

Delving deeper

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Physicist donates 3 million yuan on his 100th birthday CHINA, PAGE 4



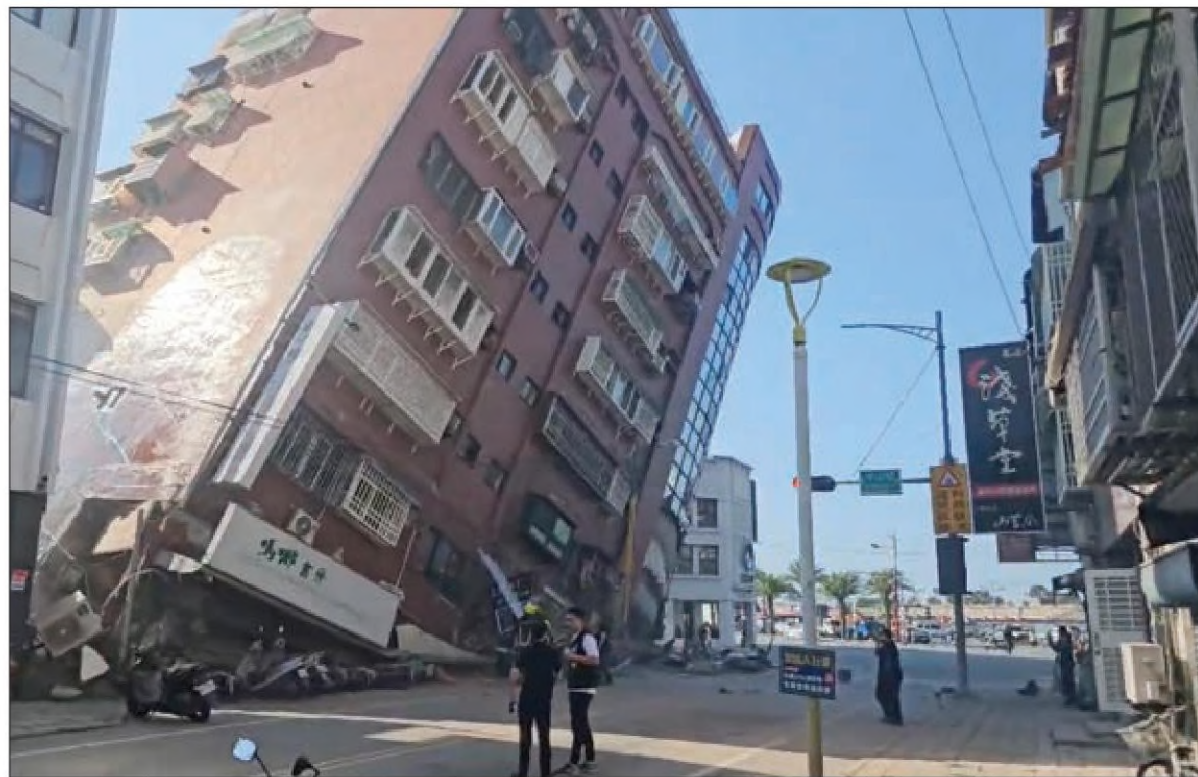
Power of melody

Young artists exchange ideas on music's global cultural influence LIFE, PAGE 15

# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2024

## Earthquake rocks Taiwan



A partially collapsed building is seen in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, on Wednesday. A powerful earthquake of 7.2 rocked the entire island of Taiwan early on Wednesday, collapsing buildings in a southern city and creating a tsunami that washed ashore on southern Japanese islands. TVBS VIA AP

## Attack on Iranian consulate in Syria condemned

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong jan@chinadailyapac.com

The airstrikes that destroyed Iran's consulate in Damascus, Syria, and killed at least 10 people late on Monday have been widely condemned as a violation of international law and Syrian sovereignty, and are seen as a possible trigger for escalating regional tensions amid the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

The 30-year-old consulate building, located next to the Iranian embassy in the Syrian capital, was attacked with missiles purportedly fired by Israel.

While neither the Israeli Prime Minister's Office nor the Israel Defense Forces has commented on the airstrikes, The New York Times cited unnamed Israeli officials as confirming Israel's role in the attack.

The attack killed Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a commander of the elite Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and Zahedi's deputy, Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, according to state-run media outlet Tasnim News Agency.

This is the first military attack on an Iranian diplomatic compound, although Israeli airstrikes have hit so-called Iran-related targets in Syria a number of times, including those on Sunday that resulted in civilian casualties, Xinhua News

Agency cited the Syrian Defense Ministry as saying.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the Israeli attack on Iran's consulate in Syria "is a violation of all international obligations".

In a phone conversation on Monday with his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad, he said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "has completely lost his mental balance" because of the "consecutive failures of the Israeli regime in Gaza", Iran's Mehr News Agency reported.

Mekdad, who visited the attack site in Damascus, also strongly condemned Israel's "aggression", Xinhua reported.

In a letter to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN Security Council President for April Vanessa Frazier on Monday, Zahra Ershadi, ambassador and charge d'affaires of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN, called upon the Security Council to "take all necessary measures" to address "this egregious violation".

"These horrific crimes and cowardly terrorist attacks are a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the foundational principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises," Ershadi said in the letter, urging the UN to "ensure that those

responsible for such criminal acts are swiftly brought to justice".

"Considering the far-reaching international implications of such a reprehensible act, which can exacerbate tensions in the region and potentially ignite more conflict involving other nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran urges the Security Council to condemn this unjustified criminal act and terrorist attack perpetrated by the Israeli regime in the strongest terms possible," the letter added.

Wang Wenbin, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said that Beijing condemns the attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria.

"The security of diplomatic missions brooks no violation, and Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity should be respected," he said on Tuesday at a regular news conference in Beijing.

Wang added that amid the current volatile situation in the Middle East, China opposes any actions that could escalate tensions.

Meanwhile, Syrian and Iranian protesters burned flags of Israel and the United States, blaming the latter for supporting Israel and calling for "forceful responses" to the attack. The Iranian Foreign Ministry said the country has the right to retaliate.

Several other nations, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Iraq, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and

Pakistan, condemned the airstrikes.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry expressed in a statement its "categorical rejection of targeting diplomatic facilities for any justification and under any pretext", adding that the attack was "a violation of international diplomatic laws and the rules of diplomatic immunity".

The Qatari Foreign Ministry said it considers the attack a "flagrant violation" of international agreements and diplomatic norms that "criminalize attacks on the premises of diplomatic missions". It also urged the need to provide better protection for diplomatic and consular missions under the rules of international law.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement, "We strongly condemn this unacceptable attack against the Iranian consular mission in Syria."

Abdalfatah Asqool, a lecturer on international law at the University of Palestine, told China Daily that the attack on the Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus is "a violation of sovereignty of both Iran and Syria", as the land on which the attack took place is considered a part of the Iranian territory according to international law.

"According to international humanitarian law, this Israeli attack is classified as a crime of aggression," he added.

Zhao Jia and Mike Gu contributed to this story.

## Xi, Biden talk of advancing cooperation

Steady development of ties discussed in 'candid and constructive' phone call

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping and United States President Joe Biden affirmed in a phone conversation on Tuesday the progress achieved so far in bilateral ties since their meeting in San Francisco in November, and agreed to strengthen communication to avoid misjudgment in order to push for the steady development of China-US relations.

The two heads of state considered their phone conversation to be "candid and constructive", according to a news release from the Foreign Ministry after the phone talk. The phone call was their latest interaction after exchanging congratulations on the 45th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries on Jan 1.

Xi said that the stabilizing trend of bilateral ties in recent months has been welcomed by both societies and the international community. On the other hand, there has been an increase in negative factors that require attention from both sides, he added.

Xi stressed that the issue of strategic perception is always fundamental to the China-US relationship, just like the first button of a shirt that must be put right.

Two big countries like China and the US should not cut off their ties or turn their backs on each other, still less slide into conflict or confrontation, he said. The two countries should respect each other, coexist in peace and pursue win-win cooperation, he added, and the relationship should continue moving forward in a stable, sound and sustainable way, rather than going backward.

As for the development of the China-US relationship this year, Xi stressed holding on to the bottom line of nonconflict and nonconfrontation, and maintaining the overall stability of bilateral ties by refraining from setting the relationship back, provoking incidents or overstepping boundaries.

The two countries should also fulfill their respective commitments with actions, thus transforming the San Francisco vision into reality, Xi said.

The Chinese president reiterated that the Taiwan question is the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations.

It is hoped that the US side will take real actions to honor Biden's commitment of not supporting "Taiwan independence", he said.

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## Back to the sea



A forest department official releases newly hatched Olive Ridley turtles into the Bay of Bengal from a beach in Chennai, India, on Monday. The eggs were collected by volunteers and forest department workers from along the coastline. R. SATISH BABU / AFP

## NATION'S RICE TECHNOLOGY NOURISHING NEEDS OF AFRICA

Perennial varieties reduce costs, provide higher yields, have potential to boost continent's food security

By EDITH MUTETHYA in Luwero, Uganda and LILEI in Beijing



In China's vast rice breeding community, Hu Fengyi is in the minority.

Over the past two decades, the plant scientist at Yunnan University has maintained a sharp focus on mining the potential of a perennial rice variety originally from Africa, which can be harvested multiple times and reduces labor costs.

Unlike hybrid rice and other conventional high-yield varieties, perennial rice has received limited academic attention in the past.

"There are lots of researchers studying rice in China, and if your

research is mainstream you are able to compare notes with your fellow researchers," he said.

However, perennial rice is such a little-researched field that it is impossible to work with others to fast-track progress. "You have to feel the way forward in the darkness," Hu said.

See Rice, page 2



Online See more by scanning the code.

## Sino-Pakistani ties won't be harmed by adversaries

Consistent efforts have been made in past years to create a wedge between China and Pakistan, but the unique bilateral relationship has emerged unscathed amid the backdrop of the terrorist attack in Besham on March 26 that caused the deaths of five Chinese engineers of the Dasu Hydropower Project and their Pakistani driver.

Local people instantly flocked to the site of the tragedy to lend a helping hand.



Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the Chinese embassy in Islamabad to express condolences. They also conveyed their firm resolve to punish the perpetrators.

It is not a coincidence that the

Besham attack was carried out ahead of discussions of the two countries' leaders for making progress on projects in Pakistan.

The attack clearly targeted the bilateral ties, which have brought progress, development and prosperity to the people of Pakistan.

China is a reliable friend of Pakistan on economic and political collaboration. Conspiracies have always been hatched to weaken the bonds between the two nations, but such plans will not

succeed in harming the epoch-making project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The project is seen in Pakistan as a once-in-a-century opportunity to break the shackles of poverty and backwardness, especially in formerly neglected areas and regions.

However, the adversaries have made no secret of their designs to either scuttle the historic

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To our readers: Due to the Tomb Sweeping Day holiday, we will publish special holiday editions on Thursday and Friday. We will return to normal publication on Monday, April 8.

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## PAGE TWO

## Rice: Advanced techniques help boost yields

From page 1

Through trial and error, Hu and his colleagues have combined the perennial variety with mainstream ones, and rolled out three hybrid varieties that can transcend rice's normal life cycle, and when grown in the right environment provide stable yields.

Compared with hundreds of new rice varieties approved for commercial production across the country each year, the three hybrid ones approved for commercial production after decades of research are a telltale sign of the solitary nature of rice scientists' work. "To make it, we had to sit on a cold bench," Hu said, using a Chinese saying that describes someone being left out. "We've learned to withstand solitude."

Two of Hu's hybrids were named after the college he works at — Yunda 107 and Yunda 25. Over a three-year trial period, Yunda 25 produced 5.5 to 6.5 metric tons annually per hectare and showed outstanding resistance to pests, which greatly reduced the need for pesticides.

"It is not unlike rolling out new car models," Hu said, referring to the enhanced traits of newer perennial varieties. "You can add functions to newer models and can improve existing ones."

Apart from reducing labor, Hu said perennial rice is also more ecologically friendly as farmers do not have to plant every year. "The soil conditions are less disturbed physically as well as chemically," he said.

Perennial rice's popularity has grown quickly in China and among its rice-producing neighbors. In 2020, less than 4,000 hectares of perennial varieties were planted, but a year later the number ballooned to more than 15,500 hectares.

The expansion of perennial rice is also representative of China's shift to a more tech-driven approach to improve agricultural productivity and ensure the security of staple food supplies.

## Honoring promises

As part of its commitment to help Africa improve the continent's food security, China has started to share its perennial rice technology, a move which has been hailed by both agricultural experts and farmers.

The technology was incorporated into the agricultural technology advancement framework at the High-Level Ministerial Session of the fifth African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water, and Environment held in November last year.

It has also been included in the African Union Seeds and Biotechnology Program 2024-2025, and has already been introduced in Uganda, Malawi, Madagascar and Burundi, through collaborations between Chinese and African agricultural experts.

Luo Tingyue, a Chinese technician for the FAO-China-Uganda South-South Cooperation (Phase 3) program who has been promoting rice-planting technologies in Uganda for five years, said he and his colleagues started to grow perennial rice in September.

The rice, which is planted at the China-Uganda Agricultural Cooperation Industrial Park in Lubenge wetland in Uganda's Luwero district, was harvested last month.

Noting that perennial rice can be harvested several times after planting, he said it saves a great deal in labor costs and farmers' time, making it a superior species for use in African countries.

In addition, perennial rice has also demonstrated higher yields compared with many conventionally grown species in Uganda, Luo said. It produced 1.5 to 2.5 metric tons per 4,050 square meters in trial production, compared with around 1 ton for conventional rice, he said.

"The grain looks longer and bigger," Luo said, holding a handful of rice. "According to our measurements, every 1,000 grains of the rice weighs 29 grams, compared to between 23 and 26 grams for every 1,000 grains of locally planted rice species."

## Sowing knowledge

To ensure good rice yields, Luo and his colleagues have been



Perennial rice Yunda 107 is harvested from a test field in Luwero, Uganda. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

teaching rice-planting techniques to local farmers in recent years — including how to plant seedlings and how to use fertilizers and pesticides. However, the educational process has had to overcome hurdles.

For instance, in China, farmers usually plant the lower part of rice seedlings in the paddy field's water in order to promote the growth of the roots. However, many farmers in Luwero plant rice seedlings much deeper in the water.

"We are also cooperating with local agriculture departments to jointly train rice farmers here, hoping that they will learn advanced planting techniques to improve rice yields," Luo said.

Jimmy Lamo, the cereals program leader at Uganda's National Crops Resources Research Institute, said perennial rice has already been planted in several irrigation areas of the country.

The perennial rice variety has grains that are similar to the popular local variety called Super, which is aromatic and soft when cooked. Local people have started calling the perennial variety "New Super", Lamo said.

Perennial rice doesn't require a lot of water and when it's grown in upland areas that receive a lot of rain, farmers get an ample yield, he said.

"It has an upland trait in it and an irrigated trait, which is unique and makes it a game changer," Lamo said.



Ugandan farmers harvest perennial rice from a test plot in Luwero, Uganda on Jan 27. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY



Local farmers collect harvested rice at the China-Uganda Agriculture Cooperation Industrial Park in Luwero in January. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY



Ugandan expert Jimmy Lamo (center) talks with Chinese experts Luo Tingyue (second from left) and Long Wenjing (second from right), at a rice field in Luwero, Uganda in January. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY



It has an upland trait in it and an irrigated trait, which is unique and makes it a game changer."

Jimmy Lamo, cereals program leader at Uganda's National Crops Resources Research Institute

As plowing is only done once, the soil and the microorganisms' ecosystem are not disturbed, which is very healthy for the environment, he added.

Perennial rice can help improve food security in Africa, Lamo said, as it's easy to store and transport, unlike other sources of starch which have more moisture that can be lost during transportation.

The easy storage of perennial rice makes it a good option for busy communities and an attractive commodity to feed people in the rapidly expanding urban areas of Africa, Lamo said.

## Practical benefits

George Katwalo, a farmer in Luwero who has been given the opportunity to plant Chinese perennial rice, said the yields are higher than traditional varieties.

He harvested 1.7 tons of perennial rice from a field that normal-

ly produced one ton or even less.

"I now prefer perennial rice because it gives me a good income. Its demand in the market is also high. I encourage other farmers to try it," he said. "When cooked, it's soft and has a good aroma."

Since witnessing its advantages, Katwalo said he plans to plant perennial rice over a larger area.

According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China is committed to helping Africa establish production bases and large-scale warehouses for several major grain products such as hybrid rice, cassava and soybean, to enhance some countries' capacity to ensure food security and self-sufficiency.

Lamo said the presence of China in Africa and its sharing of new commodities could revolutionize agricultural production on the continent. He noted that China is advanced in terms of value-added technology as well as mass production, while Africa has plenty of arable land.

Africa has 65 percent of the world's remaining uncultivated arable land, an abundance of fresh water, and about 300 days of sunshine each year, according to the African Development Bank Group.

In addition, more than 60 percent of Africa's working population is engaged in agriculture, and the soil in many African nations is rich and fertile.

"Soybean and rice rotation improves fertility, increases income and provides the opportunity for large-scale marketing. Cassava, on the other hand, is an industrial crop and food crop. We need it in hospitals, confectionery (production) and in other areas at the same time," he said.

With warehouses in strategic locations and China's aid in the development of the road network across Africa, the continent's agricultural sector is poised to greatly benefit, Lamo said.

## Other options

Long Wenjing, a researcher from the Sichuan Provincial Academy of Agricultural Sciences, in Chengdu, who is also engaged in promoting perennial rice, said the lack of proper irrigation systems in Uganda poses a major challenge for the variety. He said they will try to provide more technical support to locals to overcome the challenge.

In addition to perennial rice, Long and his Chinese colleagues are also selecting other agricultural crop species that may be suitable for Uganda's conditions.

"We are focusing on the introduction and development of new species under the FAO-China-Uganda South-South Cooperation (Phase 3) program," he said.

"We have selected more than 100 plant species from China, and are testing them in Uganda, including at the China-Uganda Industrial Park for Agricultural Cooperation."

In addition to agricultural crops, Chinese experts are also working with their Ugandan counterparts to introduce, test and promote animal husbandry and introduce certain fish species.

In addition, they are teaching locals how to raise fish on rice farms, a practice widely adopted in many agricultural areas of China.

Efforts are already underway to introduce a big-eared goat species from Sichuan province to Uganda, Long said. The species features characteristics such as a faster growth rate, higher meat yield and stronger tolerance to certain diseases.

"We hope through our concerted efforts, the new species, including the perennial rice, can help contribute to improved food security in Uganda and other African countries," he said.

Hu, the Yunnan University researcher who developed perennial rice, said rice is a food staple in Africa, but productivity remains low.

"Perennial rice technology is what Africa needs right now, and I am willing to do everything within my power to facilitate the knowledge transfer."

Luo Jiayuan contributed to this story.

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## TOP NEWS

## China praised for global humanitarian assistance

Red Cross official says organization exploring ways to enhance cooperation with country

By ZHOU JIN in Boao, Hainan  
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China is playing a very important role in providing global humanitarian assistance, a senior official of the International Committee of the Red Cross said, expressing hope for enhancing communication and cooperation with the country.

"We see that with the China International Development Cooperation Agency, there is an increased engagement of China in terms of humanitarian and devel-

opment assistance," ICRC Vice-President Gilles Carbonnier told China Daily.

China is not only a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, but also a major economy and major power, which underlines the country's role in global humanitarian affairs, Carbonnier said.

He praised China, one of the first signatories of the Geneva Conventions, for its strong dedication to international humanitarian responsibilities.

Noting that China has sent medi-



Gilles Carbonnier

cal assistance overseas and the support that China is providing.

He said that several months ago, the ICRC had an exchange with a Chinese medical team on delivering medical assistance in challenging and fragile situations.

Furthermore, the ICRC procures

cal teams and personnel to various countries and regions since 1963, he said the ICRC is exploring how the two sides can further cooperate, aside from the country's own medical assistance overseas and the support that China is providing.

250,000 solar lamps annually from China and distributes them to over 30 countries, Carbonnier said.

China is one of the ICRC's largest global procurement sources. The organization began purchasing aid supplies from China in 2010.

These supplies are distributed by the ICRC to communities affected by conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

In the conflict areas, frequent interruptions of the electricity supply are normal, and many people don't even have access to electricity, according to the ICRC.

