provide support," he said.

In December, three such teams were sent to regions struck by an earthquake, which hit Jishishan county in Gansu province the hardest, to coordinate and guide sanitation, the monitoring of infectious diseases and drinking water hygiene at temporary settlements for affected residents, Wang said.

## Empowering Tomorrow: Equal Education for Girls in China



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Join us in supporting the continued education of girls, helping them reach higher levels of learning. By empowering girls with education, we're not just shaping individuals, but the future of our country and the world. Let's work together to ensure every girl has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to a brighter tomorrow.

In China, strides have been made to ensure equal access to education for girls, with primary education enrollment now on par with boys. However, the journey doesn't end there.

## CHINA

## Festival finery



Hanfu enthusiasts pose in front of the Chaoran Tower during the Huazhao Festival in Jinan, Shandong province, on Saturday. A parade of hanfu fans that was part of the festival attracted people wanting to experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture. The Huazhao Festival, also known as the Flower Festival or Flower Deity Festival, is a traditional Chinese festival. HUANG ZHONGMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Strong magnetic storms possible this week

By LIANG SHUANG  
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The China Meteorological Administration called for special attention to be paid to potential geomagnetic storms from Sunday to Tuesday, as it predicted such storms may impact sectors such as aviation and satellite navigation, while "northern light hunters" may have a chance to observe the phenomenon.

The administration said on Sunday that it is probable that geomagnetic activities may occur through Tuesday, with some likelihood of a moderate or even major storm on Monday.

Space stations may experience a decrease in their orbit altitude, the administration said, adding that satellite navigation systems may become less precise, and the aviation sector may experience communication disruptions and extra radiation over the polar region.

The loss of altitude could occur as the two stations in orbit are "dragged down" by extra friction caused by air in the upper atmosphere heating up due to the geomagnetic storms.

For the general public, the administration said, those engaged in breeding or racing homing pigeons are advised to reduce the activities as the birds' navigational abilities may also be affected by the storms.

On the other hand, those interested in observing *aurora borealis*, or the northern lights, in the country may have a chance to see the phenomenon if weather permits, the administration said.

Geomagnetic storms are triggered by solar eruptive activities, specifically coronal mass ejections, said Han Dayang, an engineer with the National Center for Space Weather.

Such ejections may create shock waves of solar particles and cause changes in the direction and magnitude of the Earth's magnetic field, leading to geomagnetic storms, he said in early December last year during a similar weather event.

At that time, a strong geomagnetic storm led to the northern lights illuminating the skies in northern China, which is rare because the area is relatively far from polar regions.

The administration said this time, the coronal ejection, which lasted several hours on Saturday, was almost directly facing Earth, so it may create strong geomagnetic activity, adding that such an eruption could lead to auroras.

## Justifiable defense cases increasing

Fatal Guangxi fight example of how prosecutors have focused on concept

By YANG ZEKUN  
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China's top procuratorial body reported a significant increase in justifiable defense cases last year, highlighting efforts to promote a more nuanced understanding of the legal concept.

According to the Supreme People's Procuratorate's annual work report for 2023, which was approved by the national legislature on March 11, procuratorial organs nationwide deemed 261 cases as justifiable defense, representing a 25.5 percent increase compared to 2022.

The report emphasized the top procuratorate's focus on upholding the concept of justifiable defense.

In October 2020, a man surnamed Huang, who was dining at a fast-food restaurant run by a man surnamed Chen and his wife, surnamed Xue, got into a fight with another man at a neighboring table. Chen intervened in the dispute and persuaded Huang to leave.

Huang came back to the restaurant the next day and demanded compensation of 2,500 yuan (\$350) from Chen. Chen refused and called the police.

When the police arrived to investigate, Huang was questioned and allowed to leave the restaurant.

Several days later, Huang returned to the restaurant to again demand compensation, but was again persuaded to leave. Later that afternoon, he returned a third time and, failing to obtain compensation, slashed Xue's face with a kitchen knife and then threatened Chen with it.

Chen then grabbed two knives from the kitchen and fought with Huang. Huang was injured during the fight and died despite rescue efforts. Xue sustained severe injuries, while Chen's injuries were minor.

In February last year, the public security organs transferred Chen for prosecution on suspicion of causing intentional injury. After review, the procuratorial organs in the Guangxi

Zhuang autonomous region deemed Chen's actions to be legitimate justifiable defense and made the decision to not pursue charges.

"The restaurant owner faced a life-threatening situation," explained Yang Jianbo, deputy director of the Supreme People's Procuratorate's general office. "Determining the facts and applying the law accurately presented a challenge."

Yang emphasized that prosecutors avoided judging the situation based solely on the assailant's death and instead focused on factual evidence and legal principles.

The top procuratorate's report reiterated the principle that legal actions should not be compromised by unlawful conduct. It also highlighted the promotion of a law-based society where the legal framework is accurately applied.

Justifiable defense, despite being outlined in China's Criminal Law, has historically been a complex issue due to interpretation challenges and misconceptions. The report acknowledged these problems, noting the past prevalence of the belief that "whoever is injured or killed is right."

## Defense spokesman urges Philippines to stop infringements around reef

By LUO WANGSHU  
and JIANG CHENGLONG

China's Ministry of National Defense urged the Philippines on Sunday to stop all infringements and provocative actions around Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea.

Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian made the remarks after Philippine ships illegally entered waters adjacent to Ren'ai Reef, off China's Nansha islands.

Wu said on Saturday, three Philippine vessels illegally intruded into the waters during an attempt to transport supplies and construction materials to a military vessel that the Philippines intentionally grounded on the reef in 1999.

The China Coast Guard lawfully and properly regulated, intercepted and expelled the Philippine vessels, resolutely thwarting the Philippines' provocative attempt to encroach on Chinese territory, Wu said, adding that the incident was entirely provoked by the Philippines, and China's handling of the situation was standard, reasonable, lawful and professional.

China Coast Guard spokesman Gan Yu said in a statement issued on Saturday that just 18 days after

the last round of resupply — which he earlier described as "a temporary special arrangement out of humanitarian concern" — the Philippines had broken its pledge to respect China's territorial waters and again dispatched two coast guard ships and one supply vessel to infringe into the waters near Ren'ai Reef, attempting to carry out "abnormal resupply operations and transport construction materials" to the grounded vessel.

He said the Philippine side had provocatively seized the opportunity to infringe on China's rights and intentionally destroy the peace and stability of the South China Sea.

"At the scene, the Philippine supply ship disregarded the Chinese side's repeated dissuasion, warnings and navigation control, and still forcefully intruded," Gan said.

He said that in response, the China Coast Guard implemented interception, obstruction and expulsion following laws and regulations, handling the situation in a "reasonable, lawful, professional and standardized manner."

"We warn the Philippine side: those who play with fire will only humiliate themselves," he said. "The China Coast Guard is always

on high alert, resolutely safeguarding national territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests."

Wu emphasized that China holds indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha islands, including Ren'ai Reef and adjacent waters.

"China's sovereignty and territorial integrity are not to be violated," he said.

He said China is willing to properly resolve disputes with the Philippines through dialogue and negotiation. However, the Philippines, acting in bad faith, had attempted to illegally send construction materials to the grounded vessel on Ren'ai Reef to turn it into a permanent facility. China would not sit idly by when such action was taken, Wu said.

"We warn the Philippines to cease making any statements that may escalate tensions and stop all acts of encroachment," he said. "If the Philippines continues to challenge China's bottom line, China will continue to take resolute measures to firmly defend its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests."

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## Chongqing lets farmers carry large baskets to market on subway line

By TAN YINGZI  
and DENG RUI in Chongqing

Southwest China's Chongqing municipality is allowing farmers to carry large baskets on subway trains during peak hours, to the chagrin of some residents. The farmers are allowed to use Line 4, dubbed the "Vegetable Basket Line", every day.

They may carry baskets on their backs or in a small cart, or balance two baskets with a pole on their shoulders.

The baskets, made of bamboo, are usually filled with fresh vegetables.

Before the line opened in 2022, farmers would sell their vegetables in Shichuan town. The town was small, so vegetables sold slowly and prices were low.

After the metro opened, farmers discovered that they could sell their vegetables for a higher price in the city.

So, many farmers started taking the metro to the city to sell their vegetables.

Some netizens commented on the local government's inquiry platform recently that the city should prohibit passengers from carrying large items, including the baskets, during peak hours because they can hinder other passengers when space is especially limited.

Chongqing Rail Transit responded that passengers can carry items on the subway as long as the sum of the length, width, and height does not exceed 2 meters and the weight does not exceed 20 kilograms.

The Line 4 allowance has not only warmed the hearts of a large number of farmers, but also the general public.

"This is what a modern city should be — the farmers who carry baskets and those nine-to-five workers who carry laptops are essentially no different," one netizen commented.

Ao Mingqiang, a 72-year-old farmer who lives in Shichuan's Hekou village, said "it is good news for us."

Ao often carries a basket of peppers and scallions on his back as he lines up at a gate at Shichuan Station around 6 am each day.

He usually takes the earliest train to the morning markets in the densely populated city center, regularly disembarking at Yuzui Station.

Zheng Changpan, the station-master on duty at Shichuan Station, said the number of farmers has grown since the station opened in June 2022.

To make things more convenient for passengers, station staff members usually open the gates a few minutes earlier, use handheld metal detectors for security checks, guide farmers to take the elevators in the subway and help them lift their baskets onto the train.

If luggage such as vegetable baskets leaves odors or juice that soils the carriages, personnel will clean the train at the end of each trip, Zheng said.

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A farmer carrying baskets full of agricultural produce gets on a Line 4 subway train at Shichuan Station in Chongqing on Sept 20. The line has been dubbed the "Vegetable Basket Line". HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Customs authorities intercept gold smugglers

By YANG ZEKUN  
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Customs authorities in several regions have recently intercepted passengers attempting to smuggle gold into the country.

In one case, customs officers at Beijing Daxing International Airport detected anomalies in the X-ray images of two suitcases being transferred internationally. Upon inspection, they found nine gold bars weighing a total of 5 kilograms inside the suitcases.

According to Chinese laws and regulations, passengers are allowed to bring reasonable quantities of gold and gold products for personal use into the country. Those carrying gold and gold products must declare amounts exceeding 50 grams to customs. Any gold or gold products exceeding the limit for personal use in reasonable quantities are treated as imported goods.

In another recent case, customs officers at Futian Port in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, noticed that a male passenger appeared nervous during an inspection of his luggage.

Customs officer Hu Zebing said

**5 kilograms**

of gold bars were recently detected in two suitcases at Beijing Daxing International Airport.

the officers found that the buckle on his belt was roughly made and coated with a layer of black paint. When the paint was scraped off, a gold color was revealed, and the buckle was found to be made of 426.65 grams of gold, she said.

As China's gold market developed, the State Council announced in November 2014 that the country would scrap a 65-year-old policy that required individuals carrying gold and gold products into or out of the country to obtain approval.

Customs authorities said passengers bringing gold and gold products into the country should take the initiative to declare them in accordance with China's laws and regulations. Those who attempt to evade customs supervision when transporting, carrying or mailing such items will be held accountable for smuggling.

## WORLD

## Access denied

Lotfi Gheith (left), the emergency operations center director for the Egyptian Red Crescent, briefs United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (center) about items rejected by Israeli authorities that were bound for the Gaza Strip, at El Arish International Airport in Egypt's northeastern province of North Sinai on Saturday, amid the ongoing conflict in the enclave between Israel and Hamas. KHALED DESOUKI / AFP



## Rising prices top concern for EU

## Social inequality and inflation seen as hot issues ahead of bloc's elections

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels  
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Anyone who thinks the top concerns for European Union citizens ahead of the June elections are the Russia-Ukraine conflict or climate change might be surprised. Instead, they are high prices and social inequalities.

Economic issues represent four of the top five topics that citizens think should be the top priorities for future EU leaders, according to an Ipsos poll conducted last week for Euronews.

The poll, conducted in 18 EU member states that account for 96 percent of the EU's 450 million population, shows that rising prices remain the top electoral issue for EU citizens, followed immediately by social concerns such as preserv-

ing healthcare and pension systems. About 68 percent of respondents called the fight against rising prices a top priority while 25 percent think it is important even if not their highest priority.

On the issue of social inequalities and the preservation of social protection systems, some 64 percent believe it is a priority.

"The two issues of high prices and social inequality, which are vital interests for ordinary Europeans, will be reflected in the June elections," said Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai.

Ding said the problems, which became prominent due to the eurozone debt crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, have been exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

He said it matters especially for the lives of people in the lower and lower middle classes in society.

"It will greatly impact the policies of governments and parties leading up to the June elections. It's an evaluation and pressure," he said.

"High inflation in the past two years has made everyone worse off, and it came on top of a pandemic economic contraction and follows decades of slow economic growth in Europe," Fredrik Erixon, director of the European Centre for International Political Economy, was quoted as saying in Euronews.

## Adequate wages

Commenting on the survey, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit said that ensuring adequate wages that afford a decent living is "one clear way" of meeting the rising costs in Europe.

"Looking ahead, all policymakers must redouble their efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion. This means assessing the distributional impact of all policies and protecting those most at risk," said Schmit, a Luxembourg politician who is now the lead candidate in the Party of European Social Democrats to challenge Ursula von der Leyen, who is seeking reelection as the lead candidate for the European People's Party.

The GDP in both the 27-member EU and 20-member eurozone economy grew 0.5 percent in 2023, according to the European Commission. The International Monetary Fund forecast in January that the eurozone economy will grow only 0.9 percent in 2024 and 1.7 percent in 2025.

Inflation, which has haunted EU economies for the past two years, has come down greatly from 9.9 percent to 2.8 percent in the 12 months up to February this year.

Despite this, EU citizens expressed that rising prices have pushed almost a third of them into a "precarious" financial situation, according to another Ipsos survey released in November.

The purchasing power has declined over the past three years, forcing a majority of them to skip meals and resort to making difficult financial choices, the survey has found.

Also, half of EU citizens say they face a high risk of falling into a precarious situation in the next few months because of rising prices and relatively stagnant pay.

## Beijing, Bangkok reaping benefits of bilateral trade

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok  
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China always opens its door to products from Thailand and the two partners' bilateral trade will bring mutual benefits to the development of the two nations and the lives of the people, said the Chinese envoy to Thailand.

"China doesn't see trade surplus to Thailand as our target. Instead, we always welcome Thai products to enter the Chinese market," Ambassador Han Zhiqiang said at a forum on Saturday amid reports on the kingdom's trade deficit with China.

Last year, trade volume between China and Thailand reached \$126.3 billion with China's trade surplus standing at \$25.1 billion, according to the statistics from the Chinese embassy to Thailand.

"Some people thought Thailand suffered a loss in the trade with China, which is neither scientific nor objective," Han said, citing the example of agriculture products exports. "So far, at least 40 percent of agriculture products in Thailand were exported to China annually, which benefits local farmers a lot."

Raw materials and components accounted for the bulk of Thailand's imports from China. "Those products are mostly exported from Thailand to other countries after further processing," he said.

Of the Chinese products exported to Thailand, silicon wafer, a raw material for producing photovoltaic cells, was valued at \$1.29 billion last year. The value of photovoltaic cells' exports from the kingdom doubled that of silicon wafers imported from China, hitting \$2.92 billion the same year, Han said.

He said China also contributed to Thailand's economic growth through bilateral service trade and direct investment. In 2023, Chinese tourists spent a total of \$5.4 billion in Thailand, while direct investment from Chinese enter-

prises reached \$4.6 billion.

He said there are about 850 Chinese enterprises registered with the embassy, which have enhanced Thailand's exports and created more employment opportunities.

