

Impetus for growth

Nation's e-commerce sector vital for consumption recovery

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Space company works on new reusable rocket

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Paws for empowerment

Guide dogs help visually impaired community overcome struggles

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# CHINA DAILY

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## Xi: Bolster growth of western region

President stresses important role of New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor for area

By MO JINGXI  
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President Xi Jinping emphasized on Tuesday the need to boost the high-quality development of China's western region by pursuing higher-standard opening-up, both internally and externally, as the country advances Chinese modernization.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when presiding over a high-level symposium in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality, where he made an inspection tour from Monday to Tuesday.

The western region covers Chongqing, six provinces and five autonomous regions. It includes more than 70 percent of China's land area and is home to nearly a third of the nation's population.

To promote the region's opening-up, Xi said efforts should be made to accelerate the development of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, a major trade channel between China's western region and countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The corridor, which reached 490 ports in 120 countries and regions as of January, saw its cargo volume rise 21 percent year-on-year in 2023, official data showed.

Xi also called on the region to better integrate itself with the Belt and Road Initiative, promote the high-quality development of pilot free-trade zones and deepen practical cooperation with the country's southern, northern and northeastern regions.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, Xi has made more than 30 fact-finding trips to the western region, providing guidance and drawing a blueprint for the region's development in the new era.



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, learns on Monday about Chongqing's efforts in accelerating the development of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor during an inspection of the Chongqing International Logistics Hub Park. YUE YUEWEI / XINHUA

**26.9 trillion yuan**  
GDP of the western region in 2023

Official statistics showed that the region's GDP reached 26.9 trillion yuan (\$3.71 trillion) last year, with an average annual growth rate of 4.9 percent over the past five years.

Xi said that while the region has achieved significant progress in terms of ecological protection, economic opening-up, infra-

structure and people's livelihoods over the past five years, it still faces difficulties and challenges that remain unsolved.

He urged the region to focus on its competitive local industries, develop emerging sectors suited to local conditions and speed up industrial transformation and upgrading.

The region should accelerate the upgrading of traditional competitive industries, develop tourism and other service sectors into its pillar industries, and explore the development of modern manufacturing and strategic emerging

industries, he said.

Xi highlighted the importance of building a solid national ecological security shield in the western region, as the region holds significant strategic importance in safeguarding national ecological security.

Since the strategy for the large-scale development of the western region was implemented in 2000, more than 21.3 million hectares of farmland have been converted into forests or grassland.

The region is also home to the Sanjiangyuan National Park and the Giant Panda National Park.

Xi said that work should be done to optimize the development and protection of the nation's land resources, adopt a stronger region-specific approach to environmental management, and accelerate the implementation of major projects for protecting and restoring key ecosystems.

The president also urged the region to accelerate the construction of a new energy system and establish a number of important national energy bases, in order to enhance security and guarantee capabilities in energy resources and other key areas.

## Blinken visit expected to strengthen dialogue

By CAO DESHENG  
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Beijing hopes that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to China will help effectively manage differences between the two countries, strengthen dialogue and advance mutually beneficial cooperation, said an official with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of North American and Oceanian Affairs.

While briefing the media on Blinken's three-day visit, which will start on Wednesday, the official, who declined to be named,

said that Beijing urges Washington to turn the commitments made by United States President Joe Biden into concrete actions.

During a telephone conversation with President Xi Jinping on April 2, Biden reiterated that the US does not seek a new Cold War, and that its objective is not to change China's system, its alliances do not target China, the US does not support "Taiwan independence", and it does not seek conflict with China. The US also doesn't want to curtail China's development and doesn't seek "decoupling" from China, he added.

Noting that China's door for dialogue and communication has always been open, the official said the US must be aware that communication should not be conducted for its own sake, and that Washington should not always say one thing but do another. The US should also abandon the illusion of dealing with China from a position of strength, the official added.

There were, are and will be differences between China and the US, but these differences should not dominate the bilateral relationship, the official said.

The official urged the US not to cross China's red lines on the Taiwan question or on issues related to human rights, the political system and development rights.

While calling China's determination and will to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests unwavering, the official said the Chinese side will use Blinken's visit to firmly articulate its position and make clear demands to the US on the Taiwan question and the issues of economy and trade, technology and the South China Sea.

"We firmly oppose the politicization of economic, trade and technological issues by the US. We also warn the US that suppressing Chinese

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## TEENAGER'S KILLING PUTS JUVENILE CRIME BACK IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Legal experts raise questions over effectiveness of intervention, rehabilitation efforts

By CAO YIN  
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A recent case in which three boys have been held on suspicion of killing their classmate has shocked the country and put the issue of juvenile crime in the



national spotlight once again. On March 10, the victim, a seventh-grade student surnamed

Wang, was allegedly killed in Feixiang district of Handan, Hebei province. The next day, three suspects surnamed Zhang, Li and Ma, whose ages range from 12 to 14, were detained by police, according to a statement released by the provincial authorities.

The body of Wang, 13, was found buried in an abandoned vegetable greenhouse in the district's Zhangzhuang village, about 100 meters from the home of one of the suspects, media outlets reported.

After a preliminary investigation and autopsy, Li Yafeng, an official

from the district's public security bureau, told China Central Television on March 18 that it was a "premeditated crime", and "no evidence was discovered that indicated the involvement of adults in the offense".

## There is urgent need to de-escalate Mideast conflict

In the wake of Iran's recent drone and missile strikes on Israel, there is heightened concern that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is increasingly spilling onto the world stage with deepening political polarization and global economic disruption.

Iran's mission to the United Nations issued a statement saying that Iran's military action was in response to Israel's attack on an Iranian diplomatic facility in Syria, an apparent reference to the April 1 bombing of an Iranian consulate building in Damascus.

The statement said that Iran considered the matter "concluded" after the missile and drone strikes.



However, it warned that if Israel makes "another mistake", Iran would deliver "a considerably more severe" response.

On the other hand, the head of Israel's army said Iran's attack would be "met with a response". He provided no further details, but it was the first and alarming indication of possible Israeli retaliation. The prospect of a full-blown war involving Israel, the United States, Iran and others is

indeed a devastating thought. Echoing close international partners such as China, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed his deep concern over the possible escalation of regional hostilities in the Middle East. He emphasized that South Africa has consistently called for an immediate cease-fire in the ongoing conflict.

Anticipating the potential for growing conflicts, bloodshed and genocide, South Africa earlier instituted proceedings against Israel at the International Court of Justice in the Hague for violating its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and

Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, with respect to its actions in Gaza. South Africa argued in The Hague that Israel violated the 1948 Genocide Convention, established in the aftermath of the Holocaust, which mandates that all countries prevent the recurrence of such crimes.

Pretoria's support for the Palestinian cause is deeply rooted in democratic South Africa's foreign policy. Given the country's history of apartheid, the Palestinian cause is largely seen as analogous to its own struggle against oppression, occupation and violence.

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## Students vent ire



A pro-Palestinian protestor is arrested on Monday at Columbia University in New York, the United States. The university announced that classes would be held remotely starting Monday, as pro-Palestinian protests continued for the sixth day on the campus. JOHN ANGELLILLO / NEWS.COM

INSIDE  
Global South becoming increasingly influential  
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## PAGE TWO



A show is held in Shijingshan district of Beijing to make minors aware of school bullying and other campus problems. The poster on the wall says "Let's join hands to say no to school bullying!" PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From page 1

The suspects dug a hole in the greenhouse on March 9 and 10 to bury the body, Li also alleged.

News of the killing went viral on social media platforms, sparking huge debate and widespread outrage over juvenile crime, especially cruel and severe acts committed by minors.

China's top procuratorate, in line with the Chinese Criminal Law, recently approved the prosecution of the three minors.

However, some stakeholders such as legal professionals, have expressed their concern about the effectiveness of the rehabilitation of young offenders, and called for relevant professionals to become more involved to rectify the long-term behavior of such offenders.

Although minors, the suspects are expected to be held criminally liable.

Details of the prosecution and how it will be handled were disclosed by the Hebei Provincial People's Procuratorate in a statement released on April 8.

District police handed the case over to local prosecutors on March 21 to decide whether the suspects should be prosecuted, the statement said. After reviewing the case, the prosecutors concluded that the three minors should be held criminally responsible as the suspects all met the legal age threshold of criminal liability, and the circumstances of the killing were severe.

China's age of criminal liability was lowered to 12 on March 1, 2021, when the amended Criminal Law took effect.

Since then, children aged 12 to 14 can be held criminally liable for intentional killing by extremely cruel means, or for intentional injury that leads to death or severely disables others. However, the law also stresses that the decision to prosecute must be approved by the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

Before the amendment, the age of criminal liability was 14 to 16, and children could be held responsible for committing serious and violent offenses, includ-

## Law: Juvenile dilemma of crime & punishment



Left: A juvenile offender hugs his mother at a rehabilitation institution in Nanchang, Jiangxi province. LIU ZHANKUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE  
Right: A policeman demonstrates self-defense skills at a primary school in Hua'an, Jiangsu province. ZHAO QIRUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ing rape, robbery, intentional injury, and intentional homicide.

"The adjustment in age was made considering new situations and problems with juvenile delinquency," said He Ting, a law professor at Beijing Normal University. "Lowering the threshold to 12 in special circumstances has provided a legal channel to fight severe offenses committed by very young individuals."

Zhao Li, a criminal lawyer at Beijing Jingsh Law Firm, highlighted the significance of special and stringent circumstances under the law. "They indicate that Chinese judicial authorities are still prudent when dealing with juvenile offenses," he said.

This prudence is reflected in the fact that the provision only applies to suspects between the ages of 12 and 14 who commit either intentional homicide or intentional injury, and the consequences of the offense must be serious, Zhao said.

"The law also gives the SPP the right to determine whether to continue the judicial process, which is also an indication of the careful han-

dling of crimes committed by the very young," he added.

Imposing penalties is the last resort in combating juvenile offenses, as the problem cannot be resolved solely by punishment, both He and Zhao said.

Combating juvenile crime is a complex and systematic job that demands varying levels of intervention, corrective measures and prevention of juvenile delinquency, they added.

### Preventive measures

While lowering the age threshold, China has also optimized supporting measures through legislation revised in 2020 to deal with juvenile crimes and strengthen rehabilitation of young offenders.

The revised Law on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, which came into effect in June 2021, states that minors convicted of crimes but exempt from criminal punishment—such as those under the age of 12 or whose offense is not violent—should receive education and rehabilitation.



Data released by the SPP in 2022 showed that the number of juveniles prosecuted for committing offenses in 2021 increased by 24.2 percent from 2017, and the criminal charges mainly involved theft, rape, affray and robbery.

Crimes committed by offenders between the ages of 14 and 16, or even younger, became more frequent during the 4-year period, with the number of minors involved in telecom fraud rapidly rising.

Yuan Ningning, an associate law professor at the China University of Political Science and Law, told China Youth Daily that before juveniles commit crimes, most have been involved in illegal behavior that was not stopped by effective and early intervention.

To solve the problem, the 2021 prevention law requires stronger management of minors, and stipulates that children who seriously misbehave should be educated and rehabilitated in special correctional schools.

Whether to send delinquent

minors to correctional schools needs to be jointly decided by education and public security departments. It also must be clarified that the rehabilitation process has closed, and public security and justice agencies are in charge.

These stipulations are measures complementary to criminal punishment, Yuan said, adding that delinquent minors of all ages can be regulated by the rule of law in this way.

"Adolescents are inseparable from their families and schools. If they are simply detained, it will not be conducive to their socialization and could easily lead to greater security risks after they are released," Yuan told China Youth Daily.

### Best intentions

However, implementation of the revised Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law has not been straightforward.

Yuan said some public security departments have only provided

basic education to minors, instead of special corrective measures, after learning that the children did not meet the age threshold for criminal liability.

At the same time, the number of professionals who can provide corrective measures such as judicial social workers, along with the number of special correctional schools where young offenders can receive psychological help and behavioral rehabilitation, are also inadequate, he said.

Guidance on specific laws, and rules on what corrective measures should be provided to help delinquent children are also falling short, he added. Public security, judicial, and educational agencies should specify the provisions related to the special corrective measures to make their implementation more practical, Yuan said.

Zhao, the Beijing lawyer, said more social organizations should be encouraged to help in the rehabilitation of young offenders, with a greater focus on problems related to left-behind children and school bullying.

As of April last year, China had about 233,500 social workers. Of those, nearly 30 percent worked in judicial affairs, conducting social research and providing psychological assistance, according to the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China.

The league has also invited about 5,000 legal and psychology specialists to attend its think tanks to answer questions from children and their guardians.

"Children, especially the very young, need more care, attention, and aid while growing up. The law, or punishment, is just one of many ways to help them tackle their issues, but it is not the only way," Zhao said.

"When compared with punishment, it is more important to establish a work system with enough team members and practical measures to help delinquent children identify and solve their mistakes, so they can return to and integrate back into society," he added.

## Greater efforts urged to improve children's living environment

By CAO YIN

Judges and relevant workers are being urged to attach greater importance to addressing the underlying issues of juvenile crime such as inadequate family care, internet addiction, and school bullying, in order to provide a better environment for children to grow up in.

The Supreme People's Court made the requirement in response to the rising instances of juvenile delinquency over the past three years.

From 2021 to 2023, Chinese courts concluded 73,178 criminal cases involving people under the age of 18 and sentenced 98,426

juveniles, according to data released by China's top court on April 16.

Following heated public discussions on intentional killing or injury caused by young individuals, the top court emphasized that the principle of punishment was "tolerance without indulgence" when dealing with such cases.

"Juvenile offenders with deep subjective malice that causes serious harm to other people, especially those who show no remorse or incorrigible ones, should be penalized in line with laws, to serve as a warning to others and to ensure fairness for the victims," the court said.

Chinese courts recently concluded four criminal cases involving four juveniles aged 12 to 14, who were given prison terms ranging from 10 to 15 years for serious and violent offenses, the court said.

"Any issues discovered during trials of cases involving minors that may lead to juvenile delinquency or victimization must not be left unattended," it added.

For example, many cases had instances where young criminals had either bullied others or been the victims of bullying in school, without timely intervention from school authorities, leading to more serious offenses, it said.

"Therefore, collaborative

efforts by schools, families, social organizations and government agencies to build a joint work system to address bullying and solve the problem at an early stage is essential and urgent," it said.

The court suggested public security departments conduct tighter inspections of entertainment venues, where a range of juvenile crimes occurred along with minors being victimized.

Data released by the top court showed that courts nationwide heard 1,205 cases of disrupting public order involving minors in 2023, a 5.28 fold increase compared with 2020. The majority involved teenagers being organized to engage in paid compan-

ionship in bars and nightclubs, "reflecting the lack of supervision and protection of children in these business venues," it added.

In addition, judges across the country have been urged to provide stronger care and support to children affected by family-related civil lawsuits, such as child custody disputes and divorce proceedings, and try to correct any resulting misbehavior in a timely manner.

About 30 percent of juvenile defendants who committed violent crimes between 2021 and 2023 came from left-behind or single-parent families, indicating that a lack of parental care, education and supervision were con-

tributing factors, the court said.

It also called for greater attention to be paid to harmful information circulating in cyberspace. Nearly 60 percent of minors who committed robbery, theft and violent crimes over the past three years were found to be long-term internet addicts, or were more susceptible to unhealthy online influences.

While pledging to improve the quality of case handling involving minors, the court said it would promote education about the law in schools and increase information sharing about children with other authorities to ensure they can receive timely help and grow up in a sound environment.

## TOP NEWS

## Possible TikTok ban puts free speech in peril

By FAN FEIFEI  
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TikTok, owned by Chinese tech company ByteDance, highlighted its free speech concerns following the passage of a bill by the United States House of Representatives that could see the popular social media platform banned in the US.

"It is unfortunate that the House of Representatives is using the cover of important foreign and humanitarian assistance to once again jam through a ban bill that would trample the free speech rights of 170 million Americans, devastate 7 million businesses, and shutter a platform that contributes \$24 billion to the US economy, annually," the company said in a statement.

The comments came after the bill was approved on Sunday by a 360-58 vote. It requires TikTok's parent company ByteDance to sell its stake within a year, or face a ban on the video-sharing app.

The legislation now goes to the Senate after negotiations that lengthened the timeline for ByteDance to sell to nine months, with a possible additional three months if a sale is in progress.

A previous version passed by the House of Representatives in March gave ByteDance six months to divest its ownership stake in TikTok, but that plan stalled in the Senate.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk expressed his opposition to banning TikTok in the US. "In my opinion, TikTok should not be banned in the US, even though such a ban may benefit the X platform. Doing so would be contrary to freedom of speech and expression. It is not what America stands for," he wrote on his social media platform X.

Some Democrats have raised free speech concerns over the possible ban and instead asked for stronger data privacy legislation. Democra-

tic representative Ro Khanna told ABC News that he felt a TikTok ban may not survive legal scrutiny, citing the Constitution's free speech protections.

The legislation will unconstitutionally restrict free speech rights of US citizens, and could impact small business owners, who benefit from using the platform, said Rand Paul, a Republican senator.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew said in a video posted on the platform last month that he would not stop fighting to prevent the bill from being signed into law and urged the public to continue voicing their opposition to it.

"We will continue to do all we can, including exercising our legal rights to protect this amazing platform that we have built with you. We believe we can overcome this together," Chew said.

He also noted that the ban would not only force users in the US to lose access to the app but also "put more than 300,000 American jobs at risk".

TikTok has also indicated that it would likely go to court to try and block the law if it passes, arguing it would deprive the app's millions of users of their First Amendment rights.

The possible ban also drew criticism from users in the US. Sophia Zhang, who lives in Boston, opened an online store last year selling kitchen gadgets with about 300,000 followers on TikTok Shop, TikTok's e-commerce arm that allows US consumers to find and directly purchase products used in livestreaming and short videos.

Zhang said she was angry and anxious about the bill as most of her income is generated through TikTok. "I strongly oppose the legislation, which is going to threaten small businesses. The ban of TikTok will be devastating and have a huge impact on my life," she said.



## Midair collision

Firefighters and rescue personnel rush to inspect the debris of two military helicopters that collided on Tuesday at the Lumut naval base in Perak State, Malaysia. All 10 people on board were killed in the crash that occurred during a training session.

FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT OF MALAYSIA VIA AP

## Experts attribute edge in exports to new tech

Chinese manufacturers manage to save costs and win consumers

By ZHONG NAN  
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Inside

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China's export advantage arises from its competitive strength in the global market, said scholars and exporters, dismissing some Western nations' "overcapacity" narrative, which was generated by anxiety and insecurities about their own deficiencies in certain industries.

The observers said that the "China overcapacity" narrative, particularly propagated by the United States, serves as a political tool to curb the growth of the Chinese economy.

Mao Yanhua, a professor specializing in regional economic development at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, said the narrative lacks economic understanding. Globally, Chinese products are highly popular because of their technological elements, durability and high quality, Mao said.

For example, the competitive edge of China's new energy industries is not a result of subsidies. Rather, it arises from the country's integrated industrial chain and a substantial pool of high-end technical professionals, he said.

Lu Feng, a professor of economics at Peking University's National School of Development, said, "In the advancement of emerging sectors like new energy vehicles, certain Western countries maintain a zero-sum mentality."

Highlighting those countries' industrial policies, Lu said that they often contravene economic laws and intentionally destabilize global industrial and supply chain networks with "de-risking" measures.