The organization worked with a Chinese company to develop an innovative, multifunctional solar

lamp to deal with the situation, Carbonnier said.

The lamps help ensure the security of refugees and displaced people at night, and they enable children to continue their studies, he said, adding that the lamps also serve as emergency chargers for mobile phones.

"This is an innovation that is very popular with hundreds of thousands of displaced people," he said.

Carbonnier also expressed grave concern over the devastating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

"Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected from military operations, so people can get access to essential services," he said.

He also called for putting humanity first, which means elevating respect for and compliance with international humanitarian law as a political priority. He added that hostages should be released unconditionally.

Carbonnier said the ICRC welcomes all support for strengthening medical assistance, as well as efforts to find solutions to the downward spiral of violence and suffering.

Since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, China has provided cash aid and two shipments of emergency humanitarian supplies, including food, medicine and medical supplies, to the Gaza Strip through Egypt, according to the Foreign Ministry.



Ma Ying-jeou, former chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang party, who is leading a youth delegation to visit the mainland, gets ready to test-drive a BYD electric vehicle on Tuesday in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. CHEN YEHUA / XINHUA

## Ma Ying-jeou calls for cross-Strait peace, prosperity

By JIANG CHENGLONG  
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Ma Ying-jeou, former chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang party, said on Tuesday that both sides of the Taiwan Strait should cooperate to avoid war and work together to rejuvenate the Chinese mainland.

He made the remarks during his visit to the former residence of Sun Yat-sen, the renowned Chinese revolutionary and statesman, in Zhongshan, Guangdong province, with a Taiwan youth delegation on the second day of his visit to the Chinese mainland.

Sun was born in 1866 in the residence and passed away in 1925. He is known to the Chinese people as a great pioneer of China's democratic revolution for his leading role in the 1911 Revolution, which ended thousands of years of feudal rule in China.

He lived in the residence for several periods in the 1890s and 1910s. "Dr Sun Yat-sen is the idol I've admired all my life. Today, as I visited his former residence, I was deeply moved," Ma said in a group interview. "One hundred and thirteen years

ago, Chinese society was marked by extreme poverty and backwardness, and the people could not see hope," he said.

Sun led the revolution for 40 years, striving to make the country more prosperous and to seek happiness for the people, Ma said, adding that Sun was a great man whose influence is everlasting for both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

"The people on both sides of the Strait belong to the Chinese nation and are all descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor," the former KMT leader stressed.

"I hope that people across the Strait can remember Dr Sun's teachings, 'peace, struggle, save China'" he said.

"I earnestly hope that both sides can cooperate together, avoid war, commit to peace, struggle, rejuvenate China, and jointly create peace and prosperity," said Ma.

"This is also the greatest wish of our generation of Chinese people," he concluded.

Ma led the youth delegation in laying a flower basket at a statue of Sun at the museum near the former residence.

The 20 members of the youth delegation also toured the former residence and viewed the museum's exhibition, which detailed the history of Sun's upbringing and revolutionary history.

Additionally, Ma and his group on Tuesday visited the office of BYD, China's largest electric vehicle manufacturer, and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

At BYD's office, accompanied by Song Tao, head of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, Ma learned about the company's most advanced electric vehicle technology and products and inquired about the mainland's incentive policies for promoting electric vehicles.

"Which one is the most effective policy encouraging electric vehicles?" he asked.

A BYD executive responded that "the most effective measure is 6.6 million charging piles, or the supporting infrastructure".

According to the National Development and Reform Commission, the Chinese mainland had built more than 6.6 million charging piles of various types nationwide by the end of June last year.

Song also added that new energy vehicles enjoy certain preferential policies regarding road use rights and license plate distribution, making more consumers willing to purchase electric vehicles.

Ma also talked with BYD's deputy president Wang Jie about how soon electric vehicles could completely replace fuel cars in the future.

In the afternoon, Ma and his group also visited the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge to learn about the construction and operation of the bridge.

On Wednesday, Ma will lead the youth delegation to visit Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, the provincial capital of Guangdong, and interact with students there.

In the afternoon, they will depart for Shaanxi province where they will participate in the Qingming Festival Memorial Ceremony for Huangdi, or the Yellow Emperor, who is regarded as one of the common ancestors of all Chinese people.

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## Talk: One-China policy adhered to, Biden says

From page 1

According to Xi, the US is creating risks, instead of "de-risking" as it claims, by adopting endless measures to suppress China's trade and technology sectors with a growing list of sanctions against Chinese enterprises.

If the US is willing to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation with China and share in the dividends of China's development, the door is always open, Xi said. However, if the US insists on suppressing China's high-tech development and depriving China of its legitimate development rights, the Chinese side will not stand idly by, he said.

Xi also elaborated China's positions on issues concerning the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, human rights and the South China Sea, among others.

According to the Foreign Ministry news release, Biden said that the progress in bilateral ties so far demonstrates that the two sides are able to actively advance cooperation while managing their differences in a responsible way.

He reiterated the commitment to the "five noes": that the US does not seek a new Cold War with China, it does not aim to change China's system, the

revitalization of its alliances is not targeted at China, it does not support "Taiwan independence", and it has no intention to seek a conflict with China.

Biden also said that the US adheres to the one-China policy, China's development is beneficial to the world, and the US does not seek to contain China's development or to "decouple" from China.

The US president also said that the US will send US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to visit China in the near future.

The two heads of state exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis and the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

They also agreed to instruct the working teams from the two sides to step up efforts to implement the San Francisco vision, push forward consultation mechanisms in fields such as diplomacy, economy, finance and commerce, as well as military-to-military communication, and conduct dialogue and cooperation in areas including anti-drug efforts, artificial intelligence and climate change.

Consensus was also reached in taking further measures to expand people-to-people exchanges and strengthen communication on global and regional issues.

## Pedal challenge



A cyclist negotiates a flooded street on Monday in a town in Burgundy, France. Heavy rains in recent days have caused extensive flooding in the country's central-eastern region.

ARNAUD FINISTRE / AFP

## Relations: Cooperation between two nations proceeding successfully

From page 1

cooperation or slow down implementation of the multidimensional project. Thanks to the firm determination of the leadership of the two countries, the cooperation is proceeding successfully.

Concerns about the security and safety of the crew working on projects in Pakistan are legitimate. A similar terrorist attack targeting Chinese engineers occurred in 2021, after which the two sides worked out a comprehensive plan to beef up security

arrangements. The convoy of the Chinese engineers targeted in the most recent attack included three vehicles of security personnel. There is an urgent need to review and revise the security protocol to minimize the risks, and that is what the government of Pakistan has vowed to do.

Chairing a high-level meeting, Prime Minister Sharif called for all-out efforts in a thorough joint investigation. He conveyed a strong message to terrorists: "We shall fight terrorism till every terrorist casting an evil eye on Paki-

**The terrorist attacks have failed to create a dent in the unrelenting resolve of the Chinese leadership and people to continue fostering ties with Pakistan.**

stan, its people and their guests is eliminated; we shall not leave any stone unturned to ensure that every foreign citizen, especially the Chinese nationals contributing to the prosperity of Pakistan, is safe and secure in Pakistan. We shall fight terrorism with all our might, to the very end."

The terrorist attacks have failed to create a dent in the unrelenting resolve of the Chinese leadership and people to continue fostering ties with Pakistan. This resolve was reiterated by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian,

who said that Pakistan and China have the determination and ability to make terrorists pay the price for their actions, and any attempt to undermine China-Pakistan cooperation will not succeed. This is a clear message that the two countries will not allow such conspiracies to create misunderstanding between the two trusted friends.

The Chinese spokesman firmly assured that China will continue to support Pakistan's economic and social development and efforts to improve the livelihood

of its people. This, in fact, is in line with the repeated assurances of the Chinese leadership to continue to extend support to Pakistan in different spheres of life.

Against this backdrop, I firmly hope that the two countries will arrive at a comprehensive understanding to forge their ties in various sectors to mutual advantage. In fact, fast-paced implementation of ongoing projects and initiation of new ones would be the most fitting response to the designs of the enemy.

The author is chairman and CEO of the Pakistan Observer. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Yangtze fishing ban to be enhanced

By LI LEI  
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Authorities vowed on Tuesday to maintain a harsh clampdown on illegal angling along the Yangtze River and uproot the underground network that produces banned fishing gear and sells the unlawful catch.

A decadelong moratorium on fishing was imposed on the country's longest river in 2021 with the aim of restoring its ecological health.

After three years, the fish population in the river has recovered markedly, but the moratorium still faces constant threats from illegal fishing, which is becoming "more concealed" and harder to detect, Tang Renjian, minister of agriculture and rural affairs, said at a news conference organized by the State Council Information Office in Beijing.

In response, he said authorities will step up nighttime surveillance as well as patrols near river sections close to provincial borders, which are more susceptible to poaching because of jurisdictional vacuums.

Scrutiny will also be increased over "unregistered, unlicensed and unregulated" trawlers and banned fishing practices such as electric shock fishing.

"Relying on automated and intelligent monitoring methods, we are enhancing round-the-clock monitoring and supervision of critical water areas," Tang said.

The State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a guideline last month on "steadfastly advancing" the ban, amid rumors that the moratorium has led to fish overpopulation in the Yangtze.

Ma Youxiang, a vice-minister of agriculture and rural affairs, told the news conference that while it has increased by a quarter since 2021, the total fish population in the Yangtze is only slightly more than a third of the preindustrial level.

He said restoring fish populations is a lengthy task, citing the examples of Qinghai Lake in China and the Rhine River in Western Europe, where decades of moratoriums have failed to substantially restore fish stocks.

Tang described the ban as a long-term, complex and arduous historical task closely linked to the Chinese nation's sustainable development.

The current state of the Yangtze can only be described as "in the early stages of recovery from a serious illness" after decades of overfishing and pollution, he said.

Ministry of Public Security data show it has solved more than 20,000 cases involving violations of the ban since 2021. Over that period, illegal fishing in the main waterways of the Yangtze has decreased by almost a third, and less than 10 percent involves more destructive organized crimes.

Tian Yonghao, who oversees the ministry's Public Security Bureau, told the news conference that his administration will step up patrols on sections susceptible to poaching and embrace information technology and use undercover investigations to combat-related crimes.

He said it will collaborate closely with related departments "and strengthen control of prohibited fishing gear and the sale of illegal fishery products."

The fishing ban on the Yangtze is part of a growing effort by China to restore the ecological health of its rivers and seas.

Last month, the agriculture ministry said it would impose the strictest summertime fishing moratorium in the annual "Shining Sword" mission aimed at warding off illegal fishing on rivers and at sea.

Collaboration will also be stepped up with maritime neighbors to fight illegitimate angling across borders during the moratorium, which usually lasts from May through September, officials said.

## Eco-friendly pandas



A woman takes photos with panda sculptures made of recycled paper in Tianjin on Monday. Five hundred eco-friendly paper panda sculptures, designed by renowned artist Han Meilin, made a collective appearance in the city, surrounded by tulips. The event aims to attract visitors and prompt people to contemplate ecology and the conservation of biodiversity. TONG YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Action urged in HK to ease border bottlenecks

Vacation travel pushes checkpoints close to maximum capacities

By XI TIANQI in Hong Kong  
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Hong Kong lawmakers have urged the city to enhance crowd control management, suggesting technology could be used to improve cross-boundary travel, after its borders were strained during the Easter break, with over 4.26 million inbound and outbound travelers recorded.

They also said vacation peaks have brought checkpoints close to their maximum capacities, and only the opening of more cross-boundary facilities, including the new Huanggang port now under construction and due to open in 2026, will be able to ease the bottlenecks.

Between Friday and Monday — the city's Easter holidays — around 2.07 million inbound and 2.19 million outbound travelers passed through Hong Kong's land, sea and air border control points — 40 percent more than during the same holiday last year. Among those who left the city for vacations, over 80 percent headed for the Chinese mainland.

Over 1.1 million cross-boundary travelers were recorded on Friday alone, with nearly 800,000 holidaymakers leaving Hong Kong. The departure figure was much higher than the special administrative region government's previous estimate of 601,000, causing heavy con-

gestion at checkpoints across the city. More than two million people arrived in and departed from Hong Kong last weekend.

On Monday, the last day of the four-day break, over 924,000 cross-boundary travelers were logged by the city's Immigration Department.

The Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles program also drew people to travel to the mainland via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge in private vehicles. On Monday, the bridge's Zhuhai port saw over 19,000 inbound and outbound vehicles, a record high since its opening in 2018.

Hong Kong lawmaker Gary Zhang Xinyu said the pressure experienced by checkpoints during the Easter holiday, predominantly from northbound passenger flows, would likely recur during other public holidays such as National Day and the Lunar New Year.

Zhang proposed leveraging cutting-edge technologies to enhance clearance efficiency and exploring innovative approaches for upgrading the checkpoints, such as using autonomous driving technologies on bridge shuttle buses to enhance the frequency of services.

He also envisaged collaborative efforts by Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macao to establish an autonomous driving network to facilitate cross-boundary travel.

Zhang, a former station manager with MTR Corp, which operates Hong Kong's subway system, said the capacity of the high-speed railway linking Hong Kong with the mainland could be raised from the current 100,000 passengers a day to 150,000 to alleviate pressures faced by the East Rail Line, an MTR line linking downtown areas with two stations near the Hong Kong-Shenzhen border.

In the long run, Zhang recommended expediting the construction of new land ports, including the new Huanggang port, and the new Sha Tau Kok port to handle holiday peaks.

The new Huanggang port, expected to open in 2026, will be able to handle 300,000 passengers and 30,000 vehicles a day. As for Sha Tau Kok, which now clears cross-boundary cargos only, will be rebuilt into a passenger-only land crossing in 2026, with a daily capacity of receiving 100,000 travelers.

Perry Yiu Pak-leung, a legislator representing the tourism sector, said he was trapped by congestion for over one and a half hours on Friday when driving from Hong Kong to Guangzhou via the Shenzhen Bay crossing port.

He said the heavy traffic mirrored the limitations of the existing border facilities, and advised the authorities to distribute traffic information at checkpoints in a timely manner, which would help passengers avoid using border facilities during peak hours.

## Respiratory diseases 'biggest pandemic risk'

By WANG XIAOYU  
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Infectious respiratory diseases, including influenza and COVID-19, have the greatest potential to trigger the next pandemic and it is critical to maintain regular and comprehensive monitoring of pathogens in circulation to boost preparedness, public health experts said recently.

Shen Hongbing, director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said during a recent academic conference that respiratory infections can be caused by a large and diverse family of pathogens, and they can be transmitted quickly, lead to complicated clinical symptoms and inflict a heavy burden on society. Children, the elderly and people with underlying diseases are all high-risk groups.

"Infectious respiratory illnesses remain the most challenging disease that can lead to a pandemic," he was quoted as saying by Jiemian.com, an online news outlet. "Among them, influenza and the COVID-19 disease have caused pandemics before, but they still carry the risk of sparking another one and should be prioritized in pandemic preparedness."

Globally, there are about 1 billion seasonal influenza cases a year, resulting in 3 to 5 million severe cases and 290,000 to 650,000 related deaths. Modeling suggests that China has about 88,100 excess deaths linked to influenza, accounting for up to 8.2 percent of all mortalities linked to respiratory illnesses, according to Shen.

Another threat is bird flu, which can infect humans. Shen said that human infections with the H5N6 and H9N2 subtypes have been the most common in the past five years and heightened awareness should be paid to H5N1 bird flu outbreaks among poultry and the risk of the virus jumping to other species.

"In addition, China has nearly the most complicated situation in terms of human infections with the novel bird flu," he said.

Regarding COVID-19, Shen said that the domestic COVID-19 disease has stabilized since February of last year, with two upticks in infections noted in the second and third quarters.

But Shen said that the overall level of COVID-19 remains at a low in China at present.

Liang Wannian, executive dean of Tsinghua University's Vanke School of Public Health and a former health official, said during a previous interview that acute and emerging respiratory infectious diseases are the most pressing challenges.

"The key priority would be preventing and dealing with respiratory diseases that can be transmitted through small respiratory particles and droplets," he said.

“Infectious respiratory illnesses remain the most challenging disease that can lead to a pandemic.”

Shen Hongbing, director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Special attention should also be paid to the family of coronaviruses. Currently, there are seven coronaviruses that can infect people, including the viruses that cause COVID-19, severe acute respiratory syndrome, and Middle East respiratory syndrome, he said.

Health experts have also sounded the alarm about Disease X — a hypothetical disease that could cause a serious global emergency.

Wang Hesheng, director of the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, said during a news conference last month that Disease X would be deadly, highly transmissible and prone to mutating.

"Global experts have agreed that the risk of Disease X triggering a pandemic is rising due to factors such as climate change, expanding human activities and frequent cross-species spread of pathogens," he said.

However, Wang said that such a pandemic can be dealt with effectively by stepping up preparedness in building a multichannel surveillance and early warning system, strengthening evaluations of contagious illnesses and improving capabilities in detecting a new outbreak as soon as possible.

He said that China has set up an intelligent, multi-point infectious disease monitoring and early warning system. The system contains 10 surveillance channels such as monitoring hospitals, viral variants and urban wastewater to help project epidemic trajectories and inform response strategies.

Shen said the administration is working on a research project in the hope of detecting novel, high-risk pathogens and strengthening early preparations against them.

Ana Maria Henao-Restrepo, leader of the R&D Blueprint at the World Health Organization Emergencies Program, said it is critical for countries to monitor viruses and bacteria in circulation.

"The second thing is to characterize the viruses and bacteria, how they transmit, how they infect people and how they cause disease. The third point is contributing to your local, regional and global efforts to develop vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics," she said, adding that global collaboration and coordination is also important.

## Physicist donates 3m yuan to support young researchers on 100th birthday

By YAN DONGJIE  
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On his 100th birthday, Ye Minghan, a renowned physicist and academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, donated 3 million yuan (\$415,000) from his personal savings to the Education Foundation of the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to support young researchers in the field of high-energy physics.

On Tuesday, dozens of physicists, including several academicians, gathered at CAS' Institute of High Energy Physics to cut a cake, offer blessings, sing birthday songs and celebrate Ye's birthday.

Ye is one of the pioneers in high-energy physics research in China. Around the time of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, inspired by Qian Sanqiang's encouragement that "China must develop its own nuclear physics," Ye enrolled in the graduate school of Tsinghua University and conducted research in nuclear physics under the guidance of Qian.

Academician Wang Yifang, director of the institute, said that in the 1950s, during a time of extreme

poverty, Ye participated in the development of China's first and second electrostatic particle accelerators, which are crucial foundations for high-energy physics.

Starting in the 1980s, during the construction of the Beijing Electron-Positron Collider, Ye was responsible for the design and construction of the Beijing Spectrometer, and as the institute's second director, he led the development of the collider.

The Beijing Electron-Positron Collider is one of the world's eight major high-energy accelerator centers, the first high-energy accelerator in China, and a significant piece of scientific and technological infrastructure for high-energy physics research.

"He led the entire institute in arduous struggle and bold exploration, and according to plan, completed China's first major scientific device — the Beijing Electron-Positron Collider and the Beijing Spectrometer — and achieved many world-class physics results," Wang said.

"As China's first large-scale cooperative experiment, over the course of more than 30 years, the international collaboration group of the Beijing Spectrometer has grown from an initial 10 units from China and the United

States, with less than 100 people, to more than 600 scientists from 89 units in 16 countries.

"China's high-energy physics research has gained a place in the world's high-tech field, and a large number of important research achievements continue to emerge. These achievements are inseparable from Ye's outstanding contributions."

Ye's close friend, Nobel laureate Li Zhengdao, recalled the decades-long research journey he and Ye walked together.

"Eighty years ago, we were classmates at Southwest Associated University, exploring the mysteries of physics together, and seeking paths to serve our motherland," he said. "Today, we walk side by side, heading toward a hundred years. Through more than 80 years of wind and rain, our genuine friendship endures, a rare treasure in the world."

In 1994, at Li's invitation, Ye, at the age of 69, took on the role of academic director of the China Center of Advanced Science and Technology.