## Vocational skills

Additionally, Chinese enterprises have helped to improve the vocational skills of local people. As Southeast Asia's first country to put 5G technology into commercial use, Thailand gained support from tech giant Huawei, which has trained more than 70,000 digital technical personnel in the past five years.

In terms of helping the kingdom's aim of becoming Southeast Asia's hub for electric vehicles and transforming the country into an innovative and value-based industrial base, China has served as a driving force, taking the initiative of bringing its EV products to boost green development.

Last year, a total of 76,000 EVs were sold in Thailand, of which 80 percent are Chinese brands, the authorities said.

"More importantly, many Chinese EV enterprises are bringing their production lines to Thailand. It has not only enhanced employment rates, but has also met the requirement of our own target of transforming some eastern provinces into a new corridor for innovation and economic growth," said Djitt Laowattana, special adviser to the Eastern Economic Corridor Office.

The Eastern Economic Corridor lies at the heart of Thailand's 20-year strategy to achieve high-income status by 2036.

In response to reports on the impact of any influx of cheap goods on local Thai producers, Han reaffirmed that China has always required its citizens and enterprises to strictly abide by the laws and will support the Thai side in dealing with any illegal activities in accordance with the law.

## Payment innovations provide convenience for international visitors

By SONG MENGXING  
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With the recovery of the global tourism industry and mutual visa exemption between China and multiple countries, more overseas tourists are choosing China as their travel destination.

Data show that inbound travel orders during the 2024 Spring Festival holiday increased more than 10 fold year-on-year. The rise in the number of overseas tourists has also brought new challenges, with differences in payment habits and methods being an urgent issue to be addressed.

## Easier payment

As Chengdu, capital city of Southwest China's Sichuan province, increases its openness to the outside world, more foreign tourists are visiting the city. To further enhance the internationalization of consumer services and optimize the environment for foreign-related payments, the Sichuan provincial department of commerce, Chengdu bureau of commerce, Chengdu local financial administration, and the business management department of the Sichuan branch of the People's Bank of China jointly released the Guide to Payment Services for International Visitors in Chengdu on March 16.

It introduces five payment methods — swiping foreign bank cards, mobile payment, renminbi cash, digital RMB and domestic bank card swiping.

It also provides information on the foreign currency exchange points at Chengdu Tianfu International Airport, 19 hotels that provide currency exchange services, 18 demonstration bank branches for foreign currency cash exchange, and 157 key bank branches for foreigners to open accounts.

It specifically issued guidelines on mobile payment services, welcoming and encouraging international guests to use mobile payment methods, including Alipay and WeChat Pay, just like local residents to make their time



From left: Jiaozi Avenue in Chengdu in Southwest China's Sichuan province. A foreign tourist uses mobile payment while shopping in Chengdu. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Scan the code to get Guide to Payment Services for International Visitors in Chengdu.

in Chengdu more enjoyable.

Chengdu is home to a number of important international events this year, including the 110th China Food and Drinks Fair that kicked off on Wednesday, the International Horticultural Exhibition 2024 that is planned to start in April, and the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals that will kick off on April 27.

Chengdu prides itself on being a warm and welcoming city for guests from across the world and is developing itself into an international consumer center that embodies the Tianfu culture — the manifestation of Chengdu's mainstream urban values, highlights its traits as a park city and leads international fashion, with a focus on strengthening its position as an international gateway hub, nurturing new-type platforms for consumers and building an international consumer destination.

International guests can scan codes to obtain the payment ser-

vice guidelines at Chengdu Tianfu International Airport, key business areas, pedestrian streets, popular tourist attractions and the International Horticultural Exhibition 2024 venues.

In February, the Chunxi Road business area cooperated with Alipay to release a map of convenient cross-border payment scenes. More than 1,500 point-of-sale machines in the business area can accept foreign cards, covering major businesses such as large commercial complexes, tax refund shops, and star-rated hotels. Additionally, there are 40 commercial bank branches and six hotels in the area where currency can be exchanged, facilitating RMB cash withdrawal and usage.

During the Chengdu FISU World University Games held in 2023, the city and Alipay launched and promoted innovative payment services nationwide. Representatives from the Chengdu bureau of commerce said that after the

event, Chengdu continued to improve the level of payment services, optimizing card swiping payments, promoting mobile payments and guaranteeing cash payments.

It also pushed forward the complementary development of various payment methods in key business zones and pedestrian streets, such as Chunxi Road and Kuanzhai Alley, to allow the elderly and foreigners to experience safer and more convenient payment options in Chengdu.

## Spurring potential

In 2023, Chengdu's consumption surpassed 1 trillion yuan (\$138.9 billion) for the first time. Behind this milestone are Chengdu's efforts to build itself into an international consumer center.

Chengdu has historically thrived in commerce, and will have more possibilities for expanding consumption. Diverse new consumption scenarios are emerging there.

The city hosted the 110th China Food and Drinks Fair from Wednesday to Friday and plans to hold the International Horticultural Exhibition 2024 from April to October and the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals from April 27 to May 5.

Large competitions and exhibitions are effective tools for enhancing a city's popularity, stimulating consumption and promoting infrastructure construction. During the exhibitions and other events, Chengdu will offer different consumption scenarios for worldwide guests.

During the 110th China Food and Drinks Fair, Chengdu gathered industry resources such as food associations, bars and retailers to launch a consumer resource package. This year, Chengdu will use a new urban consumer brand to create a lifestyle aesthetic and increase consumers' enthusiasm.

To facilitate international tourists and exhibitors, Chengdu has launched a map for overseas tour-

ists' shopping tax refunds, a map for cross-border payment convenience in business zones, and announced 274 tax refund shops.

Representatives from the Chengdu's bureau of commerce said that it will increase the number of businesses, which can accept foreign cards, in key commercial areas, popular tourist attractions, airports and stations, expand international payment application scenarios and provide convenient and comfortable experiences for inbound consumers.

For Chengdu itself, developing into an international consumer center is beneficial for expanding the scale of consumption, consolidating and enhancing the positive trend of economic recovery, and providing higher-quality and more convenient products and services for the city's residents. It also helps in forming a higher-level dynamic balance of "demand driving supply, and supply creating demand", enhancing international influence and reputation.

## WORLD

**Editor's note:** Russia observed a national day of mourning on Sunday after the Moscow concert hall massacre on Friday, which President Vladimir Putin called a "barbaric terrorist attack". China Daily looks at the solidarity shown toward the attack victims and the calls made for concerted global efforts to counter terrorism.



## Attack highlights security challenges

Experts call for increased international collaboration to counter terrorism threats

Cars drive past an advertising screen on the facade of a building displaying an image of a lit candle and the slogan "We mourn 22.03.24" in Moscow on Saturday, a day after the deadly attack on Crocus City Hall. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

By LIU JIANQIAO

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The deadly attack on a concert hall outside Moscow on Friday has raised serious concerns about security in Russia, as experts call for increased international collaboration to combat terrorism worldwide.

With the death toll reaching 137, including three children, and more than 150 individuals injured, Russia's President Vladimir Putin declared a national day of mourning on Sunday.

It was the deadliest attack on Russian territory since the Beslan school siege nearly 20 years ago, when Islamist militants took more than 1,000 people, including hundreds of children, hostage. That siege resulted in the deaths of 334 people.

In a televised address, Putin, who called the attack "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act", cast the enemy as "international terrorism" and said he was ready to work with any state that wanted to defeat it.

The Kremlin said Putin had held conversations with the leaders of Belarus, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in which all sides affirmed their willingness to work together to fight terrorism, Reuters reported.

Following the attack, Russia bolstered security measures at airports, transportation hubs and throughout Moscow, and large public events across the country were canceled as a precautionary measure.

Wan Qingsong, an associate research professor at the Russian Studies Center of East China Normal University in Shanghai, said Russia now faces significant pressure in tackling extremist threats and maintaining security within its borders.

"Russia has assumed a pivotal role in the global fight against terrorism,



Russian citizens line up to pay tribute at the site of the attack in the northwest of Moscow on Sunday. REN QI / CHINA DAILY

### Catalog of deadly assaults in capital

Here is a timeline of major attacks on Moscow in the past two decades.

**1999:** A bomb blast on Sept 13 at an eight-story apartment building in southeast Moscow kills 118 people. The attack was one of five on apartment buildings that left 293 people dead over a two-week period in Moscow and southern Russia.

**2002:** A group of 21 male and 19 female Chechen militants storm Moscow's Dubrovka theater on Oct 23 during a musical and take more than 800 people hostage. The standoff with security forces lasts two days and three nights.

It ends when the security forces inject gas into the theater to overpower the attackers and then storm it. A total of 130 hostages are killed.

**2003:** Two female suicide bombers, identified by Russia as Chechen separatists on July 5, blow themselves up during a rock concert at the Tushino airport near Moscow, killing 15 people.

**2004:** A little-known Chechen group detonates a bomb in a packed Moscow subway during rush hour on Feb 6, killing 41 people.

**2011:** A suicide bomber strikes in the arrivals hall of Moscow Domodedovo International Airport on Jan 24, killing 37 people.

**2021:** Two female suicide bombers blow themselves up on the Moscow subway on March 29. Forty people are killed.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

exerting significant influence that cannot be ignored. However, it has been grappling with security vulnerabilities, which have been exploited by terrorist organizations, resulting in numerous attacks."

Alexander Bastrykin, head of Russia's Investigative Committee, had reported that in 2022 a total of 4,729 offenses involving foreign nationals were reported, leading to the opening of 4,231 criminal cases, Wan said. This figure represents a three-fold increase compared with the numbers reported in 2021.

"It is evident that behind these recent assaults, there are foreign influences at play, and terrorist entities and operatives have proliferated rapidly, particularly in smaller cities where security measures are weaker," Wan said.

### Precarious climate

"So in this precarious security climate, the most important thing is to stabilize the situation and prevent more terrorist incidents and casualties."

Last year the Investigative Committee underscored the prevention of extremist and terrorist crimes as one of its top priorities, Wan said. Putin presided over two pivotal meetings of the Standing Committee of the Security Council.

One such gathering, in February last year, was dedicated to counterterrorism measures, and the other, in October, concentrated on combating the illegal trafficking of weapons and ammunition in Russia.

Experts also said the world must work together to tackle increasing security threats.

After Friday's attack, several countries condemned terrorism and called for a global push to counter it.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia condemned what it called "the armed terrorist attack", stressing the "importance of fighting and combating all forms of extremism and terrorism".

Qatar reiterated its "firm position on rejecting violence and terrorism, regardless of motives and reasons".

Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed its stance in "rejecting terrorism and violent extremism in all forms and manifestations", and "continues to underscore the urgent need for a concerted international effort to eliminate the scourge of terrorism in a comprehensive and effective manner".

The United Nations Security Council offered its condolences and urged all states "to cooperate actively" with the Russian government and other authorities to hold perpetrators and backers of "these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice".

Zhu Yongbiao, executive director of the Research Center for the Belt and Road at Lanzhou University in Gansu province, said: "Terrorism presents a common threat to all members of the international community, and no single country can effectively address this global challenge alone. Collaboration among all nations is the sole feasible approach."

"Faced with constraints on deepening international cooperation, Russia may seek to advance its counterterrorism cooperation agenda through engagements with pertinent countries and international bodies because it is going to host the BRICS summit and other international events this year."

Jan Yumul in Hong Kong and agencies contributed to this story.

## Putin vows quick, tough response

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin pledged to track down and punish those behind the deadly attack on a concert hall, expressing condolences to families.

"I express my deep, sincere condolences to all those who lost their loved ones," Putin said in an address to the nation on Saturday. "The whole country and our entire people are grieving with you."

"Terrorists, murderers, non-humans... have only one unenviable fate: retribution and oblivion," Putin said.

Russian television showed security services interrogating four men on a road in the western Bryansk region, which borders both Ukraine and Belarus.

"They tried to escape and were traveling toward Ukraine, where, according to preliminary data, a window was prepared for them on the Ukrainian side to cross the state border," said Putin.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin delivers an address on Saturday. PAVEL BYRKIN VIA AFP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, in his evening address on Saturday, dismissed the suggestion that Kyiv had been involved. He said Russia was trying to shift blame.

Russia has arrested 11 people in connection with the attack, the FSB security service said. Earlier, the agency had said the attackers had "contacts" in Ukraine, without elaborating.

"All the perpetrators, organizers and those who ordered this crime will be justly and inevitably punished. Whoever they are, whoever is guiding them," Putin said.

"We will identify and punish everyone who stands behind the terrorists, who prepared this atrocity, this strike against Russia, against our people."

A senior Russian lawmaker, Andrey Kartapolov, said that if Ukraine was involved, then Russia must deliver a "worthy, clear and concrete" reply on the battlefield.

The US embassy in Moscow issued a security alert to US citizens on March 7 saying it was monitoring reports that extremists had "imminent plans to target large gatherings" in Moscow, including concerts.

The warning advised US citizens to avoid large gatherings for the coming 48 hours.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Shocked residents show solidarity with victims

MOSCOW — Queues formed before dawn on Saturday at Moscow's blood collection centers as shocked residents showed solidarity with victims of the Crocus City Hall attack.

In addition to the more than 130 people mowed down by gunmen or unable to escape the burning building, more than 100 people were taken to hospital after Friday's attack.

Many laid flowers in front of Crocus City Hall, its roof blackened and partially destroyed by the fire started by the attackers.

Police and special forces still surrounded the hall on Saturday as hundreds of emergency workers searched the debris for signs of victims.

"Yesterday was a great tragedy for all of us," said Maxim, a 37-year-old who works for the ruling United Russia political party.

"We cannot remain indifferent," he added. "A lot of us had friends and family there."

Maxim said that people he knew

who had been inside the hall and "went through hell", but all were still alive.

On advertising hoardings and at bus stops across Moscow, posters were put up showing a candle and the slogan: "We mourn 22.03.24."

With steady rain falling, about 150 people waited outside one blood collection center in northwest Moscow following an appeal by authorities.

"I came to help," said Alexandra, a 35-year-old air logistics specialist who added that all citizens had a "duty" to give aid. She added that she lived near the Crocus City Hall.

"When you can see what happened from your balcony, you understand what the reality is," she said.

"When you see the situation you don't want to remain isolated, you want to help," said Vladislav, an 18-year-old student in the queue.

By midday on Saturday, medical authorities said enough blood had been collected to help the wounded



A man donates blood for people injured in the concert hall attack at a blood center in Moscow on Saturday. ALEXANDER SCHERBAK / TASS

from the attack, but that donors would still be accepted.

"We support the desire of people coming here," said Federal Medical-Biology Agency official Olga Eikhler, as quoted by Tass news agency.

The shock was nationwide. In the second city of St. Petersburg, people left flowers in tribute at several monuments, and a queue formed at the

main improvised gathering point in front of the Russian National Library.

In the Urals city of Yekaterinburg, a makeshift memorial was started in the central square near a statue of communist icon Vladimir Lenin. People, some in tears, brought flowers, toys and candles.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Islamic State group claims responsibility for killings

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the attack on the suburban Moscow concert hall that killed more than 130 people.

The group claimed responsibility, first on Friday and then again on Saturday, on the social media channels that they typically use to issue statements.

US officials say they believe an organization known as ISIS-K, or the Islamic State Khorasan Province, carried out the strike.

The group's Afghanistan affiliate takes its name from Khorasan Province, a region taking in much of Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia in the Middle Ages.

Russia's FSB, the Federal Security Service, said it disrupted an attack by the group that was aimed at a Moscow synagogue just several weeks ago.

ISIS-K, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, has also claimed sev-

eral attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in the past.

They were behind the August 2021 suicide bombing at the Kabul airport that left 13 US troops and about 170 Afghans dead during the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

ISIS-K also claimed responsibility for a bomb attack in Kerman, Iran, in January that killed 95 people at a memorial procession for General Qassem Soleimani.

