

Art that is for all

Cultural project puts smiles on faces of African slum residents

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Chinese beat for world

Singer-songwriter Zhang brings mainstream music to global stage

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# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 2024

## US campus protests of Gaza war lead to hundreds of arrests

By MINGMEI LI in New York mingmeili@chinadailyusa.com

Protests on US college campuses over the Israel-Hamas war continued on Thursday, as one prominent university announced it would cancel its main graduation ceremony as a result.

The University of Southern California in Los Angeles said it won't hold its main graduation ceremony, which was scheduled for May 10.

"With the new safety measures in place this year, the time needed to process the large number of guests coming to campus will increase substantially," USC said in its announcement.

The Los Angeles Police Department said 93 people were arrested Wednesday night during a protest on the USC campus for allegedly trespassing. One person was arrested on allegations of assault with a deadly weapon.

On April 15, USC announced that valedictorian Asna Tabassum, who had been opposed by pro-Israel groups, would not be delivering the commencement speech after she faced criticism for her pro-Palestinian views.

USC said that "tradition must give way to safety," after Tabassum faced threats of an "alarming tenor."

"Although this should have been a time of celebration for my family, friends, professors, and classmates, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian voices have subjected me to a

campaign of racist hatred because of my uncompromising belief in human rights for all," Tabassum, who is Muslim, said in a statement.

"This is a security decision," USC Provost Andrew T. Guzman said to the Los Angeles Times. "This is not about the identity of the speaker, it's not about the things the valedictorian has said in the past. We have to put as our top priority ensuring that the campus and community is safe."

More than 530 arrests have been made in the last week across major US universities related to the protests, according to a Reuters tally.

College officials are worried the ongoing protests could disrupt their plans for commencement ceremonies next month, as they have at USC. Some universities called in police to break up the demonstrations, resulting in scuffles and arrests, while others appeared content to wait out student protests as the semester draws to a close.

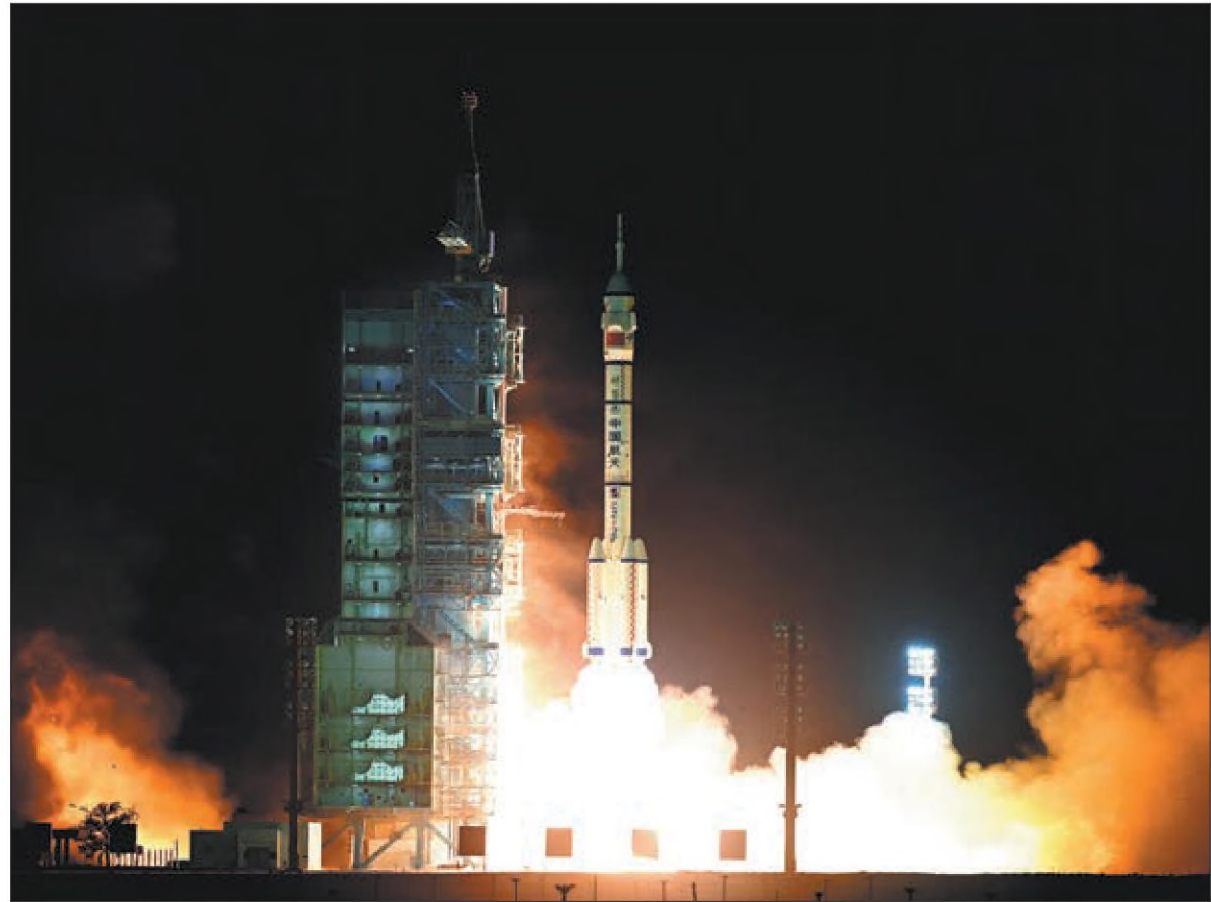
The current wave of protests was inspired by events at Columbia University in New York, where police cleared an encampment and arrested more than 100 people last week, only for students to put up tents again, in an area where many are set to graduate in front of families in a few weeks.

Columbia has said it plans to continue negotiations with protesters through early Friday.

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Police officers operate while people demonstrate in support of Israel outside the Columbia University campus in New York on Thursday. The student protest encampment in support of Palestinians is still active amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Islamist group Hamas. CAITLION OCHS / REUTERS



A Long March 2F rocket carrying the Shenzhou XVIII spacecraft with three astronauts on board is launched from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China on Thursday. WANG JIANGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Shenzhou XVIII launched

Crew to conduct landmark space station experiments, crucial extravehicular work

By CUI JIA in Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center cuijia@chinadaily.com.cn

A Long March 2F rocket carrying the Shenzhou XVIII spacecraft with three astronauts aboard blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China at 8:59 pm on Thursday.

After separating from the rocket and entering orbit, the spacecraft was scheduled to conduct a fast automated rendezvous and docking procedure with the Tiangong space station. It was to dock with the radial port of the space station's core module Tianhe, said Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the China Manned Space Agency, thereby forming a combination of three modules and three spacecraft, including the Shenzhou XVII spacecraft.