He said such actions obstruct the efficient distribution of global

resources and stifle the growth of their own industry players.

The ongoing 135th session of the China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, exemplifies China's innovation strength and commitment to providing affordable products to the global market.

Dayun Group, an auto manufacturer based in Yuncheng, Shanxi province, secured export orders for hundreds of pickups and trucks worth over 60 million yuan (\$8.28 million) on the first day of the Canton Fair. Most of the vehicles will be shipped to the African market.

Yuan Qinshan, chairman of Dayun Group, said Chinese trucks are generally more affordable than their counterparts from Europe, Japan and the US. This price advantage makes them attractive to African businesses and governments, especially in a context in which budget constraints are common, Yuan said.

Lin Jiantian, director of the Gen-

eral Administration of Customs' Department of Enterprise Management and Audit-based Control, said that by integrating new technologies and methods, Chinese manufacturers are gradually able to pass on the advantages of these cost savings to downstream consumers.

The Canton Fair, which started on April 15 and will run through May 5, attracted 125,440 overseas buyers — up 23.2 percent year-on-year — from 212 countries and regions during the first five days, according to data released by the Guangzhou-based China Foreign Trade Center, one of the organizers.

Meanwhile, Yu Hanfen, vice-president of Ningbo Borine Electric Appliance Co, said that accusations aimed at China's substantial low-priced exports are unfounded.

Reasonable prices result from thorough competition in the market, Yu said. "For instance, our Malaysian and Turkish rivals may sell a type of automatic coffee machine in the European market for between \$100 and \$200, but we sell it for \$300."

"We are willing to invest in improving the brewing system, thereby enhancing the taste, and entrust German and Italian institutions to conduct product evaluations," he said, adding that the company's research and development cycle might be as long as two years, but the final products can be used for more than a decade.

## Dashing through the snow



Reindeer herders take part in a sled race on Reindeer Breeder Day on Sunday, in the village of Novosok on the Taymyr Peninsula, Krasnoyarsk, Russia. DENIS KOZHEVNIKOV / TASS

## Visit: US political intervention slammed

From page 1

technology is tantamount to restraining China's high-quality development and depriving the Chinese people of their legitimate right to development. China will resolutely respond to this," the official said.

The official also voiced China's firm

opposition to US intervention on the South China Sea issue and sowing discord between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Regarding the ongoing Palestine-Israel conflict, the official urged the US to fulfill its international responsibilities, support United Nations Security Council Resolu-

tion 2728, and work toward achieving an immediate and full ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to rescue the Palestinian people from the dire situation, the official said.

Regarding the Ukraine crisis, the official said the US needs to refrain from adding fuel to the fire or seeking to benefit from the situation,

refrain from attacking and smearing the normal state-to-state relations between China and Russia, and avoid stirring up bloc confrontation, the official added.

The official also expressed concerns about US deployment of intermediate-range missile launch systems in the Philippines, saying that the move has heightened regional tension and increased the risk of misunderstanding and misjudgment.

## Conflict: Ignoring of court order a disturbing trend

From page 1

Naledi Pandor, the country's minister of international relations and cooperation, reiterated: "South Africa really has a moral responsibility to always stand with the oppressed because we come from a history of struggle, a history of striving for freedom, a history of believing that everybody deserves human dignity, justice and freedom; this is the only reason that we have taken this major step as South Africa."

South Africa's legal team at The Hague argued that the "intent to destroy Gaza has been nurtured at the highest level of state", and added that Israel's political and military leaders were among "the genocidal inciters".

The ICJ accepted South Africa's argument that, contrary to what Israel claimed, the UN agencies were not being assisted to get aid flowing into Gaza.

The court, the principal judicial organ of the UN, in fact, pronounced a set of provisional measures, later followed by additional measures at South Africa's insistence, that called on Israel to prevent the commission of all acts falling within the scope of the Genocide Convention.

South Africa has been applauded by the international community

for working through legitimate global legal instruments to support the Palestinian cause. What is, however, deeply disturbing to South Africa and its international partners is the fact that the Israeli government callously continues to ignore the orders of the ICJ in the genocide case. In clear defiance of the legally-binding order, Israel intensified its violence against the residents of Gaza. It continued to obstruct the provision of basic services and the entry and distribution within Gaza of adequate fuel and lifesaving aid, perpetrating acts of collective punishment that amounted to brutal war crimes and which included the use of "starvation" of civilians as a weapon of war.

By drawing on established international institutions, South Africa's government is simultaneously asking the ICJ to rule on whether there is an ongoing genocide in Gaza and to clarify the duties of all states to prevent genocide, while testing the legitimacy and consistency of this system. So the ICJ is expected to make a judgment on the merits of the case in which it determines whether Israel has violated the Genocide Convention. The process to a final judgment could, however, take several years. It is against this background

that it is encouraging to see that the UN Security Council recently demanded an immediate cease fire between Israel and Hamas and the unconditional release of all hostages after the US abstained from the vote. In addition, there has been a growing global acceptance of the new report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, which concludes that there are "reasonable grounds to believe the threshold indicating Israel's commission of genocide is met".

Furthermore, Britain, France, Germany and the European Union's foreign policy chiefs all joined Washington and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in calling for restraint and to step away from the "edge of the cliff".

An increasing number of international partners such as China are also calling on all parties to exercise the greatest restraint, for the implementation of an instant arms embargo as well as the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state "when the moment comes".

UN Security Council resolutions are binding and the international community expects the Council to fulfill its mandate and obligations under the United Nations Charter and to take due action as required by the resolution.

However, as mentioned, in clear defiance of the legally-binding order, Israel had intensified its violence against the residents of Gaza when thousands faced starvation and famine as the delivery of aid continued to be disrupted, including the killing of humanitarian and aid workers.

As regards the recent attacks by Israel on Damascus as well as the Iran attack on Israel, the proliferation of global conflicts will continue if the international community does not commit itself to the ending of war and the establishment of conditions under which justice and respect for international law are maintained.

In fact, as long as Israel carries out its ongoing and blatant breaches of international humanitarian law with impunity, the war and injustice will continue.

It is, therefore, imperative that the international community and the UN Security Council, in particular, must act in the pursuit of sustainable and just peace for all people.

The author is a senior research fellow at the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University and a former senior diplomat in the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Notice

Zhuang Yaming (Household No 15 on the Review Form of the Farmers' Residence Land Use Rights), the farmers' residence land user, and Liu Peihua and Zhuang Jiayan, applicants for the farmers' residence land of 245 Nanle, Zhongle village, Nicheang town and Group 9 Zhongle, Room No 1, 271 Nanle, Zhongle village, Nicheang town and Pudong New Area, Shanghai, are hereby notified:

The properties of your household have been included in the Lema River (Pengping Highway-Punan Canal) river channel improvement project. On August 30, 2022, the Government of Pudong New Area approved the "Pre-announcement of Land Expropriation" numbered Hu Pu Yu Zheng Di Gao (2022) No 201. By the approval of the document Hu Pu Zheng Di Fang Bu Gao (2023) No 29, the project has entered the specific execution phase regarding compensation for the houses on the expropriated land.

Since your household cannot be contacted and the properties have no actual occupants or persons in control, related property expropriation documents cannot be sent. Please contact the expropriation implementing unit within seven days from the date of the publication of this notice and provide a valid property ownership certificate, identity certificate, contact address and contact number to agree on a meeting time and ensure delivery of relevant property expropriation documents. If you fail to contact us within the time limit, we will, in accordance with the regulations, announce relevant documents and follow-up procedures concerning your properties through the bulletin board of this base.

Office hours: 8:30 to 16:30, Monday to Friday  
Address: Village Committee (178 Pengyi), Pengmiao village, Nicheang town, Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China  
Contact: Yao Haiming, Pan Jianjun; Tel: 86-18930238450 or 13301610832  
Property expropriation implementing unit: Shanghai Pudong No 7 Property Expropriation Service Firm Co., Ltd.

Appendix I:

## Delivery Notice

Zhuang Yaming (household), Liu Peihua and Zhuang Jiayan:  
On August 30, 2022, the collectively-owned land where your farmers' residence land properties are located (Land No: Household No 15 on the Review Form of the Farmers' Residence Land Use Rights; address: 245 Nanle, Zhongle village and Room No 1, 271 Nanle, Zhongle village) was proposed for approval of expropriation for the Lema River channel improvement project with the document numbered Hu Pu Yu Zheng Di Gao (2022) No 201. Approved by the Hu Pu Yu Zheng Di Fang Bu Gao (2023) No 29, the project has now entered the specific execution phase regarding compensation for the houses on the expropriated land.

Since your household cannot be contacted and the properties have no actual occupants or persons in control, you are hereby notified that related documents will be sent to property rights holders who can be reached directly. In case of delivery failure, relevant documents and follow-up procedures concerning your properties will be announced through the bulletin board of this base.

Shanghai Pudong No 7 Property Expropriation Service Firm Co., Ltd.  
April 24, 2024

## CHINA

## Getting his bearings

Polar bear Zai Zai is lifted from a refrigerated truck on Monday on his return to Nanjing Andover Underwater World in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, after an absence of two and a half years. Born in Russia in 2010, Zai Zai was sent from Nanjing to a zoo in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, in 2021 to be paired with females Qian Qian and Aisika.

YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



## Expert blames climate change for spate of unusual flooding

Increase in temperatures contributed to recent heavy rainfall, forecaster says

By HOU LIQIANG and LI MENGHAN

The extraordinary flood raging along the Beiji River in southern China, which arrived two months before the usual time for floods of similar intensity, provides new evidence that the climate crisis is looming larger, an expert said.

On Monday, the Shijiaowen hydrological station on the Beiji River in Qingyuan, Guangdong province, reported a flow of 18,100 cubic meters per second, well above its annual average of 2,400 cubic m/s for the same day, according to the Ministry of Water Resources.

A major tributary of the Pearl River, the Beiji originates in Jiangxi province, with most of its length in Guangdong.

The unusual flooding is happening because many areas in southern China are experiencing more precipitation amid higher than normal temperatures.

From Thursday to Monday, 16 counties in Guangdong and the neighboring Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region reported precipitation that exceeded the record amounts seen on the same days in previous years, the ministry said.

It said 36 rivers swelled above their flood warning marks on Sunday and Monday.

The National Meteorological Center said most areas south of the Yangtze River, including Guangdong and Guangxi, received 40 to 80 millimeters of rainfall from April 13 to Monday, which is 40 to 80 percent more than their historical averages for the same period.

Precipitation in some places in Guangdong even reached 250 mm to 450 mm, it said.

It also noted that average temperatures in most regions across the country in the past 10 days were 1 to 3 C higher than usual.

Ma Xuekuan, chief forecaster at the center, said the increase in temperatures was one of the reasons for the recent heavy rainfall south of the Yangtze.

The higher temperatures have led to abundant moisture and high unstable energy in the atmosphere, Ma said, which could cause sudden and very destructive weather that often includes thunderstorms, hail, strong winds and heavy rain.

Ma said the subtropical high pressure that has been stronger than usual this month is another factor to blame, as it has created favorable conditions for the transport of water vapor from the South China Sea and the Bay of Bengal to southern China.

Yin Zhijie, chief hydrological forecaster with the Ministry of Water Resources, pointed to climate change as the hidden force behind the extraordinary flood.

"Based on the flood control situation in recent years, extreme heavy rainfall occurs every year as the trend of rising temperature intensifies with a warming climate," he said. "Downpours and floods are direct results of such extreme weather events."

The National Meteorological Center has warned of more rainfall and severe weather events until May 2.

About 50 to 120 mm of rainfall is forecast to fall in the region from Tuesday to May 2. In some areas, precipitation may exceed 400 mm, the center said. That means they may receive 50 to 80 percent more precipitation than their historical averages for the same period.

Contact the writers at houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

## Space company works on new reusable rocket

By ZHAO LEI in Wuhan  
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Expac Technology in Hubei province has been working on a reusable rocket that will be propelled by liquid oxygen-methane engines.

With a thrust of 70 metric tons, the new engine has undergone ignition tests as well as vertical takeoff and landing tests, according to Zhao Shuang, marketing director at the company, which is a subsidiary of China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp, a major State-owned space contractor.

Compared with traditional types of rocket engines that can function only once, engines consuming liquid oxygen and methane have become popular because they are reusable, cost-efficient and more environmentally friendly.

If everything goes according to plan, the new rocket will make its maiden flight in the near future, said Zhao, who is also deputy manager of CASIC's Kuaizhou 1A rocket team.

CASIC plans to conduct up to 10 launches with its Kuaizhou carrier rocket family this year.

"The Kuaizhou 1A and Kuaizhou 11 rockets are scheduled to carry out eight to 10 launch missions to transport more than 30 satellites to their orbits," Zhao said on Monday at a rocket assembly facility in Wuhan, Hubei province. "We have launched two Kuaizhou 1A rockets this year, and

we plan to perform several Kuaizhou 11 flights this year."

She said the Kuaizhou 1A model has undertaken 26 flights that have placed 56 satellites into space. The type made six launches last year.

The 20-meter Kuaizhou 1A model has a diameter of 1.4 meters and a liftoff weight of about 30 tons. It is capable of sending 200 kilograms of payload into a sun-synchronous orbit, or 300 kg of payload into a low-Earth orbit, according to its designers. It was first flown from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert in November 2017.

The larger Kuaizhou 11 is 25 meters tall and 2.2 meters wide. With a liftoff weight of 78 tons, the rocket is able to place a 1-ton payload into a typical sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 700 kilometers, or a 1.5-ton spacecraft into a low-Earth orbit.

Its first flight took place in July 2020 at the Jiuquan center but failed due to technical abnormalities. The second launch was made in December 2022 at the same site and was successful.

CASIC started developing the Kuaizhou series in 2009 as a low-cost, quick-response product for the commercial space market. The Kuaizhou is the dominant solid-propellant rocket family in China, as opposed to the Long March series which mainly relies on liquid fuel.

## Launch to pave way for remote-sensing network

By ZHAO LEI in Wuhan

China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp, one of the country's major space contractors, plans to launch the first satellite of a massive remote-sensing network in the coming months, a project manager said.

Zhang Chuan, from CASIC Space Engineering Development, a CASIC subsidiary in Beijing leading the project, said the first satellite in the Chutian Remote-Sensing Satellite Network is scheduled to be put into orbit before July.

Remote-sensing satellites are tasked with observing, surveying and measuring objects on Earth, as well as monitoring weather and other atmospheric elements.

"The satellite will carry optical remote-sensing imagers, data processors, atomic oxygen sensors and other mission payloads, and will be used to demonstrate extra-low orbit remote-sensing technologies such as aerodynamic design, atom oxygen-resistance system and satellite-mounted intelligence," Zhang said in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Monday.

"If the first satellite works well, we will launch nine more of the same type to the same orbit before the end of 2025 to verify networking technologies and establish a trial-run system that can respond to users' requests for data in 24 hours."

Starting in 2026, Zhang's company plans to deploy vast groups of Chutian satellites to begin the large-scale in-orbit construction of the system.

Upon its scheduled completion around 2030, the space-based network will have 300 remote-sensing satellites operating in extra-low orbits, which have altitudes of less than 300 kilometers, and will be able to obtain optical pictures, radar data, and hyperspectral and infrared images, Zhang said.

By that time, the network will be capable of mapping and surveying any given place in the world within

“Our satellite network is what they really need — it will provide rapid, reliable acquisition of high-precision data and images.”

Li Yanbin, CASIC employee

15 minutes after receiving users' requests, he said.

The Chutian network will be tasked with providing public services in fields such as emergency response and rescue, and disaster prevention and relief, and will also be used to carry out real-time, high-resolution observation of designated areas and specific targets in accordance with users' requests, Zhang said.

Satellites flying in extra-low orbit are closer to Earth, can produce pictures with higher definition at lower cost, and can transmit them back to Earth in less time. They also weigh less, and their production costs are lower, according to satellite designers at CASIC Space Engineering Development.

Li Yanbin, deputy general manager of the company, said that current remote-sensing products in China are far from sufficient to meet the demands from emergency response and rescue and disaster relief operations, which require timely and low-cost data support.

"Our satellite network is what they really need — it will provide rapid, reliable acquisition of high-precision data and images," he said. "Moreover, its operations will unleash the tremendous potential in businesses related to commercial remote-sensing services and may even break new ground in the space industry."

## Flights and train services resume in Guangdong

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou  
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Airline and railway services gradually resumed across Guangdong province on Tuesday following a respite in the weather, but local authorities have ordered measures to prevent further flooding and geological hazards as a new round of heavy rainfall is predicted from Wednesday night.

Before that, there will be intermittent heavy rainfall across the province, local weather authorities said.

Following an improvement in weather conditions, the emergency response for large-scale flight delays at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, one of the busiest airports in China, was lifted on Tuesday afternoon.

By 2 pm Tuesday, 33 flights had been delayed for more than an hour, airport authorities said.

Rail transport, affected by days of rainstorms in northern Guangdong and elsewhere, has been restored since Monday, with all high-speed trains and ordinary speed trains operating normally.

Heavy rainfall, particularly since Friday in the cities of Shaoguan and Qingyuan, had a significant impact

on railway lines between Guangzhou, the provincial capital, and Beijing, with 305 trains suspended or turned back, China Railway Guangzhou Group said.

In cooperation with local authorities, the railway group facilitated the transfer of more than 34,000 affected passengers along the Guangzhou-Beijing Railway by operating more high-speed special trains and increasing station stops along the way.

The water levels at 14 reservoirs, mostly in the northern part of Guangdong, began declining on Tuesday, although they still exceeded the warning line, the province's water resources authorities said.

The downpours, which began on April 16, caused widespread damage in Guangdong. Houses collapsed, roads were blocked and landslides occurred in the cities of Guangzhou, Zhaoqing, Shaoguan, Heyuan, Qingyuan, Meizhou and Huizhou.

Local authorities have relocated over 107,400 people, with 25,800 urgently resettled. Power supplies in Shaoguan's Jiangwan township, one of the hardest hit areas, had resumed for over 60 percent of residents by Tuesday.

Rescue workers are also racing against time to search for missing



Flooding due to heavy rainfall causes traffic disruptions in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Tuesday. CHEN WEN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

crew members who were washed away after their vessel sank on Monday night in the Xijiang River, one of the tributaries of the Pearl River.

The seagoing vessel, with 11 sailors on board, sank at 11:40 pm on Monday after hitting a protective barrier on a pier at Jiujiang Bridge in Foshan, Guangdong.

Days of continuous rain meant the Xijiang's water level was high and

flowing fast when the accident happened, said Zhan Qianshang, director of the maritime affairs authority in Foshan's Nanhai district.

An initial investigation showed the accident occurred due to improper operations by the crew, Zhan said.

Zheng Caixiong in Guangzhou contributed to the story.

## Mountain village seeks prosperity from herb, honey

By TAN YINGZI in Chongqing  
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During spring, farmers in Huaxi village are busy harvesting *huangjing*, a valuable herb in traditional Chinese medicine that has brought fortune to the formerly poverty-stricken village deep in the mountains of Southwest China.

As tourists flock to the village to experience the rural scenery and

agricultural activities, homestays and restaurants are packed with guests and diners.

Known as Chinese Bee Town, Huaxi, in Chongqing's Shizhu Tujia autonomous county, has found its way to prosperity through rural tourism, planting *huangjing* and beekeeping.

Its per capita disposable income has risen to 20,691 yuan (\$2,950), up from 14,312 yuan in 2019.