A security expert, Olivier Guitta, argues that there is much to back up the Islamic State's claim, including the fact that the group had specifically threatened Russia.

General Michael Kurilla, the commander of US Central Command, told Congress last March that ISIS-K was quickly developing the ability to conduct "external operations" in Europe and Asia.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## BUSINESS

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## Advancing new industrialization, modernization

'New quality productive forces' big game-changer, instead of being just a catchphrase

By FAN FEIFEI  
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"New quality productive forces", the catchphrase that defined the recently concluded two sessions, the annual gatherings of China's top legislature and political advisory body, will signify the new growth drivers in the world's second-largest economy and seek to overcome both challenges and uncertainties, said national legislators, political advisers and industry experts.

They said the country is sharpening focus on the task of accelerating the development of new quality productive forces. This, in turn, will enhance the resilience and competitiveness of China's industrial and supply chains, advance new industrialization and inject strong impetus into the country's economic recovery.

They also called for heightened efforts to enhance independent innovation capabilities, achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields by investing more in basic research and strategic emerging and future-oriented industries, and bolster industrial upgrade through the in-depth integration of cutting-edge digital technologies with the real economy.

Emphasizing the key role of innovation, the phrase "new quality productive forces" refers to advanced productivity liberated from traditional economic growth models. Such productivity is characterized by high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and symbolizes the nation's new development philosophy.

First put forward by President Xi Jinping during his inspection tour of Heilongjiang province in September, the phrase was highlighted again at the Central Economic Work Conference in December, and became the subject of a group study session of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee in January.

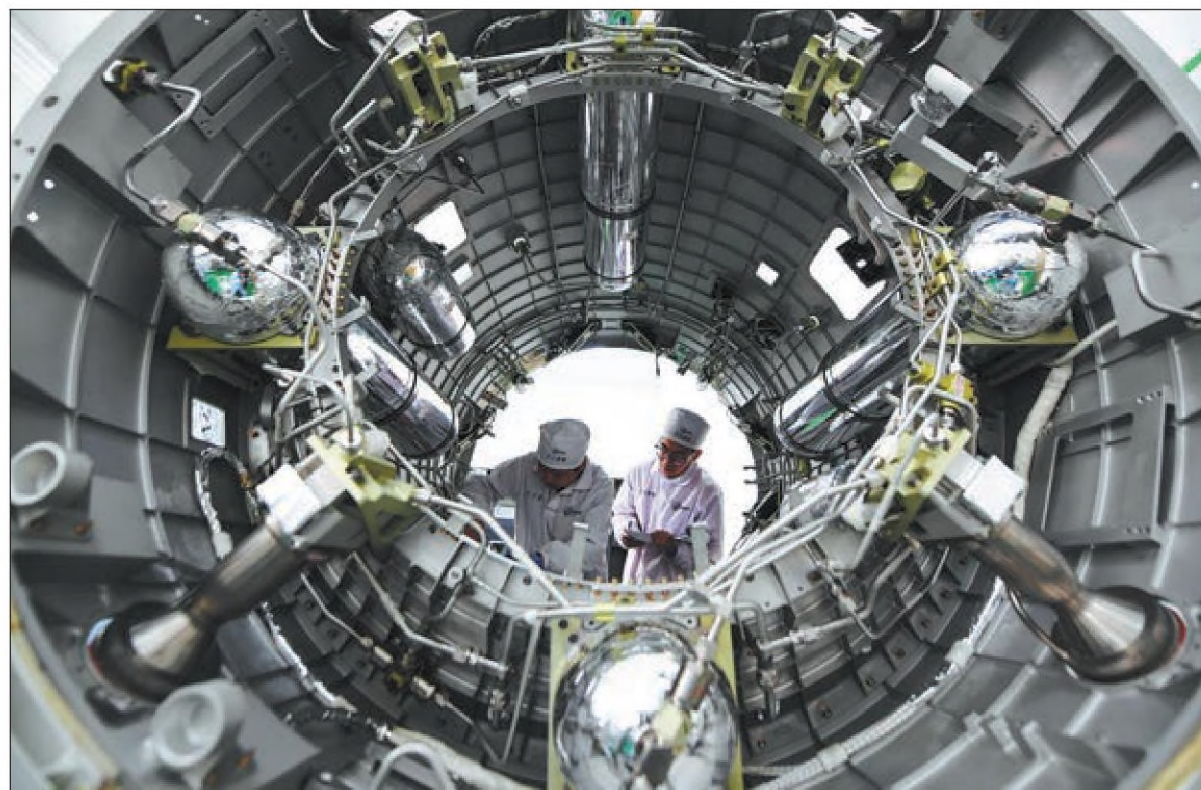
Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, underscored the concept on March 5 while participating in a deliberation during the second session of the 14th National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, stressing that new quality productive forces should be developed based on local conditions.

NPC deputy Pan Jiaofeng, who is also president of the Institutes of Science and Development, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said, "The development of new quality productive forces is an important focus of promoting high-quality development; these forces are playing a prominent role in the construction of a modern industrial system."

He emphasized the significance of nurturing new quality productive forces as they can bolster industrial upgrade, foster strategic emerging industries and future-oriented industries, and facilitate the development of the digital economy.

The strategic emerging industries and future-oriented industries mainly include new-generation information technology, new energy, high-end equipment, biotechnology, artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

This year's Government Work



Technicians test a high-tech power system used in space applications at a scientific company in Beijing on Feb 28. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA



An AI-powered humanoid robot hands a rose to a visitor during the Appliance & Electronics World Expo in Shanghai on March 14. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY



Employees use intelligent detection technology for quality-control tests on a rotor blade of a wind turbine at an industrial park in Zhangye, Gansu province, on March 7. WANG JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Report stated that China will give top priority to modernizing its industrial system and developing new quality productive forces at a faster pace.

The country will also give full rein to the leading role of innovation, spur industrial innovation by making innovations in science and technology and press ahead with new industrialization, in order to promote a new leap forward in the productive forces, the work report stated.

Noting that China is now in a critical period of innovation-driven development path, Pan said there is an urgent need to develop new technologies, new industries and new models to inject new momentum into its economic growth amid downward pressure.

Through the development of new quality productive forces, the country can seize the historic opportunities of a new round of global technological revolution and industrial transformation, achieve a qualitative leap in economic development, and promote industrial innovation through sci-tech innovation so as to gain a competitive edge in global competition, he said.

"The new quality productive forces are mainly driven by revolution-

ary technological breakthroughs, innovative allocation of production factors, and deep industrial transformation and upgrade," said Qu Yongyi, Party secretary and deputy director of the Institute of Industrial Economics, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He is also a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

"Bolstering the development of new quality productive forces is of vital importance to advance new industrialization and achieve Chinese modernization," Qu said, highlighting that sci-tech innovation serves as a key element in developing such forces.

"For traditional industries, the injection of new quality productive factors like data, and the innovative allocation of original factors of production can effectively promote the deep transformation and upgrade of industries."

Qu called for more efforts to step up investments in core technologies in key fields and solve bottleneck issues in areas like raw materials, critical components, core equipment and basic software, to boost the nation's self-reliance and strength in science and technology

and speed up the building of a modern industrial system.

He also stressed the need to strengthen international cooperation in sci-tech, improve capabilities in basic research, accelerate the construction of new types of infrastructure like computing power centers and national laboratories, and deepen sci-tech system reforms to cultivate more high-quality talent.

The emphasis on strengthening sci-tech innovation, especially original and disruptive innovation, is an important part of China's broader drive to hone its science and technological prowess. China has risen to the 11th place on the 2022 Global Innovation Index of the World Intellectual Property Organization, and remains the only middle-income economy in the top 30.

Chinese high-tech manufacturing companies are playing an increasingly pivotal role in ensuring the security and stability of industrial and supply chains, strengthening the country's capacity to buffer against external risks and shocks, and nurturing new quality productive forces.

The nation will launch an initiative to pursue high-quality development of key manufacturing chains, with focus on shoring up weak links, reinforcing strengths and fostering

new capabilities, the Government Work Report said.

Dong Mingzhu, chairwoman and president of Chinese home appliance maker Gree Electric Appliances, and a deputy to the 14th NPC, said it is important for manufacturing enterprises to beef up independent innovation capacities in cutting-edge technologies and continuously improve the quality of products and services to foster new quality productive forces.

She said Chinese enterprises must master core technologies as part of a broader push to promote the high-end, intelligent and green transformation of industries.

"The new quality productive forces are a combination of various capabilities in the process of promoting high-quality development," said Li Dongsheng, a deputy to the 14th NPC and founder and chairman of Chinese consumer electronics maker TCL Technology Group.

Such capacities include bolstering the transformation and upgrade of industries, pressing ahead with new industrialization, and boosting technological innovation and research and development of fundamental technologies and materials, Li noted.

He said the company will step up its push in artificial intelligence,

augmented reality, virtual reality, next-generation display technology and new energy photovoltaic panels, while improving its digital and intelligent manufacturing capabilities to foster new quality productive forces.

China is the world's largest manufacturer, with its output accounting for nearly 30 percent of the global total, ranking first for 14 consecutive years, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

"Intelligent manufacturing, which is a new type of production model formed by the deeper integration of artificial intelligence and manufacturing, is a crucial part of the new quality productive forces," said Zhong Zheng, a deputy to the 14th NPC and vice-president and chief financial officer of Midea Group, another major Chinese home appliance maker.

Zhong said China's intelligent manufacturing has developed rapidly in recent years, and become an important engine for upgrading traditional industries and fostering emerging industries, adding that sci-tech innovation is the core driving force for nurturing the new quality productive forces.

In her proposal to this year's two sessions, she called for more backing for intelligent manufacturing and acceleration of the formulation of standards and an evaluation system for the intelligent manufacturing sector.

The Government Work Report also said China will step up R&D and application of big data and AI, launch an AI Plus initiative, and build digital industry clusters with international competitiveness.

Cao Peng, chairman of e-commerce platform JD's technology committee, and a member of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, said, "Developing new quality productive forces denotes the close integration of cutting-edge computing technologies represented by cloud computing and artificial intelligence with intelligent machine equipment and a digitally savvy workforce."

Cao suggested that enterprises should combine the R&D of indigenous technologies with industrial development, especially amid the tide of AI technological innovation represented by large language models.

He also urged efforts to vigorously promote the construction of homegrown digital infrastructure, which provides powerful computing support for AI applications, and makes the deployment, training and reasoning of AI models safer and more efficient. He also stressed bolstering the digital transformation of enterprises along the industrial chains.

Faced with increasingly fierce international competition, China's emphasis on the development of new quality productive forces will help move the country's manufacturing sector up to the medium-high end of the global value chain, and consolidate the economic recovery momentum, said Pan Helin, co-director of the digital economy and financial innovation research center at Zhejiang University's International Business School.

Saying that enterprises have played a leading part in driving technological innovation, Pan called for more detailed policy measures to step up support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthen the protection of intellectual property rights and optimize the business environment to attract capital and technology inflows.

## How Guizhou's computing power will drive fresh growth

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Fan Feifei

When I visited Guiyang, Guizhou province, to cover the China International Big Data Industry Expo last year, I was astonished by the sight of numerous data centers in Gui'an New Area, about an hour's drive from downtown. The mountainous Guizhou is

famous for its vast karst landscapes. It is also China's first national big data comprehensive pilot zone. It has become a key computing hub for the country's megaproject of channeling more computing resources from eastern regions to its less developed yet resource-rich western regions.

I saw Chinese tech heavyweight Tencent Holdings Ltd's Gui'an Qixing data center that is shaped like mountain caves. The center covers about 470,000 square meters with over 30,000 sq m inside tunnel caves. Seen from a distance, the data center appears to be surrounded by green

vegetation, no different from natural mountain caves.

Guizhou has pioneered China's big data industry thanks to its cool climate and sufficient power supply. Tech companies from home and abroad, such as China's three telecom giants — China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom — Apple, Huawei and Alibaba have all established their data centers in Gui'an New Area. These data centers store companies' crucial data resources and provide stable computing power support.

The demand for computing power,

which is regarded as a key part of developing new quality productive forces, has been surging ever since the US-based OpenAI unveiled in February its sensational Sora, a new text-to-video generator.

Computing power, which refers to capacity of a computer or computer system to execute complex computations and data processing tasks, is key to activating the new quality productive forces in this era of the digital economy. It will also unleash China's new growth momentum, experts said. "Along with rapid development and application of AI-powered large

language models in a wide range of fields, the demand for computation and data processing has grown exponentially, which has driven the construction of data centers," said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association.

"The establishment of data centers will improve efficiency in the use of computing resources and accelerate enterprises' digitalization push," Xiang said.

The scale of China's core computing power industry reached 1.8 trillion yuan (\$250 billion) in 2022, said the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, a think tank. Every yuan invested in computing power will drive econom-

ic growth of 3 to 4 yuan in GDP.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said in August that the number of standard racks in use in China's data centers had exceeded 7.6 million units, and the country's computing power had reached 197 EFLOPS, ranking second in the world. EFLOPS is a unit of the speed of computer systems.

Zou Debao, deputy general manager of AI and big data research at market research firm CCID Consulting, said more efforts are needed to promote infrastructure construction, enhance independent innovation capabilities in areas like computing algorithms, and step up the research and development in graphics processing units and servers.

## BUSINESS



A passenger experiences a self-driving vehicle at Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area in Beijing on April 25, 2022.  
PENG ZIYANG / XINHUA

# Autonomous driving law urged as testing underway

Draft urged to be included in legislative schedule of NPC Standing Committee

By **EAN FEIFEI**  
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More efforts are needed to speed up legislation around autonomous driving technology and bolster the large-scale commercial application of self-driving vehicles, political advisers and experts said.

Lian Yuming, president of the Beijing-based International Institute for Urban Development, said autonomous driving is a tech frontier deeply integrated with new-generation information technologies, including artificial intelligence, edge computing, mobile communications and smart cities.

Lian said it has a significant impact on the country's economic development and global competitiveness.

Autonomous driving, which involves self-driving vehicle technologies, is regarded as a crucial part of developing new quality productive forces.

Noting that autonomous driving technology is an important pillar of intelligent manufacturing and vital to smart city development, Lian, who is also a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese

People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, said accelerating the legislative process for self-driving technology has become the top priority for bolstering the development of the autonomous driving industry.

He pointed out that there are some bottlenecks, such as the high cost of software and hardware devices, inadequate intelligent infrastructure and insufficient application scenarios that hinder the development of the technology.

In his proposal to this year's two sessions, Lian suggested that laws regarding self-driving should be included in the legislative plan of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, also strengthening research on legislation that covers liability, privacy protection, data security and regulatory compliance.

He also called on the government to step up support for first-tier cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen in Guangdong province, to expand the scenarios for self-driving vehicles in a wider range of fields, and further promote their commercial application.

Wang Xianjin, vice-president and chief engineer of the China Academy of Transportation Sciences, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Transport, said in the past year, the testing and operation of fully driverless vehicles had accelerated significantly in China, laying a good foundation for the large-scale application of autonomous driving technology.

Wang, a member of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, suggested that Chinese authorities should speed up the push to formulate and revise policies and regulations supporting the exploration of large-scale commercial applications for autonomous driving vehicles.

Zhang Ning, vice-president of self-driving startup Ponyai, said the company is ramping up efforts to promote the application of passenger-carrying and cargo-carrying intelligent connected vehicles on a larger scale, enrich road testing scenarios and boost large-scale commercial use of the technology.

As autonomous driving technology continues to mature, the sector is poised to consolidate in the coming years.

A report by global consultancy IHS Markit said the market size of China's self-driving taxi services is expected to surpass 1.3 trillion yuan

(\$180.7 billion) by 2030, accounting for 60 percent of the ride-hailing market nationwide.