It is China's first manned mission ever launched in April, which is typi-

cally the windiest and sandiest month at the launch center, so the meteorological staff analyzed April wind speed data from the past 10 years and mapped out multiple contingency plans for the launch.

The Shenzhou XVIII crew members are Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu, who is the mission commander, Colonel Li Cong and Colonel Li Guangsu. After their peers from the Shenzhou XVII mission hand over the massive orbital outpost, the Shenzhou XVII crew will return to the Dongfeng landing site on Tuesday.

Shenzhou XVIII is the 32nd flight mission of China's manned space program, and the third crewed mission during the application and development stage of China's space station.

Yang Liwei, China's first astronaut in space and now one of the chief planners of the nation's manned space program, said he has high

expectations for the post-1980 generation crew.

"It's such a pleasure to see the young astronauts can now carry out manned space missions and take on the heavy responsibilities. I am sure the Shenzhou XVIII crew will do well, although the mission has become more complicated and tougher," Yang said at the launch center on Wednesday afternoon.

Yang noted that it has been 21 years since he completed the Shenzhou V mission in 2003, during which he traveled in space for 21 hours and orbited Earth 14 times.

"Since then, China's manned space programs have made steady and solid progress according to the plan. Currently, the operation of the space station has been normalized," Yang said.

Lin, the China Manned Space Agency deputy director, said the Shenzhou XVIII crew will use the scientific experiment cabinets and extravehicular payloads to carry out more than 90 experiments involving microgravity, material

science, life science, medicine and technology.

Besides conducting China's first research on a self-cycling aquatic ecosystem, consisting of goldfish algae and zebrafish in orbit, the crew will also carry out the world's first in-orbit stem cell study to explore plants' evolutionary adaptation to gravity and provide theoretical support for space crops, he added.

Lin said the Shenzhou XVIII astronauts will carry out two or three extravehicular activities and conduct six cargo outboard deliveries via the station's cargo airlock module. During the extravehicular activities, the astronauts will install space debris protection reinforcements for extravehicular piping, cables and critical equipment, and will conduct inspections, as appropriate, to further safeguard the safety of the space station.

The Shenzhou XVIII crew members are scheduled to return to the Dongfeng landing site in late October after six months in space.

## Hypocrisy, lack of logic hallmarks of new act

Washington is a wonderful city, rich in history, full of diverse ethnicities and backgrounds, and with abundant cultural attractions. It is also littered with political hypocrisy.

The United States Senate on Tuesday chose to support legislation that will require TikTok to either be sold to a non-Chinese entity or face a ban from US-based app stores. President Joe Biden has signed the bill into law, and that would give TikTok's parent company about nine months to sell or face that ban. The legislation is predicated on the idea that the social media platform shares with the Chinese government information about its users that can then be manipulated to influence the users' attitudes. It sailed through the House of

### WORLD WATCH

By Anthony Moretti

Representatives in mere days, which is stunning considering that the US Congress consistently advances legislation at a glacial pace.

Keep something in mind as you see those video images or photographs of President Biden signing the legislation. This is the same President Biden whose reelection campaign opened a TikTok account in order to reach some of the estimated 170 million Americans, most of them young, who are on the platform.

Think about that for a minute:

TikTok is such a "threat" to the US and its national security that the current president engages with it.

Hypocrisy, indeed. The political posturing over TikTok, owned by the China-based ByteDance, would be funny, if not for the ramifications of what is unfolding: The United States — the country that advocates for freedom of expression and which will fight efforts to harm domestic businesses all over the world — is demanding that a foreign business be sold to it. Or else.

Clear-headed thinking is required here. As The Associated Press reported, "To date, the US government ... has not provided evidence that shows TikTok shared such (data-related) information with

Chinese authorities."

Perhaps because there is no such evidence.

Neither you nor I should hold our breath; US officials are not going to change their tune about China. In the baked-in "China is evil" narrative that has spread deep roots across the US, just the hint of China doing something wrong leads to a knee-jerk reaction that then requires it be sanctioned for the behavior. Logic is left at the station as the train of emotion speeds down the track.

But there is a small ray of optimism at the moment. At least one US senator should be applauded for urging caution. Kentucky's Rand Paul suggested that First Amendment ramifications could not be ignored when conversations about TikTok were held.

See **Ban**, page 3

## SHANGHAI'S MEDICAL TOURISM TO GROW FROM HEALTHY POSITION

Hospital pilot program looks at ways to improve services for foreigners

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn



The first child from overseas to receive a liver transplant by Xia Qiang, a leading Chinese surgeon in this area, was a 3-year-old girl from Malaysia in 2014.

Over the past decade, more than 3,200 pediatric liver transplants, including 41 for expat babies, have been performed by Xia and his team at Shanghai's Renji Hospital. Xia is president of the hospital, which has thrived to become the world's largest medical center for liver transplants. The number of pediatric liver transplants completed at the hospital has ranked first

globally for 10 consecutive years.

"Although we lagged decades behind some developed countries when we began to perform such transplants, we're now at the most advanced level in the world in this field," Xia said.

"The 10-year survival rate for pediatric liver transplants at our center has reached over 90 percent — higher than what's reported in Europe and the United States," he added.

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## PAGE TWO

## Shanghai: Foreigners seek medical expertise

From page 1

The successful liver transplants at Renji Hospital epitomize Shanghai's rising international medical standing. The city is home to the country's largest expat community and attracts the highest number of inbound travelers, and its efforts to boost medical services for foreigners have accelerated in recent years.

In September, Shanghai released a work plan for a pilot program for international medical tourism in its public hospitals. Thirteen hospitals with outstanding innovation and technical capacity, as well as experience in treating international patients, were identified to join the program and also asked to look at ways to provide better medical services for foreigners.

To date, nearly 270,000 patient visits have been made under the program, which has generated 1.66 billion yuan (\$229 million) in revenue, said the Shanghai Health Commission.

All medical institutions in the city not involved in the pilot program are now also able to provide medical services to foreigners.

## Slice of the pie

China's medical prowess and facilities have been improving rapidly, with the number of surgeries performed far exceeding those in some Western nations. The convenience of online communication, visa access, and commercial health insurance now makes it possible for patients to choose doctors around the world, said industry experts.

"If Shanghai is aiming to get a piece of the global medical tourism market pie, in addition to the optimization of service procedures and access to more commercial insurance, it must accelerate the transformation of leading disciplines into new products for international medical services," said Gu Jingwen, director of the International Medical Center at Shanghai Huashan Hospital.

"Moreover, the city must develop some disciplines with its own characteristics and increase its influence through high-level international exchanges," she said.

Huashan Hospital began receiving international patients in the late 1980s, one of the first in Shanghai to start the endeavor.

Gu said in the early days, many expats living in Shanghai preferred to return to their home countries for medical treatment when they were ill. They would even raise concerns with local doctors about routine surgery for medical conditions such as appendicitis.