Over the past 30 years, Ye has established an important platform for communication between domestic and foreign research institutions and scientists, organiz-



Ye Minghan (left), a renowned physicist and academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, cuts a cake to celebrate his 100th birthday in Beijing on Tuesday. YAN DONGJIE / CHINA DAILY

ing international academic seminars and implementing programs for young overseas scholars to return to China, in order to encourage and assist Chinese scientists in producing world-class research results domestically.

"Ye has cultivated numerous outstanding graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, contributing to the cause of science in our country," Li said.

Zheng Zhipeng, a former director of the institute, said: "Ye pays great attention to the training of scientific

and technological personnel, assigning tasks according to their expertise, regularly checking on the progress of their work, providing specific guidance and assistance when problems arise, and nurturing them through his words and deeds."

Ye's daughter, Ye Ruiyin, expressed her family's hope that her father's scientific spirit, achievements and the donation made on his birthday will continue to contribute to the development of the country's physics research.

## CHINA

## Villagers trade their kilns for cherry trees

GUIYANG — Every spring, Taoying village, nestled in Wumeng Mountain in Guizhou province, comes to life as large swaths of cherry trees reach their peak bloom, drawing throngs of visitors.

Taoying is situated in the heart of the cultivation zone for the "Agate Red" cherry variety, located in the Shedongguan Yi, Miao and Bai township of Nayong county, Bijie city. Over the years, these cherries have evolved into a symbol of the village's identity.

Thanks to afforestation efforts spanning the past two decades, the remote landlocked village has transformed its once-barren mountains, plagued by rocky desertification, into picturesque areas adorned with cherry trees, benefiting the villagers financially.

The forest coverage rate in Taoying has increased from 17.5 percent in the past to 83.6 percent today. The cherry planting area in the village exceeds 320 hectares, and the annual income from selling the fruit exceeds 28 million yuan (\$3.94 million), according to Xiao Jun, head of the village committee of Taoying.

The "flower economy" here generates additional income for the locals. The village attracts visitors from across the nation during the spring and summer seasons, drawn by the sight of blossoming cherry trees and the fun of cherry picking.

Thanks to the thriving activities, the residents of Taoying have achieved an annual per capita disposable income of over 26,000 yuan.

With a focus on the flower economy, the village is striving to explore more ways to unlock the value of ecological products. Since the beginning of last year, the village has actively promoted the integration of agriculture and tourism through measures such as building tent hotels and running sightseeing trains into the cherry forest.

Meanwhile, the green growth centering on the cherry industry saved the village from environmental degradation.

During the 1960s and 70s, villagers were engaged in burning kilns and producing bricks and tiles to augment their household incomes. While such activities provided a financial boost, the extraction of mud and deforestation inflicted significant damage on the local environment.

"At the peak, there were about 60 or 70 kilns in the village. Mud excavation and brick production not only led to soil and water erosion, but also polluted the air," Xiao said.

With support from agricultural experts, local villagers began to plant trees on a large scale and vigorously developed the cherry industry.

According to Luo Hongxiang, deputy director of Guizhou's provincial department of ecology and environment, Guizhou has been striving to harness the value of ecological products and promoting green and low-carbon development to turn ecological resources into wealth.

XINHUA



Li Rongfu (right) guide children and their parents during an ecological education tour in Jiaohe, Jilin province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Garden promotes passion for nature

### Teacher works to instill need for ecological protection in students

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

Over the past eight years, Li Rongfu has received over 13,000 visitors at his botanical garden in Jiaohe city, Jilin province, which also serves as a base for ecological and moral education and social activities for children.

Li, a 60-year-old biology teacher at the Tianbei Township Nine-Year School in Jiaohe, spent his life savings of 800,000 yuan (\$110,648) to build the 260-hectare botanical garden in 2016 and to conduct daily maintenance in the ensuing years.

In fact, as early as 2003, he began contributing to China's ecological protection efforts. Since then, he has received several honors, including the National Outstanding Contribution Award for Ecological and Moral Education for Minors, and the Ministry of Education's Advanced Individual Award for Caring for Nature and Bird Protection. He was also named one of the country's "Most Beautiful Ecological and Environmental Volunteers".

In the winter of 2003, Li's son rescued a "big" injured bird in the wild. Some people expressed an interest in buying it when they



Li (right) and his students attend biology class in his botanical garden in Jiaohe.

heard about its size, but Li refused to sell.

"At first, I didn't know what species the bird was, but I knew it was a wild animal, and no matter how much money was being offered, it couldn't be sold," he said.

After consulting with experts from the Jilin Wildlife Protection Association, Li learned that the bird was an Oriental white stork, an endangered species under national first-class protection.

The association offered Li a 500 yuan reward, but he refused the money and instead accepted two books on wildlife protection.

From then on, he noticed his students' enthusiasm for protecting the ecology and nature began to grow. This led him to establish a team at his school focused on pro-

tecting birds. Participating students carry out wildlife protection and promotion activities such as cleaning birds traps in the mountains and helping the animals survive the cold winters.

Over the past 20 years, the students have taken part in wildlife protection activities in 23 villages and 148 communities in Tianbei.

At the same time, in cooperation with the local forestry department, they have vigorously cracked down on illegal activities, rescuing over 200 species of wildlife, such as the Oriental white stork, golden eagle, egret, swan, wild goose and roe deer.

As a biology teacher, Li believes that lessons cannot be confined to the classroom.

"There are over 180 plant species in our town, but the students rarely

recognize the features and the benefits of different plants," he said. "I hope they can get close to nature, understand flora and fauna, and thus protect them."

In 2010, Li built a garden behind the school's office building, covering an area of over 300 square meters.

He planted various plants and noted their names and beneficial qualities, but due to a school expansion project, the garden had to be dismantled.

To create a field base for ecological conservation education, Li decided to build the botanical garden with his own savings.

"At first, I spent 600,000 yuan building the garden, which was originally intended to be used to buy a new apartment for my son," he said. "I received my wife's and son's support because they knew my favorite thing is to watch wild birds being released into the sky and returning to nature."

With an area of 260 hectares, the garden contains over 1,000 species of wild plants, nearly 600 varieties of Chinese medicinal herbs, over 70 species of wild birds and various terrestrial wildlife. It was open in April 2016 to the public for free.

Li has also continued to invest in road construction, housing and maintaining infrastructure at the garden. He has secured books on ecology worth 60,000 yuan through the China Wildlife Protection Association, and has built a reading room to accommodate them.

"Now the students can study and practice what they learn simultaneously in the garden," he said. "As a biology teacher and a national natural experience training instructor, I will always continue to teach about nature and cultivate a new force for the construction of an ecological civilization."

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## Doctors help rural residents remain healthy

GUIYANG — Village doctor Lei Zhaojin arrives at a health clinic in Southwest China's Guizhou province each day before 8 am.

She promptly dons her white coat and begins attending to the patients who are waiting.

Lei, 48, has worked at the Duoding community clinic in Weng'an county since graduating from medical school in 1998.

Her daily routine includes conducting consultations and performing massage therapy. Currently, three village doctors are working at the clinic.

Village doctors are playing a key role in the healthcare of China's vast rural areas. They travel door to door to answer patients' calls, especially those who live in hard-to-reach hamlets.

Mountainous and hilly areas account for 92.5 percent of the province's total land area.

In China, there are over 1.3 million village doctors like Lei. They are considered health guardians in towns and villages, offering emergency response and medical support.

Besides diagnosing common illnesses, their main responsibilities include managing the health of patients with chronic conditions, handling infectious disease reports and conducting health check-ups for the elderly.

Lei's home is only about 300 meters from the clinic, but she hangs an LED display screen at her doorstep, showing her contact information.

"I am ready to serve the villagers 24 hours a day," Lei said.

Like Lei, 55-year-old village doctor Luo Haixiang has been working at a community clinic in Baigu village in Guizhou for 38 years.

After graduating from medical school in 1986, Luo returned home and served as a village doctor.

To make home visits easier, she even bought a car five years ago.

"Now it's much more convenient," she said.

This year, more than 140 of her fellow villagers have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, and there are nine with diabetes. In addition, more than 200 elderly people are given health examinations once a year.

To keep them healthy, Luo opts to conduct public health services by visiting villagers during the early morning and late evening hours, as these are the times when the majority of villagers are likely to be home.

Currently, she goes out for home visits about four times a week, and sometimes she has to go out every day to provide public health services.

"The busiest work throughout the year is still conducting public health services," she said. "In remote mountainous areas, the distances between households are very far."

In order to enhance the sense of achievement among village doctors and further encourage them to safeguard the health of rural communities, China continues to take targeted measures.

This year, the National Health Commission will continue to foster more medical talent for rural areas and expand the enrollment size of medical students trained for rural areas with free tuition.

Meanwhile, training programs will also be organized to enhance the diagnosis, treatment and health management abilities of existing medical personnel in China's rural areas, according to the NHC.

XINHUA

XINHUA

## Tibetan farmers find fortune with fruit

CHENGDU — In mid-March, residents of Gudiao village, deep in the mountains of the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Garze in Sichuan province, were busy pumping water from the river below to water a batch of saplings they had just planted.

*Malus toringoides* is the species name of the trees. They bear red fruits and thrive at an altitude of about 3,000 meters. Villagers refer to them as *genque* trees.

The tender shoots of the tree can be used for tea, and their leaves for medicinal purposes. The red fruit can also be processed into beverages and jams.

"We call the *genque* fruit 'ruby', as in recent years, more and more villagers have gotten rich by planting these trees," said Tashi Dorje, Party chief of the village.

Before large-scale planting, *genque* trees were commonly found in the area but were often neglected by

the villagers. In 2016, there were more than 50,000 *genque* trees in Dawu county, where Gudiao is located, with an annual fruit yield of around 1,500 metric tons.

"At that time, the mountains were covered with *genque* fruit, with most decaying and left untouched on the ground," recalled Chen Gang, former director of the Dawu environmental protection and forestry bureau.

Some villagers took the fruit to experts for analysis and found that they are quite nutritious, containing various vitamins and amino acids.

In 2017, people in Dawu began developing the *genque* fruit industry and launched a beverage made from the fruit.

"At first, the beverage tasted sour. Later, we improved the formula and the packaging and began large-scale production in 2019," Chen said.

Without any prior experience in running a beverage business, the vil-



Tibetan villagers plant *genque* tree seedlings on a slope in Dawu county, Garze prefecture, Sichuan province, on March 12.

SHEN BOHAN / XINHUA

lagers had to do everything from scratch.

After years of efforts, *genque* fruit from Dawu can be processed into jams, canned goods, beverages and other products. The signature beverage product is now well-known locally for its sweet and sour taste and rich flavor.

In recent years, demand for *genque* fruit has continued to grow. In

2022, Dawu planted 32,000 *genque* trees, and the number grew to 143,000 last year.

This year, the county purchased 177,000 seedlings to promote planting in five townships.

With the growth of the *genque* industry, there has been a significant increase in demand for *genque* seedlings. Villagers in Gudiao regard it as another major source of

## WORLD

## Housing becoming harder to afford in US

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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In nearly half of the United States, someone looking to buy a median-priced home now needs a six-figure income, a new study has found.

To afford a median-priced home of \$402,343, people in the US need an annual income of \$110,871, according to an analysis published on Monday by Bankrate, a consumer financial services company in Florida.

By contrast, in January 2020, potential homebuyers needed an income of \$76,191 to afford a typical home.

Bankrate's analysis found that US people need a \$100,000-plus income to purchase a home in 22 states and Washington, DC. Four years ago, six states and Washington, DC, required such a salary to buy a median-priced home.

"The higher the price of a home, the harder it is to come up with the down payment or to qualify for the monthly payment," Jeff Ostrowski, a housing market analyst at Bankrate, said.

Driving the real estate market are higher interest rates and lower availability.

"If rates go down just another percentage point — that's what I'm hoping for by year-end — prices are going to go through the roof," said real estate entrepreneur Barbara Corcoran on Fox Business Network. "Everyone's going to charge the market."

## Rising loan rate

The average 30-year fixed mortgage rate in the US was 6.57 percent on Monday, according to Zillow, a real estate marketplace.

At the start of 2021, the average rate for a 30-year fixed loan was 2.65 percent, according to data from Freddie Mac, a government-sponsored company that buys loans in the secondary mortgage market.

Many homeowners who locked in low mortgage rates during the pandemic are staying put to avoid the high rates. Hence, there are fewer homes up for sale.

"Over the past few years, the supply of homes has been constrained by a number of factors, including muted homebuilding and the lock-in (mortgage-rate) effect," Ostrowski said. "But demand for homes has been growing, and there are more buyers than sellers."

There could be some mortgage-rate relief, however, as the US Federal Reserve has said it expects to cut rates three times this year. But that could also hinge on the easing of inflation, which has been increasing at a lower rate but is still above the central bank's preferred level of 2 percent.

Not surprisingly, you will need more money to buy a house on the East and West coasts. The South and the Midwest, meanwhile, are the most affordable.

"It's all about home-price appreciation," Ostrowski said. "The states with the most dramatic increases in income needed to afford a home have experienced above-average appreciation in recent years, while those at the bottom of the list have seen much more modest rises in home prices."

## Splashing celebrations



A man splashes water onto a woman as part of the traditional Easter celebrations in Hollóko, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Hungary, on Monday. ATTILA VOLGYI / XINHUA

## Local govts in England face 'bankruptcy'

By JULIAN SHEA in London  
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In April, the new financial year starts in England, and, for millions of households, that means the arrival of the council tax bill — money to be paid to local authorities to fund certain services.

And bills are set to rocket because a full-on local government funding emergency has erupted, with inescapable consequences for everyone across the country.

Health and defense are dealt with at a national level, but services such as street cleaning and maintaining parks are collected locally.

According to the Institute for Local Government, in 2014, 7 percent of tax collection in England was done at a local level, compared with 12 percent in Italy, 32 percent in Germany, and almost 50 percent in Canada, meaning local authorities are heavily reliant on central government funding. But between 2009 and 2019, those government contributions fell by 40 percent.

In 2009, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, prime minister David Cameron, who left office in 2016 following Brexit, announced in a speech that "the age of irresponsibility is giving way to the age of austerity ... a new culture of thrift".

The issue was largely ignored until the recent dam-burst, which has seen councils declaring bankruptcy and services facing bigger cuts than ever before.

Kevin Muldoon-Smith, an associate professor in strategic public-sector finance at Northumbria University, told China Daily that various factors had contributed to the crisis, the main one being central government funding cuts, resulting in "a whole system that exists on the margins of financial viability".

"The problem now is that trying to get hold of and fix local government finance is politically very painful. It's become less about consciously trying to reduce the state, more of a fear of the complexity of having to fix the problem," he said.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies' Green Budget, published in 2021, "driven by cuts in central government funding, English councils' noneducation spending per resident fell by almost a quarter in real terms between 2009-10 and 2019-20".

Clive Betts, chairman of the all-parties parliamentary Levelling up, Housing, and Communities Com-

mittee, told The Guardian that there was an "out-of-control" financial crisis in local councils across England.

"Councils are hit by a double harm of increased demands for services while experiencing a significant hit to their real-terms spending power in recent years," he said. "The government must use the local government financial settlement to help bridge the 4-billion-pound (\$5 billion) funding gap for 2024-25 or risk already strained council services becoming stretched to breaking point."

In 2018, Northamptonshire County Council became the first local authority in 20 years to issue a section 114 notice — this quasi-bankruptcy step prevents any new council expenditure, other than on maintaining support services for the most vulnerable.

Since then, Slough, Croydon, Thurrock and Woking, all in the southeast of England, and two major Midlands metropolitan councils, Birmingham City and Nottingham City, have followed suit, while the Daily Mirror newspaper reported 40 more councils are at risk.

The most high-profile problem is in Europe's largest local authority, Birmingham, which provides services for more than 1 million people, and that has the second-largest Chinese population of any British city, after Manchester.

## 'Going bust'

In September, years of difficulties saw the council effectively go bust, with a deficit for the year of \$110 million following a lost court case about unequal pay to council workers that cost it hundreds of millions of pounds.

Birmingham has been given special dispensation to raise council tax by up to 10 percent for each of the next two years, a move so drastic that it would usually require a local referendum.

On top of redundancies and cuts across council services, Birmingham council leader John Cotton apologized "unreservedly" to local residents during the meeting where the "devastating" budget was passed.

Following the passing of the budget, the council's Chief Executive Deborah Cadman announced she would step down after three years in the role, saying it had "always" been her "intention to leave the council once the budget was agreed, and we had a clear route to recovery and improvement ... hav-

ing led on the development of the council's new improvement and recovery plan, I feel that now is the right time to hand over the baton".

Nottingham City Council lost millions of pounds in a failed energy company venture and in February, the government appointed external commissioners to help run the council's finances at its own expense.

Early last month, council leader David Mellen told the BBC that councilors had voted to approve a harsh budget "with great reluctance", including a 5 percent council tax rise, cuts to services and redundancies to plug a deficit of \$67 million.

"To have community protection officers in their streets, to have a voluntary sector that offers cheap play schemes to children and their families, all those things are a basic requirement of councils and those are the areas that we're having to cut today because of a broken care system that a number of prime ministers have said that they will fix but they haven't done it," he said.

Mellen also quit following the passing of the budget, telling the BBC "some people will say (the financial problem is) my fault — and they do — and others will see a bigger picture of the context in which I've been the political leader of the city council".

"Whether I've got everything right or wrong, others will judge, but I've been committed to the city that I've lived in for 40 years."

Muldoon-Smith of Northumbria University said the system is flawed.

"Central government tries to say it's down to local government mismanagement but this process has shown local government is not an independent being, it's inextricably part of an integrated system in terms of finance and management," he said.

"All international studies show countries where it works best have systems where different tiers of government know what they need to do.

"Overseas, local governments have much more access to other sources of income, like value added tax, income tax. In England it's reliant on council tax, property tax and central government transfers.

"This is a problem that can't be ignored, so we've moved from the stage of not thinking about it to the stage where people are starting to listen, but we're not quite at the solution stage yet," Muldoon-Smith said.

## Deaths linked to supplements raise concern

Products containing red yeast rice spark fears as probe gets underway in Japan

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo  
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A health crisis in Japan involving dietary supplements that contain red yeast rice has sparked growing concerns among consumers at home and abroad.

Kobayashi Pharmaceutical has reported five deaths and more than 150 hospitalizations linked to such products. Individuals affected reportedly experienced kidney problems and other health issues. Additionally, nearly 700 others have either sought medical attention for health concerns or expressed a desire to do so.

Furthermore, a system for reporting unexpected reactions to health food, tablets and capsules in Taiwan has received 11 reports related to Kobayashi's red yeast rice products, the region's "central news agency" reported on Monday, citing figures from the food and drug administration.

Kobayashi said it is investigating a potential link between its products and their effects on kidney function. It has initiated a recall of the supplements marketed to lower levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, or "bad" cholesterol, and started accepting returns on Monday.

On Sunday, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare carried out an on-site inspection at a plant operated by Kobayashi's subsidiary in Wakayama prefecture, along with local authorities. This followed a similar inspection on Saturday of the parent company's Osaka plant, which was closed in December because of aging facilities, prompting production to be shifted to the Wakayama facility from January.

Although Kobayashi is a large company, some consumers have expressed concerns about trusting Kobayashi amid this uncertainty.

The Health Ministry said the drug-maker has confirmed the presence of puerulic acid — an unintended substance — in its products. However, it remains unclear whether this substance is directly responsible for the reported deaths and hospitalizations, the ministry added.

To address consumer worries and minimize the influence on unrelated products containing red yeast rice, the ministry disclosed the names of 173 businesses supplied with Kobayashi's red yeast rice ingredients.

These companies have been

urged to conduct voluntary inspections for any reported health issues within the past three years.

Red yeast rice, or *benkoji*, from Kobayashi has been used in various products such as confectionery, bread, alcohol and miso.

The Asahi Shimbun newspaper emphasized the urgent need for explanations regarding the safety and response strategies concerning such products.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, the newspaper published an editorial on Friday, stressing the significant responsibility of business operators and called for a prompt investigation to prevent the spread of damage.

Criticisms have been raised regarding the timeliness of information provision, with Kobayashi's awareness of the issue in mid-January contrasting with its report to the government in late March.