In recent years, China has introduced a series of policies to promote the development and commercialization of self-driving technology. In November 2022, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Public Security unveiled a draft guideline to expand road tests for autonomous driving vehicles nationwide.

Shenzhen started allowing fully autonomous vehicles without human drivers to run on certain roads starting Aug 1, 2022, when a local regulation on smart and internet-connected vehicles went into effect.

Lyu Jinghong, an analyst of intelligent mobility at research company BloombergNEF, said, "Continuous testing on public roads, eased regulations, as well as cost reductions in autonomous vehicle manufacturing, will help accelerate the deployment and commercialization of self-driving cars."

Lyu said clear regulations at the national level will encourage local governments and autonomous driving companies to quicken the use of self-driving technology, which is crucial for achieving commercialization targets.

## China will do more to defuse risks, say experts

BEIJING — China has not slid into deflation, but more efforts will be made to defuse potential risks, lawmakers and political advisers said during the annual sessions of China's national legislature and political advisory body earlier this month.

"Deflation is often the result of long-term accumulation of structural problems in economic operation, not affirmed solely on one or two price indicators," said Huang Maoxing, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and vice-president of the Fujian Academy of Social Sciences.

The view that deflation has occurred in China is completely misleading, he stressed.

Based on the economics, deflation mainly refers to continuous declines in prices and a downward trend in the money supply, usually accompanied by economic recession.

China's consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, rose 0.2 percent in 2023, in contrast with certain developed economies suffering from high inflation.

Deducting the fluctuating prices of food and energy, core CPI rose by 0.7 percent year-on-year in 2023, indicating overall stability in the supply and demand of industrial products and services, said Jin Li, a national political adviser and vice-president of Southern University of Science and Technology.

Moreover, China's CPI edged up 0.7 percent year-on-year in February, reversing a 0.8 percent decline in January, and rose 1 percent on a monthly basis, expanding by 0.7 percentage point from that in January, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

Referring to the money supply, the M2, a broad measure of money supply that covers cash in circulation and all deposits, climbed 8.7 percent year-on-year to 297.63 trillion yuan (\$41.9 trillion) by the end of January, according to data from the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank.

China's 2023 gross domestic product surpassed 126 trillion yuan, an increase of 5.2 percent, ranking it among the fastest-growing major economies in the world.

"We don't expect to see a general deflation trend in China," Gita Gopinath, first deputy managing director

of the International Monetary Fund, said at a news conference last November.

But prices do influence economic operations and daily life. The current low inflation rate in China is the result of multiple factors.

"After the stable transition of pandemic prevention and control, China's domestic production has seen a fast recovery, logistics remain smooth, and the supply of products is sufficient, but demand is constrained by unstable expectations," said Xu Guangjian, vice-chairman of the Price Association of China.

Xu attributed the declines in prices largely to the time gap between the recovery of supply and demand, adding "it takes time".

Jin said that major issues like the Ukraine crisis led to higher grain and energy prices in 2022, hence the relatively lower CPI increase in 2023 due to the high base.

In addition, pork prices, a heavy-weight in China's CPI calculations, have been declining due to ample supply and weak pork consumption, dragging down CPI growth.

External factors also have an impact on prices in China. In response to high inflation, central banks of the United States and European countries rapidly and intensively adjusted their monetary policies.

The rapid and unexpected decline in inflation levels in developed economies has affected price levels in China, said PBOC Governor Pan Gongsheng.

Although weak CPI performance is deemed temporary, more work needs to be done to take precautions against deflation risks, and resolve the inadequacy of effective domestic demand and overcapacity in some industries, according to national lawmakers and political advisers.

"Maintaining a reasonable level of liquidity is an effective measure to prevent deflation risks," said Zeng Gang, director of the Shanghai Institute for Finance and Development.

Zeng said he expects more effective demand in the real economy and stronger consumer and investment willingness as the government aims at a steady decline in overall financing costs this year.

XINHUA



Consumers choose groceries at a supermarket in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on March 9. SHI JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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SONG CHEN AND MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

BREAST DISEASE  
AWARENESS

EARLY DETECTION AND INTERVENTION CAN SAVE LIVES

VITAL  
FOR WOMEN

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

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

## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## Country continues to show signs of resilience

## EAGLE EYE

By Fan Zhiyong

China successfully achieved its major economic and development goals and overcame various unfavorable obstacles last year, fully demonstrating its inherent potential and resilience. As China's economy continues to recover and the country's high-standard opening-up proceeds apace, the country is expected to bring more opportunities to global economic development this year.

Looking back to 2023, the nation's macroeconomy showed a trend of high growth, stable employment, low prices and a balanced international payments situation throughout the year.

In terms of overall growth, China, as the world's second-largest economy, became one of the fastest-growing major markets last year, with 5.2 percent year-on-year growth. In terms of demand, consumption has played an increasing role in stabilizing the fundamentals of the national economy.

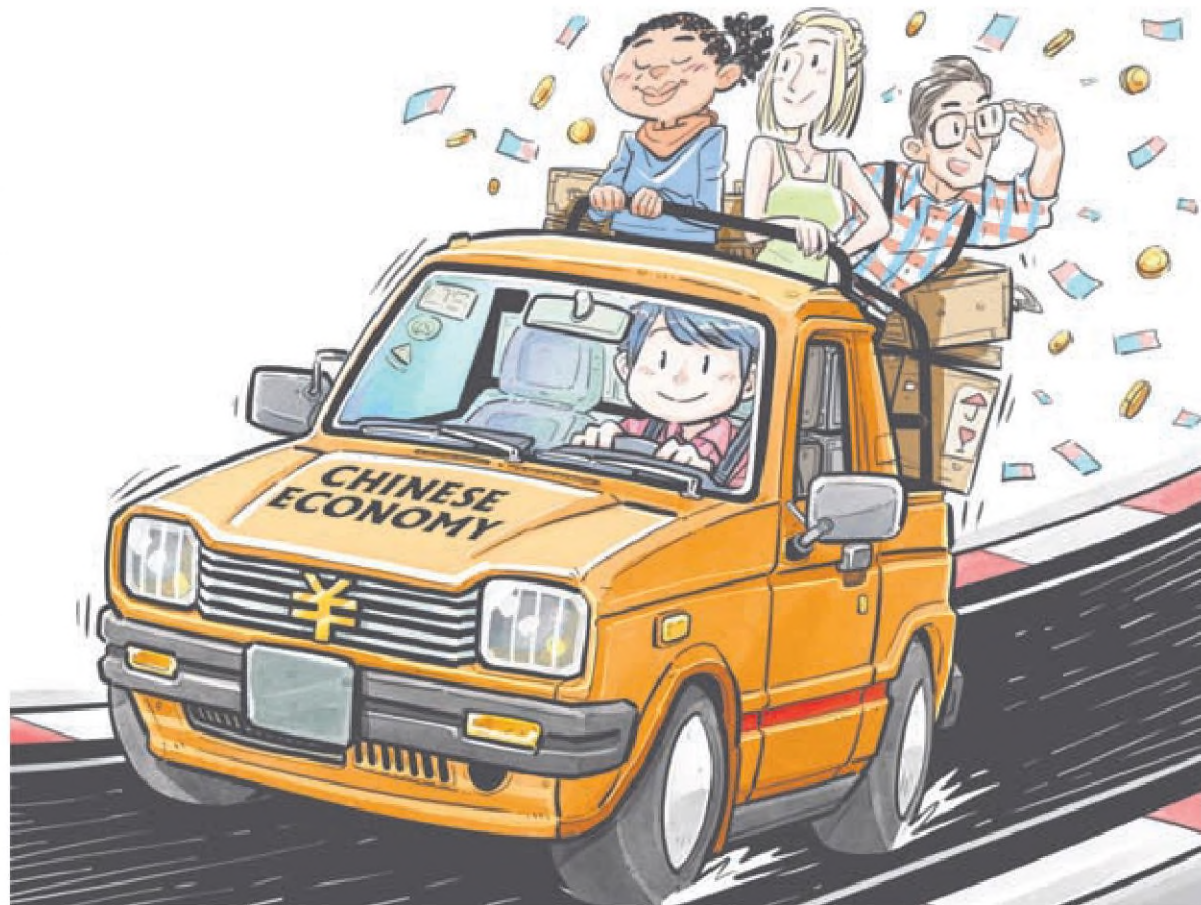
For instance, the contribution rate of final consumption expenditure to economic growth reached 82.5 percent last year, an increase of 49.7 percentage points from the previous year. Total retail sales of consumer goods for the whole year also exceeded 47 trillion yuan (\$6.53 trillion), an increase of 7.2 percent.

During the Spring Festival holiday in February, the number of domestic tourist trips hit 474 million, a year-on-year increase of 34.3 percent. The contribution rate of the domestic demand to economic growth reached 111.4 percent last year, an increase of 25.3 percentage points.

It can be seen from the data above that consumption has played a more prominent role in expanding domestic demand and driving economic development.

Despite developed countries being generally under inflationary pressure, China's price levels have remained stable with steady prices on both consumption and production fronts.

In terms of income, per capita disposable income among households increased 6.1 percent in 2023 compared with the previous year, which is slightly faster than overall economic growth. This is important for stabilizing income expectations,



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

boosting consumer confidence and laying a solid foundation for consumption growth.

As for the implementation of expanding domestic demand, for instance, the government has introduced a series of policies to boost consumption, which has given full play to the role of the services sector and consumption in leading economic growth. Total retail sales of consumer goods hit a record high in 2023 and fully demonstrated the advantages of the country's ultra-large-scale market.

Such economic activity accelerated the flow of people. In January, more than 57 million passengers traveled by plane, which marked a year-on-year increase of 44.1 percent and a monthly-high since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019.

By continuing to deepen supply-side structural reforms, on the other

hand, China has worked hard to leverage technological innovation to promote industrial innovation, build a modern industrial system and promote high-end, intelligent and green development of its manufacturing sector.

With such efforts, the country's innovation-driven capabilities have been continuously improved. In 2023, China's investment in high-tech manufacturing and high-tech service industries increased by 9.9 percent and 11.4 percent, respectively, over the previous year.

China has also continued to deepen reforms of its sci-tech system and accelerate self-reliance in high-level sci-tech. In 2023, investment in the country's high-tech industries grew 10.3 percent year-on-year, 7.3 percentage points higher than the growth rate of overall investment.

Notably, the country has imple-

mented several policies and measures to stabilize foreign investment and foreign trade. Last year, China's imports and exports both achieved steady growth in terms of scale and quality.

In particular, electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and solar batteries put on an eye-catching performance by exceeding 1 trillion yuan in total exports for the first time, which marked an increase of 29.9 percent year-on-year.

While the economy has achieved rapid growth, the quality of growth has been continuously improved. China's economic growth has increasingly bid farewell to the traditional model that relies on low-cost labor, high environmental costs and low land prices.

The country has increasingly relied on technological innovation and focuses more on quality instead

of quantity. China's high-quality development continues to increase, especially in emerging and green industries.

In 2023, industrial output of the country's high-tech manufacturing sector and equipment manufacturing industry rose 15.7 percent and 33.6 percent, respectively, year-on-year. The integrated development of digital technology and the real economy has also made solid progress, with e-commerce transactions increasing 9.4 percent over the previous year, and output of the information transmission, software and information technology services sectors rising 11.9 percent.

China's investment in high-tech and basic research will also drive high-quality economic development. In 2023, total research and development expenditure hit 3.3 trillion yuan, accounting for 2.64 percent of the

GDP, of which, basic research spending increased 9.3 percent year-on-year.

A recent European Union report, which surveyed 2,500 major companies around the world, showed that total R&D expenses in 2022 stood at some 9.7 trillion yuan. Chinese companies accounted for 17.8 percent, behind only those of the United States at 42.1 percent. Among them, Huawei ranked fifth worldwide in terms of R&D expenses.

China's economic development is becoming a major driver of global economic recovery. It contributed more than 30 percent to world economic growth in 2023 and is the largest engine of global economic growth.

For the world, effective demand is the scarcest resource. With a population of more than 1.4 billion and per capita GDP of over \$12,000, China has strong potential for rapid economic recovery, innovation leadership and risk resistance. The country has the greatest potential in the world and will definitely bring more opportunities globally.

China has been actively promoting high-standard opening-up to the outside world, as seen by the construction of free trade ports and zones. China also lifted restrictions on the shareholding ratio of foreign capital in banking and insurance institutions in January.

Nowadays, the technological revolution marked by IT, biotech, aerospace, new materials and new energy is profoundly changing human production and lifestyle. After more than 40 years of development, China's sci-tech and economic prowess is catching up with that of developed economies and the country has turned from a follower to a participant and a leader in more and more areas.

China's development never involves closing doors. Instead, the country is using its unremitting efforts to benefit people all over the world.

In 2022, the Chinese space station opened its doors to the world and became the first country in history to open its space station to all United Nations members. China is also committed to biodiversity and environmental protection and has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060 and is currently the country with the highest renewable energy output and installed capacity.

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The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## China's economy at critical phase of transition

## MAIN STREET

By Liu Shangxi and Li Chengwei

The Chinese economy has shown strong resilience. China's urbanization, pursuit of low-carbon and green development, and rapid digitization have provided robust intrinsic momentum for its economic development.

The country's institutional advantages have granted it great error-correction capabilities, while ongoing reforms and innovations have injected certainty into the future prospects of its economic growth.

Admittedly, China faces challenges such as insufficient effective demand, subdued social expectations and multiple risks during its economic development journey. However, these issues, inevitable in the transition toward high-quality development, are solvable and will not alter the long-term stability and upward trajectory of China's economy.

## Engine of expansion

China has been the world's largest manufacturing powerhouse, top goods trader, and leading contributor to global economic growth for many consecutive years. In 2023, China's gross domestic product exceeded 126 trillion yuan (\$17.5 trillion), growing at a rate of 5.2 percent year-on-year. This has not only surpassed the global average of around 3 percent, but also positioned China as one of the top performers among major economies. China remains the primary engine driving global economic expansion.

China also possesses a significant

advantage with its vast domestic market, and the potential for economic growth driven by consumption upgrades is immense. With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, a middle-income group of more than 400 million people, and a per capita GDP exceeding \$12,000, China has already established a preliminary advantage in demand within a super-large market.

As the size of the middle-income group continues to expand, Chinese residents' consumption patterns will further diversify and evolve toward the high-end and services-oriented spectrum. Simultaneously, the upgrading of consumption structures will give rise to new demands, thereby propelling China's economic growth into even broader horizons.

The Chinese economy also possesses a strong supply advantage due to its well-developed industrial system. The continuous upgrading of manufacturing industries lays the foundation for future high-quality economic development.

China's large industrial scale, complete industrial system and strong supporting capabilities enable efficient fulfillment of various market demands. This is conducive to achieving economies of scale and agglomeration effects.

By the end of 2023, China had nurtured 421 national-level demonstration factories, over 10,000 provincial-level digital workshops and smart factories, and established a total of 5,095 national-level green factories. The country has also developed 66 national-level strategic emerging industry clusters, with its share of global industrial robot installations exceeding 50 percent.

As China's manufacturing sector continues to upgrade, its advantageous position in the global industrial chains will become even more

pronounced, providing robust support for the country's economic development.

## Demographic dividend

In recent years, although China's population growth has slowed, the quality of its population has steadily improved, leading to the accelerated formation of demographic dividends.

As of 2023, China boasted a population of over 250 million individuals with university-level education, and the average education years for the working-age population (aged 16-59) had reached 11.05 years, representing a 0.12-year increase compared to that in 2022.

Besides, by enhancing public expenditure on education and other essential services, China can effectively unlock the dividends of population quality improvement, providing robust support for sustained economic development.