"Today, many choose to stay in Shanghai for treatment instead of heading back home, showing their rising recognition of the quality of local medical services," she said.

International services that meet patients' needs also help improve the business environment and enhance the international status of Shanghai's medical care, Gu said.

## Sharing knowledge

Recalling the 2014 operation, Xia said it was a coincidence that the girl, Damia from Malaysia, was sent to Renji Hospital for her liver transplant. Her parents had friends who did business in Jiangsu province, which neighbors Shanghai, and doctors there recommended Renji Hospital for pediatric liver surgery. In the past, Malaysian families with a child in a similar situation would have sought medical treatment in Europe, the United States or Japan.

"The transplant surgery on the girl was quite successful. She recovered quickly and the cost was only one-fifth — including travel expenses — compared with that in a developed country," said Xia. Renji Hospital continued to handle cases from Malaysia as word spread throughout the patient community.

A team of liver transplant experts led by Xia later flew to Kuala Lumpur to meet their peers at the University of Malaya Medical Centre, where most of the children were taken for post-surgery checkups. The trip also gave the Chinese doctors the opportunity to visit the children.

"From their expressions, we could see how puzzled our Malaysian counterparts were when we first introduced our transplant techniques. They were all trained in medicine in the West and the ingenuity of Chinese doctors was incredible to them," said Xia.

A short time after returning to Shanghai, Xia organized a small academic symposium and invited a dozen experts from Southeast Asian nations to participate. They were also invited to tour the wards at Renji Hospital, and all of them expressed amazement at what they saw, Xia said.

In 2019, a group of 16 doctors and nurses from the University of Malaya Medical Centre completed training in pediatric liver transplants at Renji Hospital, which prepared them for running a similar program at the Malaysian hospital the same year.

"Many of my colleagues, including me, have a medical license to perform surgeries in Malaysia," Xia said. "Also, we still have children from Malaysia who come to our hospital in Shanghai for transplants every year."

Xia said this year he had also treated a



French patient and another one from the Netherlands. "The country of origin of the patients is becoming increasingly widespread," he said.

Liver transplant surgeons from prestigious medical institutions and renowned pediatric liver transplant centers in countries such as the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Russia have received training at Renji Hospital, Xia said.

"This year we'll open our doors wider and welcome doctors from all over the world. We believe this will boost mutual exchanges and promote common improvement," he said, adding that the world's largest annual conference on living donor liver transplantations will be held in Shanghai in 2025.

Renji Hospital also has advantages in other disciplines, such as rheumatology, gastroenterology, and assisted reproduction, which can help it expand its influence and help more patients from home and abroad, Xia said.

While building strength in these areas, doctors need to take part in more high-level international exchanges and make their voices heard in the global arena, he said.

"Medical care is an ideal way to use China's soft power and spread Chinese culture. We reach out to alleviate people's diseases and pain and always receive a welcome. The Malaysian ambassador to China has come to our hospital multiple times to express gratitude and show support for bilateral cooperation," said Xia.

## Reputation spreads

In January, the Shanghai Children's Medical Center received an e-mail from the parents of a 2-year-old boy from Poland who were seeking medical treatment for their son.

The parents wrote that the child, Buko, had been diagnosed with severe immunodeficiency caused by a genetic mutation. While receiving treatment in Europe, doctors discovered that he had a liver tumor.

Buko's parents learned about the Shang-



hai hospital on PubMed, a database of biomedical papers. They discovered that Shanghai Children's Medical Center ranked first in the world for treatment of hepatoblastoma, a rare childhood liver cancer, and had a series of papers published in top medical journals about the disease.

Buko was admitted to the Shanghai hospital in early February and underwent surgery within two weeks. The toddler has been discharged and returned to Europe for follow-up chemotherapy.

The boy was the first international patient the hospital had received after joining the pilot program for international medical tourism.

In addition to strong pediatric services, Shanghai also has great capacity in traditional Chinese medicine.

Construction to upgrade the international division at Longhua Hospital Affiliated with the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine is underway. Chen Yuelai, president of the hospital and an acupuncture expert, said a group of loyal expats seeks regular TCM treatment from him.

Xia Qiang, president of Renji Hospital

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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In recent years, traditional Chinese cultural aspects such as tai chi, kung fu and acupuncture have grown in popularity internationally, and "this atmosphere has provided an unprecedented opportunity for TCM to go global," Chen said.

From time to time Longhua Hospital receives Western patients who have traveled to seek medical assistance for problems such as old sports injuries, he said.

A growing number of Japanese and Koreans who live in Shanghai have also come for TCM to treat chronic diseases and have therapies prescribed, Chen added.

## Improvements ahead

The global medical tourism industry grew at an annual rate of 20 percent for 10 years before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, data from the Hainan provincial government, where the Boao Lecheng International Medical Tourism Pilot Zone is located, showed.

The data also indicated that less than a decade ago, local medical services had been unable to meet people's rising health needs, experts said.

More than 600,000 Chinese went abroad for medical tourism in 2016. About 40 percent were advanced tumor patients, 25 percent traveled for physical examinations, and 12 percent for plastic surgery, according to the data.

In 2017 alone, more than 50,000 individuals from the Chinese mainland traveled to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to receive human papillomavirus vaccine inoculations before they became widely available locally.

Shanghai first proposed developing medical tourism in 2019. A year later, a group of private medical institutions were selected for a pilot international medical tourism program. The city also pressed ahead with improving health insurance and medical payments to meet international standards.

Several medical experts said that the global medical tourism market is already largely established.

For example, the US has advantages in the treatment of severe diseases and cancer, while Japan has built a good reputation in cell therapy and regenerative medicine. Some Southeast Asian countries have attracted international patients with high-quality medical services and comparatively moderate prices. South Korea has created a name for itself in plastic surgery.

Improving medical workers' English-proficiency is an important factor in expanding Shanghai's medical tourism, one expert said.

Jin Chunlin, director of the Shanghai Institute of Medical Science and Technology Information, said that some countries, like India and Thailand, already have two clear advantages.

"Medical workers in those two countries are generally fluent in English, and the two countries have fairly mature and competitive tourism products. Also, they have strong features in medical tourism. For example, they are famous for their herbal remedies," Jin said.

Service levels could be improved by providing more doctor's appointments and polishing medical workers' etiquette.

Taking the lead from countries such as South Korea, other industry experts suggested China launch a preferential visa policy for those seeking medical treatment.



A Russian child poses for a group photo on April 11 with medical workers after a successful surgery to treat her epilepsy at Children's Hospital of Fudan University in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

# China decries EU's subsidy raid on its firm

Move disrupts fair competition, undermines confidence of companies, says ministry

By ZHONG NAN  
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The European Union's protectionist measures against Chinese companies may not only jeopardize bilateral business ties but prove counterproductive, analysts said on Thursday.