The village has also been beautified and upgraded with paved roads, new schools, a community center, a plaza and even a museum featuring Chinese beekeeping and honey making.

Five years ago, President Xi Jinping visited Huaxi to learn about progress in poverty relief and to solve prominent issues in the county during an inspection tour to Chongqing.

Huaxi was a typical example of an impoverished rural area, with

per capita arable land of less than 700 square meters. Eighty-five of the village's 542 families were listed as poverty stricken by the local government.

Xi told the villagers that happiness is achieved through hard work and that people in poverty-stricken regions should make full use of the Party's policies and work hard for a better life.

Encouraged by Xi's words, the vil-

lagers have made full use of the local resources to plant *huangjing* and develop products such as *huangjing* noodles and preserved *huangjing* snacks.

In 2022, *huangjing* noodles from the village were exported to Australia and Singapore.

The village committee estimates that the *huangjing*-related industry will generate 5 million yuan (\$690,000) in revenue for Huaxi this year.

More young and educated villagers are now willing to build careers at home.

Wang Qijushi, who used to work in big cities, returned to Huaxi in 2019 to help promote and sell local produce.

"Now we are working with a company in Hunan province to develop a tea made of *huangjing*," he said.

An art major at university, Wang designed logos for the herb to attract the interest of young customers.

To consolidate the accomplishment of poverty alleviation, Chongqing has focused on developing local agricultural specialties and implemented a campaign to cultivate industry.

## CHINA

Fashion show boosts  
China-France ties

By ZHAO RUINAN  
in Gongqingcheng, Jiangxi  
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Last autumn in Paris, the air was filled with music as models gracefully walked down a runway to showcase over 30 China-chic down jackets. The Parisian fashion community was captivated by the collection.

One of the designers, Wang Ran, created a series of down jackets that were mainly military green and fresh red. Her inspiration came from the history of Gongqingcheng city in Jiangxi province, where China's first down jacket was made.

The 27-year-old is a student designer at the Textile and Garment Industrial Research Institute at Wuhan Textile University, located in Gongqingcheng. The fashion show was the institute's debut on the runway during China-France Week in Paris.

"In the early years, a group of young people from Shanghai came to Gongqingcheng and built the city. They toiled through the winters in their military green coats, and that spirit of pioneering inspired me," she said.

"I hope to bring this spirit of Gongqingcheng to the international stage."

The fashion showcased at China-France Week in Paris was a collaborative effort between teachers and students from the institute.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of China-France diplomatic ties and has also been declared the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism.

"Participating in the fashion show is a great cultural exchange for young Chinese and French people, fostering connections between the two countries," said Wang Qiuhan, head of the institute.

Established in 2021, it aims to enhance the design standards of the down jacket manufacturing industry in Gongqingcheng,

thereby supporting its industrial development. "We have trained several batches of graduate students and are promoting creative and stylish design," Wang said, adding that the China-chic style has become a buzzword in the fashion industry in recent years.

Dai Yanmei, who graduated from the institute last year, designed a series of Chinese-style down jackets inspired by the famous Chinese painting *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*.

She extracted the painting's two main colors — cyan and green — and used embroidery to create waterfalls and mountains on the lapels and belts.

Dai said the inspiration for the clothing also came from a climbing experience on Lushan Mountain in Jiangxi.

"While I was climbing the mountain in April 2022, I received a call from my teacher asking me to design a Chinese-style down jacket. The magnificent and ever-changing shapes of Lushan Mountain reminded me of that famous painting."

Wang Qiuhan said that the institute is planning to mass-produce designs created by students for the market.

"This is also the purpose of Wuhan Textile University, to co-establish a research center in Gongqingcheng with the local government, cultivating talent in fashion design," Wang said.

He and his team are preparing for the 2024 China-France Week, which is scheduled to take place in Paris this autumn.

"Our objective is to infuse additional traditional Chinese cultural elements into our creations, including the exquisite blue-and-white porcelain of Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province," he said.

"By showing the wealth of ceramic culture and classical patterns to a global audience, we aim to breathe new life into ancient Chinese civilization through contemporary and stylish clothing."



A model displays designer Wang Ran's China-chic down jacket creation in Paris last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Cancer patients' family members cook meals for their hospitalized relatives at the "kitchen of love" in Nanchang, Jiangxi province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Cooking convenience  
for cancer patients

Couple invites  
hospital visitors to  
prepare meals for  
ailing loved ones  
in special kitchen

By ZHAO RUINAN in Nanchang  
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Wan Zuocheng, 70, starts his day at 4 am.

The first thing he does after heading downstairs is fire up over a dozen stoves and get his kettle going. He boils a large amount of water every day to help the families of cancer patients with their cooking.

Knowing that patients generally have a poor appetite after chemotherapy, he also prepares many pots of porridge.

His wife, 68-year-old Xiong Gengxiang, handles rice cooking. She cooks more than 10 pots of rice a day. At 9 am, the couple welcomes their first batch of customers and keeps serving until the last customer leaves around 8 or 9 pm.

The special kitchen is located in Qingshan Lake district in Nanchang, East China's Jiangxi province, right next to Jiangxi Cancer Hospital. Over the past two decades, it has become widely known as the "anti-cancer kitchen" for providing inpatients and their families with a convenient place to cook meals.

The couple provides the use of their stoves and kitchenware to the public for a very low price — a mere 1 yuan (\$15 cents).

The kitchen was originally a breakfast stall that Wan and Xiong operated. They used to cook *youtiao*, or deep-fried dough sticks, which were well-known in the neighborhood.

One day in 2003, a young couple walked by and asked if they could use the stove to cook food for their son. The boy, then a teenager, was suffering from bone cancer. He wanted to eat his mother's cooking



A Chinese road sign which reads "kitchen of love" in a street near the kitchen in Nanchang.

while he was hospitalized.

Wan and Xiong let the young mother use their stove for free. Later, they offered the use of the stove and their kitchenware at no charge to other families who wanted to make meals for their hospitalized relatives.

As word spread about the couple's deed, people who had used their kitchen began referring to the stall as "anti-cancer kitchen". Some even started calling it "kitchen of love" that made them feel warm.

To enable more people to cook at the same time, Wan and Xiong purchased more stoves and kitchenware and transformed their little stall into a larger kitchen.

"Everyone who comes here to cook has a family member suffering from cancer," Wan said. "Patients always want to eat meals cooked by their family members, so it (running the kitchen) is a great thing for us."

To cover basic costs, the couple initially charged people only 0.5 yuan to cook, but they eventually increased the price to 1 yuan in 2016.

Fan, a family member of a cancer patient in the hospital, has made more than 50 dishes in the

communal kitchen. "I learned about this place from other families of patients," said Fan, who is from neighboring Jiujiang city and brought his family to Nanchang for treatment. "I made eel soup here, because there's no way you can buy it anywhere else."

There are many people like Fan who use this facility to prepare food for their sick loved ones. The "kitchen of love" hosts more than 10,000 people annually who come to cook meals.

In February 2021, Wan and Xiong received the Touching China Award 2020, which is an annual award that recognizes the country's most inspiring role models in different aspects. Later that year, in November, they were also named "National Moral Models".

When asked about their motivation for doing this, Wan said: "I want to help. I am willing to do it, and I'll keep doing it as long as I can."

Despite the increasing expenses in rent and utility bills, the couple said they will continue to persevere.

"We are not doing it for money. We are doing it because it brings us a sense of fulfillment," Xiong added.

Technology  
bolsters  
tea industry  
in Guizhou

GUIYANG — Strolling through his thriving tea plantation, Chen Shijun was delighted to see the leaves intact, radiating a vibrant green hue.

The daily tea leaf yield of Chen's contracted plantation — which covers over 6.67 hectares in Changgou village, located in Jinsha county, Southwest China's Guizhou province — has exceeded 500 kilograms in recent days. With the current yield, he is projected to earn over 300,000 yuan (\$42,280) this year.

Dubbed the hometown of *gongcha*, or royal tea, in China, Jinsha has a rich heritage of tea cultivation, boasting 2,000 hectares of tea plantations. In recent years, the county has transitioned from traditional tea-producing methods to tech-enabled, large-scale cultivation and production.

Chen is among the area's tea farmers who have benefited from this transition. He took over a plantation from Guizhou Jinsha Gongcha Tea Corp on a contract. The company supplied him with organic fertilizer, mowers, weeders and other farming tools and materials, and also provided pest and disease mitigation services.

According to Zheng Jikui, deputy general manager of Guizhou Jinsha Gongcha Tea, the company manages about 5,467 hectares of tea plantations and has contracted out segmented plots to local farmers. At the same time, the company has consistently aided in honing the farmers' agricultural skills through its collaboration with research institutes.

For instance, the company's partnership with the green pesticide laboratory of Guizhou University has helped promote the widespread use of eco-friendly prevention and control technologies among tea farmers.

In addition to tea cultivation, the processing of tea leaves has also undergone industrialization, thanks to technological innovations. At the company's plant, only a handful of workers are visible on the ground. The entire green tea leaf production process, from preservation to rolling and drying, is carried out by machines based on input parameters such as temperature, humidity and heating degrees.

"The tea leaves we purchase from farmers are of varied shapes and sizes, and classifying them into different grades is the first task," Zheng said.

He explained that the company uses sieving technologies to grade tea leaves, making the screening for top-quality green tea leaves more efficient.

Last year, the company saw an annual output of 1,500 metric tons of processed tea leaves with an output value totaling 85 million yuan, and its products were exported to five Central Asian countries.

Machinery used for tea leaf processing here can be locally manufactured. To extend and enhance the tea industry's supply chain, Jinsha county has invited companies specializing in the manufacturing of tea leaf processing machinery and organic fertilizers to set up plants in the county.

The Guizhou Jinsanye Machinery Manufacturing Co produces a wide array of equipment, including fanning mills, sieving devices and machines used to inhibit the oxidation of tea leaves. "Our company offers tea leaf producers a comprehensive set of equipment required for intelligent production lines, resulting in an output value exceeding 60 million yuan last year," said Hu Zhengjun, general manager of the company.

Currently, Jinsha county is home to over 50 tea processing enterprises, which generated a total tea leaf output value of 1.55 billion yuan last year. At least 58,500 households engaged in tea cultivation saw their income increase by over 10,000 yuan on average, according to Wang Youying, an official with the county's bureau of agriculture and rural affairs.

## Researchers find fossil of ancient Myanmar tapeworm

Researchers have recently discovered an endoparasitic tapeworm fossil from mid-Cretaceous Myanmar amber that is approximately 100 million years old.

The discovery was made by researchers from the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology in Jiangsu province, part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with researchers from Yunnan University, Germany, the United Kingdom and Myanmar.

This study, published in the journal *Geology*, provides evidence not only of the first partial body fossil of a tapeworm, but also, arguably, the most convincing body fossil of a flatworm, thus providing new information on the early evolution of tapeworms.

Tapeworms are a large class within the Platyhelminth phylum, with about 5,000 species described so far. They infect all major groups of vertebrates, including humans and livestock, and are found in nearly all marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems. Their sizes vary, ranging from less than 1 millimeter to more than 30 meters in length.

The order Trypanorhyncha is the most diverse tapeworm group in the marine realm and comprises one of the most ubiquitous and readily recognized parasites of marine fish. Their adults are usually found in the stomachs and intestines of sharks and rays.

Previous studies on the molecular biology estimated that Trypanorhyncha tapeworms probably origi-

nated around the Triassic and Jurassic period boundary about 200 million years ago, but their own fossils have never been found.

"The fossil record of tapeworms is extremely sparse due to their soft tissues and endoparasitic habitats, which greatly hampers our understanding of their early evolution," said Wang Bo, a lead researcher of the study.

However, he added that his team had "reported the first body fossil of a tapeworm".

According to the researchers, this fossil displays unique external and internal features that are most consistent with the characteristics of extant Trypanorhyncha tapeworms.

The study also provides an exceptional example of a marine endo-

parasite trapped in amber, shedding new light on the taphonomy of amber and restoring paleoenvironment.

Previous studies had shown that internal structures could be preserved intact as in extant forms, but such studies all focused on arthropods. By using a high-resolution micro computed tomography, the researchers discovered that the interior of the current fossil is consistent with the Trypanorhyncha tapeworm.

"Our results show that amber can preserve the internal structure of helminths such as tapeworms on geologic time scales," Wang said.

Some trichomes and a scale insect were also preserved in the amber specimen, clearly indicating

a terrestrial or onshore environment at the time of entrapment in the resin. In addition, many grains of sand were evenly distributed throughout the amber, suggesting that the fossil was entombed in a sandy environment.

One possible scenario for the deposition of the tapeworm in the amber is that its elasmobranch host was stranded by a tide or storm, and then was bitten by a higher-level terrestrial predator or scavenger. When the host was ingested by the predator, the tapeworm was pulled away, dislodged from the intestine, and stuck to nearby resin.

"Our study further supports the hypothesis that the amber was probably deposited in a paralic paleoenvironment, and also highlights the importance of amber research in paleoparasitology," Wang said.

XINHUA

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# WORLD

## Russia warns of direct clash with West

New military assistance to Ukraine will not change front-line situation: Kremlin

By REN QI in Moscow  
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A new US package of military aid to Ukraine will not change the situation on the front lines, where Russia has the upper hand, the Kremlin said on Monday.

The United States House of Representatives approved on Saturday more than \$61 billion in new aid for Ukraine, which has been held up in Congress for months, causing Kyiv's forces to run low on ammunition.

"The Russian armed forces are improving their positions at the front. ... The money allocated and the weapons that will be supplied will not change this dynamic,"

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"They will lead to new victims on the Ukrainian side. More Ukrainians will die, Ukraine will suffer greater losses."

He said the US defense industry will be the real beneficiary of the package.

"We also recognize that most of this money will remain in the US. The US will become richer and will receive additional dividends by providing assistance to Ukraine," Peskov said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Washington on Sunday to quickly turn the bill into law and proceed with the actual transfer

of weapons, saying long-range arms and air defense systems were top priorities.

"I think this support will really strengthen the armed forces of Ukraine and we will have a chance for victory," Zelensky said.

The Pentagon said it could get weapons moving to Ukraine within days if the Senate and President Joe Biden give final approval to the aid package. But experts and Ukrainian lawmakers said it could take weeks for the assistance to reach troops, giving Russia more time to degrade Ukrainian defenses, The Associated Press reported.

Western officials and experts agree that artillery rounds, precision-guided missiles and air defenses will change the military outlook for Ukraine.

Ukrainian commanders have com-

plained about dire ammunition shortages since late December. By February, heads of artillery units in several regions said they had less than 10 percent of the supplies they needed as Kyiv rushed to economize shells.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned on Monday that US, British and French military support for Ukraine has pushed the world to the brink of a direct clash between the world's biggest nuclear powers that could end in catastrophe.

### 'Strategic defeat'

Lavrov said the new military aid to Ukraine showed that the US and NATO were obsessed with the idea of inflicting "strategic defeat" on Russia.

Lavrov said the support for Ukraine was putting the US and its allies on the verge of a direct military clash with Russia.

Meanwhile, European Union countries possessing Patriot air defense systems gave no clear signal on Monday whether they might be willing to supply them to Ukraine, which is desperately seeking at least seven of the missile batteries.

Only Germany has come forward with a single Patriot missile battery in answer to Ukraine's latest request.

At a meeting of EU foreign and defense ministers, Dutch Foreign Minister Hanke Bruins Slot said the Netherlands is "looking at every kind of possibility at the moment" and is offering financial support to a German initiative to help Ukraine bolster its air defenses and buy more drones.

Asked why the Netherlands is reluctant to send some of its Patriot systems, Slot said: "We are looking

again if we can deplete our store of what we still have, but that will be difficult."

Patriots take a long time to make — as long as two years, some estimates suggest — so countries are reluctant to give them up and leave themselves exposed. Germany had 12, but it is now supplying three to Ukraine. Poland, which borders Ukraine, has two and needs them for its own defenses, AP said.

More than two years into Russia's special military operation, Moscow claimed Ukraine has lost territory in the eastern part of the country and Russia has ramped up its bombardment of cities and towns behind the front lines amid a slowdown in Western military assistance.

The Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that its forces had taken control of the village of Novomykhailivka, nearly 40 kilometers southwest of Donetsk city, the second advance it has announced in two days.

Agencies contributed to this story.

### Makeshift classroom



Students attend an open-air school in Khost Province, Afghanistan, on Monday. Nonprofit organizations offer free education in rural areas by teaching classes outdoors with portable blackboards. WAKIL KOHSAR / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

### Trump corrupted 2016 poll, prosecutors say

NEW YORK — New York prosecutors said on the first day of Donald Trump's criminal hush money trial that the former president broke the law and corrupted the 2016 election by trying to cover up sexual encounters with an adult film star and a Playboy model, while his defense lawyer said he committed no crime.

Jurors in the historic trial also heard briefly from the prosecution's first witness: former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker, who prosecutors say participated in a "catch and kill" scheme to suppress unflattering stories about Trump and help him get elected.

In the first-ever trial of a former US president, Trump is charged with falsifying business records to cover up a \$130,000 payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels in 2016 to keep quiet about a sexual encounter she said they had 10 years earlier. Trump has pleaded not guilty and denies the encounter took place.

Prosecutors portrayed the payment as a criminal effort to deceive voters at a time when Trump was facing other accusations of crude sexual behavior.

"This was a planned, coordinated, long-running conspiracy to influence the 2016 election, to help Donald Trump get elected through illegal expenditures to silence people who had something bad to say about his behavior," prosecutor Matthew Colangelo said.

"It was election fraud, pure and simple."

Colangelo told the jury that they would hear Trump working out the details of the scheme in recorded conversations and see an extensive paper trail to back up the testimony of witnesses.

Trump's lawyer told the jury that the former president did not commit any crimes and said Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg should not have brought the case. "There's nothing wrong with try-

ing to influence an election. It's called democracy. They put something sinister on this idea, as if it's a crime," Trump's lawyer Todd Blanche said.

With the 2024 election campaign in full swing, Trump now must juggle courtroom appearances and rallies.

He faces a contempt of court hearing on Tuesday as part of his historic criminal trial.

The US Supreme Court will hear arguments Thursday on whether Trump, as a former president, should be immune from criminal prosecution for acts he committed while in office.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of falsifying business records. Prosecutors say he falsified checks and invoices to disguise \$420,000 in payments to his personal lawyer Michael Cohen as legal services.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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## WORLD

## A walk amid war

A child walks past the Al Taqwa Mosque on Monday after it was hit during an Israeli airstrike on the Al Bureij refugee camp located in the Gaza Strip.

ASHRAF AMRA / GETTY IMAGES



## Wisconsin requires Asian history be taught in K-12

By BELINDA ROBINSON  
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Wisconsin has become the latest state to require that Asian American history and Hmong history be taught in schools to highlight the communities' vast contributions to the United States.

Democratic Governor Tony Evers signed AB 232 into law as 2023 Wisconsin Act 266 on April 4. The bill requires that K-12 in public schools teach both Asian American and Hmong history.

Asians make up 3 percent of Wisconsin's population. The state is home to the third-largest Hmong population in the US and the largest Asian ethnic group in the state at 29 percent.

Evers said in a statement: "The Hmong and Asian American communities are a critical part of our state's history, culture, economy, and our future. It's important that we celebrate our shared histories and honor the people who help make Wisconsin the state it is today."