The recalled "Benkoji Cholesterol Help" brand supplement falls under the category of "foods with function claims", or FFC. These foods are not subject to the government review of safety and functionality. Instead, it is the food business operator's responsibility to label products with function claims based on scientific evidence.

## Oversight issues

As a result, Japan's domestic FFC market has been growing annually. It is forecast to exceed 700 billion yen (\$4.61 billion) this year, up from 31.4 billion yen in 2015, according to market research company Fuji Keizai.

Despite its growth in Japan's domestic market, concerns have arisen regarding the oversight of FFC products.

Japan's Consumer Affairs Agency requests that businesses update their information if there are any changes. It also requests information on the sale of products to be updated about every six months.

However, analysis by Tokyo Shoko Research published last week showed that out of the 6,749 FFC products currently registered, information for 982 products, or 14.5 percent, has not been updated for at least six months.

The Consumer Affairs Agency has instructed a reevaluation of all FFC products, but it is necessary to reconsider whether it is appropriate to leave safety confirmation solely to the business operators, The Asahi Shimbun editorial said.



Staff members of Japan's Health Ministry enter a factory of Meitan Honpo, subsidiary of Kobayashi Pharmaceutical, for an on-site inspection in Kinokawa, Wakayama Prefecture, on Sunday. AP

## Prompt response



Emergency personnel work at the site of a collision between a train and a bus in the Yaroslavl region in western Russia on Monday. The accident killed eight people, Russia's Ministry of Emergency Situations said. XINHUA

## Microsoft to separate Teams and Office globally

BRUSSELS — Microsoft will sell its chat and video app Teams separately from its Office product globally, the US tech giant said on Monday, six months after it unbundled the two products in Europe in a bid to avert a possible European Union antitrust fine.

The European Commission has been investigating Microsoft's tying of Office and Teams since a 2020 complaint by the Salesforce-owned competing workspace messaging app Slack.

Teams, which was added to Office 365 in 2017 for free, subsequently replaced Skype for Business and became popular during the pandemic due in part to its videoconferencing.

Rivals, however, said packaging the products together gives Microsoft an unfair advantage. The company started selling the two products separately in the EU and Switzerland on Oct 1.

"To ensure clarity for our customers, we are extending the steps we took last year to unbundle Teams from M365 and O365 in the European Economic Area and Switzerland to customers globally," a Microsoft spokesperson said.

After the United States' Justice Department sued Microsoft in 1998 for using its dominance of the Windows platform to stifle competition from rival web browsers, the company eventually made concessions

that loosened its control of what software computer manufacturers could install on their products.

Rival internet browsers surged in popularity following that change, but Microsoft's separation of Teams from Office may not have as dramatic an effect, analysts said.

"Enterprise products are a different beast and Teams is so embedded into workflows that I don't think this has that same impact," RBC Capital Markets analyst Rishi Jaluria said.

After Microsoft Teams was unbundled from the Microsoft 365 and Office Suites in Europe in October, the platform has seen the size of its user base remain mostly unchanged,

figures from Sensor Tower showed.

The unbundling may not be enough to stave off EU antitrust charges, which will likely be sent to the company in the coming months, as rivals criticize the level of fees and the ability of their messaging services to function with Office web applications in their own services, sources said.

"This move may not completely ward off further regulatory scrutiny, but showing regulators Microsoft is willing to be proactive could still soften the stance by regulators," Gil Luria, a senior software analyst at D.A. Davidson, said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## WORLD

## Migrant arrivals in UK touch new record

By EARLE GALE in London  
earle@mail.chinadailyuk.com

About 800 migrants crossed the English Channel from France to the United Kingdom during the weekend, making it the busiest period so far in a record-breaking year.

The influx during the Easter holiday weekend brought the total number for 2024 to more than 5,400, the country's Home Office said.

A spokesperson for the UK government department that oversees immigration, security, and law and order told the BBC the scale of the arrivals "demonstrates exactly why we must get flights to Rwanda off the ground as soon as possible".

The 5,435 migrants known to have arrived in the UK in the first three months of 2024 eclipsed the previous record of 4,548 in 2022.

Stephen Kinnock, the opposition Labour Party's immigration spokesman, said UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his ruling Conservative Party had failed to deal with the issue, despite vowing to do so.

"The Tories have overseen an unprecedented level of dangerous Channel crossings this Easter bank holiday," he told the BBC.

"Over Christmas, they were quick to claim credit for the low number of crossings, so where are the home secretary and prime minister now, when we've seen almost 800 people arrive in small boats over the weekend?"

## Five pledges

Sunak has made stopping the influx of migrants one of his "five pledges" in the buildup to a general election that will likely take place in the fall. But one of his main weapons, his proposed Rwanda Bill, which calls for some migrants to be sent to the African nation of Rwanda for processing, has stalled in Parliament.

Sunak has said the bill would make migrants who do not have genuine grounds for claiming asylum think twice before heading for the UK.

But the bill has been handed a series of defeats and will not be debated again until April 15 at the earliest, when lawmakers return from their Easter break.

The Home Office spokesperson said the UK will, in the meantime, continue to work closely with police in France "who are facing increasing violence and disruption on their beaches as they work tirelessly to prevent these dangerous, illegal, and unnecessary journeys".

The Daily Express newspaper said an unnamed source from Border Force, the Home Office agency responsible for patrolling the nation's borders, said 100,000 migrants could arrive in the country by the end of the year. Last year's total was 36,704.

## Off limits



This photo shows a damaged section of Highway 1 on Sunday in the south of Rocky Creek Bridge in Big Sur, California. Authorities urged motorists to avoid the scenic highway after a section of the coastal route collapsed during an Easter weekend storm, forcing closures and stranding motorists near Big Sur, authorities said. CALTRANS' DISTRICT 5 VIA AP

## At UN, airstrike on Iranians denounced

By MINLU ZHANG  
at the United Nations  
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

China's ambassador to the United Nations on Tuesday strongly condemned a deadly airstrike blamed on Israel that demolished an Iranian consulate in Syria.

"This attack seriously violated the United Nations Charter and international law, violated both Syria's and Iran's sovereignty, and was extremely vile in nature. China strongly condemns it," Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, told a UN Security Council emergency meeting on the strike on the Iranian consulate.

The suspected Israeli airstrike targeted a building within the compound of the Iranian embassy in the Syrian capital Damascus on Monday. UN Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khari reported to the Security Council that the attack killed at least five Iranian staff, including top military advisers, with the total death toll rising to 13, including six Syrians.

Geng said he shared empathy with Iranians as he recalled the NATO bombing of the former Chinese embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, killing three Chinese journalists.

"We share the grief of the Iranian government and people at this time

and express our deep sympathy and condolences to them," he said.

"According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, an international treaty ensuring diplomats can perform their duties without interference from the host country's laws, and the universally recognized basic norms of international relations, the security of diplomatic institutions is inviolable," Geng said.

Fears of escalating regional tensions have arisen following the airstrike.

"The situation in the Middle East is already precarious," said Geng.

He said Israel frequently carries out cross-border strikes against targets in Syria and Lebanon, "seriously violating the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries concerned and exacerbating tensions in the entire region".

He expressed his concern that such "provocative actions may trigger greater turmoil and endanger the security of the entire region and must be stopped immediately".

Geng said China calls on all parties, "especially countries with important influence on Israel", to play a constructive role and make practical efforts to promote an immediate cease-fire in Gaza, cool down the situation in the Middle East at an early date, and restore peace and stability.

"The red lines of the basic norms of

international law and international relations have been breached again and again, and the bottom line of human moral conscience has been penetrated time and time again," the ambassador said, calling for an immediate stop to such "situation and tragedy".

Geng reiterated Resolution 2728 passed by the Security Council last week calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and called on the international community to work together to ensure the implementation of the resolution.

"Do not let the entire Ramadan of Muslim faithful be spent amidst the sound of gunfire," said Geng.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday condemned the attack and called on "all parties to respect all of their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, as applicable".

Guterres said that "any miscalculation could lead to broader conflict in an already volatile region, with devastating consequences for civilians who are already seeing unprecedented suffering in Syria, in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the broader Middle East," according to his spokesperson.

Iran on Tuesday vowed to take revenge for the attack.

## China's aid applauded in Pakistan

Focus will be on high-quality BRI with better returns, former Pakistan PM says

By XU WEIWEI in Boao, Hainan  
xuiweiwei@chinadailyjapac.com

Former Pakistani prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi stressed the importance of building a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future, as he condemned a terror attack that killed some Chinese workers in his country last week.

Describing the March 26 attack that claimed the lives of five Chinese workers in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as a very sad and unfortunate incident, Abbasi denounced the attack and said his country is committed to protecting Chinese nationals working there.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday visited the Dasu Hydropower Project's camp to console the Chinese personnel at the project. Sharif expressed his grief over the deaths and sent his condolences to the relatives of the victims and the Chinese personnel.

It is the responsibility of the Pakistani government to protect the safety of the Chinese brothers and sisters who have come to Pakistan to help its development and progress, he said.

Chinese companies and workers have resumed work at different sites in Pakistan a few days after the attack on Chinese engineers.

Contrary to propaganda peddled by vested interests, work on the Tarbela Dam extension project has resumed, a testament to the resolve of both nations in the face of adversity, and a classic example of Pakistan-China friendship, Sharif said.

"China firmly supports Pakistan in looking into what happened with utmost resolve and effort, bringing the perpetrators and whoever's behind the attack to justice and doing everything possible to protect the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects, and institutions in Pakistan," said Wang Wenbin, Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, on Monday.

In an interview with China Daily in Boao, Hainan province, Abbasi

lauded China's help to Pakistan through the Belt and Road Initiative and the flagship China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, project, saying he finds China's engagement and the way the Chinese system works fascinating.

BRI projects are "basically left to the host country to decide what to do," said Abbasi, who recently took on a new role as a member of the board of directors of the Boao Forum for Asia.

He said the Chinese side's framework for the CPEC had only two requirements: projects should be economically viable, and they should be environmentally sustainable.

According to him, CPEC projects have been developed at an amazing speed in the past decade. Now, the focus is shifting to high-quality BRI, which is moving away from signature projects to those that yield better returns and are more technology-focused.

"As part of the community of shared future, I think it is a very, very beneficial relationship in that sense because if you really look back at the Silk Road, it was basically a trading route and it was about inclusion and integration. The same thing is happening now with the BRI," Abbasi said, referring to the Digital Silk Road project. "I think the focus now shifts to technology and also things like artificial intelligence."

The CPEC has been a real success story, according to the Pakistani politician. He refuted the accusations of a "debt trap" by some Western nations, saying the claims have been intentionally made up to harm China's reputation.

Talking about the terrorist attack against Chinese workers in Pakistan, Abbasi said protecting the lives of Chinese nationals involved in various projects in Pakistan is very important.

"We share the grief of the Iranian government and people at this time

Kaswar Khasra, a freelance journalist based in Islamabad, contributed to this story.

## Notice

**Zhu Lifang (deceased)**, farmers' residence land user of No 4, Sunjiazhai, Brigade 1, Huxiang village, Sanlin town, Pudong New Area, Shanghai [farmers' residence land certificate of Hu Ji Zhai (Chuansha) Zi No 156199], and **Zhang Jimin**, farmers' residence land user of No 22, Yangyatan, Chihe brigade, Dongming village, Sanlin town [farmers' residence land certificate of Hu Ji Zhai (Shangsan) Zi No Dong Ming-067];

According to the "Notice on the Compensation Schemes for Houses on the Expropriated Land" of No Hu Fu Tu [2019] 754 and No Hu (Pu) Zheng Di Fang Bu Gao [2023] No 609, the above mentioned properties have been included in the land expropriation scope of the land reserve project for Hengda Parcel 3, Sanlin, Pudong New Area.

At present, the project has entered the compensation phase for the properties on the expropriated land. Related rights holders of the above properties cannot be contacted, so related property expropriation documents cannot be sent and negotiation cannot be conducted with you. Related rights holders of the above mentioned households are required to contact the expropriation implementing unit within seven days from the date of the publication of this notice and provide a valid property ownership (property rights) certificate, identity certificate, contact address and contact number to ensure the delivery of relevant property expropriation documents to negotiate compensation for the expropriation. If you fail to contact us within the time limit, this company will announce relevant affairs concerning the expropriation and compensation of your properties in accordance with the regulations through the bulletin board of this base.

**Office hours:** 9:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday  
**Contact address:** Building 2, No 1500, Zu Chongzhi Road, Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China  
**Contact:** Xu Jianzhong, Tel: 86-135 8594 8092  
**Supervision Hotline:** 86-139 1683 8578  
**Property expropriation implementing unit:** Shanghai Pudong No 1 Property Expropriation Service Firm Co Ltd

## Appendix I:

## Delivery Notice (1)

**Zhu Lifang (deceased) (household); Zhang Jimin (household):**

According to the "Notice on the Compensation Schemes for Houses on the Expropriated Land" of No Hu Fu Tu [2019] 754 and No Hu (Pu) Zheng Di Fang Bu Gao [2023] No 609, the above mentioned properties have been included in the land expropriation scope of the land reserve project for Hengda Parcel 3, Sanlin, Pudong New Area.

It is hereby notified that related documents will later be directly delivered to the co-owners to whom documents are able to be sent directly. The co-owners that receive the documents should transfer the documents to other co-owners of the same household. Co-owners of one household should negotiate relevant affairs as a whole.

Shanghai Pudong No 1 Property Expropriation Service Firm Co Ltd  
April 3, 2024

## Australian winemaker looks to go deep into China

ADELAIDE, Australia — When Kym Teusner loaded the first shipment of Teusner Wines to Beijing in 2006 to tap into the Chinese market, he did not think that his brands would become highly sought after among wine critics who were looking for small production but very high-quality Barossa producers in one of Australia's oldest wine regions in Adelaide.

Teusner has been producing wines under the Teusner brand for 20 years in the Barossa Valley, a wine-producing area in South Australia, since 2002.

Emerging from a very small winery 22 years ago to focus heavily on old wine fruits from vineyards that were up to 130 years of age, Teusner Wines grew rapidly over the past decade, with an annual production capacity of about 3,000 metric tons and a very strong global reputation, Teusner said.

China's Ministry of Commerce announced on Thursday that the country would lift anti-dumping and anti-subsidy tariffs on Australian wine from Friday.

Australia's wine exports to China



Kym Teusner, a winery owner, watches the fermentation of grapes after it was crushed and pressed in Barossa Valley in South Australia on March 12. ZHANG JIANHUA / XINHUA

were worth A\$1.1 billion (\$713 million) in 2019. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in the wine region of Hunter Valley in the north of Sydney on Thursday that the resumption of trade will see an even higher amount.

The wine industry employs hundreds of thousands of people, Albanese said, adding: "Trade is about Australian jobs."

"We already have purchase orders in the system from our past customers, so we are very confident

that people quickly want to have our wine back in China," said Teusner, who has about 200 hectares of vineyards now.

"I'm pretty excited about the next few years," he said, adding the Barossa Valley is a very diverse place that allows winemaking to suit different parts of China, as the Chinese market is diverse too.

Teusner said the Barossa Valley is much warmer, and has a much more stable climate, so the grapes are much riper, which means wines are much richer, much more concentrated, and much more flavorful.

Fiona Yao, sales manager of Teusner Wines export, was one of the first Chinese people to enter the Australian wine industry in Barossa Valley 15 years ago.

Yao said the aroma, taste and character of Australian red wines have gained increasing popularity in the Chinese market in recent years.

"Most wineries are very eager to return to the Chinese market," she said.

XINHUA

## WORLDUS

# Interactions increase as US links improve

China supports and encourages more mutual visits and exchanges, spokesman says

By ZHANG YUNBI  
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Diplomacy and exchanges — official, semi-official and nongovernmental — at various levels have been blossoming between China and the United States in recent times, with more delegations of US officials, students and business leaders expected to arrive in China later this month.

“Behind the China trip made by so many corporate executives from the US is their idea that the two countries have reached consensus on stabilizing ties...”

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies

Analysts said the current improvement in ties is hard-won, and Washington needs to further correct its perception of China and replace its coercion policy against China with win-win cooperation.

While meeting with representatives from the US business, strategic and academic communities in Beijing on March 27, President Xi Jinping said, “The history of China-US relations is one of friendly exchanges between the two peoples.”

On the same day, Vice-Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxian talked by phone with Kurt Campbell, US deputy secretary of state, in which the two discussed bilateral ties and global and regional issues of common concern.

Meanwhile, media in the US cited unnamed officials as saying that Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen plans to visit China this month.

London Breed, mayor of San Francisco, is also expected to travel to China later this month in what her office described as a “monumental opportunity” to bolster diplomatic and cultural relations with the country.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Monday that “China supports and encourages more mutual visits and exchanges between Chinese and American people from all sectors to expand common understanding and mutual trust, overcome distractions, deepen cooperation, and bring more tangible benefits to the two peoples.”

Over the past few months, government departments and working

teams from both countries have kept up communications and made progress in a number of areas such as politics, diplomacy, the economy, trade and finance, law enforcement and anti-drug initiatives, climate change and cultural exchanges.

A number of US students have visited China lately as part of the five-year-long exchange plan proposed by Xi to invite 50,000 young people from the US to visit China.

Graham Allison, the founding dean of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, attended the group meeting with Xi at the Great Hall of the People last week in Beijing.

Interpreting the Chinese philosophy of “I am in you and you are in me” at another dialogue in Beijing, Allison used the phrase “my survival depends on your survival” as he called the two nations “inseparable conjoined twins.”

Allison coined the term Thucydides Trap to describe an apparent tendency toward war when an emerging power threatens to displace an existing great power.

However, he said he now believes that the trap is not inevitable because of more frequent contacts with and growing understanding of Chinese culture in recent years.

After the meeting with President Xi, Allison told reporters that the idea of building a new type of relations between major countries, as proposed by Xi, is a positive solution to avoid the Thucydides Trap, and it shows great leadership.

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said the recent slew of interactions between China and the US reflect the fact that “the improving momentum of the ties is continuing.”

“Behind the China trip made by so many corporate executives from the US is their idea that the two countries have reached consensus on stabilizing ties and are embarking on cooperation in specific areas,” she said.

All these interactions “also illustrate the unpopularity of seeking economic decoupling and disrupting production and supply chains,” she added.

Ban Ki-moon, former United Nations secretary-general and chairman of the Boao Forum for Asia, recently expressed the hope that China-US ties could be kept afloat.

“When the relationship between the United States and China — the No 1 and No 2 countries in the world — is not so smooth at this time, I sincerely hope that the two leaders, whoever may be elected the next (US) president in November, will work very closely,” he told Chinese media in an interview.

## Walking amid the wildflowers



People take pictures amid fields of wildflowers following a wet and rainy winter in Chula Vista, California, on Tuesday. MIKE BLAKE / REUTERS

## Bridge collapse devastated immigrant crew

By MINLU ZHANG in New York  
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

The devastating collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore has highlighted the perils for immigrant workers in the United States.

Six of the workers on the bridge — four of whom are presumed dead — were from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.

“(They were) good men, men who supported their families, men who worked hard to make sure that their families will sustain economically. They were very close to their families and their families in their country of origin,” Father Ako Walker, from Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baltimore, told China Daily.

On March 26, the Singapore-flagged container ship *Dali* slammed into the bridge. Two of the workers survived and were rescued shortly afterward. One was unharmed, and the other was treated in hospital and discharged.

The US Coast Guard has opened a temporary, alternate channel for vessels involved in clearing debris from the bridge, part of a phased approach to opening the main shipping channel leading to the vital port, officials said on Monday.

Crews were undertaking the complicated work of removing steel and concrete at the site of the bridge's deadly collapse after the container ship lost power and crashed into a supporting column.

Officials said the temporary channel is open primarily to vessels that are helping with the cleanup effort.



Wreckage from the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge rests on the cargo ship *Dali* on Monday, as efforts begin to clear the debris and reopen the Port of Baltimore. TASOS KATOPODIS VIA AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Some barges and tugs that have been stuck in the Port of Baltimore since the collapse are also scheduled to pass through the channel.

On Sunday, dive teams surveyed parts of the bridge and checked the ship, and workers in lifts used torches to cut above-water parts of the twisted steel superstructure.

On the day after the bridge collapse, two bodies were found in a pickup truck at the site. They were identified as Alejandro Hernandez Fuentes, 35, from Mexico, and Dorian Ronial Castillo Cabrera, 26, from Guatemala.