## Inside

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The comments followed their review of Tuesday's news that the European Commission had launched a sudden and unexpected investigation of a Chinese company in the Netherlands and Poland over the so-called subsidies issue.

This is the European authorities' fifth subsidy-related action against Chinese enterprises since February.

Responding to the latest EC move, the head of the Trade Remedy and Investigation Bureau at China's Ministry of Commerce, said the probe disrupts fair market competition and significantly undermines the confidence of all foreign companies operating in Europe, signaling a deterioration in the EU's business environment and sending a starkly negative message to all foreign entities operating in the European market.

China will closely watch any further actions by the European side and take all necessary measures to resolutely protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies, the official stressed in a statement released late on Wednesday.

The China Chamber of Commerce to the European Union expressed dismay over the EC's raids and called them unjustified. In a statement, the chamber noted that Tuesday's raid was carried out without prior notice and lacked substantial evidence.

While suspicions of subsidies could be addressed through reasonable investigative means, the EC's actions suggest an intention to use the Foreign Subsidies Regulation as a tool to suppress Chinese companies operating legally in Europe, said the Chinese chamber.

Carrying out inspections of a for-

ign company's offices without prior notice or permission is an unexpected move, indicating a considerable degree of questionable interference by European authorities in the operations of Chinese companies, said Cui Hongjian, a professor at the Academy of Regional and Global Governance at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

"If such measures, characterized by coercion and excessive politicization, become frequent, they could negatively impact foreign businesses in the EU market due to the disruption of normal operations," said Shi Zhiqin, a professor at Tsinghua University's School of Social Sciences, in Beijing.

If China-EU economic and trade relations, however, are anchored in mutual trust and respect, they would benefit both sides, besides helping inject more positive energy into the global economy that is currently facing a threat of recession, he said.

Meanwhile, German industrial conglomerate Robert Bosch said it remains committed to China despite uncertainties as the group is impressed by the country's latest commitment to high-standard opening-up and high-quality economic development.

Bosch China saw sustainable growth in 2023, with sales revenue up 5.2 percent to 139 billion yuan (\$19.18 billion), according to its annual financial report.

"China stands as a substantial consumption market and a key innovation hub. Our consistent sales growth lays a solid foundation for deepening local innovation and presence," said Xu Daquan, president of Bosch China.

For the next step, Bosch will focus on growth fields like new energy vehicles, smart mobility, hydrogen, software and artificial intelligence in China to maintain robust growth, Xu said.

Among all its divisions, Bosch Mobility emerged as the key driver of the group's operations in China in 2023, with sales revenue up 8.2 percent to a record 112.1 billion yuan.

## Lifting the veil



Visitors take photos of a Zeekr car on Thursday during the opening of the 2024 Beijing International Automotive Exhibition in Beijing. The auto show that runs through May 4 is scheduled to display 117 global debut cars, 41 concept models and 278 new energy vehicles. TATAN SYUFLANA / AP

## High starting salaries bring cheer for job hunters

By CHENG SI  
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### 10,323 yuan

The average starting salary per month in the first quarter of 2024

Finance related jobs were the most sought after in the first quarter of the year thanks to the hefty salaries on offer, while the services sector witnessed a huge jump in starting pay during the same period.

Recruitment portal Zhaopin recently released a report that said 38 major cities in China, including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in South China's Guangdong province, saw the average starting salary settling around 10,323 yuan (\$1,425) per month in the first quarter. This was an increase of 2.2 percent year-on-year, but a fall of 0.9 percent from the previous quarter.

Among the 38 cities, the starting pay in some first-tier cities were much higher than that on offer in second-tier or third-tier cities, according to Zhaopin. Shanghai offered the highest remuneration for new recruits in the first quarter — 13,617 yuan per month — closely followed by Beijing with 13,316

yuan per month and Shenzhen in Guangdong province with 12,751 yuan per month.

Average starting pay in some cities in northwestern and northeastern provinces, such as Lanzhou in Gansu and Harbin in Heilongjiang, was under 9,000 yuan in the first quarter.

Also, the salaries varied from sector to sector. Finance and technology-related jobs were most attractive for job hunters because of the high salaries. The report said that job openings in the finance and investment sectors offered a monthly salary of 13,374 yuan on the platform and vacancies in computer science, information technology and new energy sectors saw an average starting salary of around 11,000 to 12,000 yuan per month.

The services sector proved to be the "dark horse" in the first quarter both in terms of number of jobs on offer and the increase in pay offered to new recruits. Figures from the National Bureau of Statistics show that from January to February, retail sales of services — mainly in the transport, catering and entertainment business — rose by 12.3 percent year-on-year, driving a recruitment growth for services talent with corresponding high salaries.

According to the Zhaopin report, the starting salary for hotel and catering jobs rose by 10.6 percent in the first quarter on the platform, maintaining the continuous growth trend observed in the previous three quarters. Job openings in the tourism and leisure sectors also saw starting salaries increase by 9.3 percent over the quarter.

"Recruiting salary in the finance sector remains stable. Sectors including smart manufacturing, new energy and professional services and consultancy are offering high and stable payment to their

new recruits," said Li Qiang, vice-president of Zhaopin.

He said that starting salaries see periodic ups and downs, but are also influenced by policies, state of the economy, industrial development and labor supply. He added that the slight drop in salaries from the previous quarter could be due to the trend of many people changing jobs in the first quarter.

The Zhaopin report said that the nation's economy is seeing overall recovery and growth with some macro policies bringing good results and people's consumption demands in continuous recovery. This is prompting jobseekers to adjust their salary expectations in accordance with the market and industry changes.

The nation's job market remained stable in the first quarter. According to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 3.03 million people landed jobs in urban areas in the first three months, up 60,000 year-on-year, and employers have been hiring more people.

## Extreme rainfall



A resident of Mathare slum tries to salvage belongings from his destroyed home on Wednesday, following heavy downpour in Nairobi, Kenya. Storms and flash floods have wreaked havoc across the city, claiming at least 13 lives. SIMON MAINA / AFP

## Ban: Fear, bashing of an Asian nation not new in US

From page 1

Justifiably, TikTok executives are listening, and they have been strongly encouraging US users to contact their members of Congress and voice their displeasure with TikTok's ban. The company's CEO Shou Zi Chew recently claimed that 300,000 American jobs would be placed at risk if any TikTok legislation became law. Keep in mind that job gains in February totaled 275,000, meaning all of those would be wiped out and

unemployment would certainly tick up.

And, yes, this is an election year in the US.

If this bashing of an Asian nation and its business practices sounds familiar, it should. Roughly 40 years ago, the US was gripped by irrational fear about another Asian country. As Japanese corporations began to buy US-based icons such as the Rockefeller Center, Washington's antipathy toward Japan grew.