Yee Leng Xiong, executive director of the Hmong American Center Inc, a multifaceted community agency and one of the largest Hmong mutual assistance associations in Wisconsin welcomed the new law.

Xiong told China Daily: "Mandating the teaching of Hmong and Asian American history in K-12 is a pivotal

step in educating future generations about the substantial contributions of these communities.

"By integrating this curriculum, AAPI students will develop a profound sense of belonging, pride and understanding, fostering inclusivity and dispelling misconceptions."

Several other states now require that Asian history be taught in schools. In 2021, Illinois became the first state to mandate Asian history be taught in kindergarten to 12th grade.

A year later, New Jersey, Connecticut and Rhode Island followed. California passed a law in 2021 that made ethnic studies a high school graduation requirement.

Wayne Au, interim dean and professor at the University of Washington Bothell School of Educational Studies, told China Daily that it is "important that several states like Illinois and New Jersey are mandating Asian American history."

Wisconsin already requires that K-12 teaches black American, Hispanic American and Native American history.

Evers believes that by adding Hmong and Asian American history to the curriculum it will "promote greater awareness and understanding among Wisconsin students of the histories, cultures, and traditions of these diverse communities in Wisconsin."

Wisconsin state Representative Francesca Hong and several other

lawmakers championed the law. Hong is the first Asian American legislator in Wisconsin history.

She said in a statement: "Validating the cultural heritage of thousands of Asian American students will build healthier learning environments where students from diverse backgrounds feel represented and valued, ultimately enhancing their educational experience and overall academic success."

"By including information about Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in instructional curriculum, we can provide all Wisconsin students with a well-rounded education that reflects the realities of our multicultural state and nation."

Xiong added: "This initiative underscores that Hmong and Asian history are integral components of American history, showcasing the sacrifices and achievements of these communities."

The Hmong migrated from southern China in the 19th century to the mountainous areas of Laos, Vietnam and Thailand.

During the Vietnam War and the Laotian War, the US considered the Hmong allies. In 1975, the political takeover of Vietnam and Laos led to thousands from the community being killed or imprisoned in those two countries.

By the mid-1970s, many Hmong were moved to Thailand as refugees and then sought asylum in

other countries, including the United States, Australia, France, Canada and Germany.

Those who migrated to the US arrived in the Upper Midwest as political refugees. The last Hmong refugee families arrived in 2004 to 2006.

There were approximately 49,240 Hmong people living in Wisconsin as of 2010. There are an estimated 260,000 Hmong Americans nationwide, according to the Hmong American Center.

Teaching Asian history in US schools entered the spotlight last year after Republican Florida Governor Ron DeSantis mandated it be taught in K-12.

It isn't known exactly what will be taught in Wisconsin, but students will likely learn that Asian history is vast.

That could include the importance of how more than 12,000 Chinese immigrants helped build the Transcontinental Railroad from 1865 to 1869, and how Japanese immigrants worked on sugar plantations in Hawaii.

Or it could include how the Vietnam War led Vietnamese and others to resettle and immigrate to the US after the 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act and also those who arrived after the Refugee Act of 1980.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Japan's military overseas plan raises concerns

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo  
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Japanese scholars and former officials are calling for effective communication between security experts from Japan and China and close exchanges between the governments of the two countries to enhance mutual trust, resolve issues through dialogue, and prevent unforeseen circumstances.

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, or JMSDF, recently said it will dispatch a special security unit to the so-called "Indo-Pacific" region in May or later to help the coast guards of those countries enhance their inspections of suspicious ships. Details regarding the destination of the unit and duration of the mission have not been disclosed.

This will mark the first time a special unit of SDF provides support for foreign agencies.

Ryo Sakai, chief of staff of the JMSDF, emphasized that "while the special security unit possesses a wide range of capabilities, it will provide basic capacity-building support in the coming mission so the dispatch will not cause any concerns or doubts among other countries", said Kazuyuki Hamada, an international political economy scholar.

"However, the current situation lacks sufficient explanation. Sakai also explained that there are no military objectives targeting specific countries, but it is undeniable that this deployment is part of defense cooperation with the United States," Hamada said.

He noted that the Japanese people bear the burden of history in which they once engaged in armed conflicts with neighboring countries in Asia, resulting in significant damage.

## Problematic aspects

"Considering lessons from the past, Japan should calmly analyze the problematic aspects of the United States' expansionist economic and military policies and aim to pioneer initiatives based on the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind," Hamada added.

Ukeru Magosaki, a former senior official with Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Japan is currently carrying out joint military actions with the US and countries allied with the US.

These are beyond Japan's borders and those of its neighbors, he

Therefore, political-level communication channels and close exchanges between governments are indispensable."

Kazuyuki Hamada, an international political economy scholar

said, adding that they are taking place in the context of the US positioning China as its greatest competitor and seeking to cooperate with countries surrounding China to establish a cooperative framework.

"There used to be a cautious era in the Japanese government regarding such moves, but now it seems that there is hardly any framework for such restrictions," Magosaki said.

He added: "In regard to Japan's relationship with China, I believe it is necessary to examine each specific issue that may arise, consider what agreements exist, and assess the potential for resolution through dialogue. Many of these issues are either already resolved or have a high potential for resolution through non-military means."

It is important to explain to the public and ensure they understand that there is no need to resort to military means, Magosaki said.

On Monday, more than 180 navy representatives from 29 countries gathered for the 19th biennial meeting of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, which opened in Qingdao, a port city in East China's Shandong province.

Risk avoidance measures for accidental conflicts were discussed at the meeting, Hamada said. He said he hopes such opportunities will contribute to enhancing mutual trust.

"With effective communication between security experts from Japan and China, it should be entirely possible to prevent unforeseen circumstances," Hamada said.

"Therefore, political-level communication channels and close exchanges between governments are indispensable."

## First high-speed train set to connect Las Vegas, LA

By RENA LI in Los Angeles  
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Construction has commenced on a \$12 billion high-speed passenger rail line connecting Las Vegas and the Los Angeles area, aiming to cut travel time between the two cities by half.

Brightline West, affiliated with a company already running a swift train service in Florida between Miami and Orlando, plans to lay 351 kilometers of new track.

The track will span from a terminal located just south of the Las Vegas Strip to a new facility in Rancho Cucamonga, California. Most of the route will be constructed along the median of Interstate 15, with a station stop planned for San Bernardino County's Victorville area.

US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who was in Las Vegas for the event, said the project aims to create thousands of union jobs, enhance economic opportunities, alleviate road congestion and reduce air pollution.

"People have been dreaming of high-speed rail in America for decades," he said.

Wes Edens, founder and chairman of Brightline Holdings, hailed the occasion as "the foundation for a new industry" and said the project can connect US cities that are too close for air travel to be practical and too far for convenient driving.

Brightline Holdings CEO Mike Reiningier outlined the goal of having the trains running in time for the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028.

The company secured \$6.5 billion in support from President Joe Biden's administration, comprising a \$3 billion grant from federal infrastructure funds and clearance to issue an additional \$2.5 billion in tax-exempt bonds. It also obtained federal authorization in 2020 to sell \$1 billion in similar bonds.

Las Vegas is a favored driving destination for Southern Californians. Authorities anticipate that the train line will alleviate congestion on Interstate 15, where drivers frequently find themselves stuck in long stretches of slow-moving traffic returning from a Las Vegas weekend.

With the Las Vegas area nearing a population of 3 million and attracting

more than 40 million visitors annually, passenger traffic at the city's Harry Reid International Airport reached a record high of 57.6 million people last year. An average of more than 44,000 vehicles per day crossed the California-Nevada state line on Interstate 15 last year, according to Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority data.

Electric-powered trains will cut the four-hour journey across the Mojave Desert to just over two hours, the project outline said. Projections anticipate accommodating 11 million one-way passengers annually, averaging about 30,000 passengers per day, with fares expected to be substantially lower than air travel costs.

The project is the country's inaugural genuine high-speed passenger rail line, boasting speeds of 300 kilometers per hour, akin to Japan's Shinkansen bullet trains. Analysts predict it could serve as a model for similar projects across the United States. Yet, as the country's primary high-speed rail system, it has sparked further discussion on a potential high-speed rail competition between the US and China.

Trains on China's high-speed passenger railways operate at speeds ranging from 250 to 350 kph. The network spans 45,000 km of rail, with plans to expand to 50,000 km by 2025.

In contrast, the US has just 375 route-miles (600 km) of track approved for operation at speeds exceeding 161 kph.

William C. Vantuono, editor-in-chief of railroad industry publication Railway Age, told CNN that many people in the US have no concept of high-speed rail and its value.

"They are hopelessly stuck with a highway and airline mindset," he said.

Rail travel expert Mark Smith told CNN that China has established a high-speed rail network at an unprecedented scale, often surpassing the speed and reliability of domestic flights.

The sheer magnitude of the new stations and the system's remarkable efficiency in transporting large crowds while ensuring reserved seating is "truly impressive," he said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Tesla reports lowest first-quarter profit since 2021

By AI HEPING in New York  
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Tesla reported its lowest first-quarter profit since 2021, as it faces stiffer competition especially from Chinese electric vehicle makers and slower worldwide sales.

The company's net income of \$1.1 billion for the January-to-March period was 55 percent lower from the prior year. Revenue fell 9 percent to \$21.3 billion, reflecting a decline in both vehicle prices and deliveries.

Before the earnings report, Tesla shares had fallen 42 percent in 2024, but closed Tuesday at

\$144.68, up \$2.63.

Despite the earnings miss, analysts said the stock went up in large part because Tesla said it plans to add to its lineup and market a cheaper EV as early as next year, while also investing in robotaxis.

The company's earnings call was CEO Elon Musk's first formal audience with investors since initiating a restructuring that is expected to reduce the company's global workforce by more than 10 percent.

The Texas-based automaker has seen its vehicle sales falling as demand for EVs is cooling, and it faces stiffer competition from other EV makers,

especially in China, the world's largest auto market.

Tesla has confronted competition by cutting prices again in recent days, knocking \$2,000 off several models in the US, which has narrowed profit margins.

The price cuts came after Tesla reported this month that its global vehicle deliveries in the first quarter fell for the first time in nearly four years.

Tesla also has cut prices in a number of its major markets, including China and Germany, as it deals with falling sales and an intensifying price war for electric vehicles in China.

The Wall Street Journal reported Monday that Tesla is engaged in a price war in China with hybrid specialist Li Auto, undercutting each other as sales of electric and hybrid vehicles surpassed those of traditional cars for the first time.

The price cuts by both companies came as new data showed that, for the first time, China sold more electric and hybrid cars than internal-combustion vehicles. Retail sales of new energy cars, which include EVs and plug-in hybrids, made up 50.4 percent of all passenger-vehicle sales in the first two weeks of April, according to the China Passenger Car Association.



Tesla Model 3 vehicles are seen for sale at a Tesla facility in Fremont, California, on May 23. CARLOS BARRIA / REUTERS

## BUSINESS

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# Goldman Sachs upbeat on A shares

Analysts see 19-40% upside potential in bull case and 'blue-sky' scenarios

By ZHOU LANXU  
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Goldman Sachs, a global investment banking, securities and investment management firm, sees double-digit growth potential in valuations of China's A shares, given the country's recently released nine measures to promote the high-quality development of the capital market.

Without indicating any timeframe, Goldman Sachs analysts on Tuesday projected certain upbeat scenarios for the A-share market. Citing the policy-driven upside potential as well as other positives like stabilizing economic growth and attractive current valuations, the investment bank said it remains overweight on A shares.

Kinger Lau, chief China equity strategist at Goldman Sachs, said, "We sense that international investor sentiment, risk appetite and interest are improving regarding Chinese equity markets."

This trend is partly attributable to China's better-than-expected economic performance in the first quarter, Lau said, which has led Goldman Sachs to raise its 2024 full-year growth forecast for China from 4.7 percent to 5 percent.

Goldman Sachs' overweight view on the A-share market is related to the "National Team" buying Chinese equities, solid fourth-quarter earnings results, a valuation level remaining close to cycle troughs and light positioning from investors globally, Lau said.

The guideline released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, on April 12 outlined nine new measures to boost the high-quality development of the capital market, and has added another layer of hope, he said.

The guideline was the third such document issued by the State Council on the country's capital market in the past two decades, demanding strengthened oversight over listed companies, including on cash dividends, strict regulation of entry into the capital market and intensified delisting regulations.

At a State Council study session on Monday that focused on further reforms of the capital market for its steady and healthy development, Premier Li Qiang stressed that it is necessary to take the implementation of the guideline as an opportunity to boost the reform and development of the capital market.

A Goldman Sachs report released

on Tuesday shows that A shares could rise 19 percent if they could narrow the gaps with international averages along the dimensions of corporate governance standards, long-term investor ownership and shareholder returns, including dividends and buybacks.

In a more aggressive scenario where the Chinese equity market can match global leaders on those dimensions, there is as much as nearly 40 percent valuation upside potential for A shares, which the report referred to as a "blue-sky" scenario.

"What we're trying to say here is that even without the fundamental macro growth situation getting a lot better, but by just doing the right policy, there's still a lot of value to be unlocked from the stock market," Lau said.

With the nine measures to be gradually implemented, the investment theme of shareholder returns — which refers to investing in A-share companies with strong dividend payouts and share buybacks — would particularly present investment opportunities, Lau said.

Another leading global investment bank UBS has upgraded the MSCI China Index to overweight following early signs of pickup in consumption.

However, Lau cautioned against the risk of potential worsening US-China trade frictions. "As we get into the (US) election events, we think there could be more noise and more policy risks from the US specifically targeting China, so that could be a key avenue for volatility for the Chinese assets."

Amid pressures on global equities due to worries about geopolitical tensions and the potential of the US Federal Reserve delaying rate cuts, China's key A-share market index hovered around 3,000 points this month, shedding 0.74 percent to close at 3021.98 points on Tuesday.

"The reality is that the political environment is one where there will be some pushback against Chinese imports," said Timothy Moe, Goldman Sachs' chief Asia-Pacific regional equity strategist and co-head of macro research in Asia.

This has made it important for China to stimulate domestic consumption to achieve stable economic growth, Moe said.

Nevertheless, it is unfair to blame the Chinese government's support as the sole reason behind the current disputes surrounding overcapacity and the world needs to understand the causes of the issue better, he added.



An exhibitor promotes sales of Pu'er tea via livestreaming during an expo in Kunming, Yunnan province last week. LIN BIFENG / XINHUA

## E-commerce bolsters consumption

By FAN FEIFEI  
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China's burgeoning e-commerce sector has played a vital role in bolstering the recovery of consumption, improving people's livelihoods and shoring up the economy as an increasing number of shoppers opt for high-quality and diversified products via online marketplaces, experts said.

Their comments came as this year marks the 30th anniversary of China's full access to the internet, which has profoundly transformed traditional economic models, accelerated social development, and revolutionized the way people work and live.

E-commerce was a term largely unheard of two decades ago. But today it is one of the pillars of the Chinese economy, industry insiders said, while highlighting that online shopping is injecting new impetus into China's consumption, which serves as the main driving force boosting economic growth.

Major domestic e-commerce platforms such as Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, JD and PDD Holdings that connect countless business owners with hundreds of millions of customers looking for cost-effective deals have already changed the traditional retail landscape of the world's second-largest economy.

Li Zhongliang, a villager from Donghai county in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, sold crystal products worth thousands of dollars to consumers in the United Kingdom during a four-hour livestreaming session on an online shopping platform.

Like Li, countless other residents in Donghai have seen sales surge via livestreaming e-commerce. Sales from online e-commerce platforms in the county surpassed 28 billion yuan (\$3.9 billion) in 2021, representing China's achievements in internet construction and the fast-developing online retail sector.

According to a report from market consultancy iResearch, the market scale of China's e-commerce segment based on livestreaming reached 4.9 trillion yuan in 2023, up 35.2 percent year-on-year.

The development of Taobao villages, which refer to a cluster of retailers within an administrative village where residents have embraced e-commerce primarily by using Alibaba's Taobao online marketplace, has helped lift many Chinese rural areas out of poverty by promoting agricultural products and other local specialties online.

Mo Daiqing, a senior analyst at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy, emphasized the importance of the online retail segment in boosting consumption, expanding employment and improving people's livelihoods, thus helping enhance resilience of the real economy.

E-commerce had been regarded as a supplement to brick-and-mortar business until a promotional event called Singles Day shopping carnival turbocharged its stellar rise. Initiated by Alibaba in 2009, the Double 11 or 11-11 promotional gala each November has morphed into the world's biggest online shopping event.

Both Alibaba and JD have placed greater emphasis on empowering

brands and small and medium-sized merchants by helping the latter achieve digitalized operations, as well as providing cost-effective products to capture price-sensitive consumers.

"The Singles Day online shopping extravaganza is pivotal to stimulating consumers' purchasing appetites and promoting the recovery of consumption," said Wang Yun, a researcher at the Academy of Macroeconomic Research affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission.

Wang said online shopping symbolizes new retail, and has been playing a significant part in reducing transaction links and information asymmetry, enhancing transaction efficiency of commodities, improving the consumer shopping experience and fostering high-quality economic growth.

China's retail sales, a major indicator of the country's consumption strength, climbed 4.7 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

Online retail sales jumped 12.4 percent year-on-year to 3.3 trillion yuan during the January-March period, with online retail sales of physical goods expanding 11.6 percent and accounting for 23.3 percent of the total retail sales.

To meet consumers' growing demand for a wide range of products and nurture new consumption growth points, e-commerce platforms have also accelerated steps to launch new and customized products by leveraging next-generation information technologies like 5G, artificial intelligence and big data.

### Briefly

#### PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281.5 million) in seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Tuesday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's

Bank of China said in a statement.

#### Retail sector seen more value centric

Pursuing enhanced value has become a new trend in China's retail sector, according to a report by NIQ, an international consumer

intelligence company. Offering more attractive value at reasonable prices is becoming more important for enterprises in the industry, according to the report. However, more reasonable consumption does not mean settling for quality compromises, it added.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Digital field seen vital to Portuguese business ties

By LIU YIFAN in Macao  
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China and Portuguese-speaking countries and regions will explore more growth opportunities in fields like the green economy and digital transformation of industries and organizations through enhanced cooperation, China's commerce officials said on Tuesday.

They made the remarks at the Conference of Entrepreneurs, a supporting event of the sixth Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao).

Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, and Timor-Leste joined the forum.

With a population of more than 200 million and spanning four continents, Portuguese-speaking countries have been presenting a bright future for cooperation.

According to official figures, total trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries exceeded \$220 billion last year, marking a twentyfold growth since 2003.

Delivering her opening speech, China's Vice-Minister of Commerce Guo Tingting said the country is willing to cooperate with Portuguese-speaking countries to embark on the path of high-quality development with emphasis on ecological and green development, contributing to the clean energy sector and working toward building a sustainable future.

Guo said China is committed to promoting exchanges in areas like marine renewable energy, marine resource conservation and sustainable utilization.

Describing digitalization as a crucial force in restructuring global resources and reshaping the global economic landscape, Guo said the country is also willing to strengthen collaboration with Portuguese-speaking countries in e-commerce and jointly promote the digital development of trade and investment.

Guo said China will actively support the participation of enterprises from Portuguese-speaking countries in major exhibitions and promote important economic and trade promotion activities.

Efforts will be made to continuously enhance the scale and quality of trade, strengthen industrial connectivity and promote the building of economic and trade cooperation zones.