Hazardous weather conditions in recent days and the bridge's wreckage have made it impossible for divers to continue recovery operations for the four missing workers, Maryland Governor Wes Moore said.

Miguel Luna, from El Salvador and a father of three children, is among the missing. He arrived in Maryland more than 19 years ago. He left for work at 6:30 pm on March 25, worker advocacy group CASA said.

Ratneswar Roychowdhury, a regular customer of Luna's wife's food truck, last saw Luna on March 23. “It's very sad, having known him for almost one and a half years. It's quite disheartening for everyone,” Roychowdhury told CNN. “I'm really feeling sorry for his family. He has family over here and takes care of all of them.”

### Miseries pile up

Maynor Suazo Sandoval, who migrated from Honduras more than 17 years ago and is a father of two

children, is also missing.

Sandoval dreamed of establishing his own small business in the Baltimore area.

“He was always so full of joy, and brought so much humor to our family,” Sandoval's brother said.

Jose Mynor Lopez, 35, from Guatemala, was another victim. The sixth, believed to be from Mexico, has not been identified, the Mexican consulate said.

About 30 percent of workers in the US construction industry in 2020 were Hispanic, compared with 17.6 percent in the total workforce, data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics showed.

In 2022, 316 foreign-born Hispanic or Latino workers died in the construction industry, agency data showed.

Walker, whose church congregation is 97 percent Hispanic, said there needs to be appropriate mechanisms to protect migrant workers to ensure that situations and circumstances like these do not recur.

“These men will be up at 1 am, fixing the bridge, patching it so that regular ordinary people can pass the bridge safely, and so they were contributing to the development of Baltimore,” Walker said.

“I think coming out of this, the powers that be need to ensure that there is adequate protection at the legal level and also the way in which migrant workers are hired, are contracted and what are the responsibilities of the companies who do these kinds of hiring.”

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Poverty rate varies widely among Asian Americans

By MAY ZHOU in Houston  
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

Despite the stereotypical image of being highly educated and financially well-off, Asian Americans do have their fair share of poor people.

Roughly 10 percent of Asian Americans — 2.3 million of them — lived below the poverty line in 2022, according to the Pew Research Center's analysis of US Census Bureau data.

While that is close to the national poverty rate of 11.5 percent, the poverty rate within the Asian community varied widely, the analysis showed.

Burmese (19 percent) and Hmong Americans (17 percent) were among the Asian origin groups with the highest poverty rates in 2022. Filipino (7 percent) and Indian Americans (6 percent) were among the groups with the lowest poverty rates.

Chinese Americans' poverty rate of 11 percent was slightly higher than the Asian American average and slightly lower than the national rate.

As defined by the Office of

Management and Budget, the poverty threshold for a family of four in 2022 was \$29,678.

In a focus group study, the Pew Research Center interviewed 144 participants from four locations to find out what their main struggles were living in poverty.

The participants' responses showed that the common theme among included day-to-day financial difficulties, assumptions by others that they don't need help because they are Asian, and the importance of financial security in achieving the American dream.

Simple things like food and transportation could be a struggle. One participant by the name of Nolan told Pew that he lived with his grandmother, mother and sister in a cramped apartment.

“There were times where I couldn't travel to school because I didn't have enough money to pay for a bus. Or if I did pay a for bus, I wouldn't have enough to come back,” Nolan said. “There were times where a bowl of rice would be a meal for all three meals, or we just simply did not eat. I have definitely felt that I was a huge

financial burden.”

About 42 percent of Asian Americans living near or below the poverty line said they have trouble paying their bills, and 38 percent of them have to get food from a food bank or a charitable organization sometimes.

Asian immigrants had a higher poverty rate than those who were born in the US. Census data show that 57 percent of Asian Americans living in poverty were immigrants, and many didn't speak English proficiently.

A Vietnamese participant by the name of Phong said he had to work hard from morning to night. Unable to speak English, he went to work at a Chinese supermarket, where mostly Chinese was spoken. As a result, his English was progressing very slowly. He wanted to learn but didn't have any time to learn.

“I felt sad about life, didn't know the language, didn't know the roads. I had no friends, so I felt very sad,” Phong said in Vietnamese.

Only about half of Asian Americans (49 percent) in poverty turned to the government for help. The

majority, 61 percent of them, turned to their family or friends for help with living expenses or employment.

Asian Americans in poverty also attach importance to a good education in making a better life.

“I feel if my parents were educated and they could have guided me in the right direction [for college],” a Pakistani who was born here said. “I think just the background that we come from was not the best versus someone who's had parents here for multiple years, and their parents are now telling them, like, ‘Hey, this is not the right decision for you. Try doing this. This will be better in the long run.’”

A Nepalese immigrant said: “What I can assume is that outside of our community, especially at the government level, state level and central federal level here, we are missing out or not eligible for benefits.”

“In their opinion, we are rich, no matter if we are working or not. [They may think] our stories may not be genuine. They may think we are making up a story [if we apply for benefits].”

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

## BUSINESS

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## COSCO Shipping to bulk up with 80 new vessels

By ZHONG NAN  
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COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers Co, a unit of State-owned China COSCO Shipping Corp — based in Guangzhou, Guangdong province — will add more than 80 vessels with different functions into its fleet over the next two years, said a senior executive on Tuesday.

Driven by the upgrading and diversification of China's foreign trade products, these new ships, including 24 car carriers with operational capacities between 7,000 and 8,600 units, 20 pulp carriers and a number of heavy lifting ships, will expand COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers' fleet capacity to over 10 million deadweight tons by 2026. This expansion will further bolster China's ability to secure its supply chain.

The majority of the company's new vessel orders have been placed with domestic shipbuilders, including Xiamen Shipbuilding Industry Co Ltd based in Fujian province and Jiangsu province-based Chengxi Shipyard (Yangzhou) Co Ltd.

Huang Nan, president of COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers, said the company will closely follow the global trend of industrial and supply chain development, continuing to maintain capacity updates through multiple channels.

As one of the world's largest specialized shipping operators by fleet size, the Chinese firm currently



A COSCO vessel docks at Taicang Port, Jiangsu province. JI HAIKIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

owns more than 140 vessels, including multipurpose and heavy lift vessels, semisubmersible vessels and asphalt carriers. Its fleet is capable of transporting oversized and overweight cargoes, including oil rigs, engineering and port machinery, locomotives, windmills, bridge cranes, and complete equipment to ports of call worldwide.

With China's auto industry entering a new export era in 2023, COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers transported 248,000 passenger vehicles for export last year, an increase of 228 percent year-on-year. Among these, 86,000 were new energy vehicles.

Huang said that China's intensified efforts to develop new quality productive forces will generate significant market demand for innovative technologies, products and services, while also creating fresh investment prospects for exports and foreign investment.

New quality productive forces

refer to advanced productivity freed from traditional economic growth modes and productivity development paths, and feature cutting-edge technology, high efficiency and high quality.

In the process of building a digitalized supply chain within the shipping industry, Huang said that new quality productive forces are being harnessed through innovative solutions such as artificial intelligence-driven intelligent stowage platforms, pioneering smart route products, digital supply chain platforms for the automotive industry and intelligent temperature monitoring systems for real-time cargo tracking.

These advancements are leading the way in enhancing operational efficiency, customer experience and environmental sustainability in the shipping sector, he added.

Noting that demand for shipping large-size products abroad by Chinese exporters and infrastructure project contractors will persist over

the long run, Zhang Xiaotao, dean of the School of International Trade and Economics at Central University of Finance and Economics in Beijing, said that the current reshaping of global supply chains offers opportunities for Chinese manufacturers to match their capabilities with changing market needs.

Chinese businesses are showing robust competitiveness in areas such as electric vehicles, trains, construction machinery, wind turbines and photovoltaic products, leading to increased acceptance by many countries, said Zhang.

China's foreign trade expanded 8.7 percent year-on-year to 6.61 trillion yuan (\$914 billion) in the first two months, while the country's exports of mechanical and electrical products amounted to 2.22 trillion yuan, an increase of 11.8 percent on a yearly basis, accounting for 59.1 percent of its total export value, said the General Administration of Customs.

## Central bank committed to prudence

PBOC's moves not to be confused with initiating quantitative easing

By ZHOU LANXU  
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China's central bank may regard treasury bond trading in the secondary market as one of the common means to provide liquidity — a practice that hasn't been active for about two decades and a meaningful means to optimize its monetary policy system, experts said.

But such a potential shift, they stressed, should not be mistaken as China initiating quantitative easing (QE) as some Western central banks have resorted to, as such a move serves different purposes and indicates a much more aggressive policy stance. The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, instead, is expected to maintain moderate monetary accommodation this year.

Discussions of whether China will start QE to stimulate growth heated up after a compilation of excerpts from discourses by the country's top leadership on China's financial sector, published last month, included the words: "enriching the monetary policy toolbox and gradually increasing the buying and selling of treasury bonds in the central bank's open market operations". The PBOC has declined to comment on the speculation.

Open market operations (OMO) refer to the central bank buying or selling securities to manage inter-bank market liquidity and adjust money supply.

Experts said the expression indicates the PBOC is expected to progressively increase treasury bond trading as a liquidity management tool, given the narrowing scope for cutting the reserve requirement ratio and deceleration in the growth of foreign exchange assets — which are both sources of money supply.

Wang Tao, chief China economist at UBS Investment Bank, said: "The PBOC now needs more flexibility in managing liquidity and more tools to expand its balance sheet, and the government bond market is deeper than before, which makes PBOC trading central government bonds and even local government bonds more necessary and feasible than before."

In early 2000, trading government bonds in the secondary market used to be one among many tools for the PBOC to manage liquidity. This practice was later replaced by instruments such as the medium-term lending facility

(MLF), a change experts partly attributed to the PBOC's concern of affecting bond yields too much amid an earlier shallow treasury bond market.

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura, said the trading of central government bonds in PBOC's toolbox would represent a meaningful step in developing a modern framework for monetary policy conduct, where interbank rates are the intermediate policy target.

"The main implication could be more stable interbank rates, as the PBOC can directly trade with banks," Lu said. "A more stable interbank rate guided toward the PBOC's target rates is a milestone for building a modern monetary system."

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the PBOC, said in a column on the central bank's website in December that it will accelerate efforts to build a modern central banking system and improve the mechanism for the formation, adjustment and transmission of interest rates.

Nevertheless, Jacqueline Rong, chief China economist at BNP Paribas, said this is not indicative of China initiating QE. Given that the expression indicates that the country's leadership still deems buying and selling government bonds as part of OMO, it should remain a tool to manage short-term liquidity.

"This is different from QE which is held to maturity, in our view," Rong said, adding that the size of potential government bond purchases by the PBOC may not be substantial. Instruments such as reverse repos and MLF may continue to be the main tools to manage liquidity due to their flexibility regarding collateral requirements.

Generally speaking, QE is deployed when the scope for conventional monetary policy is exhausted — such as when interest rates and the RRR are close to zero — and is conducted via central banks' direct purchase of government bonds and other financial assets to push down interest rates and provide liquidity.

Experts said China is far from such a situation as the MLF rate is now 2.5 percent. The compilation of the country's top leadership's thoughts on the financial sector also reiterated that the country should always maintain the stability of its monetary policy.

## Economist predicts further upswing for economy

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China's economic outlook is poised to improve in the following months, buoyed by robust fiscal spending, and the country's growth target of around 5 percent for 2024 is achievable, according to a renowned economist.

Huang Yiping, dean of Peking University's National School of Development, told China Daily in an exclusive interview that the nation's economy is relatively stable, with better-than-expected indicators in the first two months.

"There is hope that the economy may continue to improve, given that the government will expand its fiscal spending and provide more support to economic growth in the coming months," Huang said. "The US economy looks like it is experiencing a soft landing, which should be positive for our external economic environment and exports."

China's economy has shown nota-



Huang Yiping

ble signs of recovery since the beginning of this year, with factory output and investment growth accelerating, as well as easing deflationary pressure, despite persisting challenges from both structural

issues as well as insufficient demand. "Overall consumption is relatively stable, but it's not particularly strong," Huang said. "For instance, if you look at the mobile payment numbers during the Chinese New Year, the overall number is rising, but the price per order is still very soft or very weak. And people are still worrying about the consumption downgrade."

He said the relatively weaker consumption indicates that the scarring effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, to some extent, has yet to fade.

Huang called for more efforts to boost economic recovery and stabilize employment, which will bolster

consumer sentiment and increase incomes for households.

He added that the government is allocating more resources to support social welfare, pension and health-care systems, trying to revitalize rural areas, as well as supporting households in replacing their consumer durables with new ones. "These subsidies, spending, and so on would be positive for consumption."

According to the annual Government Work Report, China has set its GDP growth target at around 5 percent for 2024, similar to last year's goal. While this year's target may be more difficult than last year's because of the higher base in 2023, it is achievable given the upward trend in economic recovery, more fiscal stimulus and monetary easing, Huang said.

"In fact, the expectation is the US Federal Reserve may cut the policy rate by 75 basis points this year. This should also create more room for the People's Bank of China to ease monetary policy if it wants," he said.

On speculation that China's economy had already peaked due to multiple pressures, Huang said "all economies' growth rates will head toward a decline as they reach higher levels of development", and it is reasonable to see China's growth slow down after double-digit growth in the past decades.

"Some foreign experts are talking about the collapse of the Chinese economy. That's, I think, a wrong assumption or prediction to make. That's not something I would look at as a baseline going forward," he said.

Looking ahead, Huang highlighted the significance of delivering fast total factor productivity, or TFP, which is a measure of productive efficiency, measuring how much output can be produced from a certain amount of aggregate inputs. "Growth really means innovation will have to become more important ... The only way to sustain the current economic growth rate is that the efficiency and productivity will need to go higher," Huang added.

## Govt policies to aid banking sector, BOC says

By LI XIAOYUN in Hong Kong  
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The central government's supportive policies are expected to gradually improve business sentiment, boosting domestic demand and laying a solid foundation for the steady development of the banking industry, Bank of China said.

The bank's operating income reached 624.14 billion yuan (\$86.26 billion) in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 6.42 percent, the mainland-based lender said during a briefing on its annual financial performance, in Hong Kong on Tuesday.

Net interest income and net fee income both rose, while profit after tax reached 246.37 billion yuan, up 4.07 percent on a yearly basis, it said.

As of year-end 2023, its total assets stood at 32.43 trillion yuan, a growth of 12.25 percent compared to 2022.

Domestic renminbi loans increased by 16 percent, or 2.28 trillion yuan, while liabilities rose 12.7

percent to 29.68 trillion yuan, with domestic renminbi deposits increasing by more than 15 percent, or 2.4 trillion yuan.

While the global economic situation is expected to remain complex in 2024, the central government has proactively rolled out an array of policies aimed at stabilizing business sentiment, fostering growth and ensuring employment, which can contribute to economic recovery and the steady development of the banking industry, BOC President Liu Jin said.

"In Hong Kong, BOC will further enhance its services for both the local market and international clients, supporting the city's position as a leading international financial center," Liu added.

The bank will continue to ramp up efforts in technology finance, green finance, inclusive finance, pension finance and digital finance, in a bid to accelerate the development of new quality productive forces and enhance its capabilities to serve the real economy, BOC Chairman Ge Haijiao said.



A view of the booth of Bank of China during an expo in Fuzhou, Fujian province. CHEN BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The bank has focused on directing credit toward sectors such as technology and innovation, advanced manufacturing, green development, and providing support to small and micro-sized enterprises," said Wang

Yifeng, an analyst at Everbright Securities.

According to analysis by Zhongtai Securities, China's six major State-owned banks, including Bank of China, have reported growth in profits in 2023.

## Briefly

## FAW Group sales rise 9.5% in Q1

Chinese automaker FAW Group Co Ltd has reported a surge in vehicle sales in the first quarter of the year. Sales exceeded 743,000 units in the first three months, up 9.5 percent year-on-year, according to the carmaker. Of the group's total sales, its Hongqi car brand alone accounted for 100,300 units, a year-on-year increase of 64.3 percent. FAW Group, founded in 1953 in Changchun, Northeast China's Jilin province, is regarded as the cradle of China's auto industry.

## Retail prices of gasoline, diesel raised

China raised the retail prices of gasoline and diesel on Tuesday, based on recent changes in international oil prices. Gasoline and diesel prices will increase by 200 yuan (\$28.2) and 190 yuan per metric ton, respectively, the National Development and

Reform Commission said in a statement. Under China's current pricing mechanism, the prices of refined oil products are adjusted following changes in international crude oil prices.

## More wells in operation in key shale gas field

The Fuling shale gas field in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality put into operation 33 new wells in the first quarter, up 50 percent from the previous year, according to the Fuling branch of Sinopec Jiangnan Oilfield, the developer. The gas field produced 1.819 billion cubic meters of gas during the period, of which 1.745 billion cubic meters were sold, according to the developer. As the country's first large-scale shale gas field to enter commercial development back in 2014, Fuling has become a clean energy source for more than 70 cities along the Yangtze River Economic Belt in China.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

## BUSINESS FOCUS

## European firms eye opportunities in Hubei

Central Chinese province vital growth driver for Yangtze River Economic Belt

WUHAN — “2024 Cherry Blossom Viewing: Business Cooperation & Fortune Global 500 Dialogue with Hubei” hosted a series of activities in late March in Wuhan, Hubei province, with an eye on international cooperation between European enterprises and the central Chinese province.

More than 600 attendees, including diplomatic envoys, representatives of domestic and overseas governmental agencies and international economic organizations — as well as executives of Fortune Global 500 enterprises and well-known firms — took part in discussions on deepening investment in the Chinese market, promoting green and open development, and enhancing supply chain efficiency.

Hubei is a vital growth driver for the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. It has great market vitality and serves as the financial and technological center of Central China. Over the years, the province has been working closely with European countries to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of bilateral trade and investment.

According to the provincial department of commerce, Hubei's total foreign trade volume with Europe stood at 124.12 billion yuan (\$17.15 billion) in 2023, up 28.3 percent year-on-year.

About 700 European firms have invested in Hubei, including 74 Fortune Global 500 firms. Hubei's Ezhou Huahu Airport has successfully launched international freight routes to countries such as Belgium and Germany, and China-Europe

freight trains now serve 109 cities in 40 countries across Eurasia, with over 1,000 train trips operated last year.

“We've been deeply involved over 40 years in the Chinese market, and we are one of China's largest foreign investors in electricity generation with nuclear power,” said Fabrice Fourcade, chairman and CEO of EDF (China) Holding Ltd, at a celebration of the 10th anniversary of an agreement to build the Sino-French Wuhan Ecological Demonstration City.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and China, EDF is happy and ready to continue deepening cooperation with Hubei for a successful energy transition, Fourcade said.

The event also showcased promising prospects for Sino-German cooperation in fields such as green development and rail transportation. Since Wuhan Sino-German International Industrial Park was built more than four years ago, it has attracted 58 foreign-funded enterprises.

Germany-based Knorr-Bremse Group established ties with Hubei over 10 years ago, exploring cooperation in the commercial vehicle sector, and it has since participated extensively in the construction of multiple rail transit projects in Wuhan.

By the end of 2023, Knorr-Bremse had contributed to the design of nearly 380 kilometers of rail lines in Hubei, designed 12 subway and tram lines, and provided safe and reliable daily travel services for millions of Hubei residents, said Eric Bi,



Workers load cargo onto a jet departing from Ezhou, Hubei province, for Belgium, in April 2023. ZHANG CHANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

president and member of the Knorr-Bremse RVS China Board.

Knorr-Bremse will continue increasing its investment in research and development and local capacity-building for key technologies such as braking systems, and will build an innovative

system based on local supply chains, Bi said.

Hubei is now consolidating its green and high-quality development momentum. Since 2016, the province has implemented more than 28,000 major technological transformation projects, with ener-

gy consumption per unit of GDP decreasing by 20.2 percent, construction land use by 23 percent and carbon emissions by 23.9 percent.

China and Europe are each other's major partners in investment and trade, said Ning Jizhe, vice-chairman of the China Center for

International Economic Exchanges. A long-term, favorable future for China-Europe relations relies on the new achievements of complementarity and mutually beneficial economic and trade cooperation, Ning said.