One US scholar has offered a

sobering reminder: America has a long history of xenophobia when it comes to some Asian countries. Walter Russell Mead wrote in 1989, "In our society, land and resources are abundant, but the population's social heterogeneity would pull the country apart if we had not learned the arts of compromise and consensus."

Washington is not a place where "the arts of compromise and consensus" are found today. With this anti-TikTok legislation becoming law, the courts will determine whether it

is constitutional. One can but hope they will demonstrate common sense.

*The author is an associate professor in the Department of Communication and Organizational Leadership at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania. The author contributed this article to China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## Protests: US campuses grapple with security concerns

From page 1

"There is a heavy police presence. I'm sure when you entered the campus, you are aware of all of the security around here," Althea C., a 21-year-old environmental biology student at Columbia University in New York, told China Daily. "But our movement is very strong."

Professors were spontaneously standing in front of students against police officers on Monday night, wearing gowns and hoods, holding signs saying "Hands off our students".

"It's very difficult to have

complicated conversations when you have 100 of your students being hauled off with zip ties around their wrists by the NYPD," Nara Milanich, a history professor at Barnard College of Columbia University, told China Daily.

As the encampment took place on the lawn, a small group of pro-Israel students also demonstrated on the steps.

"I want everyone to live in security to not have to fear for their lives. I do not wish war to be anywhere," said a pro-Israel student who requested anonymity. "I personally want an end to this war, and that includes the ceasing of

rockets flying in Israel from every direction."

At Emerson College in Boston, 108 people were arrested at an alleyway encampment.

Some students protesting the war are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from certain companies that they say have enabled the conflict.

Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and have made them afraid to walk around campus.

The University of Texas at Austin campus was much calmer Thursday after 57 people were jailed and charged with criminal

trespass a day earlier. University officials pulled back barricades and allowed demonstrators onto the main square beneath the school's iconic clock tower.

At Emory University in Atlanta, local and state police swept in to dismantle a camp, although the university said the protesters weren't students but rather outside activists. Jail records showed 22 people arrested by Emory police were charged with disorderly conduct.

"Several dozen protesters trespassed into Emory University's campus early Thursday morning and set up tents," the school wrote in response to an emailed request

for comment.

On the campus of Princeton University in New Jersey, officers swarmed a newly formed encampment, video footage on social media showed.

But many colleges, including Harvard University, were choosing not to take immediate action against protesters who had set up tents, even though they were openly defying campus rules.

Some colleges were making new rules, like Northwestern University, which hastily changed its student code of conduct Thursday morning to bar tents on its suburban Chicago campus.

George Washington University in Washington DC said it would move its law school finals from a building next to the protest encampment to

a new location, because of noise.

"We continue to follow reports about protests — including very alarming reports of antisemitism — on and around college campuses across the country," US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said in a statement.

Student protesters also have demanded that the US government rein in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, which Palestinian health authorities said have killed more than 34,000 people.

Israel is retaliating against an Oct 7 attack by Hamas that killed 1,200 people and led to 253 taken hostage, according to Israeli numbers.

*Agencies and Heng Weili in New York contributed to this story.*

# BUSINESS



Employees work at a photovoltaic panel production facility in Hefei, Anhui province, in February. RUAN XUEFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## China's renewables tech cuts costs

Large production capacity helping lower global green transition burden

By ZHENG XIN  
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China's large-scale production of solar panels and electric vehicles has not only lowered costs but has also made green technology more accessible globally, industry insiders said.

The nation's optimum production capacity has helped other countries and regions reduce their burden in terms of production costs and technological development, said Ma Yingqiong, a senior analyst covering metals and materials supply chain at global consultancy Rystad Energy.

"In the process of promoting the development of green energy globally, China is providing more choices to the global market and giving everyone equal opportunities to use green energy," Ma said.

"For underdeveloped regions, cost is the biggest bottleneck. China's raw material products can help them better reduce costs and build green production capacity faster, while for developed countries and regions, China's large-scale and standardized industrial technology can also help accelerate their process of greening."

The comments came after United States Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen recently raised concerns over China's alleged "overcapacity"

in clean energy sectors, citing potential repercussions for the US and its allies.

Marco Fernandes, a research fellow at the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research in Brazil, said that China's policy and investments in renewable energy have propelled the world toward a more sustainable future.

These have led to accelerating the adoption of clean energy solutions and providing affordable options for developing countries, particularly those in the Global South, which have maintained a pragmatic stance and view China's surplus as an opportunity rather than a threat to their interests, Fernandes was quoted as saying by CGTN.

In the last few years, China has been able to take a huge leap forward in innovation, in electric vehicles, solar panels, renewable energies, and wind turbines, according to Fernandes.

"It's the first time that we have a major economy, such a strong economy in the realm of the Global South, so it's absolutely strategic," he said.

Chinese renewable energy enterprises have been making technological breakthroughs while driving down costs in recent years.

Longi Green Energy Technology Co Ltd, a leading enterprise in the photovoltaic industry, broke the world record in November with a new conversion efficiency of 33.9 percent for silicon-perovskite tandem solar cells.

"Improving cell conversion efficiency and reducing the cost of electricity remain the drivers behind

the development of the photovoltaic industry. The photovoltaic conversion efficiency of solar cells is a crucial indicator and benchmark for evaluating the potential of photovoltaic technologies," said Li Zhenguang, president of Longi.

China, which is a dominant force in the field of renewable energy, has several advantages that others do not possess, including the ability to approve and build transmission grids and renewable energy projects more efficiently and finance projects more easily thanks to policy priorities, according to the International Energy Agency.

The IEA believes China was the major driving force behind the world's rapid expansion of renewable power generation capacity last year, which grew by 50 percent to 510 gigawatts.

China is expected to see its position further consolidate in the next five years, as lower costs make utility-scale solar power generation more attractive compared to coal and gas power generation, it said.

The IEA has forecast that almost half of China's electricity generation will come from renewable energy sources by 2028.

Development of green hydrogen is also gaining momentum in China to better take advantage of its extensive generation capacity in renewable energy while driving green transition forward in China.

China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, also known as Sinopec, is working on a green hydrogen investment project with an investment of 20.5 billion yuan (\$2.9 billion) in Ulaanqab, North China's

Inner Mongolia autonomous region, which is known for its expansive grasslands.

Electricity generated on-site using solar and wind power will be used to electrolyze water and produce 100,000 metric tons of green hydrogen annually when put into operation in June 2027, it said.

With a total installed capacity of 2 gigawatts, China's largest integrated wind-solar-storage demonstration project that is designed and built by China Three Gorges Corp in Ulaanqab, was put into operation recently and will play a key role in fully taking advantage of the green power produced locally while meeting the electricity needs of large enterprises.

Equipped with a 220-kilovolt grid connection project, the project marks a significant milestone as the first energy station in China with a storage capacity exceeding 1 gigawatt-hours, elevating the integration level of renewable energy and enhancing the comprehensive utilization of electricity.