Themed "Promoting the New Trends of Digital Transformation and Sharing the New Opportunities Presented by Green Development", the Conference of Entrepreneurs also featured on-site arrangements, including two-themed seminars and business matchmaking sessions. Representatives from China and all nine countries where Portuguese is an official language attended the conference.

Zhang Shaogang, vice-chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, said digital transformation and the green economy will be key areas of economic and trade cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries in the next phase.

He said China is willing to share its experience in the development of the digital economy with Portuguese-speaking countries and promote the deep integration of digital technologies like big data and artificial intelligence with the real economy.

The country will also strengthen the exchange of technology and experience to grow the green economy, which involves electric vehicles and renewable energy.

Zhang said that businesses from Portuguese-speaking countries should seize the emerging opportunities brought by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone.

Lei Wai-nong, Macao Special Administrative Region's secretary for economy and finance, said the SAR's economic diversification plan will benefit companies from the country and Portuguese-speaking countries.

## Bookings spurt for May Day travel peak

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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China's tourism sector is seeing another booking frenzy ahead of the five-day May Day holiday, with long-haul domestic trips and outbound tours being particularly sought by visitors, industry players said.

The number of flyers is expected to reach a new high during the holiday period from May 1 to May 5.

Economy-class flight tickets on several popular routes are sold out and only business-class tickets are still available, said Beijing-based travel agency Qunar.

The average price of a domestic flight ticket during the holiday was 990 yuan (\$136.6), slightly higher than the rates recorded in the same period last year and about 60 percent more than the off-season price in March, according to Qunar.

"Demand for travel during the

May Day holiday this year has been strong, and there are insufficient flight tickets on some routes. We suggest that passengers wishing to travel purchase their flight tickets as soon as possible," said Xiao Peng, a researcher with the big data research institute of Qunar.

The travel peak is expected to commence as early as Saturday, as some workers may take three days off, from April 28 to 30, to extend that into an eight-day-long holiday period.

Bookings of packaged tourism products such as group tours, self-driving tours and cruise voyages have been climbing, said Tuniu, a Nanjing, Jiangsu province-based online travel agency.

Shanghai; Beijing; Sanya, Hainan province; Nanjing, Jiangsu province; and Guangzhou, Guangdong province are among the popular tourist destinations.

Other cities with a unique cultural charm, trendy style, seaside scenery and distinctive cuisine have also attracted bookings from many young travelers, Tuniu said.

"Japan, the Maldives, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and New Zealand have witnessed robust bookings. Some European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Germany, France and Switzerland are also hot picks by Chinese travelers," said Qi Chunguang, vice-president of Tuniu.

The search volumes for flight tickets have also increased significantly.

For instance, on April 16, the search volume surged 130 percent over the level of April 15, according to VariFlight, an aviation data and solution services provider.

Tokyo, Osaka, Seoul, and Singapore are hot outbound tour destinations as far as flight searches go. Japan saw the highest search vol-



Passengers seen at the international airport of Wuhan, Hubei province. WU ZHIZUN / XINHUA

umes. With the depreciation of the Japanese yen, it is forecast that Japan as a tourist destination will become even more popular, VariFlight said.

As of April 16, the number of passenger flights connecting China and

Japan had recovered to more than 70 percent of the level seen during the pre-COVID period of 2019.

The number of flights connecting China and Singapore has approached close to the 2019 level, VariFlight found.

# BUSINESS



A visitor takes photos of LEGO brick artwork during the sixth China International Import Expo in November. ZHANG HENGWEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## LEGO expanding experience-centered stores in nation

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Amid surging enthusiasm for out-of-home novel and leisure activities, LEGO, a global leader in toy manufacturing, is strategically expanding its presence by introducing more experience-centered stores in China to captivate more new consumers and forge deeper connections.

On Saturday, the Danish firm unveiled in Joy City shopping center in Xidan, Beijing, its third beacon store in the country, following earlier openings in Changsha, Hunan province and Xi'an, Shaanxi province, last year.

The store is designed to offer an immersive and culturally resonant playspace and amusement destination to build connections with visitors from the minute they step into the elevator. The lift and surrounding product display spaces in the store are adorned with ancient palace-themed decor, creating an inviting vibe for the immersive world of play.

The new store's decor and vibe are fashioned after the corners of

ancient palaces and modern urban street views in the Chinese capital. Moreover, 3D brick figures are built depicting iconic cultural scenes inseparable from Beijing. For example, in one LEGO structure an elderly man strolls with a bird perched on his hand, reminiscent of the tradition of taking pet birds to parks in old times, and another depicts a child holding a sugary fruit treat.

Xu Jie, vice-president of LEGO China, who oversees offline retail business, said, "These beacon stores serve as hubs for fostering connections with consumers and have often hosted themed gatherings and events to attract more visitors."

Paul Huang, general manager of LEGO China, said the company has been exploring how to blend the local culture with personalized experiences to become the go-to play destination in local communities.

With eight flagship stores in the country and more than 460 certified stores in over 120 cities, Huang said they are expanding into more cities

to tap into the market's vast potential. The company has built more than 40 percent of its retail stores in cities smaller than third-tier ones.

While the brand enjoys strong recognition in first-tier and coastal cities in China, the company has also become increasingly popular among families and children in smaller urban areas.

"Still, more than 100 cities are untapped for LEGO, prompting more concerted efforts to bring LEGO play closer to home for more children," Huang said.

He added the company has confidence in the Chinese market, buoyed by its sizable young population and middle-income families.

Its confidence is further bolstered by its continuous investment in digital hubs, expansion of production capacities in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, and the upcoming opening of Legoland Shanghai.

As for digital options, the company has invested in a digital hub and a membership system that provides services and benefits to LEGO players, including the latest product

launches and reservations for themed activities, said Huang.

In 2023, the toy market in China saw retail sales up slightly compared to the previous year, with the offline toy market showing a significant recovery.

Department stores and shopping centers showed a significant growth trend. Total retail sales of toys — excluding trendy and collectible varieties — reached 90.69 billion yuan (\$12.52 billion), up 2.7 percent, said the China Toy & Juvenile Products Association.

Despite a challenging year for the global toy industry, LEGO Group posted a 2 percent growth in revenue and a 4 percent increase in consumer product sales in fiscal year 2023 compared with a year earlier, with plans to add 40 new stores in China for long-term growth in the market.

CEO Niels B. Christiansen believes there is significant long-term potential for LEGO in China. "We are on the growth journey in China and are hoping and expecting to get back to growth," he said.

## High-speed network opens in N. China

Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei facility relies on famed Tianhe supercomputer

By YANG CHENG in Tianjin  
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A Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei computability network, powered by China's high-speed Tianhe Supercomputer, was launched in Tianjin on Tuesday.

Initial investment in the network is set to reach 500 million yuan (\$69 million) this year, with expectations for it to surge to 1 billion yuan next year, as announced at the 2024 Tianhe SuperComputability Ecology Conference by the National SuperComputer Center in Tianjin.

Meng Xiangfei, Party secretary of the center, said, "The network, funded by various organizations and companies, aims to enhance the region's presence in the country's computability network and facilitate multilevel coordination among regional governments and companies."

During the conference, a partnership signing ceremony took place among participating organizations and companies.

"Leveraging the power of the Tianhe Supercomputer, this initiative is poised to elevate computing capabilities in the region and extend its impact to other areas," Meng said.

The National SuperComputer Center in Tianjin is renowned for developing and deploying China's top-ranking supercomputers, including the world-renowned Tianhe-1 and the Tianhe new generation.

The center has revealed ambitious targets to achieve computing capabilities ranging from 200 quintillion to 300 quintillion petaflops, resulting in a supercomputing capacity exceeding 100 quintillion calculations per second, an intelligent computing capacity surpassing 100 quintillion calculations per second, and a data management capacity of 100 quintillion bytes per second.

The center signifies China's commitment to self-reliance and advancement in supercomputing technology, and is currently the

Leveraging the power of the Tianhe Supercomputer, this initiative is poised to elevate computing capabilities in the region and extend its impact to other areas."

Meng Xiangfei, Party secretary of the National SuperComputer Center

most widely applied, highest performing and largest output supercomputing center in the country.

Qian Depei, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and head of the National Supercomputing Network Team, said, "Tianhe represents the country's continuous innovation capability, and we urge its broader applications in various fields across China."

In alignment with Qian's vision, a partnership was established between Tianhe and over 30 State-owned enterprises, and the formation of a generative intelligence innovation conglomerate was inaugurated during the conference.

Zhu Ruijun, deputy chief engineer at China ENFI Engineering Co Ltd, said: "With the support of Tianhe, we are enhancing our quality and productivity. It enables us to explore minerals at depths of 2,000-3,000 meters with safety, precision and efficiency."

Yu Long, chief engineer at the Research Academy of Offshore Oil Engineering Co Ltd, based in Tianjin, said, "Our company has been collaborating with Tianhe since 2016, and we will continue our partnership in advancing computing capabilities for deeper sea exploration, undersea pipeline development, human resources training and research."

## Liaoning gains more attention from foreign investors

By LIU YUKUN in Beijing  
and WU YONG in Shenyang

Northeast China's Liaoning province is on a fast track to solidifying its status as an investment hub by drawing growing attention from a number of foreign investors bullish on its market potential.

Through implementing a series of policies conducive to foreign investment and bringing forth more opportunities for foreign companies, the province has become home to the commercial presence of industry leaders such as South Korea's SK Group, France's Michelin and BMW Brilliance Automotive — a joint venture between Germany's BMW Group and Brilliance China Automotive Holdings Ltd.

By the end of 2023, Liaoning had accumulated a total of \$245.5 billion in foreign investment. The province's goods have been exported to over 200 countries and regions



Ahn Tae Min

worldwide, among which the export of electric passenger cars, lithium batteries and solar cells all enjoyed substantial year-on-year surges.

Ahn Tae Min, chairman of CJ (Shenyang) Biotech Co Ltd — South Korean firm CJ Group's China branch in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning — expressed optimism about the city's favorable investment environment. He highlighted the company's rapid expansion in Liaoning in recent years, and expressed strong confidence in the Chinese market.

CJ (Shenyang) Biotech produces food additive nucleotides and feed additive amino acids using corn as a raw material through bio-fermentation technology. CJ Group is a Fortune Global 500 firm founded in 1953.

CJ (Shenyang) Biotech, established in 2011, has become CJ Group's largest overseas investment project with an initial investment of 3 billion yuan (\$414 million).

"Liaoning enjoys superior geographical advantages and abundant grain resources. The province provides a favorable business environment with solid industrial foundations and comprehensive industrial categories. In addition, it boasts abundant scientific and educational resources, with numerous renowned universities, research institutions and a large number of high-quality industrial workers. These advantages provide ample motivation and confidence for enterprises to achieve high-quality development," Ahn said.

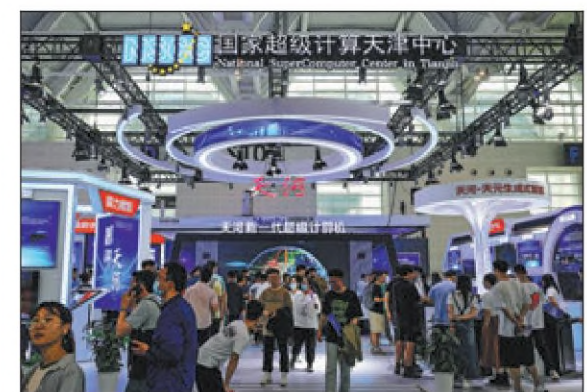
Wu Jun, Party secretary of Shenyang New Area in Shenyang, said the presence of leading agricultural enterprises like Wellhope has driven

investment and development in the agricultural sector.

"Meanwhile, we have formulated a series of investment attraction policies and established a platform for enterprise innovation and technological empowerment, leveraging high-quality resources from institutions such as Shenyang Agricultural University to foster high-quality development," Wu said.

Ahn said: "CJ will further integrate our own advantages with Liaoning's geographical advantages to contribute to the province's high-quality development and realize the high-quality development of our company. At the same time, we will actively encourage South Korean entrepreneurs to pay attention to Liaoning and invest in Liaoning, seizing opportunities for new growth points."

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Visitors gather at the booth of the National SuperComputer Center in Tianjin in May 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Innovation highlighted for petrochemicals sector

By ZHENG XIN  
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Accelerating energy transformation and innovation is crucial for achieving high-quality development in China's petroleum and chemicals industry, and refiners should embrace breakthrough initiatives to better navigate the transition, said industry insiders.

"The petrochemical industry must step up supply-side structural reforms while focusing on the large domestic market to better prepare itself against external uncertainties," said Li Shousheng, chairman of the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Association.

The petroleum and chemical industry, both major consumers of energy and significant emitters of

carbon dioxide, faces challenges as well as opportunities in transitioning toward green and low-carbon practices, Li said during the 2024 Petrochemical Industry Development Conference held in Beijing on Tuesday.

Enhancing innovation capability is also fundamental to optimizing product and industrial structures, especially after the sector saw revenue and profit declines last year, he said.

The petrochemical sector's annual operating income fell 20.5 percent year-on-year to 15.95 trillion yuan (\$2.2 trillion) in 2023, while total profits were also down 20.5 percent year-on-year to 873.36 billion yuan, official data showed.

The industry has made significant advancements in technical

innovation during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), he said.

These include the drilling of a super-deep borehole in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region that has reached 10,000 meters, a breakthrough in the country's deep-earth exploration, as well as China's independently designed and built deep-water submarine jacket platform, the largest of its kind in Asia.

However, considerable gaps still need to be filled, Li added.

"In key areas of the national economic strategy, for example, such as high-end specialty chemicals, new environmental protection technologies, and life pharmaceutical technologies, there remains a significant disparity compared to advanced

countries and the industry needs to significantly accelerate and deepen institutional reforms to bridge these gaps," he said.

The chemical industry faces structural shortages in high-end products represented by new chemical materials and high-end fine chemicals. Some key chemical markets lack competitiveness, and there is insufficient reserve of forward-looking technologies and leading products for the future, he said.

While the country's goals of achieving carbon neutrality before 2060 will exert pressure on its refinery sector, energy transition efforts will also broaden opportunities for those who capture growing demand for petrochemicals and are willing to adjust and modify their produc-

tion modes, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

China's pursuit of carbon neutrality will bring numerous opportunities to refiners that are willing and prepared to evolve, Lin said.

While the carbon peak and neutrality goals might bring many refiners difficulties, it is believed several of those who succeed in seizing opportunities will thrive amid the challenges, he said.

According to the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Association, focused investment also serves as a crucial growth factor for both individual enterprises and entire industries looking toward the future.

In 2022, the industry witnessed a remarkable increase in investment capacity, with total investment reaching 2.6 trillion yuan, a 14.8 percent growth compared to 2.3 trillion yuan in 2021.

Allocating capital effectively in

high-end, differentiated and green chemistry domains, as well as in empowering areas such as intelligent systems, big data and frontier technologies, including investments in overseas markets participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, poses a significant challenge to the petrochemical industry's precision investment capabilities, said Li.

Fu Xiangsheng, vice-president of the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Association, said a significant number of investments has been geared toward expanding scale and increasing output in the past few years, with a limited proportion of these allocated to structural optimization and high-end advancements.

The disproportionate focus on sheer scale has led to overcapacity, and reevaluation of strategies is needed to achieve a more balanced and sustainable industry landscape, he said.

# CHINA MARVELS

## World's biggest wheeled crane breaks barriers

The XCA4000 completes its first lift in Hebei in March, **Liu Yukun** reports



**A**t a 200-megawatt wind farm in Hengshui, Hebei province, the world's largest tonnage wheeled crane XCA4000 completed its first lift in March, lifting a 130-metric-ton nacelle, a 40-ton hub and three 95-meter-long blades weighing 28 tons each, to a height of 162 meters for assembly on the tower.

With a 4,000-ton lifting capacity, the XCA4000 marked the seventh time that Xuzhou Construction Machinery Group, the machine's builder, broke the global record for the largest wheeled crane. The launch of the XCA4000 is significant for the global wind power equipment manufacturing industry as turbines today increasingly adopt larger and heavier models, which require higher lifting capacities and heights while ensuring safety.

The XCA4000 is capable of hoisting 230 tons of equipment to a height of 170 meters. With the adoption of advanced technologies, the XCA4000 also solves problems that were commonly seen in cranes such as reduced lifting performance at high altitudes and limited space beneath turbine lifting hooks, thus enabling a 20-30 percent reduction in time required to install wind turbines and signifi-

cantly enhancing efficiency in wind power construction projects. Moreover, the XCA4000 is equipped with a self-developed control system and technologies to ensure safety during operation.

With more than a dozen sensors distributed in the facility, it is able to detect and eliminate potential safety hazards in real time.

According to XCMG, over the past five years, the company has made multiple breakthroughs in the field of high-end manufacturing, including increasing the lifting capacity of the world's largest all-terrain cranes from 1,200 tons to 4,000 tons, expanding the maximum installation height of wind turbines from 100 meters to 170 meters, and producing a series of China's largest equipment in terms of capacity, including 700-ton hydraulic excavators and 35-ton loaders.

Shan Zenghai, chief engineer at XCMG, said the company's all-terrain cranes have undergone technological upgrades and attained a global leading level. The domestic content ratio of the machines has increased from 71 percent to 100 percent, with all key components now made in China.

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### WORLD'S HEAVIEST WHEELED CRANE

Mega-construction projects such as gigantic wind turbines require special equipment to assemble. To achieve this, impressive machines have been designed such as the XCMG XCA4000, the heaviest wheeled crane in the world, which has been specifically designed for the lifting of wind turbines.

#### Super lifting arm

The technology of pulling and supporting the boom head of a super long crane reduces the load on the boom head of the super long boom by more than 20%.

Counterweight

The 5-section boom reaches 85 meters

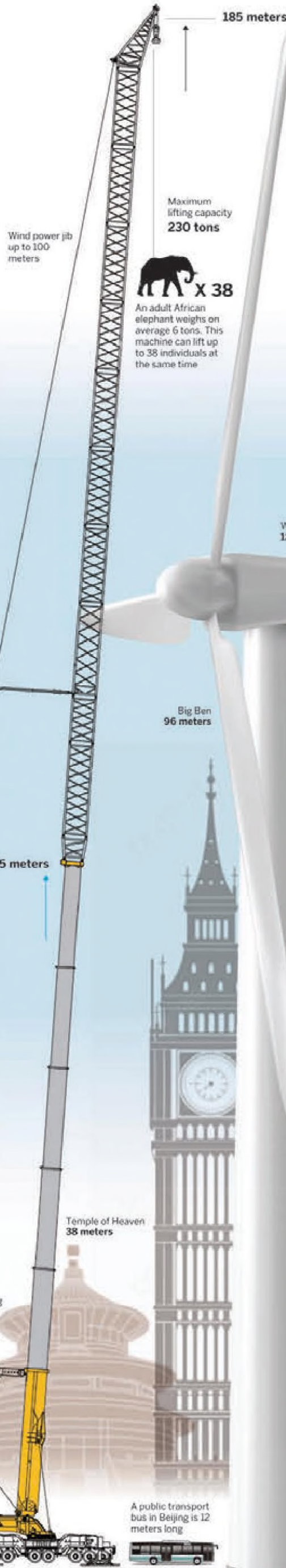
Temple of Heaven 38 meters

Double winch synchronous lifting technology, increasing work efficiency by more than 30%

Telescoping cylinder

A public transport bus in Beijing is 12 meters long

Source: XCMG



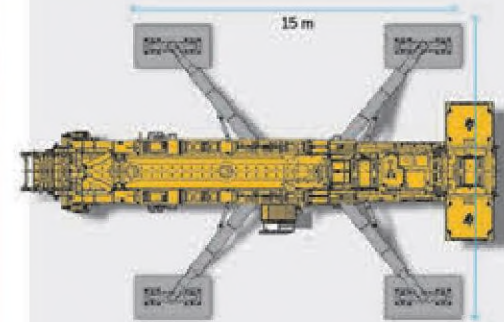
### THE LARGEST TONNAGE WHEELED CRANE

With the employment of this large crane, designed specifically for lifting wind turbines, a wind turbine nacelle weighing 135 tons can now be effectively installed in a 30-minute operating window.