The aging population has also given rise to a considerable silver economy, while China's pool of over 200 million skilled workers also represents significant potential for innovation and creativity.

China's efforts to build a financially strong nation provide effective support for future economic and social development.

The country boasts abundant capital, and its outbound investments continue to grow, making it a significant source of investment for many countries. Currently, China's banking sector holds the world's largest asset size, and its bond market ranks second globally. Additionally, China's foreign exchange reserves have consistently maintained the top position for years.

The development of digital finance, green finance and inclusive finance places China at the forefront globally. As internationalization of

the renminbi gathers pace and its exchange rate remains relatively stable, China is providing greater security in an uncertain financial world.

Currently, the Chinese economy is entering a critical period of transitioning toward high-quality development. In this process, it is inevitable to encounter some challenges and issues, which may cause fluctuations in certain economic indicators.

However, these fluctuations will not alter the overall stable, progressive and positive long-term prospects of the Chinese economy, which is underpinned by its significant potential in urbanization, low-carbon green development, and digitization. The realization of this potential will provide strong impetus for China's economic growth.

In 2023, China's urbanization rate stood at 66.16 percent, which is still more than 10 percentage points below the level of developed economies. This indicates that China has vast development potential from urbanization.

Besides, in terms of registered permanent residence, China's urbanization rate is only 47.7 percent, leaving the population of rural migrant workers at nearly 300 million. Progress in turning the rural migrant workers into new urbanites will unlock significant domestic demand and growth potential, providing robust momentum for China's economic development.

## Green transformation

Low-carbon and green transformation is also driving the transformation and upgrade of China's energy structure, industrial composition, transportation systems, and production and lifestyle patterns.

Within this transformation lie substantial opportunities for investment and consumer demand. For instance, the green and low-carbon

transformation of heavy industries such as steel, cement and petrochemicals, along with the production, storage and transmission of renewable energy, necessitates significant investments.

Meanwhile, low-carbon and green initiatives will foster new drivers of economic growth, enhance development potential, and provide robust support for China's economic progress. A prime example is the emergence of the three core products in the green and low-carbon industry — new energy vehicles, lithium batteries and solar panels, or the "new three". They have gradually replaced the traditional "old three" of clothing, furniture and household appliances, becoming a fresh impetus for China's foreign trade growth.

Digital transformation in China is also accelerating, infusing new vitality into its economic development.

Currently, China's digital economy has surpassed 5 trillion yuan, the world's second-largest in terms of value. China's capacity for digital technology innovation is also rapidly advancing. As of the end of 2022, the country held 1.273 million valid patents in core industries related to the domestic digital economy.

The widespread application of digital technology and the rapid accumulation of data elements are driving the convergence of digital and real economies. By empowering supply chains, industrial networks, value chains, and fostering innovation, this transformation is propelling comprehensive, multidimensional and end-to-end upgrades across manufacturing, services and agriculture. Consequently, it will inject fresh vigor into China's economic development.

Currently, the global economy is faced with high levels of uncertainty and instability, with escalating risks worldwide. Only countries that can discern problems and promptly address them through reforms and innovation will be better positioned

to maintain positive economic development. China possesses such advantage in its institutional framework.

First, China's decision-makers exhibit strong risk awareness and crisis perception capability, and maintain a clear and objective understanding of the challenges facing the nation's economic development. Their insights into the complexity, severity and uncertainty of the economic situation are crucial for risk prevention and crisis resolution.

Second, the spirit of self-revolution within the Party embodies robust reform and innovation capabilities, allowing for continuous self-correction. This enables the Chinese economy to make fewer mistakes in uncertain environments. Even when faced with short-term setbacks, the system's advantages can facilitate error correction, foster consensus on reforms and inject greater certainty into China's economic prospects.

In recent years, despite the rise of protectionism and the emergence of anti-globalization forces, economic globalization remains a general trend. China is a beneficiary of, and contributor to, economic globalization and, more importantly, a staunch supporter and defender of it. High-standard opening-up and cooperation are not only beneficial to the development of all countries in the world, but also provide conditions for China's sustainable economic development.

China's rapid economic growth and the continued promotion of high-standard opening-up have provided important impetus for stable global economic growth and the construction of an open world economy.

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The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Terrorism a challenge to civilization that calls for concerted endeavors to counter

By attacking a concert hall in a Moscow suburb on Friday night, which has resulted in at least 143 deaths and more than one hundred people being hospitalized for their injuries, the perpetrators have once again exposed to the world how morally low terrorists can be.

Wearing the false mask of "the weak against the strong", terrorist organizations attack only the most vulnerable targets. Often, as in this instance, concertgoers intent on enjoying live music or people going about their daily lives, commuting or shopping.

It's ordinary people that suffer from the cruelty of these cold-blooded killers.

The Chinese government and Chinese people stand in solidarity with the victims and their families at this time. In a statement released on Saturday, the Chinese leader extended his deep condolences to the bereaved families of the victims, and extended his sincere sympathy to the injured.

He emphasized that China opposes all forms of terrorism, strongly condemns terrorist attacks, and firmly supports the Russian government's efforts to maintain national security and stability.

According to the Russian authorities, the four suspected gunmen and seven others have been arrested and are being detained and questioned in Moscow.

The global response to the attack shows that it is a common understanding that nothing can justify such heinous acts.

The United Nations Security Council has condemned "the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack" and called it "reprehensible", while other members of the international society have expressed similar statements of sympathy and outrage.

Despite the complexities of international affairs and the conflicts of interests among countries, it is a consensus of the international community as a whole that terrorism targeted at civilians is intolerable. So even though some countries are at odds with Russia, they have still decried the terrorist attack on Moscow concertgoers on Friday.

This is the right response because terrorism poses a challenge to all countries and people around the world. What happened in Moscow on Friday could happen anywhere at any time. The attack is a reminder that terrorism remains one of the most serious threats to global peace and security, and it requires a unified and resolute response from all nations. The international community must work in close cooperation to ensure that all those responsible are swiftly brought to justice in accordance with international law.

As a major member of the international community and close neighbor with friendly relations with Russia, and a country that has also been the victim of terrorist attacks, China engages in practical cooperation with Russia and other countries on multiple aspects in the fight against the evil forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

The nation has joined 12 global counterterrorism conventions and it has played an important role in facilitating joint efforts to promote regional security and stability through agreements such as the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States Agreement on Border Defense Cooperation.

Founded in 2001, the SCO has grown from six member states to a big family of over 20 member states, observers and dialogue partners. As a major political, economic and international security and defense organization, the SCO's counterterrorism mechanism is of great practical importance in the regional approach to fighting terrorism, which is an inherently cross-border threat to countries. The SCO now needs to further strengthen its collective and collaborative counterterrorism capacities.

The terrorist attack in Moscow on Friday is a call of action for all nations to stand together in the fight against extremism and to work tirelessly to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future.

## Chinese economy belies scaremongers

The high growth rate the Chinese economy maintained for the majority part of the past four decades seems to have made some take it for granted. They therefore view the 5.2 percent year-on-year growth of the Chinese economy last year from a glass-half-empty perspective.

Added to this, the United States and its allies have been going to great lengths to try and shake the market's confidence in the prospects of the Chinese economy implying it's a cause of concern for the world.

Yet China's economic growth rate is markedly higher than those of other major economies, including the respective 2.5 percent, 1.9 percent and 0.1 percent growth rates of the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom last year, not to mention the 0.5 percent contraction of the eurozone economy over the same period.

None of the latter has caused the same level of hand-wringing as the performance of the Chinese economy, with some China-bashers backing up their claims of the "decline" of the Chinese economy by pointing to foreign direct investment in the country decreasing by about 8 percent year-on-year in 2023. What they don't bother to mention is that the FDI in the developing countries and the global average in 2023 fell 9 percent and 18 percent respectively. Nor do they acknowledge the cause of that, which is the US Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes, which have enabled the US to reap the global post-pandemic recovery dividends.

True, the de-risking policies of the US and some of its allies have unavoidably affected the Chinese economy to a certain extent. But that is something China has realized that it cannot sidestep due to the incorrigible Cold War mentality and zero-sum game mindset that prevail in some developed countries. But an economy with China's size and the level of its connection with the world — China's GDP was \$17.52 trillion last year and it is the largest trading partner with over 120 countries and regions — will not easily yield to the external pressure.

Also, Japan experienced something similar in the 1980s, when it was targeted by the US after it showed the potential to overtake the US in some economic indexes and technology sectors. China has certainly drawn lessons from that.

That being said, what Chinese Premier Li Qiang has stressed in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the China Development Forum 2024 on Sunday in Beijing — the recovery of the Chinese economy is strengthening, the country's high-quality development is accelerating, and the long-term development of the Chinese economy is unchanged — should not be seen as a mere defense of the prospects of the Chinese economy, but a show of the policymakers' full confidence in the growth potential of the world's second-largest economy in the future.

Themed "The continuous development of China", the two-day forum, with its first edition held in 2000, hosted by a major think tank under the State Council, the country's Cabinet, is a vital platform to promote exchanges and cooperation between China and the global economic and financial decision-makers and the business community. About 400 people attended the opening ceremony this year, including the representatives of international organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The participants' positive echoing of Premier Li's remarks demonstrates that there are those taking a more objective view who also have confidence in the future growth of the Chinese economy. They believe that China, whose contribution to world economic growth remained at around 30 percent last year, has the ability and resilience to make the most of what it has to generate lasting internal growth impetus and new quality productive forces to drive its development.

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Li Min



## Opinion Line

## Nurturing new quality productive forces will be a process of 'creative destruction'

At present, China is cultivating emerging industries, building future industries, and developing new quality productive forces. However, there are concerns that because emerging industries are highly capital-intensive, excessive investment may result in overcapacity that wastes investment and triggers international trade disputes.

If well managed, the aforementioned problems of this process of "creative destruction", as economist Joseph Schumpeter termed it, can be resolved or avoided.

Judging from the history of the 1970s, this process, in which new innovations replace and make obsolete older innovations, has taken two routes. One route is shown by the rise of Japan's

semiconductor and electronics industry, which led to a trade war with the United States. The other is the information technology revolution in the US.

The innovation process of exploring new technologies and new industries is a risk-taking process for entrepreneurs. There is inevitably a lot of trial and error, and certain new technologies will also be subject to competitive investment.

In addition, the process of "creative destruction" is also a stage for technological competition between major powers, which in turn is an external driving force for creative destruction.

The main feature of great power competition is that governments use fiscal funds and government procurement to fund large-scale scientific and technologi-

cal research and development. The technological innovations of the US, the former Soviet Union, Japan and other major economies are all the outcome of government-funded research and development in the process of competition.

Therefore, there is no need to worry about over-investment in innovation fields and emerging industries. But it is necessary to avoid the old production capacity structure affecting the enthusiasm for creative destruction. So in addition to industrial transformation and upgrading based on application innovation, China must also pay attention to new technological revolution, and be prepared for the elimination of old technologies and production systems at the same time.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## Philippines risks being burned playing with fire

On Saturday, the Philippines once again sent two coast guard ships and a supply ship to trespass into the waters adjacent to China's Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea in an attempt to transport construction materials to the disintegrating World War II warship it illegally grounded on the reef in 1999.

Despite China's repeated warnings, the Philippine ships tried to force their way toward Ren'ai Reef. The China Coast Guard vessels were left with no choice but to implement interceptions, and evictions in accordance with laws and regulations. These actions were carried out in a restrained and professional manner.

It is Manila that has taken the initiative to stir up trouble and undermine regional peace and stability in the South China Sea time and again.

By grounding the BRP *Sierra Madre* on the reef, Manila hoped to change the "status quo" of the reef. In 1999, China immediately lodged stern representations and demanded that the Philippines tow the warship away. The Philippines has repeatedly promised to do so. But not only has it not fulfilled that promise, it is now attempting to conduct large-scale repairs of the warship and augmentation to the site to establish its permanent occupation of Ren'ai Reef.

The current relations between China and the Philippines are facing serious difficulties. The root cause is that Manila has changed its policy stance, reneged on the commitments it has made to Beijing, continued to provoke and cause trouble in the waters, and undermined China's legitimate rights and core interests. The

Philippines should act with caution, as China-Philippines relations are at a crossroad.

The top priority is to properly handle and control the current maritime situation. The existing disputes should be resolved through consultation between Beijing and Manila. China has always been committed to that.

However, if the Philippines misjudges the situation, insists on going its own way, or even colludes with malicious external forces to continue causing trouble and chaos in the South China Sea, China will respond resolutely to safeguard its rights in accordance with the law. The Philippines will bear the responsibility for all the consequences arising from its playing with fire.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## US needs to close ranks and demand Gaza cease-fire

The United Nations Security Council is to vote on Monday on another draft resolution on the Gaza Strip submitted by the nonpermanent members.

This draft resolution demands a permanent and sustainable cease-fire in the Gaza conflict. It requires the immediate and unconditional release of all detained persons, and the expansion of humanitarian assistance and strengthened protection of civilians, and calls for the removal of all obstacles to the large-scale provision of humanitarian assistance.

Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN, said that the draft has a clear stance on a cease-fire, is in line with the correct direction of the UN Security Council's actions, and has practical significance. China therefore supports it.

On Friday, the UN Security Council voted on a draft resolution proposed by the

United States on the Palestine-Israel issue. A total of 11 members were in favor of it, and Guyana abstained. Russia, China and Algeria, the only Arab country among the current UN Security Council members, voted against it.

Although the draft proposed by the US had been revised several times in the past month and contained some elements that responded to the concerns of the international community, it remained evasive on the core issue of a cease-fire. The final text of the draft did not call for an immediate cease-fire, or even provide a path to achieving a cease-fire in the short term. This obviously deviates from the consensus reached by the other UN Security Council members and is far from the expectations of the international community. An immediate cease-fire is a basic prerequisite for saving lives, expanding humanitarian access, and preventing greater conflict. Instead, the US draft set preconditions for a cease-fire.

The US draft was also unbalanced in

many other aspects, especially in response to Israel's recent multiple declarations of its plan to launch a military attack on Rafah. The draft did not clearly express its opposition, and thus it would send a very wrong signal and have serious consequences.

Any action taken by the UN Security Council should withstand the test of history and moral conscience. Based on the concerns and strong dissatisfaction of Arab countries with this draft, and to uphold justice and safeguard the dignity of the UN Charter and the Security Council, China, Algeria and Russia voted against it.

China rejects the unreasonable accusations made by the US and the United Kingdom about China's voting position. If the US was serious about achieving a cease-fire in Gaza, it would not have repeatedly vetoed multiple UN Security Council resolutions; it would not have played word games, and it would not have been vague on key issues.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Asian Economic Development

**Editor's note:** Facing the complex and uncertain international situation, countries in Asia have played and will continue to play a vital role in promoting free trade, multilateralism and globalization, which are essential to building a just, equitable, open and inclusive world. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Cyn-Young Park

## Climate goals need trade collaboration

The countries responsible for 88 percent of global carbon emissions, including large emitters in Asia, have pledged net-zero emissions by 2050 (with some realizing the goal between 2060 and 2070), yet current efforts are insufficient to achieve that target. Integrating trade policies with climate initiatives could break the gridlock and bring us closer to achieving this crucial goal.

A growing number of countries have pledged to achieve the time-bound net-zero emissions. More than 140 countries, which account for about 88 percent of global emissions, including the biggest emitters — China, the United States, India and the European Union — have now signed up. Their net-zero targets are translated into climate action plans, or Nationally Determined Contributions, to reduce emissions and slow the pace of global warming. However, the current NDCs are not enough to achieve the climate goal set in the Paris Agreement to keep global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius above the average pre-industrial level.