With the commissioning of numerous gigawatt-scale renewable base projects in Northwest China, the local grid system needs to integrate renewable capacity, optimize power output and address intermittency issues brought on by wind and solar energy, said Deng Simeng, a senior analyst in renewables and power research at Rystad Energy.

By the end of 2023, Northwest China had installed 222 GW of wind and solar capacity, and over 10 GW of battery storage projects, she said.

## Milliken sanguine on nation's plastics market

By WANG KEJU  
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China's ongoing pursuit of high-quality economic development, fueled by technology and innovation, is fostering a more enabling ecosystem for businesses and opening up massive market opportunities for global businesses seeking growth and expansion, said a senior executive.

The world's second-largest economy's growth, while no longer in double digits as it was a decade ago, continues to maintain a medium-high rate based on a high aggregate, said Cindy Boiter, executive vice-president of Milliken & Co and president of Milliken Chemical Business — a specialty chemical and performance materials company in the United States — in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"The Chinese government has set an economic growth target of around 5 percent for 2024. In the medium term, China will continue to be a key contributor to global economic growth. The long-term fundamentals of China's economy remain intact despite pressures and challenges," Boiter said.

China's transition toward a more innovation- and technology-driven economy has played a crucial role in sustaining growth, she said, adding that the resilience and adaptability displayed by China's economy over the years provide confidence in its ability to overcome these challenges and maintain steady growth.

In particular, China has been one of the largest consumers and producers of polyolefins globally, driven by rapid urbanization, industrialization and rising consumer demand. The country's strong manufacturing base and expanding middle-income group have fueled demand for polyolefin products.

According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, Chi-

na's cumulative plastic products manufacturing output reached 74.89 million metric tons in 2023, up 3 percent year-on-year.

The revival in plastic products production aligns with broader economic trends, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of China's manufacturing sector, Boiter said.

China's pursuit of its dual carbon goals, aiming to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, serves as a catalyst for various sectors aligned with sustainable development. Notably, the country's focus on the circular economy has gained momentum.

To transform today's linear plastics economy into a circular one where plastics retain their value, a collective effort toward innovation and technology is needed, as is an integrated approach that involves all sectors of society, including government, private businesses and academia, Boiter said.

Global plastic recycling rates, as shown by a white paper released by China Petrochemical Corp in April last year, are projected to significantly increase, reaching an estimated 50 percent by 2030, thanks to advancements in recycling technology and increased production capacity.

"We have expanded our innovation gallery and expanded our Shanghai Packaging Innovation Center recently. It is now the biggest research and development center outside our headquarters in the US," said Boiter, adding that the company leverages partnerships at local research institutions and universities, bringing technical expertise together to advance future innovations.

"Moving forward, we are committed to the strategy of 'in China, for China,' emphasizing further penetration into the Chinese market to drive the high-quality development of the polyolefin industry," she said.

## Wheeling through the fields



An aerial view of the Wuhan-Yichang section of the Shanghai-Chongqing-Chengdu High-speed Railway. China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, a State builder participating in the construction of the HSR, said girder installation of the Yichang section in Hubei province was completed last week, a milestone for the key HSR project that is being built along the Yangtze River. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Cherish Food and Reduce Waste

Over 1/3 of all food produced globally goes to waste.  
About 1/4 of the world's fresh water supply is used to grow food that is never eaten.

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## BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Domestic brands make steady march overseas

Florasis, Heytea among leading names gaining offshore foothold

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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Domestic brands with unique features and high-quality attributes have been accelerating their pace of going global, and the trend has shifted from low-priced competition to branding development, and increasing applications of digital technologies, industry experts said.

Hangzhou, Zhejiang province-based Huaxizi — or Florasis in English — a Chinese beauty brand with cultural attributes and aesthetic qualities, launched a series of products at a Cosme store, a Japanese cosmetics information and community portal, in Osaka earlier this year.

In August last year, it opened a store at high-end Japanese department store Isetan in Shinjuku, Tokyo, as its first seasonal limited offline store overseas.

"The Japanese cosmetics market is quite mature and shows strong demand. The high standard of the Japanese market will help Florasis to raise brand strength, and seek new breakthroughs in the international market," said Gabby Chen, president of global expansion at Florasis.

"China and Japan are geographically close and have frequent cultural communications. Florasis chose Japan as the first stop for overseas operations, as the company aims to leverage cultural resonance between the two countries," Chen said.

The brand launched its store on Amazon in Japan in 2021, and its bestselling lipstick product topped the real-time lipstick sales charts on its first day of launch, fueled by an increasing pursuit of beauty and youth among consumers.

Since last year, domestic beauty products have become increasingly popular overseas and Chinese companies have gradually established a foothold in the markets of Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia, said industry observers.

In 2023, the total export value of Chinese cosmetics reached 26.37 billion yuan (\$3.64 billion), growing 39.3 percent year-on-year, according to data from the General Administration of Customs.

"Japan and South Korea stand as two mature beauty markets with high-income consumer groups. They are suitable destinations for the export of distinctive Chinese beauty products," said a research report by Guotai Junan Securities.

Shared beauty standards among East Asian countries enable Chinese cosmetics brands to take advantage of export opportunities. Domestic



Consumers line up for crossover products between tea drink chain Heytea and a mobile game in Shanghai in March. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

cosmetics retailers should further raise their research and development capabilities and brand impact, and grab business opportunities presented by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, said the Ministry of Commerce.

The RCEP agreement, which took effect on Jan 1, 2022, includes 15 Asia-Pacific countries. The trade pact is expected to reduce tariffs by up to 90 percent on goods traded among member economies over the next two decades.

Meanwhile, Florasis attended the fourth China International Consumer Products Expo in mid-April in Haikou, capital of the southern island province of Hainan, and it was the company's first participation at the expo.

"Displaying a series of products with different ethnic themes, we hope to convey the unique Chinese culture and showcase the craftsmanship spirit of Chinese quality to domestic and foreign consumers," said Zeng Min, general manager of public affairs at EastGarden Group, parent of Florasis.

Domestically, the company has been focusing on online sales through e-commerce platforms.

Late last year, Florasis launched its duty-free store in Sanya, Hainan, and it became the sole Chinese cosmetics brand to operate an independent store at the duty-free shopping mall in Sanya.

In addition, Shanghai Chicmax Cosmetic Co Ltd, a Shanghai-based makeup retailer that owns brands such as Kans and Baby Elephant, debuted on the Hong Kong bourse in December, becoming the first listed Chinese mainland cosmetics company to sell shares in Hong Kong.



Visitors gather at the booth of Chinese beauty brand Huaxizi, or Florasis, during a beauty industry expo in Shanghai in May 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Last year, Chicmax achieved sales revenue of 4.19 billion yuan, up 56.6 percent year-on-year, with its gross profit margin at 70 percent, according to its earnings report.