#### X-shaped outriggers

Its four outriggers are arranged in an X-shaped, four-point bracket, with a fully extended stabilizer wingspan of 15 x 15 meters



29.7 meters long

#### Counterweight

Maximum weight of the counterweight is 340 tons

Each slab weight is 10 tons



### ASSEMBLING A WIND TOWER

First challenge achieved was to lift a 95-meter-long wind turbine blade



XCA4000 has a remote human-computer interaction system

INFOGRAPHIC BY JORGE CORTES; PAGE EDITING BY LI JIAYING / CHINA DAILY; MACHINERY ILLUSTRATIONS PROVIDED BY XCMG

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Cold water can't dampen significance of discussions among estranged parties

The way in which some Western media outlets have reported on the 19th Western Pacific Naval Symposium hosted by China in Qingdao, Shandong province, from Sunday to Wednesday only exposes that they have missed the point.

They have tried to portray the gathering of high-level delegations from 29 countries as being merely an occasion for Beijing to attempt to defend itself against the allegations of the West, which accuses it of making "dangerous, irresponsible, bullying, provocative and coercive" moves targeting its smaller neighbors in the South and East China seas.

These reports originate from the media outlets' biased view that Beijing is the root cause of the security threats in the region. They are not only a deliberate distortion of the truth; more importantly, they fail to convey the practical significance of the forum.

China has nothing to feel sorry about when it comes to defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity and core interests in the Asia-Pacific, and it has no need to defend its actions to that effect.

The real value of the symposium is that it provides a rare platform for major countries related to not only the security of the Asia-Pacific, but also the rest of the world, to have face-to-face communications on core issues of global concern.

Notably, many senior representatives of the maritime defense departments of different countries are attending the symposium at the invitation of China, including US Navy Pacific Fleet Commander Stephen Koehler and Acting Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy Aleksandr Alekseyevich Moiseyev. Australia, France, India and the United Kingdom have also sent delegations to the forum.

That means representatives of not only the US-led "Indo-Pacific" geopolitical cliques such as the Quad and AUKUS, but also some North Atlantic Treaty Organization member states are participating in the meeting.

The regional maritime security forum should therefore be welcomed given the long-time lack of security communications, if not estrangement, among some of the countries attending the gathering, against the backdrop of the US' "Indo-Pacific" strategy, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Middle East crisis.

According to the forum agenda, delegates to the meeting are expected to review activities taking place under the symposium's framework since its 18th biennial meeting, set the future agenda, and discuss and vote on issues such as the Western Pacific Naval Symposium Business Charter, the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, and unmanned systems. All of these contribute to laying a strong foundation for the formation of an effective institutional mechanism to safeguard regional peace, avoid any misjudgment and manage risks.

As US Pacific Fleet Commander Stephen Koehler told the media, the symposium is a rare opportunity for countries with apparently "opposing regional interests" to exchange views.

Although details of most of these exchanges between the key stakeholders remain unknown, their presence at the forum, and the forum's agenda, which reportedly has been widely welcomed by the majority of the participants, should serve to prove that the participating countries are open to talks and face-to-face communications on key issues of common concern.

Instead of misportraying the Qingdao naval symposium, the Western media has enough reasons to report on it accurately. In a volatile world that has not seen such a meaningful and pragmatic solution-oriented multilateral gathering at the executive level for so long, the collective willingness displayed by the participating countries to exchange views and seek common ground to ease regional tensions and explore ways to resolve some hotspot issues is a positive and welcome sign.

China deserves credit for inviting, hosting and encouraging these otherwise not-talking-with-each-other guests to engage in constructive discussions about meaningful topics, avoiding the event from becoming another bickering shop between different blocs.

That is why the symposium is being keenly followed by countries far beyond the Asia-Pacific, despite the efforts of some Western media to belittle it.

## People-to-people exchanges key to ties

The Doolittle Raid in World War II has been, and always will be remembered as a testament to enduring friendship between China and the United States.

On April 18, 1942, just months after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the US sent 16 B-25 bombers on an air raid to strike Japan's main islands. After bombing Tokyo and other Japanese cities, Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle and his fellow pilots, facing fuel shortages and bad weather, were forced to parachute over the eastern parts of China. Local Chinese launched a massive rescue operation, and helped 64 of the 80 US pilots escape to safety, many of whom found refuge in Quzhou, Zhejiang province.

The Chinese people paid a heavy price for their kindness and bravery: some 250,000 civilians were killed by Japanese troops seeking revenge for the raid.

Last week, descendants of the Doolittle Raiders visited Quzhou from Tuesday to Thursday to commemorate the rescue operation and express their gratitude to the Chinese people. Actually, a strong bond has been forged between the Doolittle Raid survivors, their descendants and the Chinese people. The Doolittle Raid Memorial Hall, which opened in Quzhou in 2018, has served as "a witness to the hardships endured by our ancestors and a symbol of cooperation and friendship between China and the US", as Jeff Thatcher, the son of a rescued US pilot, said at the opening ceremony.

Such people-to-people exchanges are the foundation for China-US relations, and cement the bond of friendship between the two countries, which has withstood various tests over the years to be passed from generation to generation.

It is their shared belief in the importance of that bond that prompted the top leaders of the two countries to reach a consensus during their summit in San Francisco last November that they will work out more measures to promote people-to-people exchanges, including increasing direct passenger flights, holding a high-level dialogue on tourism, and streamlining visa application procedures.

The Chinese leader also announced a program for 50,000 US youths to visit China over the next five years for exchanges and study, saying the future of the Sino-US relationship depends on the two countries' youth.

More than 20 Muscatine High School students from Iowa paid an exchange visit to Beijing, Shanghai and Hebei province from Jan 24 to 30 as the first group of US students to visit China under the program.

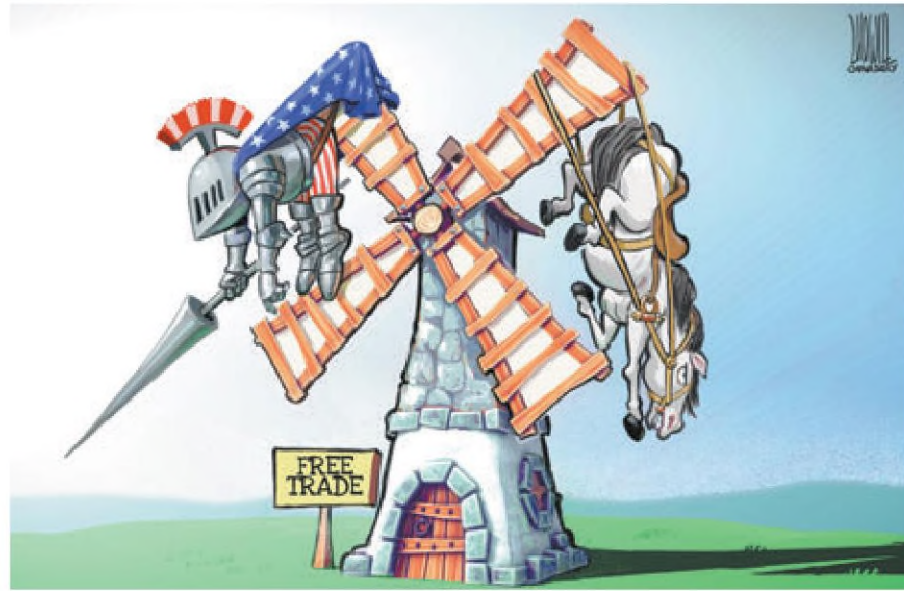
Sino-US relations are experiencing one of the most difficult times, mainly as a result of China hawks in the US political circles seeing the country as the greatest threat and No 1 adversary to the US and taking all steps possible to contain its rise. It is therefore all the more necessary for the two peoples to reach out to each other. It is hoped that the goodwill and friendship that exist between them will help Beijing and Washington transcend their differences and bring their relationship back to the normal track.

In a positive sign in that direction San Francisco Mayor London Breed announced in Beijing on Friday that her city will receive a pair of pandas as a symbol of friendship from China next year. The pandas will add a new chapter to Sino-US friendship in the new era.

As former US president Richard Nixon said more than half a century ago, "the Chinese people are a great people, the American people are a great people. If our two peoples are enemies the future of this world we share together is dark indeed. But if we can find common ground to work together, the chance for world peace is immeasurably increased."

His words still ring true.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Expanded visa-free policy shows positive results in boosting visits

The number of foreigners coming to China in the first quarter of this year increased by more than three times compared with the same period in 2023, data recently released by the National Immigration Administration show.

In the past few months, China has introduced a number of visa optimization measures, including reducing the content of visa application forms, reducing visa fees, simplifying the examination and approval procedures, and piloting visa-free policies for some countries, providing more convenience for foreigners' travel, work, study and living in China.

Widely welcomed by the international community, these measures demonstrate China's resolve to promote high-level opening-up and strengthen international exchanges and cooperation.

Following the resumption of a 15-day visa-free entry policy for Singaporeans and Bruneians holding ordinary passports for business, tourism, visiting friends and relatives and transit in Chi-

na on July 26, China again launched a pilot unilateral visa-free policy for ordinary passport holders from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia on Dec 1, and from Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg on March 14.

Up to now, a total of 989,000 travels have been made to China visa-free by people from the 15 countries, accounting for more than 60 percent of the total visits made by foreigners to China, showing an overall upward trend.

The China-Thailand visa exemption agreement came into effect on March 1. According to Ctrip data, on the day the China-Thailand visa agreement came into effect, Thai travel orders to China surged three times year-on-year, an increase of more than 160 percent compared with the day in 2019. Keyword searches on Chinese cities also increased significantly. That an increasing number of Thai people are choosing China as a travel destination is helping further promote exchanges between the two countries. A travel

agency in Sichuan province said it has received more than 600 tourists from Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand since the beginning of this year, more than double the number during the same period last year.

China's visa-free policy has also been widely welcomed by overseas people looking to expand their business and seek cooperation opportunities in the Chinese market. It is their belief that a series of measures taken by China to facilitate foreigners' visit, including resolving their mobile payment problem, have made their stay in China safer, more comfortable and more convenient.

The visa-free policy has not only promoted rising enthusiasm for overseas people to travel to China, but also enabled people in more countries to have a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of China, thus further promoting friendship and people-to-people exchanges between China and the rest of the world.

—PEOPLE'S DAILY

## Internet spirit should be nurtured to make life better

China gained full access to the World Wide Web 30 years ago, on April 20, 1994. Thirty years later, China has the largest network infrastructure and the second-largest digital economy in the world.

The digital economy has become a powerful engine for China's economy. With the support of advanced internet technology, even small sellers in China are able to enjoy the benefits of globalization, selling their goods to the world, while Chinese internet entrepreneurs have extended their e-commerce platforms to the whole world.

Today, the market capitalization of

Chinese internet enterprises has reached nearly 10 trillion yuan (\$1.38 trillion), with nine of them ranking among the top 30 in the world. Last year, China's online retail sales reached 15.4 trillion yuan, ranking first in the world for 11 consecutive years.

The internet has been very significant for the world. But the past 30 years show that its significance is even more special for China. The internet has made it easier for people's voices to be expressed and heard, laying the foundation for improving governance.

At a time when economic globaliza-

tion encounters backlashes, the internet will not only cushion the world against them, but also be a window for maintaining openness and communication in extreme cases.

The internet does have a negative side, such as the spread of rumors, information cocoons, privacy breaches, media manipulation and public opinion biases, but its benefits, if well managed, can outweigh its harms. In particular, the spirit of equality, transparency and openness that the internet brings should be further nurtured to make life better.

—BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## Diversity of books treasure trove to cherish

Tuesday was this year's World Book and Copyright Day. The day is observed worldwide to promote reading, publishing and copyright protection since the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization initiated it on April 23, 1995.

April 23 is a symbolic date in world literature. It is the date on which several prominent authors died.

Despite the impact of digital technologies on reading, the importance of books — a link between the past and the future and a bridge between generations and across cultures — still prevails over time and space.

China's retail market for books showed a recovery trend in 2023, with a size of 91.2 billion yuan (\$12.59 billion), a year-on-year increase of 4.72 percent.

Technology is having a big influence on not only people's reading habits but also the book industry.

For instance, short video livestreaming platforms and social media networking have become the second-largest book sales channel in China last year after large-scale B-2-C e-commerce platforms. Relevant publishing companies are paying more attention to promoting sales on these fast-growing retail channels, which registered year-on-year growth of 70.1 percent in book sales last year.

The advancement of technology does not conflict with books being a treasure trove of knowledge and an essential part of people's spiritual world. As Audrey Azoulay, director-general of UNESCO, said in her message to mark the day this year, "Books, in all their forms, allow us to learn and to keep ourselves informed. They also entertain us and help us to understand the world, while offering a window into otherness."

Notably, her stress on "the linguistic diversity of our world" reflected by books is a timely reminder of not only the impacts of technological progress

on books and reading activities but also a worrying trend that has become more prominent in the digital age that "the majority of works are published in just a handful of languages" as digital technology is promoting linguistic homogenization.

That is why, as part of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, launched in 2022, UNESCO is actively supporting the publication of books in both indigenous and regional languages. As such, the World Book and Copyright Day should also be an occasion for countries to cherish and protect linguistic and cultural diversity through promoting the publishing of relevant books, and raise public awareness on that.

As Azoulay noted, "every written language brings with it a particular worldview, with its symbols and its values". Books published in different languages help preserve that invaluable cultural diversity, a foundation for mutual learning and respect and a cradle for innovation and creation.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Harvey Dzodin

## 'Decoupling' cannot make US stronger

While not much is expected from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit from Wednesday to Friday, especially because this is a US presidential election year when the only issue uniting the Democrats and Republicans is frenzied anti-China paranoia, the fact that the visit is even happening is a positive sign. The same can be said about the visits of US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo last year and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in early April, and the resumption of the high-level military-to-military video meeting between US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun — earlier this month.

Surely, talking is better than fighting, but too many aggressive and provocative US moves and veiled (and not so veiled) threats negate the nice words the administration's representatives have said recently.

Much work remains to be done to shore up damaged bilateral relations and avoid continuing lose-lose economic and political "decoupling". Here the picture is less rosy as exemplified by the ongoing US persecution of Huawei, China's top telecommunications company. I attended Huawei's Analyst Summit in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, last week.

The US, unwilling or unable to cooperate with China in the high-tech sector, continues its policy of restricting China's access to advanced computer chips. The US' stated position is "a small yard and high fence", highly targeted restrictions against China for the most advanced dual-use computer chips on the pretext of safeguarding national security, but in reality it is intended to prevent China's continued economic rise, because Washington fears Beijing could challenge its global domination.

Harvard professor Graham Allison says that in the past 500 years, a rising power spooking the established power has resulted in a conflict in 12 out of 16 cases. That's a frightening thought.

From what I learned at the Huawei Analyst Summit, the sanctions of the US and its allies against Huawei, although dealing a blow to the company, have not only made it stronger but also expanded its horizons, from making better telecom equipment to ambitiously moving into artificial intelligence, cloud computing and a host of new-horizon, all-inclusive "fifth industrial revolution" services for consumers and businesses alike.

It is a case of necessity being the mother of invention, first to stave off what could have been a fatal blow due to US pressure and then to move from

being debilitated to prosperity by building an ecosystem unimaginable when Huawei was a small manufacturer of telephone switchboards at its birth in 1987. It's no less a remarkable story than that of Shenzhen, which from being a small fishing village a little more than four decades ago has developed into a metropolis of 17 million people with GDP of \$500 billion, similar to that of Sweden or Thailand.

Blinken, a guitarist who loves the work of blues genius Muddy Waters, must also know Cole Porter's famous Western/cowboy song *Don't Fence Me In*. Instead of fencing China in, he should be razing fences and engaging with China and other countries to build a community with a shared future for mankind where national interests overlap, that is if, and it's a very big if, we are going to have a future at all.

Talking about the future brings us to Dubai. On April 16, the United Arab Emirates' city received more rain in one day than it normally gets in one full year. On the other hand, last year was the hot-

test in 100,000 years, according to meteorologists, which prompted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to say "the era of global warming has ended" and "the era of global boiling has arrived". Yet globally, we are stumbling on a straight path to extinction unable to give up fossil fuels, especially because of the energy giants in the US and other countries and their army of lobbyists promoting short-term profits at the cost of human existence.

As for the US, although it has professed to have gone green for half a century, it has done little to prevent this catastrophe. As a matter of fact, it is resisting more fuel-efficient and clean-energy vehicles in favor of continuing to produce huge gas-guzzlers. It doesn't want to accept that the world has changed.

The US, however, could have been the global leader in clean energy but, due to political pressure from the farm lobby, opted to promote biofuels which are costly, raise global food prices and have negative environmental impacts like water pollution.

At a time when the US was indulging in such activities, China was still a relatively poor country but realized that it had to plan for a sustainable future. Today, China is the global leader in renewable energy, especially in solar and wind energy. But instead of applauding China for its green achievements, the US is trying to check its peaceful rise, just as it tried to strangle Huawei.

The smart, green and logical choice is to join forces with China when the alternative is extinction. But no, the US' response is the opposite.

To me, it's a no-brainer that the US and its allies should join forces with China and the Global South, because their national interests and very future depend on it.

Sadly, I don't think they will, but they really should realize that "decoupling" cannot make the US stronger.

*The author is a US scholar and senior guest researcher at the Center for China and Globalization. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Zhang Monan

## 'Overcapacity' an excuse to target 'made-in-China'

Recently some US and EU officials have said China's overcapacity distorts global pricing and production patterns. Concurrently, the Joe Biden administration is considering imposing high tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum, potentially opening a new front in the ongoing trade conflicts in order to contain Beijing's "made in China" drive.

Overcapacity is an economic term that signifies a situation in which there is too much production capacity relative to current demand levels, and hence it should not be overly "pan-securitized". Capacity utilization rates are crucial indicators of whether capacity is adequately leveraged, with a very high rate generally indicating a shortage and a low rate suggesting excess capacity or an irrational capacity structure.

According to the latest data from Trading Economics, the US has a capacity utilization rate of 78.3 percent while China's stands at 75.9 percent. Developed countries including the US and European nations consider any rate between 79 percent and 83 percent an indicator of supply and demand. China's rate is not significantly lower than the healthy range.

Moreover, China has eliminated outdated steel production capacity to a large extent, having reduced about 300 million tons of steel and 1 billion tons of coal capacities, including entirely eliminating 140 million tons of substandard steel

**It could also ramp up anti-subsidy and anti-dumping investigations, and impose green or labor standards barriers to limit Chinese exports.**

capacity, over the past decade.