XINHUA

## Nation seeks win-win for carbon reduction

NANJING — Sun Tao, an environmentalist from Yangzhong, Jiangsu province, has made a conscious decision to charge his electric car at a parking lot near his home that offers green charging services.

The 180-square-meter car park, part of a local microgrid project, is equipped with photovoltaic panels and energy storage facilities. Green electricity is primarily used by nearby residents to charge electric vehicles.

“The project helps to facilitate charging new energy vehicles and reduce reliance on conventional energy, thus further reducing carbon emissions,” Sun said.

China has seen explosive growth in the NEV sector in recent years. It had ranked first in the world in NEV production and sales for nine consecutive years, with the number of NEVs in use surging to 20.41 million by 2023, according to official data.

To serve the increasing number of electric cars, China has continued to expand its network of NEV charging facilities, which marked a growth of 65 percent year-on-year to reach nearly 8.6 million units by the end of 2023, said the National Energy Administration.

Jiangsu has built the country's first smart electric vehicle charging and battery-swapping demonstration zone. With about 1,300 chargers, it can reduce the average monthly waiting time for charging by nearly 50 percent through intelligent algorithms, said State Grid Jiangsu Electric Power Co Ltd.

The advancement of the NEV sector, which is instrumental in reducing vehicle emissions, exemplifies China's ongoing commitment to a green future.

In recent years, the country has made vigorous efforts in green transition, injecting fresh impetus into its economic trajectory while steadfastly pursuing its dual carbon goals of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

These efforts are sparking the development of an array of high-tech and green sectors, which are



A user charges a new energy vehicle in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, in October. CHAI JUNWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

China has developed into the world's largest offshore new energy market, while Europe possesses technological and experiential prowess. The prospects for cooperation between the two sides are very broad.”

Erwann Debos, CEO of EDF Renewables China

becoming new bright spots and drivers of the world's second-largest economy.

China dominates the global NEV market with an over 60 percent share. It also supplies 50 percent of the world's wind power equipment and 80 percent of photovoltaic products.

China's exports of the tech-intensive green trio — lithium-ion batteries, photovoltaic products and NEVs — amounted to 1.06 trillion yuan (\$146.5 billion) last year, a robust increase of 29.9 percent year-on-year.

The NEA said the country's total installed renewable energy capacity topped 1,516 gigawatts at the end of last year, accounting for 51.9 percent of its total installed power generation capacity and contributing to nearly 40 percent of the global installed renewable energy capacity.

This outcome is a result of years of extensive investment in green

energy resources across the country, including in major coal-producing areas — the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Shanxi province.

Inner Mongolia reported a new energy investment boom in 2023, boasting a remarkable 33 percent year-on-year growth, according to the regional energy department.

The region's installed new energy capacity increased by more than 31 GW, a record high, to 92.6 GW, accounting for 45 percent of its total installed power generation capacity.

Off the coast of Yancheng, Jiangsu, more than 100 wind turbines — part of an offshore wind power facility jointly developed by Electricite de France and a Chinese company — stand tall, collectively generating roughly 1.4 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually.

“China has developed into the world's largest offshore new energy market, while Europe possesses technological and experiential prowess. The prospects for cooperation between the two sides are very broad,” said Erwann Debos, CEO of EDF Renewables China.

“Accelerating carbon reduction and fostering economic growth are not mutually exclusive,” said Lin Weibin, an expert from the China Energy Research Society.

“As China has been adjusting its industrial and energy structures and promoting energy conservation, more green productive forces are expected to be cultivated, thus realizing a win-win situation for reducing carbon emissions and promoting economic growth,” Lin said.

XINHUA

## MNCs delve deeper into local market amid country's opening-up commitment

BEIJING — Foreign firms continue to view China as a favored investment destination, driven by the country's steadfast commitment to opening-up and innovation, said foreign firm executives at the Invest in China Summit 2024 in Beijing in March.

The summit, jointly hosted by the Ministry of Commerce and the Beijing Municipal People's Government, marked the first signature event of Invest in China, a government campaign to attract foreign investment and help overseas firms better understand China's opportunities.

Attendees at the summit said China's robust economic resilience — fueled by its enormous market potential, burgeoning emerging industries and high-quality talent pool — instills enduring confidence among foreign companies to continue investing in the country.

“China is now an innovation leader and a nation of engineers, alongside its status as a manufacturing powerhouse and a key consumer market,” said Tetsuro Homma, executive vice-president of Panasonic Corp.

Homma emphasized that the country also serves as a “testing ground” for foreign enterprises, given that products thriving in the Chinese market often gain a competitive edge in other markets as well.

To delve deeper into the Chinese market, the Japan-based multinational corporation has unveiled a series of investment plans and established 18 investment bases in China over the past four years. To expand its footprint in China, it announced the construction of a world-class production base for new integrated circuit materials in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in late March.

As a firm proponent of opening-up, China has intensified its efforts to expand access to its markets by streamlining rules, regulations, management practices and standards. These initiatives have reassured foreign investors, according to participants at the summit.

To further attract foreign investors, China has pledged to fully lift restrictions on foreign investment access to its manufacturing sector this year.

Earlier last month, the country issued an action plan to further

**7,160**

number of new foreign-invested firms set up across China in the first two months of 2024

attract and utilize foreign investment, proposing 24 measures across five aspects, such as expanding market access, facilitating the flow of innovation factors, as well as better aligning domestic rules with high-standard international economic and trade rules.

Mats Harborn, president of Scania China Group, said the action plan demonstrates the government's determination to remain an integral part of the global economy, which bodes well for foreign investors engaged in long-term business in China.

“By providing clarity on many of China's new laws, the perceived investment risk for foreign investors will decrease,” Harborn said, adding that this will allow the company to prioritize value creation over risk management.

A leading global truck manufacturer, Scania has made heavy investments in China, building its third global production hub in the country after Europe and Latin America. According to Harborn, the company's move to establish supply chains worldwide, particularly in China, has strengthened its resilience against disruptions caused by natural disasters or geopolitical tensions.



An employee operates equipment at a battery assembly workshop of Panasonic Energy (Wuxi) Co Ltd in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, in July 2022. LI BO / XINHUA

XINHUA

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Sino-French partnership provides basis for more coordination with EU

French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne's visit to Beijing on Monday heralds closer exchanges and stronger cooperation between Paris and Beijing. As indicated by the topics covered in his meetings with Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, ranging from the economy and trade to the Ukraine crisis, there are many issues on which the two countries share a desire for coordination.

Sejourne's visit is his first trip to China since he took office in January, but the second by a French foreign minister in less than six months, as his predecessor Catherine Colonna visited China in November. Premier Li visited France in June last year and Foreign Minister Wang paid a visit in February this year. The frequent interactions between the two sides demonstrate the importance they attach to bilateral ties, as well as their common interest in strengthening their cooperation.

Despite the strategic mutual trust between Paris and Beijing, France's top diplomat and his Chinese hosts have gone to great lengths to reassure each other of their positions on sensitive issues — that France is not pursuing economic "decoupling" and China's stance on the Ukraine crisis, as set out in its position paper, is clear and has not changed.

That they felt the need to do so only serves to show the extent to which the two Washington-orchestrated issues have exacted a toll on international relations.

The interests of France and China align with each other due to their economic complementarity and shared belief in free trade, globalization, multilateralism and the UN-centered international system. That should apply to the European Union as well.

That being said, it's encouraging to hear Sejourne reaffirming that Europe is not becoming protectionist and, instead, remains open to investment. It is to be hoped, as both Premier Li and Foreign Minister Wang stressed, that the EU side can provide a transparent, nondiscriminatory and fair business environment for Chinese enterprises and investment. Wang also told Sejourne that China is willing to import more "high-quality French products and services" and it is working to resolve the concerns raised by European companies, including restrictions on the transfer of data overseas. That China and the EU should have differences from time to time is natural, but any disputes that arise can be resolved and they should never be allowed to hijack the overall Sino-EU economic ties.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, and the 21st anniversary of the founding of comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the EU. China and the EU have great potential to tap in such fields as green energy, scientific and technological innovation, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and the digital economy while deepening traditional cooperation to better achieve mutual benefit and win-win results.

China supports a political solution to the Ukraine crisis at an early date and is taking full advantage of its neutrality on the issue to actively work together with all like-minded countries to help broker talks between the conflicting parties, as shown by the latest shuttle diplomacy of China's envoy that concluded at the end of last month.

If the EU, as a whole, can uphold the strategic autonomy that France has demonstrated in dealing with China-related issues, and remain open to communication, it can effectively enlarge the space for cooperation and coordination with China in the world market as well as on the world stage.

As Premier Li pointed out, an "absence of cooperation" and the failure to develop endogenous technology "are the biggest risks" that the EU should beware of. The past decades have proved and will continue to prove that China constitutes opportunities to Europe, rather than risks. The two sides are partners not opponents, and they should work together to strengthen cooperation and promote common development.

## US steels itself to be more protectionist

If there is anyone out there who is still doubtful about which country poses the biggest threat to economic globalization by chipping away at the free market, the proposed merger between Japan's Nippon Steel and US Steel should serve to settle the issue.

Nippon Steel announced in December that it planned to buy the Pittsburgh-based steel producer for \$14.1 billion in a deal that many in the business community believe would benefit union workers and the US steel industry. Moreover, Nippon Steel, the world's fourth-largest steelmaker, has even tried to gild the lily for Washington by describing it as a useful means to counter the leading role that China plays in steelmaking globally.

"Nippon Steel will advance American priorities by driving greater quality and competitiveness for customers in the critical industries that rely on American steel while strengthening American supply chains and economic defenses against China," it said in a statement. Akira Amari, a senior Japanese ruling party lawmaker, called the proposed deal "a symbol of Japan-US cooperation as allies ... to confront China's rising technological capability".

To increase the chance of securing the transaction, the Japanese steelmaker, which already employs about 4,000 US workers, has also pledged to move its US headquarters to Pittsburgh. In addition, Nippon Steel said it is engaging with the United Steelworkers labor union which opposes the deal, and has offered a number of specific commitments on job security, investments and other matters.

Yet despite all these gestures that Nippon Steel has made, as well as the fact that it is shelling out around twice what a US bidder is ready to pay, politicians in Washington, from both the Democratic and Republican camps who are embracing an increasingly strident nationalist and protectionist economic vision, have joined with the USW to oppose the proposed merger.

Ironically, they have cited Nippon Steel's exposure to China as reasons for concern, despite the Japanese steelmaker saying its operations in China are very limited — representing less than 5 percent of the company's global production capacity.

The upcoming US presidential election in November has only served to heighten the jingoism and make the proposed deal a flag-bearer for the two parties' self-proclaimed championing of US workers as they vie for votes. A week after President Joe Biden announced on March 14 that "US Steel has been an iconic American steel company for more than a century, and it is vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated", he won the endorsement of the USW.

His Republican opponent Donald Trump had already said earlier he would block the merger if he returned to the White House, calling it "a horrible thing".

All these serve as unmistakable signs that the US is drifting away from its long-held policy of openness to foreign trade and investment, and minimal government interference in the markets. Further evidence could be found in Biden's 2024 State of the Union address last month that was littered with protectionist promises that the government would "buy American".

For a long time the US has painted itself as a defender of free trade and pointed an accusing finger at China for not allowing wider market access and providing a level playing field for foreign investors. Yet the Nippon Steel merger, as well as a slew of restrictive policies that have been introduced to crack down on Chinese high-tech companies such as Huawei and TikTok, belie Washington's claim.

It talks the free market talk, but refuses to walk the walk.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Shanghai going all out to become preferred global investment place

The 2024 Shanghai Global Investment Promotion Conference has once again boosted the confidence of overseas and domestic enterprises who plan to invest in Shanghai. As many as 21 new projects involving an investment of 52.4 billion yuan (\$7.24 billion), covering key industries such as biomedicine, new energy, general aviation and semiconductors, were introduced to Shanghai through the collective signing ceremony during the conference on Friday.

Actually, Shanghai signed 42 key projects with a total investment of 343.5 billion yuan in the first quarter alone, continuing the momentum of investment growth from last year. As some observers said, enterprises that choose Shanghai for their development get access to an international market, global resources, open policies and better development opportunities. More important, Shanghai has not only seen increased foreign investment, but also an accelerated transfer of foreign investment to the high-end links of the industry

chain, which will further enhance the confidence and motivation of foreign enterprises in China.

Shanghai launched a global investment partnership program a few years ago, inviting a number of renowned global enterprises and business institutions to participate, as part of its efforts to strengthen global resource allocation, innovate investment promotion methods, and broaden investment channels. Foreign institutions have joined and helped Shanghai attract dozens of major industrial projects.

In recent years, Shanghai has innovatively put forward the "whole-industry-chain investment attraction" plan, in order to build more competitive leading industries from which it can build new industrial advantages and cultivate new growth drivers.

Therefore, a major feature of the just-concluded conference is to closely focus on the high-tech, efficient and high-quality connotations of new quality productive forces, take innovation as the first driving

force, refine Shanghai's industry chains and subdivision of investment tracks, and send Shanghai's investment invitation to the world.

To this end, the conference released a policy package for "investment in Shanghai" in 2024, including reducing costs by 100 billion yuan for enterprises, increasing an investment and financing credit of 2 trillion yuan, adding intelligent space of 10 million square meters, and setting up an industrial investment fund of 100 billion yuan. In addition, Shanghai will continue to improve its "service package", rolling out a series of reform measures to optimize its business environment.

As a frontier of China's reform and opening-up and an international metropolis with deep links to the world, Shanghai is an important window for the world to observe China. The greater efforts Shanghai is making are bound to make it a preferred place for global investment and development.

— THEPAPER.CN

## Reducing insurance woes for electric vehicle users

The insurance premiums for electric vehicles, already much higher than those for traditional vehicles, are reportedly rising continuously. But high insurance premiums will hinder the popularization of EVs.

Under the prerequisite of protecting user privacy, it is possible to share driving behavior data to innovate and improve risk assessment models for insurance companies, thereby providing a foundation for more accurate premium pricing.

In recent years, domestic automotive

companies have been increasingly involved in the insurance business, with many establishing their own insurance brokerage or agency companies. Due to the multiple advantages in data and technology possessed by automotive companies, the underwriting costs are relatively low. This model naturally helps reduce premiums.

Besides, reducing the maintenance and upkeep costs of EVs is also important. For example, automotive companies can strengthen targeted technological innova-

tions, focusing on the repair and maintenance services to reduce the parts-to-labor ratio of EVs, which also helps create more space for reasonable premium control.

The popularization of EVs is an inevitable trend, and there is still large market space to be tapped. Major insurance companies should be encouraged to demonstrate more responsibility and commitment, considering the costs and benefits of insuring EVs from a long-term perspective.

— BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## Bad-mouthing China won't change trajectory of its economy

In recent years, some politicians in certain Western countries have continued to try and cast a shadow over China's economy, forging and spreading various negative opinions, which actually stem from their deep-rooted zero-sum game mentality.

China's economic development cannot be changed by their bias. Comprehensive analysis shows that China's economy has strong resilience and self-adjustment capabilities, and still has huge development potential.

In 2023, against the background of the global trade volume shrinking by approximately \$1.5 trillion, China's import and export scale increased steadily, and the quality of the country's development has

also improved, especially its exports of electric vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products. In the first two months of this year, China's exports increased by 10.3 percent year-on-year, once again exceeding market expectations.

The advantages and potential of China's economy are not only reflected

in foreign economic and trade cooperation, but also in the continuous transformation and upgrading of its economic structure. Relying on its abundant human resources, huge market scale and high-intensity R&D investment, China's economic growth continues to gather momentum.

At present, there is still considerable room to improve and upgrade China's traditional industries. The country is accelerating the development of its health, tourism and cultural industries, etc. As investment in technological innovation continues to increase, various high value-added products and globally competitive companies continue to emerge.

In an era when game-changing technologies are appearing and advancing at an exponential rate, China's science and technology have gained sufficient momentum and huge potential for further development. This includes not only cutting-edge technology formats with promising prospects, but also the smart transformation of industries such as shipbuilding and aviation manufacturing that continue to consolidate China's dominant position in manufacturing.

The "decoupling and de-risking" attempts of some countries targeting Chi-

na cannot check its development and progress. At present, it is precisely because these countries have blatantly abandoned multilateralism, constantly created geopolitical tensions and impacted the global economic governance system that the risks facing the world economy have increased.

China firmly opposes unilateralism and protectionism. The development of new quality productive forces in China will create more development opportunities for itself and other countries. The development of China's green industry is proof of that. In the process of promoting green development, China's new energy industry has developed rapidly, not only providing low-cost and more mature new energy products for global green development, but also helping many countries create jobs, promoting common development and prosperity through practical actions.

In the face of the sustained external pressure, China has demonstrated a more independent and powerful development trend as it has had to overcome various difficulties and challenges. In doing so, it continues to bring more opportunities and hopes to international cooperation.

— PEOPLE'S DAILY

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## COMMENT

Tian Feilong

## HK legislation balances rule of law and development

The recent implementation of the Safeguarding National Security Bill in Hong Kong, 26 years after the return of Hong Kong to the motherland, marks a significant milestone in bolstering the special administrative region's legal framework for safeguarding national security.

The belated piece of legislation, based on Article 23 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong, signifies the advancement of the "one country, two systems" framework and highlights the political achievements of "patriots governing Hong Kong".

The Safeguarding National Security Bill, characterized by its scientific and democratic essence, will play a significant role in strengthening the rule of law in Hong Kong. The new law is comprehensive in that it integrates the substantive and procedural aspects of law as well as complements the National Security Law of Hong Kong, and identifies the offenses punishable under Article 23. In fact, it is an institutional response to the decision made by the National People's Congress on May 28, 2020, and aimed at eliminating the new national security risks, thereby plugging the loopholes in the national security legal framework.

How to understand the importance of the law based on Article 23 and its role in strengthening the rule of law in Hong Kong? Some naysayers claim the new law undermines "one country, two systems", violates the Sino-British Joint Declaration and compromises judicial independence in Hong Kong, but these are unfounded criticisms.

The new law is constitutional, based as it is on Article 23 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong, which means it advances, rather than undermining, "one country, two sys-

tems". As for the Sino-British Joint Declaration, it was never the constitutional basis for the laws of the SAR; it cannot be used as a legal basis to interfere in Hong Kong's affairs either.

According to the Constitution of the country and the Basic Law of Hong Kong, the central government has the right to supervise local legislation in the SAR. Based on that, it strongly supported the implementation of the Safeguarding National Security Bill.

Also, the new law is based on the lessons learned from and the latest legislative dynamics of national security laws in Western countries. If Western countries can update and strengthen their national security laws, why can't the SAR?

The bill's legitimacy is based on not only the direct authorization of Article 23 of the Basic Law but also the National Security Law of Hong Kong, the NPC's decision on May 28, 2020, and the NPC Standing Committee's interpretation of the National Security Law. Also, the bill is guided by the principle of "one country, two systems" in the new era, especially the highest principle of "national sovereignty, security, and development interests".

Given its robust legality and rationality, the new law strengthens the rule of law in many ways.

First, by complementing the existing National Security Law and integrating it into Hong Kong's jurisdiction, the new law lays a solid foundation for the SAR's national security governance, and better safeguards national security and interests.

Second, adopting an approach that is closer to common law practices and with its precise legal language, the new law facilitates proper understanding and application by Hong Kong's judicial system, fostering

**The new law, based on a strong legal foundation, fills the gaps in Hong Kong's national security legislation and aligns enforcement and judicial mechanisms. It will thus improve Hong Kong's national security governance and help build a new environment of prosperity and stability.**

the development of structured jurisprudence in matters of national security.

Third, the new law enhances legal deterrence against both local and external forces, reinforcing trust in the rule of law and boosting the confidence of global investors and tourists in Hong Kong's safety, freedom and development, thus consolidating its legal standing on the global stage and status as a global financial center.

And fourth, the new law includes special mechanisms to safeguard judicial independence, countering undue external interference and upholding the authority of Hong Kong's judiciary.

By consolidating the foundation of national security governance, the new law promotes prosperity, stability and high-quality development of the SAR. Amid the implementation of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and on the fifth anniversary of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development plan, the new law's emphasis on both security and development aligns with the central government's

policy directives for governing Hong Kong.