The rosy business performance is mainly due to its comprehensive efforts in building a multi-brand matrix and continuous investment in scientific research, and the company's profitability prospects are stable and improving, industry analysts said.

In the past few years, significant achievements have been made in China's economic transformation and upgrading, and China's man-

ufacturing and supply chains boast strengths, fueling growth in the number and quality of Chinese companies venturing overseas, said Denis Cheng, consumer sector leader at Ernst & Young China.

"The going-global trend of China's consumer goods sector is consistent with the overall trend of Chinese enterprises. More Chinese brands and technologies are going global, which is of great significance for stabilizing the competitiveness of Chinese enterprises in emerging fields and promoting the development of the nation's

dual circulation development pattern," Cheng said.

At the same time, China's popular milk tea chain Heytea, a brand originating in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, has been accelerating its pace of opening more stores overseas and use of intelligent machines to make beverages.

During the just-concluded consumer expo in Haikou, Heytea, as a representative enterprise of Shenzhen, showcased the latest version of its intelligent beverage-making device, which can make a single-serving beverage in as fast as three seconds.

Heytea said it has applied the self-developed highly efficient device in China and overseas to make multiple kinds of popular milk tea products. Currently, the company operates more than 3,000 stores globally, including in South Korea, Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Standardization and uniformity of product quality are crucial, and the application of intelligent devices for tea drinks will help promote the sector to accelerate its development of overseas business with higher standardization and better quality, the company said.

In December, Heytea launched its first store in the US in New York, and became the first Chinese mainland milk tea chain to operate in that country. The company said it plans to continuously expand its operations in North America.

Earlier last year, Heytea opened its first stores in core business areas of the UK, Australia and Canada. Back in 2018, it launched its first overseas store in Singapore, with daily sales exceeding 3,000 serving.

The economic and trade relations between China and emerging economies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Middle East and Latin America are becoming increasingly close, Cheng of Ernst & Young said.

"These countries boast significant economic growth potential and a young population structure, and they are expected to show a strong demand for consumer goods and become popular destinations for Chinese consumer goods enterprises to go abroad in the future," Cheng said.

## Chinese restaurants taking 'takeout' to new extremes in global expansion push

By ZHU WENQIAN

Fueled by a growing appetite for authentic Chinese food outside the country, more domestic restaurants are opening branches overseas, driving higher demand for quality Chinese chefs in the international catering market.

Chinese dishes characterized by various local cuisines have become a highlight of consumption, and the government has encouraged the development of Chinese food business in foreign markets.

The government has actively supported Chinese chefs to work abroad, according to a guideline jointly issued by the Ministry of Commerce and eight other departments in late March.

"An increasing number of domestic chefs have landed jobs abroad, which also helps alleviate domestic employment pressure. The local government of Hunan province has introduced a series of favorable measures to support the development of Hunan cuisine overseas," said Luo Jixiang, a senior Chinese culinary master.

Hunan dishes, or *xiangcai*, represent one of the most popular regional Chinese cuisines overseas.

The guideline said it encourages the availability of more catering raw materials and accessories related to Chinese dishes overseas, and China may strengthen cooperation with key countries and regions in areas such as inspection and quarantine.

In addition, more Chinese culinary colleges may expand cooperation with overseas institutions, according to the guideline.

"The catering sector has become a leader in the consumer goods market, and the document has a guiding significance for China's catering sector to enter a stage of high-quality development," said Zhu Danpeng, an independent analyst tracking the food and beverage sector.

Last year, the British branch of Hunan Cuisine College, which is affiliated with Changsha Commerce and Tourism College, was launched in London.

The school signed a memorandum of cooperation with the University of Birmingham for

cooperative education, with the aim of cultivating more international talent able to prepare Hunan cuisine and promote related cultural aspects.

The establishment of the school will help establish an internship base of Hunan cuisine catering and cooking in the United Kingdom, and solve difficulties related to talent recruitment and ingredient procurement for regional Chinese delicacies in the UK. It will also continuously provide high-quality and international Chinese cuisine experts for the UK, the school said.

"Hunan dishes are relatively affordable and satisfy taste preferences for spicy food by many young consumers. More than 15 local enterprises specialized in the preparation of Hunan dishes have promoted the meals in Europe, and some restaurants have also opened overseas branches in the United States and Japan," Luo said.

Meanwhile, British consumer goods conglomerate Unilever Plc said it would continue to expand its investment in businesses related to Chinese food and cooperate with

more chefs in China — one of its three largest markets globally.

Unilever has been focusing on growing demand for Chinese food, and has set up five major research and development kitchens in Shanghai; Beijing; Guangzhou, Guangdong province; Chengdu, Sichuan province; and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Knorr, a condiment brand under the Unilever umbrella, reached a cooperation agreement with a group of famous chefs specialized in seven major styles of Chinese cooking in April, as the company hopes to integrate its resource advantages and chefs' personal strengths to further promote the development of Chinese food.

The two sides have established a Chinese food-related alliance. By 2025, the tie-up aims to achieve cooperation with more than 200 Chinese chefs and introduce over 200 kinds of new Chinese cuisines that integrate traditional features, thus further promoting Chinese food culture in China and other countries and regions.

"With the increasingly diversified



A cook prepares Chinese noodles at a food market in New York in June 2023. LIAO PAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

growth of Chinese cuisine, regional dishes with distinguished features are expected to become a powerful driving force for the high-quality development of Chinese food," said Xing Ying, chairman of the World Federation of Chinese Catering Industry.

Last year, China's catering sector

recovered rapidly after the country optimized its COVID-19 response measures in late 2022, and total catering sales reached 5.29 trillion yuan (\$730 billion), up 20.4 percent year-on-year. The figure grew 13.2 percent over prepandemic levels in 2019, said the National Bureau of Statistics.



Attendees exchange views during the 2024 ZGC Forum Annual Conference in Beijing on Thursday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

## Rich diversity of parallel forums enliven main event

By YUAN SHENGGAO

**17** parallel forums hosted or organized by international organizations and foreign government departments

To realize sustainable development, it is essential to strengthen knowledge sharing and to improve research institutions' capacity in basic sciences, technology, innovation and engineering to make everyone benefit from science, said Hu Shaofeng, director of the division of science policy and basic sciences of UNESCO.

Hu made the remarks at the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development Forum, a parallel forum of the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum, also known as the ZGC Forum, which is being held from Thursday to Monday in Beijing.

The theme of the parallel forum is that of the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in August 2023 on 2024 to 2033 being the "International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development".

The forum is aimed at sparking new ideas, expectations, advice, and approaches regarding the goal of sustainable development, according to the organizers.

"The forum provides a unique platform for international scientific cooperation, enabling us to leverage the global power of science to build a sustainable future together," Shahbaz Khan, director of the UNESCO multisectoral regional office for East Asia, said in his speech.