Trade policies need to become more integrated with the NDCs to cover the shortfall. Unfortunately, the nexus between trade policy and climate actions continues to be overlooked in formulating the NDCs. The economic rationales for improving the interface between trade policy and climate actions are compelling. For example, green trade can offer many solutions to climate change by expediting the transition to renewable energy, promoting technology transfer, and encouraging investment in green sectors and low-carbon technologies among others.

Leveraging green trade and investment is also key to successfully facilitating the energy transition and the NDCs' implementation in developing countries which face difficulties in gaining access to finance and technologies.

Policy frameworks under the NDCs, which help create new trade and investment opportunities in renewable energy for example, can support just transitions in developing countries and increase their NDC ambitions.

But geoeconomic fragmentation is a growing threat to the transition to clean energy and developing a net-zero economy. Conflicting national interests in the name of energy security have led many countries to undertake unilateral actions and restrict trade in materials critical for energy transition. And as

enterprises compete in the global race to secure the supplies of critical minerals for new business opportunities, governments lend their support to domestic companies and promote domestic energy transition through additional protectionist measures.

With many governments leaning toward protectionism, businesses and investors retreat further from overseas activities. Protectionist policies could persist despite their adverse consequences on the reliability of global supply chains and national long-term energy security, if the lack of collective global actions continues to create uncertainties over trade and supply chains.

Given the complex workings of deeply interconnected global value chains, protectionist measures such as export bans, tariffs and subsidies create uncertainty, which in turn will discourage investments. They can also distort business incentives, create supply chain bottlenecks, and disrupt the flow of



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essential inputs that could be detrimental to the successful transition to clean energy technologies.

Trade policies need to become more integrated with the NDCs to address the shortfall. The current NDCs represent in delivering on the global climate goal. It would be more sensible therefore to implement proactive policies such as encouraging investment in infrastructure and human capital development, and implementing reforms to improve the overall business environment while preserving open trade and investment regimes.

As global energy transitions gather pace, developing reliable, diversified and responsible supply chains for critical mineral and clean energy manufacturing is becoming strategically important in Asia and the Pacific. The region boasts rich natural resources, well-established manufacturing and industrial bases for clean energy technologies, as well as a high-quality and skilled workforce.

To unlock the massive economic potential from the global energy transition, the region's policymakers must take coordinated measures to reduce business uncertainties, help manage environmental, social and governance risks, and support reforms to address supply-side constraints. Governments, for their part, can encourage private and foreign investors to input capital into projects by "de-risking" investments, leveraging government funding and tax incentives, and forging strategic partnerships to reduce policy uncertainties and political instability.

A united front on green trade and investment can exert significant influence on national climate pledges. For example, trade agreements with strong environmental provisions can help increase the NDC ambitions and make their implementation more efficient by aligning private sector incentives with climate goals and creating an environment conducive to green trade and investment.

More importantly, coherent policies and coordinated actions across countries will help strengthen their NDC targets and expedite their implementation. The current trade tensions and geoeconomic fragmentation harm our chances of capitalizing on these opportunities and reaching the global climate goals in time to avert the climate crisis.

The collective ambition to achieve net-zero emissions underscores the urgent need to leverage trade policies for climate action. Trade policy reforms focusing on transparent trade rules and regulations can reduce market uncertainties that hamper investment in green projects, boost confidence and trust by increasing market access for private and foreign investors, and facilitate cross-border investment and technical transfers.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asian Development Bank, its management, its Board of Directors, or its members.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Xu Changwen

## Rise of Asian nations changes AI development landscape

The introduction of ChatGPT by OpenAI in November 2022 sparked a global frenzy. The historical milestone in the development of artificial intelligence ignited a race among tech giants worldwide to come up with new AI innovations.

Goldman Sachs and McKinsey have said that breakthroughs in generative AI could significantly boost global GDP. At the forefront of this revolution stand US tech giants such as OpenAI, Google and Meta, leveraging their considerable resources and talents to come up with more advanced AI applications. But this dominance is now being challenged by a wave of AI innovations in Asia.

Japan, long known for its technological prowess, has ramped up its efforts to develop AI with unwavering government support. Under Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's leadership, Japan has unveiled ambitious plans, including substantial budget hikes and tax incentives, to foster innovations in AI. The establishment of the AI Strategy Council underscores Japan's commitment to harness AI's transformative potential, with Japanese corporations like NEC and SoftBank leading the charge and developing large-scale language models, such as NEC's Cotomi and NTT's Tsuzumi, tailored to Japanese people's needs.

Besides, the Japanese government plays a key role, along with other countries, in setting international rules for AI development. In May 2023, Japan spearheaded the Hiroshima AI Process at the G7 Summit, focusing on the use of, and regulations for, AI and aiming to take a leading position in the formulation of international rules in relevant fields.

Similarly, the Republic of Korea has set its sights on becoming a global AI powerhouse under President Yoon Suk-yeol's leadership. With ambitious goals to rival the United States and China in AI development capacity by 2027, the ROK is investing heavily in AI semiconductor research and development.

Last September, the ROK government introduced a new plan for AI development which says that, starting from 2024, the government will invest 909 billion won (\$680 million) to promote the widespread application of AI in various fields including healthcare, education, culture and administration, and strengthen its global competitive position in the super-large-scale AI domain.

Leading ROK tech companies such as NAVER and Samsung are demonstrating their technological prowess with innovative products like NAVER's HyperCLOVA X, which can be applied to search engines, online shopping, res-



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ervations, reviews, maps and multimedia and other areas to efficiently find the desired information and products.

Additionally, initiatives like the "Hiroshima AI Accord" highlight the ROK's commitment to shape international AI regulations. ROK tech giants such as SK Telecom and LG have also invested heavily in the development of large-scale AI language models.

Apart from Japan and the ROK, other Asian countries are also making significant strides in AI development. Vietnam aims to position itself as an AI innovation hub in Southeast Asia, while Singapore seeks to lead the global AI race with substantial investments in AI computing and talent development. India, too, is investing heavily in AI projects to bolster its AI ecosystem, including a 103 billion rupees (\$1.25 billion) investment this month.

The rapid development of AI in Asia poses a significant challenge to the US, which has traditionally dominated the field. While the US and Europe have

long been at the forefront of AI development, the emergence of formidable competitors in Asia is reshaping the global AI landscape. With substantial government support and strong emphasis on R&D, Asian countries are fast closing the gap with the West, and positioning themselves as key players in the global AI race.

The implications of the AI boom in Asia are far-reaching. As Asian countries make significant strides in AI development, they could potentially reduce their reliance on the US' AI technologies, reshaping the global AI supply chain.

Moreover, the increase in Asian countries' capability to develop AI could lead to greater diversity and inclusivity in AI development, with non-English language models gaining prominence on the global stage.

Despite the US being an AI development powerhouse, the emergence of countries like China and Japan as AI development hubs is slowly shifting the AI development balance toward Asia. For the West, especially for the US, embracing this new era of AI development and collaboration is necessary to stay ahead in the rapidly evolving technological landscape.

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

Kimihiko Fukuyama

## Cooperation the way forward for Japan, China

It is a miracle that two of the biggest economies in the world are close neighbors. The economic relationship between China and Japan, which can be described as a "dance of dragons", is a fascinating but somewhat complicated matter. On the one hand, they are intertwined giants, with China being Japan's largest trading partner and a major investment destination, and vice versa. On the other hand, the differences in their perspectives and their geopolitical rivalry have cast a shadow on bilateral relations. Understanding this "complex dance" is crucial for the two sides to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges it presents.

The economic melody between the two countries is undeniable. Bilateral trade has soared in recent decades, fueled by China's vast market and efficient large-scale production capability, as well as Japan's technological and sub-cultural capability. This interdependence created a win-win situation, with China accessing advanced and environmentally-friendly technologies and Japan finding a lucrative consumer base and excellent production hub.

This win-win situation, however, faces somewhat discordant notes. Concerns over intellectual property rights protection, market access barriers, regulatory uncertainties and limited flow of people between the two sides could dampen the rhythm of this economic symphony.



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In particular, the flow of people between the two countries is much below the pre-pandemic level. Which is of concern, for the best way to know each other is to meet in person. The more people visit each other, the deeper their mutual understanding is likely to be. China and Japan have maintained official/unofficial trade and communication channels since the Sui Dynasty (581-618). And the most important aspect of maintaining trade or other relations is trust, which is always fostered by people's warm hearts.

I love the Chinese people's heart-warming, kind and friendly attitude toward foreigners. I always feel Chinese people's *ren qing wei* — human touch or human warmth. The Chinese people have always been innovative and forward-looking.

One of my best Chinese friends always tells me that he loves to visit Japan, because Japan has preserved Tang Dynasty (618-907) architectures not only in Kyoto and Nara but in other parts of the country. He has visited a lot of old temples and shrines in Japan, some of which have preserved ancient calligraphy works written in classical Chinese characters. We both have the same *hanzi* — Chinese characters.

Fukuzawa Yukichi, a famous scholar whose portrait you can find on Japan's highest denomination bank note, of 10,000 yen, was already a master of ancient Chinese literature when he started studying science and technology in English almost 170 years ago. As a result, he coined so many Japanese terms using Chinese words, for example, *jingji* — economy, *yinhang* — bank, *baoxian* — insurance and *renmin* — people. Their roots are all in ancient Chinese literature which Fukuzawa had mastered.

China faces new economic challenges, the challenges a country faces in transitioning from a developing to a developed country, especially because its economic growth rate has slowed down. Japan, too, faces the challenges of caring for its rapidly rising aging population, and dealing with the declining population. It also lags behind in adapting to the digital economy in a big way.

From the late 1970s to the 2000s, Japan provided huge development assistance for China, which catalyzed the rapid growth of the Chinese economy. The Japanese funds and technologies were used not only to build huge infrastructure facilities like ports, airports, expressways, power plants and industrial zones but also for technological transfers and human resource development projects such as reforestation, low-carbon and eco-friendly technologies, and State-owned enterprises' capacity building.

After the devastating Wenchuan earthquake in May 2008, Japan dispatched teams of experts to help with the rescue and relief operation in Sichuan province. And after the quake-triggered tsunami struck northeast Japan in March 2011, China dispatched rescue teams and some Chinese companies offered to send construction equipment to Japan. This shows the two sides have always helped each other.

Also, the Chinese and Japanese economies still complement each other. China's bright university graduates need to find decent jobs, whereas Japan is plagued by serious workforce shortage. China's digital technology may soon face challenges in maintaining the current pace of innovation, whereas the digitalization of Japan's logistics/transportation sectors still has enough room for growth. If the two sides just move one step forward, that is, relax the rules for issuing visas to each other's nationals, many Japanese and Chinese people can visit each other's country, boosting not only their respective country's economy but also the two countries' mutual trust and friendship.

Now is the time for the two Asian dragons to join hands and step forward to dance together in the Year of the Dragon.

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

## GLOBAL VIEWS

SUN CHENGHAO AND ZOU YANNING

## Reluctant collaborator

Ukraine crisis has prompted the EU to strengthen its coordination with the US but it is unwilling to totally endorse Washington's competition with Beijing

The protracted Ukraine crisis and the latest escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are driving a complicated shift in the global geopolitical landscape and shaping the evolution of major country relations. To tackle the two crises, the United States and the European Union have enhanced coordination while still keeping China-related issues high on their agendas. The changing global situation has also prompted the US and the EU to step up their competition with China.



Sun Chenghao



Zou Yanming

Today, the US and the EU have largely convergent views on China — both regard China as a competitor and challenger. For the US, it has set the long-term goal of outcompeting

China, while the EU has moved closer to the US on its China policy and demonstrated a more aggressive stance on China, which will have multiple impacts on China in fronts such as the economy, technology, geopolitical security and ideology. First, the US and the EU have strengthened their economic bonds and built consensus on “de-risking” from China. Against the background of China's economic and technological development, the US and the EU are trying to “de-risk” from China in trade and economic areas where China can gain access to high technology, while keeping cooperation with China in mutually beneficial fields. Essentially, both “decoupling” and “de-risking” aim to build “a small yard with high fences” that exclude China, with the only difference being that “de-risking” sounds softer and offers more policy space, which will help maximize the benefits.

The alignment of the US and the EU on “de-risking” from China will have a negative impact on the high-quality and sustainable development of the Chinese economy and its technological sector. In terms of economic policy, the US and the EU have been increasingly turning inward and taking a castle-and-moat protectionist approach to reduce their dependence on China. The Joint Communication on European Economic Security Strategy, issued by the European Commission and the

**In dealing with the EU, China should ensure smooth communication with it on multiple fronts including political, academic and business, and address priority issues of shared concern for the two sides such as economic cooperation and global governance to let China-EU relations play a more constructive role.**

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs on June 20, 2023, is designed to achieve economic security by protecting the EU against economic risks, which will, in effect, bind the hands and feet of EU enterprises.

In this context, China may face subsidies and state interventions from the US and the EU, which will impede China's endeavor to integrate to achieve economic security by protecting the EU against economic risks, which will, in effect, bind the hands and feet of EU enterprises. On the technological front, some US and EU enterprises are likely to reduce operations and investments in China to avoid risks, and the tightening technological restrictions imposed on China will hinder the nation's efforts to move up the global value chain.

Second, the closer security partnership between the US and the EU, and their allies in Asia, has complicated the security situation in China's surrounding regions. As the Ukraine crisis drags on into its third year and major power competition escalates, the US has deployed some of its resources and strength to the EU, which, however, has not changed its strategic shift eastward. The US is trying to align its Atlantic strategy with its “Indo-Pacific” strategy, which, coupled with the EU's increasing attention to the “Indo-Pacific” region, is complicating the security situation in the region.

The Ukraine crisis has revitalized NATO, which has gained new-found importance from the conflict. The US is attempting to use “NATO Plus” to link its two alliance systems at the two ends of the Eurasian continent, and peddle the NATO model of “small nations join hands to fight a major power”. As NATO pushes for an expansion into the Asia-Pacific, China will encounter more challenges

in maintaining stability in its surrounding region and in keeping good relations with neighboring countries due to outside interventions.

In the future, NATO may hold joint military drills targeted against China, and carry out more cooperation with regional countries in the “Indo-Pacific”, further worsening China's strategic environment.

Third, the US and the EU have also been smearing China's global image, impeding China's efforts to pursue practical diplomacy. Since Joe Biden became the US president, ideology has taken center stage in the China policy adopted by the US and the EU. Using ideology as a tool to peddle the narrative of “democracy versus authoritarianism”, the US and the EU claim to defend the “rules-based international order” by ganging up with other “like-minded countries” such as Australia and Japan to build an anti-China alliance, which will accelerate the forming of blocs and exclusive groups, and exacerbate confrontations and divisions worldwide.

Meanwhile, the US and the EU are weaponizing ideological issues and seeking to build a “democratic alliance of supply chains”, a “democratic tech alliance”, and an infrastructure-building initiative led by democratic countries in order to reduce the reliance of countries on China, and strengthen the technological blockade against China. The US and the EU have also been interfering in China's domestic affairs regarding Xinjiang, Zizang and Hong Kong by imposing sanctions on China on the grounds of “human rights” issues. The ever-stronger ideological bias the US and the EU hold against China is detrimental to normal diplomatic exchanges.

However, the US and the EU don't see eye-to-eye with each other on every China-related issue. In fact, the EU has different strategic focuses and goals than the US. In contrast with the US, which is the main driver of the breakdown of the current global order, the EU wants to preserve the current system. And since most European countries care more about the transatlantic relations and Russia than the “Indo-Pacific” and China, they don't want to see the US' strategic shift eastward come at the expense of its security commitment made to Europe.

In addition, the US and the EU adopt different stances on China. Whereas the Biden administration regards China as a strategic competitor of the US and uses all tools at its disposal to outcompete China in the long term, the EU has a more multi-dimensional view of China.