With the implementation of the new law, the Hong Kong government and society can now focus on leveraging central policies to capitalize on the region's institutional and economic advantages. As Hong Kong progresses toward achieving the goals outlined in the 14th Five-Year Plan, a stable and sustainable legal environment, enhanced by the law based on Article 23, will serve as the cornerstone for policy implementation and economic growth.

People arguing that the new law is incompatible with the SAR's social and business environment lack legal basis. The truth is that the new law adheres to existing human rights standards and legal principles, and is designed to operate in Hong Kong, which has an independent judiciary and is governed by rule of law. Like the National Security Law, the new law will also be implemented based in the SAR's legal system and gradually integrate with its common law tradition.

The new law, based on a strong legal foundation, fills the gaps in Hong Kong's national security legislation and aligns enforcement and judicial mechanisms. It will thus improve Hong Kong's national security governance and help build a new environment of prosperity and stability. Its enactment is a positive institutional development for the long-term commitment to "one country, two systems" and the unleashing of Hong Kong's new developmental potential.

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Liu Taoyuan

## 'Subject Three' dance belongs to the world

A special popular dance has attracted attention widely. There are two stories about the origin of "Subject Three" or *kemusan* (also known as "Guangxi Subject Three"). One story traces the dance's roots to a wedding in Wuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, where guests spontaneously broke into a dance as part of the celebrations. The other story suggests Guangxi local people undergo three tests in their life: singing folk songs ("Subject One"), slurping rice noodles ("Subject Two"), and dancing ("Subject Three").

In the popular dance style, performers show off some swag dance moves, such as swinging their knees sideways as they execute a series of fast hand actions, including fast wrist-twisting moves. The dance is accompanied by music that sounds like a mix of Western disco beats and traditional Chinese folk songs.

"Subject Three" continues to captivate audiences around the world. From self-amusement to international dance competitions, people of different nationalities, races, cultures and social backgrounds are shaking their legs to "Subject Three". This dark horse showcases China's cultural diversity and transcends language and cultural boundaries.

Why has "Subject Three" dance become so popular around the world? The magic of "Subject Three" lies in its simplicity and inclusivity. It has transcended cultural differences and language barriers to become a unique form of expression in the digital age, and allows people worldwide to find a common emotional ground.

Throughout history, popular culture has included both highbrow and grassroots elements. The works that are loved by the common people are always universally appealing.

Some scholars said the key to the success of "Subject Three" lies in its simplicity, which allows mass imitation and wider participation. Its inherent joy is the secret to its popularity, tapping into people's social, psychological needs. While some others attribute its popularity to optimism and openness.

But "Subject Three" does not belong to Guangxi alone; it belongs to the world. Throughout history, popular culture has included both highbrow and grassroots elements. The works that are loved by the common people are always universally appealing. "Subject Three" showcases the diverse but inclusive elements of Chinese culture. As such, the central and Guangxi regional authorities should take advantage of this opportunity to introduce more Guangxi cultural products to the world and showcase the charm of Chinese culture.

The global popularity of "Subject Three" shows that cultural creations know no political boundaries. China's stories can be conveyed to the world even through simple, short videos of a dance. Rooted in Chinese grassroots culture, "Subject Three" embodies the warmth and reality of the Chinese people's well-being, providing a deeper understanding of the inner world and living conditions of the Chinese people for the international community.

From Psy's "Gangnam Style" in 2013 to "Subject Three" in 2023, over the past decade, some dance styles, songs and other performances have broken boundaries and won over audiences across the world, making it all the more important for cultural exchanges to break free from static cultural perceptions and include more popular art forms.

When it comes to telling China's stories, we often focus on the word "good" to showcase high-brow Chinese culture to the world. But in 2023, the breakout success of "Subject Three" became a classic example of how to tell a good Chinese story. Hopefully, in the future, more stories like "Subject Three" will be heard by the world and loved by people across the globe.

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Sun Yixue

## Telling China's 'small stories' beautifully

*Taishan Mountain gives up no soil, thus it becomes majestic; rivers and seas accept all small streams, thus they achieve their depth.* The ancient Chinese poem reflects the ever-changing nature of the world which can be attributed to the subtle elements revolving around humankind. That's why when we share China's stories with the rest of the world, it is the human voice that narrates and the human heart that listens.

China spreads its influence through the enchanting power of "small and beautiful" stories, both in verse and prose. Take for instance, a poet of Tang Dynasty (618-907) Meng Haoran's couplet: *This morning of spring in bed I lie. Not waking up till I hear birds cry.* Or the lines by another Tang Dynasty poet Yang Wanli: *What after a long day's nap can I do with pleasure? I only watch the kids catch willow down at leisure.* They capture the essence of spring that is universally felt.

Verses like these touch the heart. They harmonize with the most subtle, the tender-most depths of human spirit. The popularity of ancient Chinese poetry reminds us that words have the power to move souls. It is in the minutiae that the heart truly stirs, entwined in the tender fibers of humanity's core. Poetry encompasses emotions, the dance of the seasons, the ebb and flow of the times, the cycle of life's breath and the tapestry of love and strife.

Poetry transcends borders, race, gender and class. Our aim, as we share China's tales with the rest of the world, is to gather the essence of truth, goodness and beauty from Chinese culture and fuse it with the diverse treasures of global heritage.

Together, we strive to nurture a shared, joyous existence for all of humankind. To realize this noble pursuit, while recounting China's modern narrative, we must accentuate the telling of "small and beautiful" stories from everyday life in China. In the mundane, we see profundity; through simplicity, we reach the depth of meaning. By focusing on details, we illuminate the grand tapestry, silently nurturing the roots and enriching the mind without making a sound.

The essence of the "grand era" resides in the intricately woven tapestry of "small lives". Each epoch dons its unique symbols — attire, melodies, prose structures and more. These symbols are manifested in the people — how they move, how they speak, what they see, what they eat, how they engage in activities and how they travel. Amid the ceaseless flow of life, these mundane details, taken for granted, become the threads of human existence.

Yet hidden within them lies a transformative power. Like a solitary blossom, lost in a kaleidoscope of hues, it may go unnoticed. But when tenderly transplanted into a flowerpot, it becomes a singular spectacle.

By deftly discerning the extraordinary amid the ordinary, unearthing the reasons behind these subtle shifts, we not only elevate the mundane to the sublime, but also

satisfy the innate curiosity of foreigners who perceive enchantment in every action of daily life. As their curiosity subsides and they start contemplating, they will embark on a journey akin to that of the Chinese people. It is then that Chinese stories will reverberate across the world, resonating deeper meaning and depth.

Even the grandest saga emerges from humble fragments. Likewise, an era of great magnitude is woven through myriad events. To tell China's "small and beautiful" tales to the world, we must artfully elucidate the origins and repercussions of each fleeting event that graces our lives. The "small lives" of people, akin to tender blades of grass in spring, may seem fragile, yet they are deeply rooted in earth, epitomizing vitality and boundless hope.

The "small and beautiful" narratives we

share, like the sprouting blades in the vernal breeze, must emit the fragrance of freshly upturned soil, embodying the righteousness and vigor of the "grand era". It is through this connection that the storyteller and the listener harmonize, their pulses synchronize, their emotions intertwine, and their thoughts converge.

The "small and beautiful" tales of China flow not as stagnant narratives, but as ever-evolving sagas. Time unfurls, the world transforms, yet unyielding remain China's spirit, dreams and original aspirations. It is our perspective and the evolving forms of storytelling that must adapt to the times, and embrace the data-driven empowerment of the era of artificial intelligence in order to better narrate China's stories.

As stories and storytellers evolve, China's narratives may contain errors. However

these "small and beautiful" tales can dispel misunderstandings, unravel misconceptions and help lift rigid barriers abroad, and unfold new realms.

Once a solid foundation is laid, China's stories will transcend the confines of time, space and distance to become part of the lives of people across the globe. By adapting to the changing times, while remaining true to their original aspirations and spirit, China's stories embody the wisdom of China, bestowing benefits upon the world.

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JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

# GLOBAL VIEWS

XU JIANCHU

## Exploring sustainable ways

Yunnan is pioneering an inspiring path toward sustainable development

Yunnan province has always been a land of inspiration for people and nature. First and foremost, Yunnan is diverse, from mountains, cloud forests, and wet and dry river valleys in the south to the high Himalaya in the north. This complex mountainous geography promotes the richest cultural diversity in Yunnan in languages, belief systems,



land use and livelihood practices. People in Yunnan have adapted to the land in ways that demonstrate their intimate relationship with the local ecosystems. There are the UNESCO world heritage traditional rice terraces and ancient tea tree gardens on the cloud-shrouded mountainsides. A thousand years ago, merchants from southern Yunnan traveled the Tea Horse Road to Tibet in caravans that formed a socio-cultural network between low river valleys and high mountain communities. And today, there are modern horticulture and contemporary trade ways — Yunnan features the largest flower market in China shipping bouquets to every corner of Asia. The mountains remain pathways of commerce and migration that reduce the barriers between highlands and lowlands.

Yunnan is many things to many people and it continues to change. When I began my first job at Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanic Garden in 1986, it took me seven days to travel from my home in eastern China to southern Yunnan. Now, it takes me seven hours to go from Kunming to Luang Prabang, Laos, by high-speed train. This certainly benefits tourists who come for holidays. But the cultural and biological diversity connections in Yunnan can also serve as a living lab to integrate innovations used by local mountain people into new ways to build an ecological civilization in China and the world.

In 2016, an international research group launched the Mountain Futures Initiative

to enhance the health of mountain ecosystems while supporting sustainable lifeways for dwellers in the highlands. Led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences with strong support from several United Nations programs, this consortium built a platform to protect nature and culture. This program is based on support for cultural beliefs that focus on traditional ecological views of life and reverence for nature; cognitive values that believe in "the unity of heaven, god, man and earth"; the domestication and sustainable use of plants and animals by humans; ecological farming based on circular agriculture of nutrients, water and energy; sustainable production using traditional ecological knowledge of nature; a one-health ecosystem approach to human health; ecological wisdom that combines scientific and traditional practices to maintain biodiversity; the inheritance of traditional farming knowledge; and innovation to spread mountain farming culture and new crop varieties to benefit people and nature.

Mountain Futures Initiative delegates hosted a program at the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in October 2021 in Kunming and, in December 2022, participated in another COP15 event in Montreal that launched a new Mountain Futures Action Plan. The plan is aspirational and ambitious. Its general goals closely follow those of the COP15 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including the sustainable use of biodiversity, ecological restoration for ecological health, full participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, and sustainable lifeways change through public education and economic transformation.

The action plan is already being implemented at the Honghe Innovations Center for Mountain Futures in southern Yunnan. Established in 2019, the center covers 672 hectares of dry mountain sloping lands and serves as a public-private laboratory where



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

projects in support of local livelihoods can be tested. So far, it has attracted investment of \$10 million from local, provincial and national governments along with private donors. Current projects cover a range of experiments: multipurpose agroforestry system for fruit and fodder crops, integrated fertilizer use with efficient water management, kapok products for sustainable rural-urban market supply chains, innovative biomass production for soil restoration; and more. We expect that general lessons learned in the Honghe dry-hot valley may be exported to other mountain areas in China and the world.

Just as in ancient times, intercultural learning and interdisciplinary research are built into the Mountain Futures Initiative. There are international scientists and PhD students from France (shaded-agroforestry coffee), the United States (bee keeping and pollination), Kenya (plants for new fiber materials), Ethiopia (animal nutrition and husbandry), Sri Lanka (edible mushroom cultivation), and Nepal (forest products development) working together with local farmers and regional business entrepreneurs. The young generation today will take leading roles for transforming landscape and livelihoods for mountain people

and urban dwellers through innovative knowledge and social value chains. That is our future dream and our contemporary action plan in Yunnan — building a new sustainable civilization based on historical roots from the countryside to the city and from the mountains to the sea.

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ZHAI KUN AND ZHANG LEI

## Point of convergence

Yunnan is a distinctive concourse of various communities with a shared future

Yunnan, a province in Southwest China, shares borders and cultural affinity with Southeast Asia, and ancient trade routes such as the ancient Southern Silk Road and the Tea Horse Road have facilitated economic and cultural exchanges between Yunnan and these regions. Yunnan has been a well-deserved regional trade and cultural center



Zhai Kun



Zhang Lei

between China and the Indochina Peninsula.

Since the 1980s, Yunnan has been at the forefront of China's opening-up. In 1992, Yunnan participated in the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation (GMS), taking advantage of its geographical location to initiate China's involvement in the regional integration processes of Southeast Asia. Since the 21st century, the scope of Yunnan's openness has expanded from South and Southeast Asia to the Pacific and Indian Ocean, as well as the Middle East and Africa, making it one of the most international provinces in China.

With its increasingly prominent role as a hub linking South and Southeast Asia, Yunnan serves as the overlapping intersection in the process of community building on various levels; for example, the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, the Asia-Pacific community with a shared future, and the China-ASEAN community with a shared future, as well as the China-Cambodia, China-Laos, China-Myanmar, China-Thailand, and China-Vietnam bilateral communities with a shared future. Based on its abundant biodiversity resources, Yunnan is also becoming the gateway for China's initiatives to promote a community with a shared future for all life on earth.

The advantages of Yunnan's multi-dimensional convergence are reflected in four aspects:

First, Yunnan has become an increasingly prominent hub in the southwest direction of the Belt and Road Initiative over the past decade, and its important gateway role in deepening exchanges and cooperation between China, and South and Southeast Asia has been continuously highlighted in China's foreign policies. Currently, the bilateral provincial cooperation mechanisms between Yunnan and five Mekong countries have been fully established.

Second, Yunnan has formed a framework of inner-outer integration. Yunnan is located

at the center of Asia's five-hour aviation circle, and at the intersection of ASEAN 10+1 Free Trade Area, GMS economic cooperation, and the Pan-Pearl River Delta Economic Zone. The China-Laos Railway, China-Europe freight train, and the new western land-sea corridor, enable Yunnan to smoothly connect itself with the six corridors and routes of the BRI. The China-Vietnam, China-Laos, and China-Myanmar international expressways have empowered Yunnan as a pan-Asian transportation hub. Southeast Asian countries can enter western China through Yunnan, connecting to the second Eurasian Continental Bridge.

This will be a spectacular continental "bridge", connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa, bridging the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Ocean.

Third, Yunnan is a crucial pivot point in the Yangtze River Economic Belt, linking South and Southeast Asian market with the internal markets of China, which enables production factors from surrounding areas to converge in Yunnan. In 2023, the total trade between Yunnan province and the five Mekong countries reached about \$15 billion, and the province has established cross-border renminbi settlement channels with a total of 120 countries and regions.

Furthermore, Yunnan has gradually formed a value chain optimization and restructuring system led by the China (Yunnan) Pilot Free Trade Zone.

Fourth, Yunnan is the preferred destination for students from South Asia and Southeast Asia studying in China, and the Yunnan-Mekong Vocational Education Training Base has trained over 55,000 Southeast Asian students. In addition, the secretariat of South and Southeast Asian University Network, as well as the national focal point of the GMS Knowledge Network, are both in Yunnan University, which enhances the systematic knowledge-shar-



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

ing on development experiences and policy lessons among China and South and Southeast Asia.

In the future, Yunnan's opening-up can focus on cultivating the soft power that brings together all kinds of communities with a shared future.

First, Yunnan should continuously leverage the Lancang-Mekong corridor as a long-term strategic pivot, and closely interact with domestic development policies. Especially, Yunnan should focus on logistics corridors connecting Asia and Europe, as well as the new western land-sea corridor, with strategic development plans for integrating energy and computing power.

Second, given the importance of understanding the world when implementing the BRI, it's crucial to strengthen area studies to adopt a "one country, one policy" approach. With its numerous universities, Yunnan has distinct advantages in the research on Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Based on that, developing and synthesizing policy advice on key issues related to greater regional development should be one of the priority issues for Yunnan's area studies.

Third, Chinese language education and promotion is essential for China's international communication in the coming decades. Yunnan has wide exposure to the outside world, and can develop new models for rapid Chinese language learning through industry-academia-research collaboration in order to enhance the capacity of Chinese international communication.

Last but not least, a global ecological civilization center should also be proposed in the near future. Given its abundant biodiversity resources, Yunnan has unique advantages in establishing a global or China-ASEAN ecological civilization center. By conducting interdisciplinary research and human resource development, Yunnan can assume a leading role in experience and knowledge sharing on environmental protection and the building of an ecological civilization.

In a word, Yunnan will enhance its soft power on convergence, and contribute significantly to achieving more integrated, prosperous, sustainable and inclusive development in the region and beyond.

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## LIFE

All about Gen Z

Z  
WEEKLY

## Social Media Digest

## Realism in animation

Recently, Chiikawa, a tiny hamster, has risen to prominence as a beloved anime character among Chinese youth, amassing over 900 million views on Chinese lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu.

*Chiikawa*, also known as *Something Small and Cute*, is an animated series based on a manga by Japanese author Mamoru Nagano. The storyline revolves around three adorable protagonists: Chiikawa the hamster, Hachiware the cat, and Usagi the rabbit.

This anime offers a distinctive perspective, blending real-life challenges with charming, simple visuals. These characters strive to earn a living and confront monsters, emphasizing the idea that even in this delightfully animated world, success stems from hard work rather than magic.

Despite lacking the superhuman abilities often depicted in anime, the main characters maintain a hopeful attitude and always support one another, resonating deeply with young audiences.

"It's a story about a world full of harsh realities through the gentlest of imagery — how could it not capture our hearts?" one netizen commented.



Chiikawa the hamster, Hachiware the cat, and Usagi the rabbit are the protagonists of the animated series *Chiikawa*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Drama sparks debate

A recent post entitled "A couple earns over 400 million monthly from producing mini-dramas" has sparked discussions on Sina Weibo, drawing attention to the economic significance of this emerging entertainment style among Chinese netizens.

Mini-dramas, often shot in portrait mode for better display on a phone screen, compress captivating storylines into bite-sized episodes, using exaggerated performances to maximize excitement. Each episode usually concludes abruptly at a thrilling moment, leaving viewers eager for more. On some mini-platforms, payment is required to access content beyond the first few episodes.

These mini-program platforms have raised concerns, particularly among older viewers who may accidentally incur charges by selecting the "automatically unlock the next episode by default" option, which can be misleading. Worries about inconsistent content quality and unfair pricing have also caught the attention of both the public and the government.

As of December 2023, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China had implemented additional regulations for online mini-dramas. Since then, video and social media platforms like Douyin, Kuaishou, and WeChat have taken measures to comply with these regulations.

MENG WENJIE



A poster for the 2023 mini-drama *The Double Life of My Billionaire Husband*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Sparking youthful passion for the stage

International Theater Institute celebrates World Theater Day, emphasizing youth engagement and highlighting theater's role in shaping and inspiring the younger generation. **Gui Qian** reports.



From left to right: Members of Qfun Children's Experimental Theater Troupe, Golden Sail Art Troupe, and Beiguo Drama Society perform and participate in workshops at the 2024 World Theater Day celebration, held from March 27 to 29 in Langfang, Hebei. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"The activities of World Theater Day aim to rekindle young people's interest in the vitality of theater," said Chen Zhongwen, deputy director-general of the International Theater Institute (ITI), at the press conference of the 2024 World Theater Day celebration, which took place from March 27 to 29 in Langfang, North China's Hebei province.

Since ITI established World Theater Day on March 27, 1962, it has been celebrated globally every year. During this year's event, theater professionals and practitioners from around the world gathered at the city's Silk Road International Arts Center to participate in speeches, seminars, and workshops.

In contrast to other theater festivals that present many shows, this event placed more emphasis on discussing the essential and current issues of the theater industry. Among all the activities and topics explored this year, the involvement of young people in theater stood out as a major highlight.

One of the event's three main panel discussions focused on the theme "Theater: A Stage for the Young." Eight speakers from China, Hungary, India, and Ghana shared their observations and insights.

According to Huang Changyong, president of Shanghai Theater Academy, the current participation of young people in China's theater is remarkably high, making them "a primary driving force behind the development of theatrical arts."

The latest statistics from the Shanghai Drama Art Center show that those aged 0-29 make up 41.72 percent of its audience, while those aged 30-39 account for 33.96 percent.