Western pressure on China's industries and trade has intensified in recent years, with many Western countries restricting the export of semiconductors to China and curbing the import of Chinese-made new energy vehicles, while taking "reshoring" or "near-shoring" measures, further exacerbating global overcapacity and straining the global economic governance system.

This is not the first time the West is using "overcapacity" as a pretext to suppress China's manufacturing sector. In 2012, the European Commission initiated an anti-dumping investigation into Chinese photovoltaic products, initially planning to impose a 47.6 percent tariff on them. But in July 2013, China and the European Union "amicably" settled the photovoltaic trade dispute.

Unlike previous occasions, however, this round of scrutiny by the West is focused on China's advanced manufacturing, particularly in clean energy sectors such as electric vehicles (EVs),

photovoltaic panels and lithium batteries — areas in which there is intense Sino-US competition and China enjoys competitive advantages.

In recent years, spurred by the "New Washington Consensus", the Joe Biden administration has increasingly used administrative and other non-market forces to ensure it has the upper hand in its competition with China in strategic future industries. Also, the US has been strengthening the industrial policy through government intervention, which, in essence, is strategic protectionism.

As many as 49 industries including automobile, aerospace, defense, electrical equipment, information and communications technology, and renewable energy in the US get huge government subsidies.

Also, while strengthening itself, the US has also increased efforts to weaken others. In recent years, under the guise of combating climate change and promoting low-carbon development, the US has enacted the Inflation Reduction Act, which imposes discriminatory subsidy policies on products from World Trade Organization member states, specifically EVs from China.

These measures distort fair competition and will disrupt the global supply chains, as well as violate WTO rules of national treatment and most-favored-nation status. With the US presidential election still seven months away, the

"overcapacity" issue is likely to be exploited by US politicians on the campaign trail, and the US could intensify its rhetoric on China's overcapacity, possibly imposing tariffs on Chinese exports including EVs, power batteries and photovoltaic panels.

It could also ramp up anti-subsidy and anti-dumping investigations, and impose green or labor standards barriers to limit Chinese exports. Alternatively, it may continue to forge alliances based on different issues to contain China.

The overarching US strategy of exaggerating the issue of China's overcapacity is not aimed at striking a balance between global supply and demand; instead, it is aimed at checking China's industrial development by resorting to a beggar-thy-neighbor policy.

The narrative of overcapacity is crafted by the US to curb China's industrial upgrading, safeguard certain Western countries' vested interests in the global industry and supply chains, promote the reshoring of supply chains to the US, bolster the US' manufacturing competitiveness, contain China's technological progress and prevent it from achieving breakthroughs in advanced manufacturing and strategic industries.

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Fan Hongda

## Can peace still be restored in Middle East?

China has expressed profound disappointment following the US veto of a Palestinian request for full UN membership in the UN Security Council on April 18. The resolution received 12 votes in favor, two abstentions from the UK and Switzerland, and one opposing vote from the US.

In March 2023, Saudi Arabia and Iran achieved reconciliation with China's mediation, subsequently followed by Türkiye easing decade-long tensions with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It was also anticipated that relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia would normalize.

But the Hamas attacks on Israel on Oct 7, 2023, and the outbreak of the Israel-Palestine conflict have "halted" the reconciliation trend in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia has postponed the talks with Israel to normalize relations, with Arab countries divided over whether and how to punish Israel for the relentless attacks on Gaza, in which nearly 34,000 people, a majority of them women and children, have been killed.

Relations between Israel and Türkiye, too, are not normal. Worse, Israel bombed the Iranian Consulate in Syria on April 1, raising tensions to a new height in the Middle East. And after Iran retaliated by launching a calculated attack on Israel on April 14, Israel's response is being closely watched.

Before the Gaza crisis, the reconciliation trend reflected the Middle East's desire for peace. The ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza and the Iran-Israel confrontation show that long-term peace remains a dream for the Middle East. It is not difficult to ascertain that the root cause of confrontations and conflicts in the region is the Palestinian issue and the mutual dislike between Iran and Israel.

Immediately after the Oct 7 Hamas attacks, Israel accused Iran of being behind them. After Israel bombed Iran's consulate in Syria, Iran said it was an Israeli attempt to divert international attention from the crisis in Gaza.

**It is obvious that an Iran-Israel conflict would be far more damaging for the Middle East and the world.**

The ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict and the Israel-Iran confrontation have made it even more difficult to restore long-term peace and promote development in the region. On March 25, 2024, more than 170 days since the Israel-Palestine conflict broke out, the United Nations Security Council finally adopted the first resolution, calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and the unconditional release of all hostages.

However, negotiations between Israel and Hamas on a cease-fire and the release of hostages have not been successful so far. On the one hand, the Israeli defense minister has said that Israel will not stop the attacks on Gaza while the hostages are still held in Gaza. On the other hand, Hamas has emphasized that the prerequisite for the release of the hostages is a permanent cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

The biggest concern at present is whether Israel will attack the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Gaza residents have fled to escape the Israeli onslaught in central and northern Gaza. Reports say about 1.4 million Palestinians are now in Gaza. As such, any Israeli attack on Rafah will lead to an even bigger humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Reports suggest Israel plans to attack Rafah, but has not yet said when.

However, the global focus on Gaza has somewhat diminished because of the Israeli-Iranian confrontation. After the Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria on April 1 and Iran's retaliatory attack, the world has been closely watching Israel's next move. It is obvious that an Iran-Israel conflict would be far more damaging for the Middle East and the world.

Both the Palestine issue and the Israel-Iran confrontation have obvious international characteristics. Therefore, it is difficult to find the key to resolving them based on the perspective of a single country.

Since the two-state solution, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, is the best way to resolve the Palestinian issue, the international community must urge Israel as well as Palestine to implement the two-state solution. More importantly, external powers should stop blindly supporting Palestine or Israel, such as weapons that could fuel their conflicts.

As for the Israel-Iran confrontation, the two countries must first acknowledge each other's right to exist. Almost as important is that between Iran and Israel, some countries can no longer continue to seriously support one side in attacking the other. That can only intensify rather than alleviate the Israel-Iran conflict.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

LI CHAO

## Building a better world

China and Germany should categorically oppose a new Cold War and bloc confrontations, uphold multilateralism and peaceful development, and safeguard the UN-centered world order

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz led a high-level business delegation and three federal ministers on a visit to China, which concluded on April 16, signifying Germany's willingness to strengthen cooperation with China.

China-Germany relations are at the forefront of China's ties with Europe, and the two nations work closely on global governance. In the face of geopolitical conflicts, a sluggish world economy and the risk of a global disorder, China and Germany, as two major countries, should expand cooperation and inject stability into a world undergoing tumultuous changes.

Germany has long been the economic "locomotive" of the European Union, particularly during the tenure of Angela Merkel as chancellor, a period when Germany played a key role in lifting the EU out of its debt crisis. Since the Russia-Ukraine crisis broke out, the German economy has been hit hard, sliding into recession last year. Nevertheless, the country remains an important anchor of the European economy.

In fact, Germany's manufacturing-dominated economy is still highly competitive. While the country's total exports dropped 1.4 percent last year, the exports of machinery and auto products grew 8.9 percent and 5.5 percent respectively, underscoring the strength of "made in Germany".

Germany's public debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 64.8 percent, close to the pre-pandemic level, which gives the country larger fiscal policy room compared with most European countries. Germany is also the largest contributor to the EU's budget, accounting for over one-fourth of the bloc's funding, and it overtook Japan as the world's third-largest economy in 2023, which means it should shoulder a heavier responsibility in preserving global economic stability.

With the world economic and trade

order disrupted by geopolitical conflicts, China and Germany, as the world's second and third-largest economies, should strengthen coordination and bring more benefits to the world.

The priority is to stabilize the bilateral economic and trade ties and inject more vitality into the two countries' growth through win-win cooperation. Despite domestic political obstruction, German enterprises still attach high importance to the Chinese market. Last year, German companies' direct investment in China reached a new high of 11.9 billion euro (\$12.7 billion), a year-on-year increase of 4.3 percent.

On the other hand, various affordable products from China have helped Germany maintain lower inflation and ensure the security of supply chains. The two countries, with their respective advantages, have jointly provided abundant products to the rest of the world and eased global inflation pressure. Therefore, stable China-Germany economic relations are of immense significance for the world.

Moreover, China and Germany should jointly smooth global supply chains, reject "decoupling" and the severing of industry and supply chains, and break "small yards with high fences". The two countries also need to safeguard and improve the global financial system, uphold the rules of the World Trade Organization, enhance coordination in macroeconomic policies, support the internationalization of the renminbi and the euro, and foster more inclusive economic globalization.

Order is considered to be a key element of German culture. "Ordnung muss sein", which roughly translates as "there must be order", was first introduced by Martin Luther in the 16th century. After World War II, Germany recognized the international order with the United Nations as the core, and has since been committed to solving crises and promoting peace under the framework of the UN system.

The world is fraught with turbulence as the Ukraine-Russia crisis and the Palestine-

Israeli conflict drag on. China and Germany should work together to preserve global peace. When Chancellor Scholz visited China for the first time in November 2022, the Chinese side said "nuclear weapons must never be used and nuclear wars must not be fought". During the German leader's recent visit to China, the two countries reiterated their commitment to upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, opposing the use of nuclear weapons or attacks on nuclear facilities that are used for peaceful purposes.

China also supports Germany to maintain its prudent position in the Ukraine crisis and actively promote peace talks. During Chancellor Scholz's China visit, the Gaza crisis further spilled over in the Middle East after Iran launched drones and missiles against Israel in retaliation for Israeli airstrike that hit an Iranian diplomatic building in the Syrian capital of Damascus. To prevent the tensions from further escalating, China and Germany called for implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2728, and for influential countries to jointly push for an early resolution of the Palestine issue. These calls demonstrate that the significance of China-Germany relations has gone beyond the bilateral scope and carries important global influence.

As the risk of a "new Cold War" looms large, China and Germany, as responsible countries, should oppose a "new Cold War" and bloc confrontations, uphold multilateralism and peaceful development, and safeguard the UN-centered world order.

In recent years, the German political situation has encountered severe challenges such as declining support for the traditional ruling party, and the rise of far-right populism and political polarization. In addition, an economic downturn has wor-



XING WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

sened the livelihoods of ordinary people, and sparked nationwide strikes in the agriculture, transport and public service sectors, severely disrupting social order.

Germany also faces other headaches such as immigration problems. As the main destination for refugees going to Europe, Germany is grappling with a massive influx of refugees, which threatens the country's social order. Another problem is its housing shortage. The Scholz government failed to deliver its promise of building 400,000 housing units a year, drawing sharp criticism. These governance problems threaten social stability and public welfare, which constitute the very foundation of the country's political stability, and in turn have an impact on the global situation.

Under the new circumstances, both Chi-

na and Germany face the challenges of promoting socioeconomic development, and creating a stable environment for growth. The two countries, with their respective wisdom and experience in governance, can share experience in areas such as social security, healthcare and education, an aging society, industrial policy and data security, thereby jointly contributing their wisdom for building a better world.

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WANG YOUMING

## Alternative reality

Global South cooperation mechanisms that are completely different from that of the Western alliance have been formed and are becoming increasingly influential

Since the beginning of the 21st century, new problems and trends have arisen in the West-monopolized international system and order.

On the one hand, the international order is showing increasingly prominent "failure and imbalance". The influence of Global South countries in the international governance system is disproportionate to their collective rise. The widening imbalance has

led to stagnation in the operation of various systems of global governance. The developed countries, led by the United States, have reacted by hindering reform of the financial institutions and the World Trade Organization, which has impeded a global economic recovery.

At the same time, the US and its allies have instigated geopolitical conflicts and turmoil. The international institutions dominated by them show gradually declining ability, or even no ability, to solve traditional security challenges. The governance model of Western power and hegemony is far from the ideal pattern that should be based on the United Nations Charter and its purposes. Global governance institutions urgently need to be reformed to enhance their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and disputes.

On the other hand, a new trend of "two parallel systems" is emerging in the international system. After the Joe Biden administration took office, the US revived its alliance system in a bid to build a new international order in which the West continues to rule the world. As a result, the once dormant G7 emerged, and a new mechanism, the Australia-United Kingdom-US (AUKUS) trilateral security partnership, was established. In the process of constructing this system, the US has gone beyond its traditional alliances with the Anglo-Saxon nation states and developed industrial countries such as France, Germany and Japan, to include emerging countries such as India. As a result, a series of mechanisms such as the quadrilateral security dialogue (the Quad) among the US, Japan, India and Australia, the "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor have been launched. At present, the enhanced alliance cooperation mechanisms of the US, which encompass

politics, economy and security, are forming a closed, exclusive and confrontational global system based on ideological values, Western regulations, and power status.

Meanwhile, some cooperation mechanisms that are completely different from the Western alliance system have emerged and are becoming increasingly influential. They are emerging mechanisms represented by the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. These mechanisms' participants and executors are mainly Global South countries. They cooperate and complement each other in the reconstruction of the global industrial and value chains, and are seeking self-improvement together. They have also expanded from narrow economic cooperation to political, security, cultural and other fields, thus developing into comprehensive mechanisms.

Specifically, Global South countries are vying to join the BRICS mechanism and gradually becoming emerging forces driving the international order toward justice, greater fairness, rationality and inclusiveness.

Currently, the BRICS mechanism has established two major institutions. One is the New Development Bank. As the first



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

The series of concepts and practices proposed by China in its modernization efforts represent one of the directions for future changes in the international order and system.

lished and controlled by developing countries, it has offered \$32 billion in loans to support infrastructure and sustainable development projects urgently needed by its member countries. In particular, the \$10 billion emergency allocation during the COVID-19 pandemic left some Western monopolistic financial institutions out of reach, a move that attracted many countries in the Global South to "line up" to join the New Development Bank. The other institution is the BRICS Innovation Base in Xiamen, Fujian province. Since its establishment two years ago, the base has focused on talent training, policy coordination, and project research and development

against the background of the new technological revolution. With the support of the Chinese government, it has also held various activities, becoming another new calling card of BRICS after the NDB.

Besides, the BRICS countries' achievement in reforming the quota system of the International Monetary Fund in 2010 has produced a strong demonstrative effect. In this round of reform, nearly 6 percent of the share has been transferred to emerging countries and underrepresented developing countries. China, Russia, Brazil, and India have increased their representation and share and entered the top 10 list.

In fact, the Global South countries are pursuing economic growth and national rejuvenation in the post-pandemic era, rather than following the US and the West to engage in rampant bloc politics and camp confrontation. Their strategic autonomy is conducive to making the global governance system fairer, more effective and balanced.

China is an ex officio member of the Global South. As China is speeding up its pace on the Chinese path to modernization, the China-proposed concept about international order featuring democratization of international relations, economic globalization, and multi-level international pattern has been fully recognized by the Global South countries. Its concepts — a community with a shared future for mankind, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative — have also been widely welcomed. Some visions have been written into United Nations documents; especially the successful practice of the Belt and Road Initiative has been recognized by most countries of the Global South. The series of concepts and practices proposed by China in its modernization efforts represent one of the directions for future changes in the international order and system.

China can take the advantage of the BRI to expand the areas of cooperation, tap the potential for cooperation, and utilize the opportunity of developing countries' gradual recognition of China's three major global initiatives on development, security and civilization to build a fair and equitable international order with developing countries.

China will work with Global South countries around the world to make development a central task in the post-pandemic era, build a new global governance paradigm of consultation, co-construction, and sharing, and promote the establishment of an international system that is in line with the characteristics of the times and reflects shifts in the world's power balance.

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## LIFE

All about Gen Z

Z  
WEEKLY

## Social Media Digest

## Study like a princess

Earlier this month, an internet user named "Shiduopili" on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, announced that she had been accepted into her dream graduate program after securing first place in the second round of the entrance exam. "The 'princess learning method' was a total success!" she said.

Her announcement video received more than 146,000 likes, and the hashtag "princess learning method" amassed over 28 million views on Douyin. So, what exactly is it?

Basically, it involves transforming into a princess from the inside out — dressing, thinking, and acting like one. The most important part is the mindset, which requires you to believe that you're an heir to the throne and are shouldering great responsibilities. Therefore, you must adhere to a high standard of persistence, patience, attentiveness, and composure during study sessions.

This method appeals particularly to Generation Z. Many young netizens who enjoy role-playing and self-affirmation have acknowledged its effectiveness, as it works similarly to the Pygmalion Effect, where positive expectations and suggestions can encourage individuals to develop in a positive direction.

"Many people believe that a girl who spends time dressing up wouldn't be hardworking or excel in anything. However, you proved that we could realize our goals while looking good," a netizen commented on Shiduopili's video.



Young internet users in China have found that adopting a "princess mindset" can help them focus and persist while studying. TUCHONG

## Radio retro revival

In the 1980s, the radio cassette recorder was all the rage in Japan. Recently, it's made a comeback with added CD-player functionality, Bluetooth capability, and a more stylish appearance.

Initially, the development team intended to target Generation Xers (those born from 1965 to 1980) who couldn't afford a recorder when they were young. But interestingly, Gen Zers have also shown a strong interest.

Cassette factories in Japan have reported a surge in orders over the past few years. With an average price of 1,000 yen (\$6.46), cassettes are affordable for both long-time collectors and newcomers on a tight budget.

"The preparation process itself before listening to the music is interesting and delightful," said a teenager during a street interview with Nippon Television Network Corporation.

The retro wave has also swept over the video industry. A VHS (video home system) cafe in Tokyo has been gaining popularity since its opening last October. The cafe offers videotapes of short films that run 20-30 minutes long, allowing customers to watch them using the aging cathode ray tube (CRT) televisions in-store.

According to NTV, Gen Z customers particularly enjoy the process of the videotape being "swallowed" by the player. They see it as "ritualistic and fun," and often capture the moment with their phones.

LI XINRAN



Radio cassette recorders are making a comeback in Japan. TUCHONG

AI takes center stage  
at Beijing Film Fest

Beijing International Film Festival introduces AI-generated short films, exploring innovation in storytelling and collaboration between AI and human creativity.



Poster of the AIGC Short Film Unit of the 14th Beijing International Film Festival.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By GUI QIAN  
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For the first time in history, the Beijing International Film Festival has introduced an AIGC (artificial intelligence-generated content) Short Film Unit, showcasing the application and innovation of AI technology within the film industry while also exploring how AI challenges and reshapes traditional cinematic storytelling.

Co-organized by the School of Animation and Digital Arts of the Communication University of China, the core activities of this unit include a forum for creators within the AIGC environment, a screening of outstanding entries from the inaugural BJIFF AIGC Short Film Competition, along with an awards ceremony.

Tang Junshu, the principal of this unit and a teacher at CUC, noted that participants from various backgrounds have taken part in this section. There are full-time AIGC artists, educators and students from academia, directors and screenwriters from the film industry, and even technical professionals from technology companies.

According to her, the younger generation has been at the forefront of AIGC creation. About half of the participants in this competition are in their 20s, with the youngest member at 11 years old and the oldest at 60.

The competition is the highlight of the event. The organizing committee received 430 submissions from across the globe, including entries from the United States, the United Kingdom, Austria, Japan, Malaysia, and other countries and regions. These submissions varied in duration, spanning from one to 18 minutes. Among them, 23 entries made it to the final round of judging.

Tang explained that the judging criteria for the AIGC section are

more complex than those for typical short film competitions. The judges not only consider traditional elements like thematic expression, artistic impact, and the use of audiovisual language, but also the proportion of AI application, AI technical difficulty, workflow, and more.