The EU pursues a more balanced strategy toward China rather than absolute decoupling from China. Also, the EU is a supporter of multilateralism, and thus sees China as a key pillar in preserving the international system and a partner in tackling common global challenges. The 24th China-EU Summit has demonstrated the two sides' willingness to enhance communication and trust as an embattled EU seeks to maintain stable and constructive relations with China.

Therefore, the EU will strive to maintain its strategic independence while striking a subtle balance between China and the US.

On its part, China should stay alert to the greater strategic coordination between the US and the EU, while continuing to maintain economic ties and people-to-people exchanges with the US to keep the bilateral relations on a stable path.

In dealing with the EU, China should ensure smooth communication with it on multiple fronts including political, academic and business, and address priority issues of shared concern for the two sides such as economic cooperation and global governance to let China-EU relations play a more constructive role.

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GE JIANHUA

## Divide and rule

Western countries are trying to drive a wedge between China and countries of the Global South

With major-power competition escalating, the Global South has grown into a key force in the global arena, and several developing countries have accumulated

significant economic heft and political clout over the past few decades. As a result of their

growing influence and strategic importance, Global South countries have been increasingly fought

over by major powers in their geopolitical contests. To preserve the West's dominance in the international system, the United States, Japan and Europe are attempting to drive a wedge between China and other Global South countries by copying the same tactic adopted in promoting the “Indo-Pacific” strategy.

The Ukraine crisis has led to the increased dependence of Europe on US military protection, and under the “leadership” of the US, Western countries now share the same stance on many major issues. But in doing so, they have become increasingly disconnected with the rest of the world, with Global South countries paying more attention to the economy and development and upholding political neutrality.

In response, the US, Japan and Europe are seeking to woo “swing states” in the Global South, such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, and Türkiye, to forge a “united front” with these countries, thereby winning the global public opinion war, and serving their national interests. Japan, for example, has been actively engaging with Global South countries to win them over on behalf of the West.

To counter China's influence among Global South countries, the West has reduced its economic dependence on China and framed it as a threat to the “rules-based international order”, while roping in Global South countries to decouple from China under the guise of protecting supply chain resilience and economic security. By doing so, they aim to contain China's rise through the forming small cliques.

The West also intends to obstruct the creation of a new global financial system.

The Ukraine crisis has fueled a de-dollarization trend among Global South countries, which is reducing the influence of the US in global trade and investment.

To maintain its hegemony in the world financial system, the US has been trying to drum up support from Global South countries to initiate a new “globalization” that shuts China and Russia out, and redefine the rules of the global financial system.

On this basis, the US, Japan and Europe have reached a strategic consensus on their approach to the Global South.

First, the West is attempting to enhance the resilience of supply chains for critical minerals along with Global South countries on the grounds of “de-risking” and create a so-called alliance of supply chain resilience for emerging industries. They take a flexible approach in imposing financial sanctions to court Global South countries to reshape the global economic order. Second, the West is offering alternatives to the China-led Belt and Road Initiative to fund infrastructure building in developing countries.

Third, the West is using a “one area, one policy” approach to deepen ties with developing nations. For instance, Japan has spearheaded the West's agenda-setting on issues related to Africa, while the US and Europe back Japan's endeavor to entice members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the name of “co-creation”. Meanwhile, they are attempting to strengthen relations with Latin American states in a bid to build a “Western Hemisphere alliance of supply chains”. Fourth, the West is forming small multilateral frameworks to court Global South countries and incorporating issues concerning the Global South into multilateral mechanisms with the G7 at the core to enlist the support of major players of the Global South.

All in all, since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, the West has adjusted its strategy toward the Global South to forge closer ties with developing countries and alienate them from China and Russia so as to gain an upper hand in its long-term competition with China and Russia.

Specifically speaking, the US tends to employ the bloc mentality to coerce and divide Global South countries, while Japan and Europe follow the steps of the US on the one hand, and seek to court developing countries in a softer way to achieve strategic autonomy on the other hand.

In response to the concerted efforts of the West to win over and divide the Global South, China, as the world's largest developing country and a “natural member” of the Global South,

has always stood by other developing countries.

As the world has entered a new period of disorder and transformation, China is committed to building a community with a shared future for the Global South by implementing the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative and advancing cooperation under the framework of the BRI. The country will also leverage cooperation platforms such as the BRICS mechanism, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to expand cooperation with other developing countries.

China aims to build the BRI into a bridgehead in its comprehensive opening-up drive, and carry out multilateral exchanges and cooperation with other developing countries at more levels. As China provides more and more global public goods to other Global South countries, it will surely replace the West-led global system that is exclusive and hierarchical with a more fair and just global governance system that features extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefits.

The Global South is building up political and economic heft, and China's development has presented an alternative path of development to other developing states. The US, regarding China as the greatest threat to its hegemony, has implemented an all-round containment and suppression campaign against China and seeks to forge a parallel system that excludes China. To this end, it attempts to “divide and rule” the Global South and build a “global united front” against China. Japan and Europe, which have their own agendas, are playing the role of a third force in the China-US competition while aligning themselves with the US.

In this context, China will strive to find the largest common ground and expand the common interests of all parties by maintaining an open global system, thus firmly standing on the right side of history.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

LIFE



Portrait of Emperor Qianlong in Winter Suit, by Giuseppe Castiglione.



Chinese Junk, by a Chinese painter named Yongxiang.



Self-portrait, by George Chinnery.



The Garden, by an anonymous painter.



Poker Playing, by an anonymous painter.

# Picturing a lost era

Exhibition examines how China was portrayed, literally, before photography boomed, **Lin Qi** reports.

The popularity of online travel blogs, vlogs and tourism guides has given new life to the use of a word previously associated with the very opposite of travel — workplace punctuality. *Daka* originally meant the act of punching the card when arriving and leaving the workplace, but has been appropriated to refer to the trend of visiting must-see attractions, such as scenic spots, restaurants famous for specific local delicacies and unique gift shops, and sharing them via text and photos on social media.

Back in the 19th century, however, before the advent of photography, the major way for travelers to record their *daka* was through painting.

Foreign merchants, shipowners and sailors who arrived at major ports in southern China often commissioned local oil painters to produce paintings of the coastal scenes, and took them back home as souvenirs.

Some of these professional painters were from Europe, the most reputed being George Chinnery, a British artist based in Macao. Some were Chinese who had learned Western art techniques. Among the works most highly sought after were those of Chinnery or his pupils, such as Lam Qua.

In addition to completing commissions from travelers, painters also earned a living by painting pictures for export to the Western market.

These paintings have been referred to as *xiyanghua* or *yang-fenghua*, meaning the Western-style painting, a cultural product of the exchanges between the East and the West, prompted by the Maritime Silk Road and the sea routes of the Age of Discovery.

This unique interaction is highlighted at *The Meeting of Chinese and Western Art*, a touring exhibition that examines the images of 19th-century Guangdong province and Macao, two major destinations of the Maritime Silk Road.

This project initiated by the Macau University of Science and Technology has gained support from the China National Arts Fund. It has been opened at the Art Museum of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, the first of its five planned stops, where it will run until April 20.

The exhibition marks the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland and the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region. It gathers 129 fine pieces of *xiyanghua*, mostly from the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Yinchuan, in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, which vividly capture the commercial and social hustle and bustle of Guangdong, largely Guangzhou, and Macao. It also shows dozens of maps of Guangdong and Macao at the time to reflect changing coastal scenes and people's varied perspectives of the world back then. The exhibition will travel to Tianjin, Guangzhou, Macao and back to Yinchuan.

### New techniques

Western paintings were believed to have been brought to China by European envoys and missionaries around the 16th century, and the 18th and 19th centuries saw a boom in the production of Western-style art, increasing its influence in the country, according to Wang Lan, the exhibition's curator and an associate professor of the Faculty of Human-

ities and Arts, Macau University of Science and Technology.

He says the Western painters, then living in China, and their Chinese pupils, left a trove of *xiyanghua* — oil works, watercolors and gouaches — a valuable visual legacy, which “records the vibrant urban landscapes, folk customs and social luminaries in Macao, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and neighboring areas.”

Western paintings and techniques were introduced to the imperial palace and impressed the incumbent emperors, who commis-

sioned paintings of a similar style to document court events. Italian missionary and painter Giuseppe Castiglione is the best known figure to have contributed to this trend, first arriving in Macao and later serving in the court of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

He came to the attention of Emperor Qianlong, an avid patron of the arts and an ardent collector. Castiglione was commissioned to depict the emperor in landscape paintings and stand-alone portraiture. The exhibition shows Casti-

glione's work, *Portrait of Emperor Qianlong in Winter Suit*, created with oil pigments but on paper.

Some other artists, like Chinnery, chose to stay in Macao and lived on commissions and trained local painters.

Besides painting merchant ships and coastal views, both Western and Chinese painters also revisited popular motifs, such as Chinese gardens and courtyards, and the daily life of women and children of the upper-class families living in these places.

While fusing the different techniques of Chinese and Western art, these works were sometimes created to show China as imagined by European buyers. For example, Chinese pavilions and bridges were unnaturally arranged in the composition of a Western courtyard, or Western buildings were placed in between the mountains and waters in China; and the faces of people look more like Westerners than Asians.

Liu Xiyun, a senior researcher of the Art Museum of Central Academy of Fine Arts, says these paintings highlight unique Chinese elements that would interest Westerners, such as the flower pots to decorate the gardens and interior spaces.

“These potted flowers enrich the views of the single-story residential houses while also showing the diverse vegetation in Lingnan region (areas surrounding Guangdong),” she says.

### Pupils and competitors

When Chinnery taught his Chinese counterparts to create in the Western style, he might not have expected that, one day, these talented and hard-working pupils would outperform him, and even take over his market.

Devoted to painting from a young age, by the time he was 17, Chinnery began to make a name for himself when his work, a portrait of his father, was shown at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He left England in 1802 to sail to India, and never returned. Decades later, he relocated from India to Guangdong and, eventually, Macao, where he lived out the rest of his days. Portrait painting was his main livelihood.

The practice of Western artists helped cultivate a generation of homegrown oil artists, who were also adept at executing watercolor and gouache. At first, they simply copied the works of their European teachers, and then, they learned quickly to paint their own pictures. Perhaps more importantly, they produced them quickly and in large quantities while charging less.

Lyu Peng, art historian and academic host of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Yinchuan, says *xiyanghua* revealed to the world the life and living environment of the Chinese at that time. However, as photography was introduced to China around the mid-1850s, it gradually overtook these paintings as the main way European visitors documented their experiences. Demand for trade paintings waned, and many painters made the transition to other professions.

“We hope that this touring exhibition will introduce to the general public not only the paintings and those who made them, but also the little-known story of the mutual influence and infusion of diverse cultures,” Lyu says.

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Shepherdess, by Chinese painter Guan Zuolin, another of the works on show at *The Meeting of Chinese and Western Art*, an ongoing exhibition held in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Seal carving illustrations of 15 heritage sites along the Central Axis of Beijing — such as the Palace Museum, Jingshan Park, and the Temple of Heaven — the core of the capital that stretches 7.8 kilometers from south to north. Unique stamps for these 15 sites have been designed and are included in a newly released “Beijing Central Axis passport”. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Seal carving provides ‘passport’ to the Beijing Central Axis

By CHENG YUEZHU  
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For those who like to travel, perhaps one of the fun aspects is collecting the stamps of places they've visited in their passports. Now, the Central Axis of Beijing offers a similar experience to visitors and citizens alike, who have the opportunity to collect seal stamps in a “Beijing Central Axis passport”.

Released in January, the “passport” is a booklet containing illustrations of 15 heritage sites along the Central Axis of Beijing — such as the Palace Museum, Jingshan Park, and the Temple of Heaven — the core of the capital that stretches 7.8 kilometers from south to north.

Using anti-counterfeiting measures, the pages feature hidden imag-

es that are only visible under fluorescent light.

With the recently launched series of public activities, aimed at promoting the Central Axis of Beijing through the seal carving art form, tourists will be able to collect seal stamps unique to each heritage site, which can be found at the sites, subway stations along Beijing's Line 8, the Beijing Central Axis Protection Foundation, as well as the China Millennium Monument.

Since 2019, the annual *Chinese Seal Carving* exhibitions have been hosted at the China Millennium Monument, highlighting a different theme each year that is complemented by supporting lectures and activities that serve to engage the broader public in the art of seal carving.

This year, with the Central Axis of

Beijing as the theme, the Beijing Central Axis Protection Foundation, Beijing Gehua Cultural Development Group, China Millennium Monument's art museum and the Chinese National Academy of Arts' seal carving college all collaborated in hosting a series of public activities that promote Beijing's heritage with the seal carving art form.

Li Danyang, artistic director of Beijing Gehua Cultural Development Group, introduced the main highlights in his speech at an opening ceremony held on March 11 at the China Millennium Monument.

Three main categories have been introduced — seal carving activities tailored for children and teenagers, an exhibition showcasing seal carving works and an awards ceremony.

This May, seal carving experts and teachers will be invited to visit Beijing's primary and middle schools, as well as Children's Palace, a public facility that provides extracurricular education for teenagers and children.

In-person and online courses, where young students will be introduced to the art form and traditional Chinese art in general, will be offered. Outstanding pieces created by the students will have the opportunity to be included in an exhibition in July.

The exhibition is the second major component in the event series, with works being contributed by the event's supporting organizations, schools and the young participants. The exhibition will debut at the China Millennium Monument, before tour-

ing heritage sites and cultural venues across Beijing.

In August, the event series will host an awards ceremony in honor of individuals and groups that have contributed to the exhibition's implementation and the promotion of the Central Axis of Beijing.

“This year's events encompass a variety of activities, including lectures on Chinese seal carving history and culture, hands-on activities related to seal carving, seal stamp collecting and subway station exhibitions, which encourage the general public to participate and promote the Central Axis of Beijing via the art form,” Li says.

At the opening ceremony, 16 representatives from organizations that supported the event series marked its commencement by

stamping seals onto a scroll painting depicting heritage sites along the Central Axis of Beijing.

The ceremony was also accompanied by an exhibition presenting the sites, the seals created for the sites and a variety of seal carving pieces.

“The activities center on the preservation and inheritance of the Beijing Central Axis, and use the seal carving art form to concisely, yet vividly portray its historical and contemporary stories,” says Yu Ping, a counselor at the Beijing government and a former deputy director of Beijing Cultural Heritage Bureau.

“Also, the event focuses on encouraging the public to actively take part, exercise their creativity and create works that blend traditions with a modern touch, which is sure to produce many outstanding art pieces.”

## CULTURE

## Taking up the baton

Young homegrown maestro exemplifies a new generation, as he prepares to conduct 135-year-old Dutch orchestra, **Chen Nan** reports.

When the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, one of the world's leading symphony orchestras, announced its 2024-25 season on Sunday, a young Chinese conductor, Yu Lu, was featured in its program as a guest conductor.

The 34-year-old Yu describes the invitation from the 135-year-old orchestra, which is based in Amsterdam, as an admission ticket to the top of the classical music scene.

"It's such an established orchestra with their unique sounds. It's challenging but in a way that I like," says Yu.

"Unlike being a soloist, such as pianist and violinist, a conductor is silent but shoulders the responsibility of leading the orchestra and shaping the music. For a young conductor, in his early 30s and from Asia, it's quite tough to lead such a great orchestra with a very long history," he adds. "I have to be well-prepared and be careful since such kind of opportunity is rare and valuable."

The invitation was first sent to Yu about two years ago, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the conductor, the orchestra planned to have him perform *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky, but the upcoming season will have Yu play something "interactive" since they believe that the young conductor would inject new energy into the program.