Chen addressed the importance of young audiences and how they perceive theater. After visiting various countries, watching plays, and communicating with local theater practitioners,

“Theater shapes the youth, who, in turn, interpret and engage with the world through the lens of drama.”

Huang Changyong, president of Shanghai Theater Academy

ers, Chen has found a particularly important phenomenon in China that she "greatly appreciates."

"In all the places I've worked around the world, nowhere else have I encountered as many young people in theaters as in China," she said. "Especially in Europe, theater audiences tend to be older. Also, in Latin America or Africa, the younger generation seems to be losing interest in theater."

Ramendu Majumdar from Bangladesh, honorary president of ITI, said that "taking theater into schools is a very good idea" in terms of increasing the appeal of theater to the younger generation.

World Theater Day invited three children's and school theater groups to present their works and to have workshops with international experts.

The Qfun Children's Experimental Theater Troupe is mainly made up of primary school students. After staging a short play, the French musician and director Matthew Rauchvarger led them into an instrumental and choral practice, encouraging them to improvise within theatrical games.

The Golden Sail Art Troupe originated from the campus drama club of the Beijing Haidian District Teacher Continuing Education School. In 2012, the school became the "Theater Education

Base" of the Beijing People's Art Theater, receiving coaching and training from this top theater group in China. On March 28, the students performed a show titled *Xianheng Hotel*, which features characters from the works of Chinese writer Lun Xun (1881-1936), including Sister Xianglin, Kong Yiji, and Run Tu. A director, a lighting designer, and a stage manager from the Beijing People's Art Theater accompanied the students in creating and rehearsing this performance.

Jiang Xiao, in his second year of high school, played Xunge'er in the show. Before this, he had never seen a play or even a scene, knowing nothing about theater.

"It's not that I wasn't interested, but rather that I never had the opportunity to be exposed to it," he said. "But now, as a performer, not just an audience member, I have the chance to be the center of attention, to be myself and yet someone else, and to feel the character's emotional journey from a century ago. Where else could I find this kind of experience if not in the theater?"

Akosua Abdallah, president of the Ghana Center of ITI and a specialist in theater education, emphasized the positive impact of theater on the younger generation.

"When children and teenagers engage in theater, initially, it may be a bit shaky and wobbly, but as they progress through the performance, they can become anything. Theater is very beneficial for both their confidence and academic performance in school," she said. "When you build up confidence, it opens doors for you. You're not shy; you're able to communicate effectively; you're capable of doing all the things you want to do."

Members of the Beiguo Drama Society at Beijing Normal University have taken theater further into psychological healing.

Sun Ruonan, 26, a graduate of the university, created a play titled *4.16 km* in 2019 based on her own experience. The play delved deeply into the psychology of a girl with depression, who struggles with her relationships with her parents and the pain of growing up.

"Five years ago, I went through the same thing. I felt stifled and angry because there was no one to share my tears. So, I wanted to write a play that could evoke raw emotions from everyone who watched it," Sun said. "Through rehearsals and performances, I've come to understand myself more as well as my grievances and pettiness."

Li Zihan, once a member of the drama society and now its mentor, has noticed that the younger generation of theater practitioners tends to focus more on their internal emotions, pursuing the meaning of life and existence through theater.

"School theater troupes hold a unique significance. They serve as a supplement to the theatrical industry, being more liberating, open, and inclusive than commercial theater groups. They often engage with cutting-edge theatrical theories, tackling socially significant or philosophical themes, and experimenting with innovative forms of expression. These characteristics are both their distinctive features and areas of expertise," she said.

Huang agreed that youth are a precious creative force in the theater landscape.

"They possess passion, a receptiveness to new ideas, and a keen awareness of the present moment. This is why society needs to support and incubate young theatrical talent," he said. "Theater shapes the youth, who, in turn, interpret and engage with the world through the lens of drama."

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## LIFE

In the latest episode of *Youth Power*, young music enthusiasts and musicians from different backgrounds share their stories about how they believe music shapes the world. DONG MING / FOR CHINA DAILY



# Exploring music's transformative power

Youth from diverse backgrounds discuss music's influence on culture and its role in fostering understanding and unity worldwide in the latest episode of *Youth Power*.

By LIXINRAN  
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In the latest and final episode of this season's *Youth Power* by China Daily, which aired on March 30, eight music enthusiasts and musicians from five countries came together to share their stories about how they believe music shapes the world.

Lv Wei, a 31-year-old violinist, is the assistant principal of the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra in East China's Jiangsu province. Her musical journey began because her parents — as she put it — “forced” her into it.

“My parents believed that playing an instrument would help me focus better on my studies at school, so they introduced me to the piano first and later to the violin,” Lv said. “After a few years of practice, I developed a fondness for the sound of the violin and wanted to share my music and ideas with different people on stage.”

For Benjamin Essomba, a 26-year-old music producer from Cameroon, his love for music developed more naturally. Growing up attending church, he had early access to various instruments.

“I don't recall ever being forced to play music,” said Essomba. “When you see people you know and love playing something that sounds really good, you'll think, ‘Why can't I do it?’”

However, loving music and mastering it are two different endeavors. Ludoviko Maletti, a 25-year-old French horn player from Italy currently performing with the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra, believes that many

talented musicians have been immersed in music from a very young age, often being the offspring of musicians themselves.

“Talent does exist, but it's a product of nurturing rather than nature,” Maletti explained, adding that he personally doesn't believe he has inherent talent; rather, everything he has achieved is a result of dedicated cultivation.

Lv believes that 75 percent effort and 25 percent talent are the crucial ingredients for creating a great musician. “We need a lot of time and attention to practice the techniques, and then the 25 percent of talent can elevate you to a higher level as an artist,” she said.

While becoming a recognized musician is challenging, some may argue that developing an appreciation for classical music, such as symphonies, can also be difficult and requires a refined taste. Maletti suggested that those interested in exploring classical music can begin with more accessible pieces, such as the rhythmic first movement of *The Rite of Spring* by Russian-born composer Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971).

“Back in high school, I added this piece to my friend's playlist, and he ended up enjoying it. He later expressed that he was up for more classical music,” Maletti said.

Chen Shihua, a 19-year-old student from Peking University, pointed out the potential of movie soundtracks to foster an interest in classical music among the public.

“For example, *Playing Love* from *The Legend of 1900* is one of my favorite pieces in movies. I can feel a mixture of regret, love,

“Creating art is more fundamental to being human than having enough to eat. So, what we musicians do here is profoundly essential to the human experience. It's something that's very ingrained in what it means to be human.”

Joseph Chen, a trombone player in the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra

humanity, memories, and a myriad of complex emotions in it,” said Chen.

As musicians grow and refine their skills, they often seek collaborations across different styles, genres, and countries. Melissa Baidak, a 24-year-old doctoral student from Russia at Beijing Foreign Studies University, shared her experience attending a concert featuring a fusion of Western and Chinese musical instruments, such as the violin and the *pipa* (a four-stringed Chinese lute).

“Music serves as a tool for intercultural communication, bringing people together

and making the sound of different musical instruments more fascinating,” said Baidak.

Wang Zongnan, a 24-year-old student from Tsinghua University, also witnessed a harmonious blend of performance styles across countries. Recalling an event hosted by China's Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra and the Spanish theater group La Fura, he described it as a “visual symphony”.

“The orchestra played Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* in the center of the stage, while La Fura's actors performed a play at the front of the stage and among the audience. The play revolved around environmental protection. It was a magical combination of cultures,” he said.

The host of this episode of *Youth Power*, 19-year-old Wang Licheng, a student at Peking University, emphasized that music itself is a universal language that transcends borders to unite different peoples and nurture mutual understanding.

Wang Zongnan agreed, underlining the practical aspect of self-expression. He shared how his exchange experience in Sweden led him to write a song whimsically reflecting on the evolution of his own cultural identity, as he explored both the similarities and differences among various cultures.

Dylan Walker, 27, a music enthusiast from the United States, also resonates with Wang Licheng's belief in the power of music to foster understanding. Having studied and lived in China for years, Walker has formed friendships not only with Chinese locals but also with people from diverse

backgrounds worldwide.

“Singing together in Chinese is one thing, but singing a song in their native language with them creates a deep emotional connection. It really brings you closer together and helps you understand their culture. It also sparks an interest in understanding each other and a sense of mutual respect,” said Walker.

Joseph Chen, 26, a trombone player in the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra, sees music as more than just a means of self-expression and building friendships. He believes it's a core aspect of human existence.

Chen referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which suggests that as humans, our most inherent necessities start from food and shelter, with art being a higher-level need. However, he observes that the actual progression of human development is quite the opposite: before we had shelter and a stable source of food, we had cave paintings and bone flutes, which were art and music.

“Creating art is more fundamental to being human than having enough to eat. So, what we musicians do here is profoundly essential to the human experience. It's something that's very ingrained in what it means to be human,” Chen said.



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## A melodic journey: one note at a time

Since I was three years old, music has been my faithful companion. Over the years, I've explored all kinds of musical activities — from playing the piano to trying out different percussion instruments, and from singing to dancing. I've also dipped my toes into various musical styles — from classical to pop, folk to jazz. Music has also led me to discover and appreciate different cultures.

In 2015, at the age of 12, I went to Lincoln School in the United States as an exchange student. I was fortunate enough to participate in the school's musical production of *Beauty and the Beast*. Immersed in the story and its melodies, I found myself exchanging ideas with my classmates about our understanding of musicals.

In these discussions, a local student told us how, in US musical theater, dance is all about expressing feelings rather than showing off skills. By way of contrast, a student

from Europe shared that they would probably emphasize more the growth and transformation of characters throughout the story, and how they would portray these changes with nuanced acting. I then introduced some characteristics of Chinese musicals, including that we tend to focus in great detail on telling stories.

The result of these dialogues was that we all learned something from each other, and through collaborative effort, we presented a version of *Beauty and the Beast* that was rich in various cultures and artistic expressions.

During my time in the US, I also had the opportunity to learn and practice the Chinese piano piece *Mai Za Huo* (Selling Groceries) under the guidance of a Russian teacher. This piece is adapted from Cantonese music and tunes but portrayed by the piano, a Western instrument, which led to

interesting exchanges between me and my Russian teacher.

During rehearsals, I introduced to her some basic characteristics of Cantonese music — cheerful, smooth, and elegant — while she taught me to focus on the inner emotions and rhythmic changes of the piece. Her performance was powerful yet graceful, embodying the traditional charm of Chinese indigenous music while at the same time incorporating her own understanding of the composition.

This cross-cultural experience allowed me to rediscover this work and to see that music can maintain its own characteristics while integrating exotic elements, eventually developing into timeless and innovative expressions.

In 2021, I decided to study music communication at the Communication University of China in Beijing, where I joined the Youth

Symphony Orchestra. In 2023, as a member of the orchestra, I had the honor of participating in the recording of *Youth Friendship Waltz* for the 31st World University Summer Games held in Chengdu, Sichuan. In the orchestra, I played the triangle.

When I found out that I was selected to be part of the performance team, I was so excited because it was an opportunity to represent Chinese university students on a global stage through music.

Looking back on my life, music has always been there for me, giving me strength no matter what challenges I face. Looking ahead, I hope to keep exploring music and sharing its joy with others. With every note I play, I want to spread friendship and love, making the world a happier place.

Written by Hu Bing, 21, a student at the Communication University of China.



Hu Bing, a student at the Communication University of China, is playing the triangle. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Enchanting Sydney's streets with Chinese music

Dong Min, a talented Chinese flutist, captivates the streets of Sydney with traditional Chinese music, fosters cultural exchange and musical education, **Meng Wenjie** reports.

**O**n the bustling streets of Sydney, Australia, a young Chinese woman, adorned in elegant *hanfu*, the traditional attire of China, gracefully holds a *dizi*, the bamboo flute of China, enchanting passersby with the melodies of traditional Chinese music.

The videos of her performances have been making the news since earlier this year. And the performer is Dong Min, a talented musician born in 1990.

When she was growing up, Dong noticed that many *dizi* musicians were male. So, at the age of 8 when she first saw a female performer playing the bamboo flute on TV, her eyes lit up. "I thought it was cool for girls to play the *dizi*," she said, recalling how she persuaded her parents to buy her one so she could learn it.

Dong's interest soon blossomed into talent. At the age of 10, she stood out in a provincial-level Chinese musical instrument competition in her hometown of Central China's Hunan province. This accomplishment earned her one of only four spots available that year in Hunan for further studies in Beijing.

After graduating from Minzu University of China with a major in Chinese bamboo flute, Dong decided to venture into a new realm of art. In 2015, she enrolled at the University of New South Wales in Australia to study curating and cultural leadership.

Despite being far from home, Dong quickly found like-minded friends passionate about Chinese traditional instruments. They then formed a Chinese music band, attracting audiences interested in learning about these unique instruments.

Encouraged by this reception, Dong took a bold step toward entrepreneurship and founded the Sydney Meiya Conservatory of Chinese Music — named after her English name "Meiya" — dedicated to teaching Chinese traditional instruments to more people.

Dong noticed a lack of awareness of Chinese traditional music in Australia. So, inspired by local performers using Western instruments like pianos and violins for street performances, she initiated street performances with her conservatory members, showcasing traditional Chinese instruments in Sydney's Chinatown in 2016.

"Street performances offer a direct and visual way for people to experience Chinese music. By bringing it to the streets, we make it accessible to everyone," she said.

Transforming mundane street corners into their stage, Dong and her fellow musicians shared

“Street performances offer a direct and visual way for people to experience Chinese music. By bringing it to the streets, we make it accessible to everyone.”

Dong Min, a Chinese flutist

the richness of Chinese culture through music with an international audience.

Each time Dong performs, she wears traditional Chinese clothing, such as *hanfu* or *qipao*. According to her, many countries have instruments similar to *dizi*, such as the flute, India's Bansuri, and Japan's shakuhachi. Therefore, wearing traditional Chinese clothing during performances not only pays homage to her heritage but also complements the instrument she plays.

"Traditional clothing is also one of the symbols of Chinese culture," she said. "Through these holistic performances, the audience can intuitively grasp Chinese elements."

The sight of a mysterious Chinese girl in *hanfu* playing the bamboo flute on the streets of Sydney attracted many international spectators. Dong also displays a sign introducing the *dizi*, and she is eager to share her passion for the instrument and invite spectators to partake in the experience firsthand.

During one performance, a group of fair-haired, blue-eyed children were intrigued by Dong's attire and approached her to express their interest in trying the *dizi*. One of them chose the smallest one Dong had prepared in advance, and he was successful in producing sounds. "For beginners who have never touched a *dizi* before, blowing into it isn't an easy task," Dong explained.

She gave the young participant a Chinese instrument pendant as a gift. "The kid was very happy and said he would show it off to his friends at school," she laughed.

As Dong's performances grew in popularity, snippets of her shows spread across social media, drawing in a larger audience. With over 1 million

followers online, including nearly 150,000 from international platforms, Dong's influence continues to grow.

"Many audiences travel all the way from cities like Melbourne and Brisbane to Sydney just to attend my performances," she said with pride.

One of Dong's most popular videos features her rendition of *Cang Hai Yi Sheng Xiao*, from the classic Chinese martial arts film *Swordsman*, amassing over 32 million views. "This melody, based on the pentatonic scale of traditional Chinese music, holds a distinctiveness that resonates with diverse audiences," Dong explained.

Dong also infused advanced playing techniques such as circular breathing and tongue blocking into her performances, which also attracted international audiences whenever they gathered to witness live renditions.

Beyond street performances, the conservatory also acts as a center for preserving and teaching Chinese traditional music. The institution offers instruction in various traditional instruments, including the *dizi*, *guzheng* (a Chinese zither with more than 20 strings), *yangqin* (a hammered dulcimer), and *erhu* (a two-stringed bowed instrument). "Our students range from 4-year-olds to 80-year-olds, reflecting the timeless appeal of Chinese music across generations," Dong said.

Among her students, there's an intriguing blend of Western and Chinese musical influences. Some, already proficient in Western instruments like violin and flute, choose to delve into similar Chinese counterparts such as the *erhu* and *dizi*. They even seek Dong's guidance on incorporating elements of Chinese traditional instruments into their original music compositions.

Apart from her conservatory, Dong also offers online *dizi* lessons to a global audience and organizes online exchange concerts for her students worldwide. "I hope to create a platform for music enthusiasts to connect and cultivate friendships through their shared love for music," she said.

Ever since she arrived in Australia, Dong has noticed a growing interest in Chinese traditional music among local people. Many music schools now offer courses on Chinese instruments.

"In Australia, I've witnessed a shift in foreign audiences, from initial unfamiliarity to active engagement with traditional Chinese music. This demonstrates that traditional Chinese music is thriving not only in formal concert halls but also on the streets and within communities," she said.

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Dong Min, a Chinese flutist, is known for playing the *dizi* on the streets of Sydney, Australia, earlier this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Global Insights



August Hagen, a 22-year-old Norwegian, is a graduate student at Fudan University. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Exploring the vibrant life of China's elderly

Before I came to China last autumn, I had spent several years studying Chinese language and culture, and I felt like I had a good overview of what might surprise me after moving here. However, certain things always managed to evade the scope of textbooks and television shows. For example, I was shocked by the vibrant life of the elderly and the differences in culture between the younger and older generations in China.

It's not just the natural variances in their daily routines and lifestyles, which are to be expected anywhere in the world. There is something much more prominent: how different age groups interact with public spaces.

During my routine strolls around the neighborhood, I would often stumble upon scenes that diverged from my expectations. I might encounter someone cooking a meal on a portable gas stove placed in the middle of the pavement. Sometimes, I might stop and join a crowd gathered around a chess or card game. Then there were the occasions where I would pass by individuals taking afternoon naps on a bench, watching TV dramas with blaring speakers, or simply listening to classical music on a radio.

Whenever I enter a park, there are always people exercising in various ways: from brisk walkers to tai chi practitioners and sword dancers, and music can always be heard, whether it's from someone playing a flute or even coming from a choir! On the weekend, I often encounter a group dance with over a hundred participants, accompanied by another few dozen onlookers who, like me, are perhaps too shy to join. And in the evening after I returned home, I can still hear the dance music coming from the park, which is a reminder of the lively social gatherings that persist late into the night.

Remarkably, the one common aspect of all these experiences is that they are all from the older generation.

The elderly in China are lively and have vibrant lives. Even my old neighbor, who struggles to walk, still manages to climb down five floors to join his friends in the circle of chairs outside while drinking tea from their thermoses, talking about me — the teard foreigner passing by, looking at them with curiosity.

To the elderly, the park is not only a place to go for a walk on a sunny day, but it is also a locale to socialize, dance, exercise, play badminton, practice an instrument, take a nap, or play a game of chess. All of these activities, which make good use of public spaces, truly embody the term "public space".

The younger generation in China, however, is less likely to partake in this form of public life to the same extent. That is not to say there aren't young people out in public spaces, but rather that they don't utilize these spaces in the same manner.

Even after six months of living in China, I am still amazed as to how this phenomenon of elderly people and their cultural interactions in public spaces differs from my native country of Norway.

Norwegian culture is more reserved, and this becomes even more evident regarding older generations. When taking a walk in the park in Norway, for instance, you will see fewer elders engaged in social activities or exercise routines than in China.

Of course, the elderly in Norway do socialize, but not like their counterparts in China. My conclusion when comparing these two cultures is that Chinese elders are far more socially active, and they fully embrace the concept of public space.

There is a saying in Norway that states, "We are all children of our time", meaning that we are all shaped by the time and space in which we grew up. When considering the drastic changes and rapid development of China in the past century, it is no wonder that the social lives and cultural practices of its younger and older generations are so divergent. Each generation in China grew up in a vastly different socio-economic landscape, and they are shaped by these landscapes.

This disparity is much more prominent than that in Norway, which has experienced relatively small social changes within the same time span.

When I think about my retirement years, I can't help but envision a life like that of retired people in China. I imagine waking up early to get groceries, taking a walk in the park, doing some stretches, chatting a bit with my friends, joining a group dance, taking a nap on a park bench, and then making dinner on the pavement while observing the passersby — just as I observe them now.

Written by August Hagen, a 22-year-old Norwegian who is passionate about learning Chinese language and culture. He is currently studying for a master's degree in Chinese language and culture at Fudan University in Shanghai.