"The main challenges for AIGC works currently lie in the smoothness of the shots, consistency in character portrayal, and the establishment of a unique visual style," she said. "The works that have made it to the finals have achieved a considerable level in these areas."

One such work is *To Dear Me* by AIGC artist Chen Liufang. It tells the coming-of-age story of a girl burdened with the pain from her dysfunctional family and her personality flaws. She longs for and seeks love, and ultimately learns to love herself. Lasting five minutes and 30 seconds, this short film took Chen's team nearly three months to complete.

The film is based on CUC student Yan Xiaoxuan's original idea and video project. Team member and director Tong Hua began by shooting live-action scenes. AI was then used to transform the footage into animated videos.

Chen explained that they used real actors because it helps make the AI-generated content more consistent and stable. "Currently, AI creation is like a roll of the dice, with outcomes being random each time. Using live-action footage as a basis for AIGC offers much greater control compared to generating videos from images and texts."

Chen also mentioned that AI isn't yet very good at making characters act realistically, and filming real people allows for precise control over characters' facial expressions and movements. "Can AI learn to perform on its own in the future? I view it with optimism and anticipation, but it will require a lot of train-

ing," she said.

Visual aesthetics is another crucial element of an AI-generated short film, which cost a significant amount of time and effort for Chen and her team.

They dedicated over a month to training AI models specifically for this film, experimenting with different styles using Stable Diffusion's SDXL model. After much exploration, they decided on one style dominated by Spanish painter Pablo Picasso's blue hues, combined with oil painting techniques and pointillism effects.

This isn't Chen's first competition or AI-generated work. With each project, Chen delves deeper into exploring AI's applications, trying to achieve different goals.

In her first AIGC work, *Love's Last Song*, for example, she experimented with a full AI-driven production process, using various AI software for scripting, visuals, modeling, animation, music, and voice-over.

Her second project, *The Songs of Distant Earth*, based on the novel of the same name by British sci-fi writer Arthur Charles Clarke, explored the workflow process of creating a trailer with AI, resulting in a two-minute animation short film in just 20 hours.

This time, *To Dear Me* marks Chen's first attempt at a complete AIGC narrative, moving beyond a mere assembly of fragmented shots to telling a story with both artistic value and coherence.

"I believe the measure of excellence for judging an AIGC short film is whether you can appreciate and be moved by it, even without the elements of AI," Chen said.

Every step of Chen's progress keeps reminding her not to rely too much on established creative paths or fixed ways of thinking.

"This is what AI demands from today's creators," Chen said. "We need to soak up new information

and skills like a sponge."

She pointed out that the good thing about AI is that the industry is open, and AIGC creators are willing to share their experiences with one another. There are also plenty of learning materials available online, which allowed Chen to acquire almost all of her AI skills through self-study. "AIGC creators believe in the power of sharing. We want to build a richer creative ecosystem," she said.

Tang is also amazed by the rapid pace of AI development. "You might wake up every day to find the world has changed, with new advancements in the industry. This poses new challenges for training talent in AI creation," she said. "While in the past, designers primarily focused on their technical skills, now anyone can bring their concepts to life with AI tools, making creativity humanity's most important asset."

Sha Dan, the deputy director of the BJIFF Screening Department and a renowned film curator, summarized the relationship between AI and humans today as "a love-hate dynamic."

"The rise of AI is like the boy who cried wolf. If we don't actively engage, there's a chance that AI could replace us in the future. But instead of fearing it, we should 'dance with the wolf,' grow with it, and let AI assist us in our creative endeavors," he said.

"Film festivals are particularly interesting. Here, you can find old movies, modern works, and even VR (virtual reality) and AIGC animations that speculate about the future. It's like stepping into a time tunnel where yesterday, today, and tomorrow converge."



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LIFE

# Paws for empowerment

On International Guide Dog Day, challenges faced by guide dog users highlight ongoing struggles for the visually impaired community, Meng Wenjie reports.

Every year, the last Wednesday of April, which falls on April 24 this year, is celebrated as International Guide Dog Day, a commemoration that reminds us how traveling with a guide dog remains challenging.

Even though Chinese law has allowed guide dogs in public places since 2008, and despite continuous improvements in public transportation over the years, Xu Jian, who is visually impaired and living in Shenzhen, Guangdong, still faces resistance from establishments like restaurants and hotels with her guide dog.

"Every time I go out, it takes a lot of communication to make sure I'm treated fairly," she said.

Xu, 43, has been battling a degenerative retinal disease since primary school. Despite losing her eyesight, she pursued education and now works as a senior operations specialist at a coworking space. However, she's always wanted greater independence.

So, in 2016, Xu applied for a guide dog at the China Guide Dog Training Center in Dalian, Northeast China's Liaoning province. After waiting for over a year, she welcomed Daimeng into her life.

For the past seven years, Xu's guide dog Daimeng has faithfully accompanied her to work and throughout her daily activities.

The Dalian center, founded in 2006 by Wang Jingyu, a professor at Dalian Medical University, operates as a nonprofit organization. It is the first guide dog training facility on the Chinese mainland.

Over the years, the center has trained about 400 guide dogs, with more than 350 currently serving in 27 provinces and cities nationwide.

Despite these achievements, Wang said that China has over 17.3 million visually impaired individuals, nearly three times the population of Dalian.

"Many people express interest in guide dog training, but few stay committed," Wang said. He explained that the training of a guide dog at the center demands a minimum investment of 210,000 yuan (\$28,992), but the dogs are provided to visually impaired individuals free of charge.

Currently, the main funding for the Dalian center comes

from governmental aid and contributions from social organizations. Dalian Medical University also provides free facilities and utilities. In 2008, the university established a guide dog volunteer association, engaging young student volunteers to support the center's daily operations.

"We currently have over 800 members, with an average age of 20," said Hao Shuting, the president of the Dalian Medical University Guide Dog Volunteer Association.

Hao, 19, explained that in addition to assisting with the center's daily work every week, they also organize various activities to raise awareness about guide dogs.

For example, during the summer vacation of 2023, a group of volunteers went back to their hometowns and displayed signs supporting guide dogs to passersby in busy locations across the country. They then shared these photos on the school website.

### Another pair of eyes

According to Wang, along with the considerable training expenses, the selection and training process for guide dogs is also notably rigorous.

The Dalian center upholds its own breeding program to ensure high-quality lineage. Its research team diligently investigates the biology and genetics of guide dog breeding.

"We maintain a success rate of 40 to 50 percent in guide dog training, which is relatively high on a global scale," said Wang Xin, a trainer who has been working at the center since 2010.

She explained that 90 percent of the center's guide dogs are Labradors, valued for their gentle nature and intelligence.

Once suitable guide dog puppies are identified, they undergo personality assessments in the lab, followed by socialization techniques during foster care and further evaluations.

One volunteer, surnamed Sun, has fostered four puppies since 2019. Her first puppy, Bohe, became a working guide dog in 2021, while the other three didn't pass subsequent



LIANG GUOXIU / CHINA DAILY

training and assessments. One of them was then adopted by Sun, and the other two also found loving homes through adoption.

"Raising guide dogs is quite different from raising pet dogs," said Sun. She strictly adheres to the center's guidelines for their care, including controlled feeding and teaching the dogs to reject food when necessary. She also regularly guides them along tactile paths during their outings.

After the fostering period, the dog candidates return to the center for about one and a half years of skill training, during which they learn to navigate obstacles and adjust to various road conditions.

Throughout the training process, guide dogs may be disqualified for various reasons, including their performance, physical health, personality, and psychological traits.

According to Wang Xin, an ideal guide dog should not be overly curious, excitable, or timid. "These characteristics could cause distractions during work, which can be dangerous for visually impaired individuals," she explained.

However, even if the dogs successfully pass all evaluations, they could still be disqualified if they don't enjoy the role of a guide dog, Wang Xin added. "Every guide dog that graduated from our center takes pride in its work and remains focused," she said.

Typically, guide dogs serve for six to 10 years. Those who are disqualified or retired are usually adopted by their raisers, the users themselves or their families, or volunteers.

### Human connection

Wang Jingyu finds the active involvement of young people in aiding the visually impaired quite impressive. He notes that most employees at the Dalian center are under 40 years old, with those aged 26 to 30 constituting 40 percent of the staff.

Additionally, college and high school students visit the center annually to learn about guide dogs and participate in volunteer work.

"Young people are readily embracing and gaining a deeper understanding of minority groups like visually impaired

individuals," he said. "These individuals are often overlooked, not because of lack of ability, but due to difficulties in traveling and limited opportunities."

Sun regularly shares her life with foster puppies on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, to raise awareness about guide dogs. Some of her followers have even adopted retired guide dogs.

Xu is also actively working to create opportunities for visually impaired individuals. As a public welfare advocate, she co-founded a platform with her friends that offers free assistance services. This platform provides lessons in various skills, such as dubbing, Braille, music, cooking, and computer and internet communication. These lessons are tailored for the visually impaired and are taught by young volunteers.

"Some people hold the stereotype that visually impaired individuals are only suited for massage work," Xu said. "But that's not true. They have a multitude of potential, and I'm dedicated to being a bridge, opening doors for them."

Contact the writer at [mengwenjie@121st.cn](mailto:mengwenjie@121st.cn)

### What can you do?

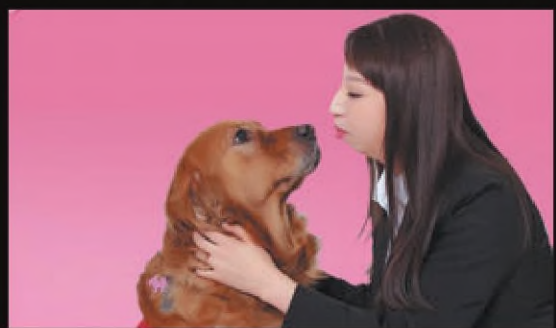
Xu Jian shared some advice on interacting with visually impaired individuals and guide dogs at work.

**Four "don'ts"**  
Do not call out to, touch, feed, or obstruct guide dogs while they are on duty.

**One question**  
If you'd like to help, please ask first and communicate clearly. Do not touch or pull the visually impaired person directly.

**Correct posture for assistance**  
- When guiding individuals with guide dogs, stand in front of the guide dog's left side to lead.  
- When assisting individuals using canes, stand in front of their left side and guide them forward by offering your elbow.

From left to right: Wang Xin, a trainer at the China Guide Dog Training Center in Dalian, works with a guide dog. Hao Shuting (second from right) leads a group of student volunteers from Dalian Medical University in supporting guide dogs. Xu Jian, a visually impaired woman, and her guide dog Daimeng. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## LIFE



**Clockwise from left:** Xiao Chao sets fire to heat iron blades to make traditional Chinese cleaver at his workshop in Changsha, Hunan province, in March 2022. Xiao (right) poses with his colleague at his workshop in March 2022. Xiao makes traditional Chinese cleaver at his workshop in September 2022.

# The cutting-edge art of Chinese cleavers

Young artisan Xiao Chao preserves the centuries-old craft of hand-making Chinese cleavers, facing the challenges of modernization while building a devoted following through online platforms.

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha  
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There are only about five people making hand-made traditional Chinese cleaver in Changsha, Hunan province, and 29-year-old Xiao Chao is the youngest among them, with the average age of the others being over 60 years old.

Xiao was born in the Laodaohu region in suburban Changsha, where the history and techniques of making Chinese cleavers date back for more than 500 years.

To make a Chinese cleaver, the iron and steel blades need to be heated to more than 1,000 C, and two pieces of iron blades need to be repeatedly hammered and quenched with one piece of steel blade more than 2,000 times.

These techniques were recognized as a provincial intangible cultural heritage in 2016.

The Chinese cleaver, also known as a Chinese chef's knife, is a staple of the Chinese kitchen, rivaled in utility only by the wok and chopsticks. Chinese people have used the cleaver for everything from slicing, chopping, mincing, and scraping.

Xiao's father runs a cleaver store in Changsha, so he is familiar with the industry and has been fascinated by making cleavers since childhood.

He started to learn the techniques in 2014 at the age of 19 and has become a full-time cleaver maker for almost 10 years.

Learning the techniques has had its difficulties. With temperatures rising to 1,000 C, the heat is the first thing he must cope with, especially during summer days when the temperature in Changsha can easily rise to 40 C. Moreover, the pure physical labor of hammering has been exhausting.

Making a cleaver is time-consuming. Xiao said he can make at most two cleavers in a day. It's also dangerous, as evidenced by his hands, which are covered with injuries from blade cuts and burns.

His life has been occupied by work. He makes cleavers in the morning, manages his cleaver shop in the afternoon, and sells cleaver products on the short video platform Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, in the evening.

"I work almost 12 hours a day and seldom take a break, even over the weekend," he said.

Xiao has been passionate about improving his techniques, and learning the process of making different new products has also been fulfilling for him.

"I have persisted for almost 10 years because I

"I have persisted for almost 10 years because I really like the job. Whenever I acquire a new technique or create a new cleaver, I feel a strong sense of satisfaction."

**Xiao Chao**, 29, a craftsman making Chinese cleavers

really like the job. Whenever I acquire a new technique or create a new cleaver, I feel a strong sense of satisfaction," he said.

However, Xiao also needs to face the reality that handmade cleavers do not yield much profit with the prevalence of machine-made ones being sold at cheap prices.

He said the average price of his cleavers is about 100 yuan (\$13.81) each. If the prices drop any lower, his business cannot make a profit.

To expand the sales channels, Xiao has opened an online store on Taobao and also sells products via livestreaming on Douyin.

His followers on Douyin have now surpassed 13,000. By posting videos of his daily life making cleavers and explaining the history of the Laodaohu cleaver as well as its differences from other cleavers, Xiao has garnered many die-hard fans who would buy all his new products.

"They treat handmade cleavers as artworks as each one is different and contains the efforts of the workers," Xiao said.

Mu Jia, 40, from Xi'an, Shaanxi province, is one of Xiao's fans.

"I believe each cleaver is unique and a piece of art. Only those who truly understand it can make a high-quality Chinese cleaver, and Xiao is one of them," he said.

Mu says he likes cooking, and knives are very important tools for him. He became a fan of Xiao in 2022 and has bought almost 50 cleavers from him because he believes they are better than all the other brands of knives he has used.

However, he said that the Laodaohu cleavers

need more advertising and promotion to prevent them from becoming a fading brand.

The government also needs to invest more in protecting products of the country's intangible cultural heritage; otherwise, they might be replaced by machine-made cleavers someday, Mu added.

Zhou Zhenke, 39, lives in Manila, the Philippines, and is also a fan of Xiao's products. He was sent to work in Manila by his company last year and has been missing Chinese food very much. After trying various foreign knives which he didn't like, he bought several cleavers from Xiao's livestreaming sessions, and it took over a month for them to be shipped to the city.

"I have bought more than 10 cleavers from Xiao. The Chinese knives have made the Chinese food more authentic, which is soothing for someone living overseas," he said.

Zhou was impressed by Xiao's focus on craftsmanship, but he also believes that additional promotion is needed for the cleavers to be known by more people.

Xiao's products are very creative, and the style has been updated to cater to modern tastes, Zhou said. If more people know about them, they will become popular, he added.

Xiao said it is also difficult to find young people interested in learning to make Chinese cleavers as it requires hard labor and working in tough conditions, but he will continue the work and try to find new ways to promote his products.

Since 2022, Xiao has been receiving media coverage, which has contributed to the sale of his cleavers. However, persisting in the trade is not easy for him due to the demanding physical labor and the reluctance of other young people to learn the craft, he said.

The busy work has also made it hard for him to find suitable life partners. "My entire life currently revolves around making and selling Chinese cleavers, so there are few opportunities for me to meet potential partners. Plus, I'm too much of a romantic and idealist to go on blind dates arranged by my parents," he said.

Whenever he can squeeze in some spare time, Xiao also likes singing and playing the guitar and piano. He has posted videos of himself singing and playing the guitar on Douyin, which have also received positive feedback.

"If the business really cannot sustain itself, I might consider becoming a professional singer," he said.



Anna Onuchina (right), a Russian student from Shenyang University of Chemical Technology, write the Chinese character "loong" under the guidance of Zhang Zhenzhong (middle) at a cultural studio in Shenyang, Liaoning, on April 20. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Exploring the mystique of the 'loong'

By LI XINRAN  
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April 20 marked the 15th United Nations Chinese Language Day. In celebration of this occasion, a group of international students from Shenyang University of Chemical Technology gathered for a special extracurricular activity to explore the Chinese character for "dragon" — "loong".

The special lesson took place at a cultural studio in the Laobeishi area of Shenyang, Northeast China's Liaoning province. During the session, Zhang Zhenzhong, an instructor at the studio and a member of the China Calligraphers Association, demonstrated more than 10 forms of the "loong" character, spanning from *jiaguwen*, the oracle bone inscriptions — China's earliest documented font — to *kaishu*, the standard calligraphic script commonly used today.

According to Zhang, the character "loong" was selected for this event because this year is the Year of the Dragon, and "loong" is a Chinese national totem. In fact, Chinese people often refer to themselves as descendants of the "loong".

For Phitchapa Prakopjinda, a student from Thailand, the visit to Laobeishi and the studio helped bring to life the Chinese culture that she had previously learned only from textbooks. She pointed out that the special lesson on the character "loong" provided fresh insights into the language.

"I came to realize that the language has undergone a very intricate and exquisite transformation, which I think demonstrates Chinese aesthetics and the inclusive nature of Chinese culture," she said.

Mishell Dorjderem, a Mongolian student, also elaborated on the inclusiveness of Chinese culture, but from a different angle. She was surprised to learn that the mythical creature, the "loong", is a fusion of various animals.

"Mr Zhang taught us that the 'loong' depicted in Chinese legends has the eyes of rabbits, the antlers of deer, and the body of snakes, among other features," she said. "This must be what he means by saying that Chinese is an inclusive language."

Dorjderem also had the opportunity to witness sugar paintings, a traditional Chinese craft where artisans use syrup to create images. She then received a sugar painting featuring the "loong" character. "It was so beautiful that I couldn't bear to eat it," she said.

For Russian student Anna Onuchina, she was only familiar with the simplified Chinese writing of the character "loong" before Zhang displayed the multiple forms of the character.

"I learned in the session that most Chinese characters are hieroglyphs, meaning that they were invented based on how the objects look. I found the 'loong' character in the oracle bone inscriptions full of dynamism — one of them looks like it has a tail shaped like fire, and another has a much larger head," she said.

Zhang emphasized the importance of learning about Chinese characters in mastering the language. "If you truly want to understand the language, you must comprehend the history behind the characters' transformation. They carry over 3,000 years of cultural heritage and transcend time," he said.

The students also tried writing the character "loong" with a brush, getting a firsthand experience of the beauty of Chinese calligraphy.

Zhang was impressed by the strong interest and active participation shown by the international students from SYUCT. "I was deeply moved by their enthusiasm and amazed by their proficiency in Chinese. The entire session was conducted in Chinese, and they followed along without difficulty," he said.

However, he also stressed that mastering the Chinese language is no simple task, and the students still have a long way to go.

Zhang, who worked as a college professor for years before retiring, views education as a process of "seeding".

"This session merely provided the students with a glimpse into the richness and charm of the Chinese language," he explained. "It's like planting a seed in their hearts. We don't know when or how it will bloom, but hopefully, one day, their interest and understanding of the language will contribute to the preservation of Chinese culture and facilitate cross-cultural communication."



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