In fact, it will not be the first time that Yu will work with the orchestra. When he was 22 years old, he was selected and invited by maestro Mariss Jansons (1943-2019) to participate in a conducting master class, and take up the baton at the orchestra in Amsterdam. In 2018, he also recorded with Camerata RCO, an ensemble consisting of musicians of Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, on an album, titled *Salon*, featuring pieces including Johannes Brahms' *Serenade No. 2 in A Major, Op. 16*, and Hector Berlioz's *The Death of Cleopatra*.

"I have known and worked together with Yu Lu for several years now. In my opinion, he is one of the most talented conductors in his generation," comments Michael Gieler, principal violist of the orchestra. "We have worked together when he conducted the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in a master class given by the legendary Mariss Jansons. He really stood out from his colleagues in expressivity and confidence."

Calling Yu a "versatile conductor" with a broad repertoire, Gieler also says the conductor's beat is "clear"

and "he is expressive without neglecting precision."

"All those master classes, rehearsals and performances seem like building a solid foundation for my collaboration with the orchestra again during its new season. I am honored and excited to perform as a Chinese conductor with the world-renowned orchestra," says Yu.

Born and raised in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, in 1989, Yu began to show his music talent at a very young age by learning to play the violin and the piano. His interest in conducting started when he was 3 years old, "conducting to the air while listening to *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*."

His parents, though sensing their only son's talent, didn't want him to take on a music career in the beginning since they believed that an occupation like a doctor or a lawyer would be stable for their son.

In 2002, when Yu's father played a video of Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa (1935-2024) at the New Year's Concert in the Golden Hall of the Vienna Musikverein, Yu, 13 years old then, conducted again while watching the video. Since then, his family supported his music learning and his decision to become a conductor.

Ranked in first place, Yu was admitted to the affiliated middle school of the China Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing at the age of 15 and enrolled at the China Central Conservatory of Music with the top score in the admission exam at 18 years old.

In 2012, Yu gained his bachelor's degree from the conducting department of the conservatory and continued to pursue a master's degree.

His first break came when he was 22 years old when maestro Jansons, who was the chief conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra then, selected three young conductors from around the world to participate in a master class in Amsterdam. Yu was the only one from Asia.

"He was one of three active participants selected from more than 70 young conductors. He is a talented conductor who prepares his scores thoroughly, has a clear technique, and knows how to communicate nonverbally with an orchestra," maestro Jansons comments on Yu's performance.

Before Jansons, Yu was also trained by Ozawa. It was in 2009 when the established conductor came to tour in China. The Central Conservatory of Music recommended five top students from its conducting department and Yu was one of them. After rounds of fierce com-



**Top and above:** Yu Lu conducts Beethoven's nine symphonies in five consecutive days, with the Ningbo Symphony Orchestra, in 2020.

**Left:** Yu and his mentor, Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"I am honored and excited to perform as a Chinese conductor with the world-renowned orchestra (the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra)."

**Yu Lu**, conductor

petition, Yu stood out among his peers and became Ozawa's student and assistant conductor.

"I flew to Japan to study with him every month. One day, he told me to pay attention to the beat. On my way home, I bought a metronome and spent the whole night conducting to it without any sleep. The next day, he was surprised by my progress," recalls Yu. "Two days later, he said that he wanted to go back to China to perform with me, with him conducting the first half of the concert and me doing the second half. Though the trip didn't happen due to his health, I was very touched because he was such a great teacher, willing to support and help his students."

One of his generation's most sought-after and celebrated conductors, Ozawa was born in Shenyang, China, in 1935, and from a young age studied piano and then conducting in Japan.

"He had a very deep love for China. Besides music, he also inspired me to think about pursuing a career in the West. He himself had achieved great success in the West, so his encouragement was very convincing to me. He gave me lots of confidence," says Yu. "I used to set a goal of conducting all the top orchestras in the world. But now, I want to train and lead a Chinese symphony orchestra to stand out on the world classical music scene with the top level, which I will consider the highlight of my career."

The highlights that Yu has already achieved include conducting *Madama Butterfly* by Italian composer Giacomo Puccini in Japan in 2012, which was his first time to conduct an opera. In 2022, the Shanghai Opera House appointed Yu as its first ever principal guest conductor.

By the end of 2020, Yu initiated a challenge of performing Beethoven's nine symphonies in five consecutive days, by working together with Bilibili — one of China's biggest video-sharing platform, and the Ningbo Symphony Orchestra.

The online live performance was a great success and captured widespread attention both at home and abroad. It also made Yu the first conductor in China's music history to do so.

"The Ningbo Symphony Orchestra was only five years old back in 2020, and I was also very young. We made it together," says Yu.

Maestro Ozawa, who was in the hospital then, wrote Yu a note, encouraging him and cheering him up since the project was very challenging for any young conductor and any orchestra.

"I still have it, it is like a treasure to me," says Yu, adding that he is planning to launch a commemorative project by gathering Japanese and Chinese musicians to perform in concerts in Beijing and Shanghai this year, paying tribute to the great conductor.

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Fighting for the top spot, *Kung Fu Panda 4* hits Chinese theaters

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Stretching his arms and squatting slightly, actor Huang Bo demonstrates a classic martial arts gesture often depicted in movies as a ritualistic, pre-fight greeting. However, this time, it wasn't about gearing up for battle, but more about displaying his connection to an iconic animated kung fu master.

During a recent promotional event for *Kung Fu Panda 4* on March 14, Huang struck the pose alongside Po, the titular hero of the franchise, at the Universal Beijing Resort.

Graduating from the Beijing Film Academy with a dubbing major, Huang has returned to familiar territory, lending his voice to the famous panda in the Chinese version of the movie, which opened across Chinese mainland theaters on Friday.

Since the first *Kung Fu Panda* film was released in 2008, the franchise has earned around \$2 billion in

global box-office receipts, and 1.8 billion yuan (\$250 million) in the Chinese mainland market.

The latest film kicks off with Po facing a new hurdle. Reluctant to let go of the glories and benefits that come with being the Dragon Warrior, Po has to choose a successor to carry on his legacy, as he will soon assume the role of the Spiritual Leader, a loftier position.

Meanwhile, a new threat looms over the Valley of Peace — Chameleon, a cunning lizard with the ability to transform into any creature, sets her sights on Po's Staff of Wisdom, a mystical item that holds the power to resurrect all the formidable adversaries Po has defeated and banished to the Spirit Realm.

In an unlikely team-up with Zhen, a sly Corsac fox who Po catches trying to steal something in the valley's most sacred palace, the duo sets off on an adventure to Juniper City, a fictional Chinese metropolis under the rule of the



notorious villain Chameleon. However, their newfound friendship is put to the ultimate test when hidden truths come to light.

A "Juniper City" was re-created at Universal Beijing Resort during the promotional event, drawing a lot of local visitors who joyfully admired the fictional city, includ-

ing a mahjong parlor and a colorful paper kite workshop.

Aside from Huang, Chinese actresses Yang Mi and Jiang Xin do the voice-overs for Zhen and Chameleon, respectively.

Huang recalls that he felt thrilled to watch the first *Kung Fu Panda* movie, as it encapsulates Chinese

elements so well, from the giant panda and kung fu, to mouthwatering food, despite being produced by foreign animators.

"It has been 16 years, and Po has transformed from merely an exceptionally gifted martial artist into a spiritual mentor," he adds.

Huang also reveals that the translated version has fully localized the English dialogue by incorporating well-known and internet-popular Chinese puns and idioms.

Yang, who lent her voice to Mei Mei, a supporting character in the third installment eight years ago, says she admires her new character, Zhen, who she describes as possessing courage and a sense of justice, even though the character has a checkered past.

As of Friday, the movie had earned over 90 million yuan, making it the new box-office champion in the country on its opening day, according to Beacon, the live film information tracker.



**Above left:** Actor Huang Bo, the voice behind the titular character in the Chinese version of *Kung Fu Panda 4*, strikes a martial arts-inspired pose at Universal Beijing Resort on March 14.

**Above:** A poster for the film.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# CULTURE

For many years, ancient porcelain shards were not strange to farmers in Chencun village of Huozhou city, North China's Shanxi province, where many of them believed the small, white fragments meant there had to be major kilns buried below the area.

Chinese archaeologists who have been conducting research in Chencun for nearly two years have since given the farmers a mind-blowing answer: the kilns are right under their village.

The ruins on different layers of soil date back to the Jin (1115-1234), Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties, according to Liu Yan, vice-president of the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology.

"Among the archaeological findings are nine kilns, 40 ash pits, nine workshops, two ditches, one well and numerous porcelain pieces," Liu said.

The white-glazed porcelain shards including bowls, plates, dishes, vases, pots and stem-cups were retrieved from the kiln site in Chencun. The wares are for the most part plain and undecorated, with a small quantity displaying impressive designs.

Ming Dynasty records already point to white-glazed porcelain being fired in Huozhou.

Many ancient ruins and tombs were found at construction sites in various parts of China in the 1950s, with a nationwide survey of cultural relics carried out in 1956 in an attempt to learn about the conditions of immovable cultural relics.

Liu said that when Chinese ceramic specialists including Chen Wanli and Feng Xianming from the Palace Museum began searching for places where ancient porcelain wares were produced, they spurred cultural heritage authorities across the country to launch archaeological surveys of ancient kilns in the 1960s and 1970s.

The scholars located the ancient Huozhou kilns in Chencun, which lies on the western bank of the Fenhe River, the second-largest tributary of the Yellow River. Shards and kiln tools were found scattered in abundance along the banks of the Fenhe River, a sign that the ancient kilns of Huozhou were of a relatively large scale.

The Fenhe River, which originates in the north of Shanxi province, is one of the few rivers to flow from north to south in China, where rivers mostly flow from the highlands in the west to the coast in the east.

Chencun is the fief site of Huo Guo, the younger brother of King Wu of Zhou in the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-771 BC), and the descendants of later generations there take Huo as their surname, according to China News Service.

Shanxi authorities put Chencun village on the list of protected major cultural heritage sites in 1986. The multiple surveys done from the 1970s to 1990s helped give experts an idea of the Huozhou kiln complex, with bun-shaped kilns and brick caves for unburnt earthenware for drying found. The relic sites were buried underground, 1.5 meters to 5 meters deep, Liu said.

The village was put under national-level protection in 2006, the highest protection level approved by the central government for immovable cultural relics.

China decided to excavate the kilns in Chencun in 2022. Archaeologists from the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archeology, Peking University, Fudan University and Huozhou city's cultural relics department conducted investigations and explorations of the village. They finally chose eight sites covering 600 square meters for excavation, Liu, who is in charge of the excavation team, said.

The findings of the porcelain kilns in Chencun village fill an archaeological gap, Liu said.

The Song Dynasty (960-1279) is always referred to as the golden age of Chinese ceramics. During this period, the degree of specialization at the different kiln sites increased and the demand for particular wares began to rise among specific social classes.

This is especially evident in the existence of the famous "five kilns": the Ru (Henan province), Guan (Zhejiang province), Ge (Zhejiang province), Jun (Henan province) and Ding (Hebei province).

While it had been widely believed that North China did not produce white porcelain wares when the Jin Dynasty ended, the discovery of the Huozhou kilns site in Chencun showed that white porcelain was fired in North China until the Ming Dynasty.

"Shanxi is rich in quality clay and coal for firing porcelain," Liu said. "Surrounded by famous porcelain-making regions such as Hebei, Henan



Liu Yan, vice-president of the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, leads excavation work at Chencun village in Huozhou of Shanxi province.

## Center of ceramics

Major ancient white porcelain site provides important link to past, Sun Ruisheng and Cai Hong report.



Surrounded by porcelain-making regions such as Hebei, Henan and Shaanxi, Shanxi also grew into a ceramic production powerhouse. Its porcelain production developed quickly in the Song and Yuan dynasties."

Liu Yan, vice-president of the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

1. A fragment of a Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) ceramic bowl decorated with iron red clouds and dragon claws. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
2. A fine white Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) porcelain plate with decorative patterns featuring lotus and reed.
3. A fine white porcelain plate shard fired during the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) carries a design featuring three children playing with lotus flowers.
4. A fine white porcelain cup with a dragon motif handle from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).
5. A black glaze Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) ceramic cup decorated with bird motifs.
6. Plain white high-end porcelain pieces from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

and Shaanxi, Shanxi also grew into a ceramic production powerhouse. Its porcelain production developed quickly in the Song and Yuan dynasties."

After the collapse of the Jin Dynasty, the importance of North China as a porcelain production center diminished rapidly. A rare exception was the fine-grained white wares produced at Huozhou in Shanxi during the Jin, Yuan and Ming dynasties, Liu said.

"Huozhou was the only source of delicately made white porcelain in the Yuan Dynasty."

Huozhou white wares are small and very thinly made. They are fired on five spurs, remains of which can be seen on the inside and base of the vessels. Common shapes include the waisted dish, stem-cup with ribbed foot, and dish with flattened rim. The decorative elements on them are waves, flora and fauna such as fish, hares and birds.

### Crucial connections

Shanxi connects the east with the west of China, making it a place where different ethnic groups and cultures meet. The ancient porcelain pieces discovered in Shanxi reflect the province's unique position on the field, which helped the merchants sell the porcelain from Huozhou kilns to places far away.

Fifty-four ceramic wares, 27 of them intact, were uncovered at a construction site in Hangzhou city of East China's Zhejiang province in 1987. Several experts assumed that some of the white glazed wares were products from the Huozhou kilns of the Yuan Dynasty.

Wares produced at these Huozhou kilns were also unearthed in Khanbaliq or Yuan Dadu (the winter capital of the dynasty in what is now Beijing) and ancient Karakorum, the capital of the Mongol empire. The discoveries indicate that porcelain products fired at Huozhou kilns were traded at the "high-end market", and likely used at the court of the Yuan Dynasty, according to scholars Yu Luyang and Zhu Xinhai.

But a large quantity of poorly glazed, roughly made stoneware has also been excavated, with the items considered to be used by commoners.

The archaeological excavation at Chencun was the first time for researchers to establish a crucial point in the history of Huozhou's pottery industry. It provides basic scientific and systematic data for the study of the firing history, technology, production scale, economic form, and traditional influence and development of the Huozhou kilns, Liu said.

There are many archaeological findings of ancient porcelain kilns in China, but the discoveries at Chencun are still considered significant, with researchers placing them as one of the country's top 10 archaeological findings of 2023. At a seminar on the findings at Chencun in December, Chinese historians and scholars said that the Huozhou kilns site represents the highest level of white porcelain technology in northern China in the Yuan Dynasty, calling it the "swan song" or "last glory" of white porcelain in North China.

Many Chencun residents are well aware of the importance of cultural heritage protection. Wang Baoqing is responsible for keeping watch over the ruins in the old, empty section of the village, with local farmers moving to the new site. Wang knows the village's temples date back to the Yuan and Ming dynasties. He gets 10 yuan (\$1.38) a day for his work but he takes it seriously.

"As long as I am a keeper for this cultural heritage, I will do my best," Wang said.

In the summer of 2022, fellow Chencun villager Zheng Honghu found a pile of white ceramic pieces when he built a cistern in his courtyard.

He reported it to the archaeologists working in the village and they discovered porcelain-making ruins such as a Jin Dynasty workshop, three Yuan Dynasty kilns, Ming Dynasty house and porcelain shards, marking Zheng's place as an important excavation site.

Archaeological work at Huozhou is ongoing and surveys showed that the site of the ancient Huozhou kiln complex may cover 25,000 square meters, with Chencun serving as a focal point, Liu said.

Recognizing the increasing cultural importance of the area, archaeologists and scholars also suggested setting up a national archaeological site park or a museum where visitors will have a chance to see how Huozhou kilns work and further experience traditional Chinese porcelain culture.

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Left: An aerial view of the archaeological site in Chencun village. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: Archaeological findings in Chencun shed light on porcelain kilns from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).