In addition to the forum reflecting the importance of science for sustainable development, the 2024 ZGC Forum comprises a total of 60 parallel forums, with themes such as cutting-edge technologies, new quality productive forces, tech talents, open ecosystems and science and technology governance.

Seventeen of the forums are hosted or organized by international organizations and foreign government departments, indicating the event's progress in attracting international involvement.

Experts from nearly 80 countries and regions are participating, including the Nobel Prize laureate Barry Marshall, the Turing Award winners Joseph Sifakis and Yao Qizhi, and Qiu Chengtong, an internationally renowned mathematician.

Of the parallel forums, the Global Forum on Women in Sci-tech Innovation held on Saturday morning is designed to serve as a platform for high-level dialogues among global female scientific researchers and encourage more women to engage in the science and technology sector, organizers said.

Wang Zhizhen, an 82-year-old female academician from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, will deliver a keynote speech at the forum, sharing her perspective on how to make women play a more vital role in the new sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation.

During the roundtable session, six female scientists will engage in

an in-depth discussion about creating a favorable innovation environment for women in science and technology; and motivating intrinsic innovation capabilities.

The parallel forum will also display 100 sci-tech innovation achievements made by female researchers and engineers from across the country.

Other forums focus on tech talents, including the Beijing International Youth Innovation and Development Forum on Sunday.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the integrated development of Beijing, and neighboring Tianjin and Hebei province. Governments of the three regions will jointly host the Collaborative Innovation and High-quality Development in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region Forum on Saturday, sharing their experience and showcasing development achievements during the past decade.

As one of the top highlights of the forum, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei national high-tech zone alliance will unveil a map of innovation service platforms in the three regions.

By aggregating innovation resources and offering clear guidance, the map is aimed at attracting more entities to conduct technological research and application in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province, said Zhou Jing, a senior official from the Beijing Science and Technology Commission.

Contracts for over 30 collaborative projects will be signed at the forum, in industries such as hydrogen energy, semiconductors, biomedicine and intelligent connected vehicles.

This year's ZGC Forum also debuts a parallel forum for unicorn startups.

Representatives from some 150 unicorn companies and 100 investment, finance and service institutions will attend the 2024 Global Unicorn Company Conference on Sunday, exploring development paths and opportunities together.

Additionally, a list of Chinese unicorn firms complied by the Zhongguancun unicorn company development alliance in collaboration with several institutes and companies will be released at the conference.

From Saturday to Monday, the eighth China Science Fiction Convention, another of the parallel forums, will take place in western Beijing's Shougang Park.

A total of 18 activities will be held, including technology exchange events, the award ceremony for the second Science Fiction Planet Award and a science-fiction film week, according to organizers.

## Flying the flag for innovation

Zhongguancun puts spotlight on cutting-edge technology with high-profile global gathering

By HAO NAN

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Ten major scientific and technological achievements were released at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum in Beijing on Thursday.

One of them was an all-analog photoelectronic chip developed by a research team from Tsinghua University.

The first of its kind in the world, the chip delivers superior performance in computer vision tasks, with faster processing and greater energy efficiency compared to the current high-performance commercial chips, according to the developers.

The first prototype of a 300-megawatt F-class heavy-duty gas turbine was also announced as a major sci-tech achievement during the opening ceremony.

Developed mainly by State Power Investment Corp, the turbine represents a major breakthrough as it is of great significance to ensuring national energy security, and brings more possibilities and opportunities for the development of global energy, organizers said. The turbine features maximum power and the highest technical grade, as well as low-carbon, safe and efficient operation.

A four-year construction plan for the ZGC World-leading Science and Technology Park (2024-27), formulated by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Beijing municipal government, and

the Ministry of Science and Technology, was also on the list.

Focusing on leading concepts to drive original innovation, talent development, first-class enterprises, advanced industries, and across-the-board open innovation ecosystem leadership, the plan outlines 50 key tasks and introduces a number of new major policies and reform measures.

In addition, the forum, also known as the ZGC Forum, will announce a batch of key innovation policies and latest research reports to the world on Monday afternoon.

The ongoing forum, running from April 25 to 29, comprises five sections including forums and meetings, technology trading, achievement release, competitions in cutting-edge fields and supporting events.

The forum serves as a weather vane for cutting-edge technologies and future industries globally.

Nearly 120 events are planned during the five-day gathering. They have attracted representatives from more than 150 overseas government departments and international organizations from over 100 countries and regions across the world.

Also, a group of top experts and scientists including Nobel and Turing laureates, as well as leading entrepreneurs and investors, will conduct in-depth communication on such topics as sci-tech innovation leading social progress, improving people's livelihood and sustainable development, and seeking development opportunities that contribute

to building a better world.

In addition to the opening ceremony, the five-day event comprises 60 parallel forums being held by government organs, international organizations and Chinese provincial governments. Of these, 17 are being hosted by 19 international organizations and foreign government departments.

The forums will focus on the development of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and space science; new quality productive forces such as future industries, engineering technology, and ultra-high-definition audio and video; and sci-tech governance related to intellectual property rights protection and data security.

For example, the eighth China Science Fiction Convention, a parallel forum, will be held from April 27 to 29 in Shijingshan district's Shougang Park, focusing on science-fiction technology, creation and industry development. It features 18 planned meetings and activities.

During the ZGC Forum, 30 technology trade fairs will be organized, including four debut shows of commercialized sci-tech achievements, and eight launch ceremonies for advanced and high-end products.

The trade fairs are expected to gather 6,000-plus innovative projects from more than 40 countries and regions, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan.

According to the organizers, this

year's forum highlights the sharing of sci-tech achievements. It plans to build a trading and sharing platform for more than 3,000 sci-tech achievements from over 40 countries and regions via activities like the ZGC International Technology Trade Fair.

The achievements will focus on such fields as clean energy, medical and healthcare, and the carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals.

The forum also emphasizes the importance of openness and cooperation, involving not only intergovernmental dialogues on sci-tech cooperation but extensive invitations to international sci-tech organizations, scientists, innovative enterprises and investors to collaborate, bringing together global wisdom, establishing communication platforms and injecting new vitality into global sci-tech cooperation, the organizers said.

Inaugurated in 2007, the ZGC Forum, with its enduring focus on innovation and development, has been held for 14 sessions. It is now regarded as a State-level platform for global sci-tech innovation exchanges and cooperation.

This year's forum will be held at its newly constructed permanent venue in Haidian district.

Referred to as China's "Silicon Valley", Zhongguancun in north-western Beijing is the country's first national independent innovation demonstration zone, and has become a flag-bearer for China's innovation.

## Barista robots create caffeinated buzz with their dexterity

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The ongoing 2024 Zhongguancun Forum is wowing visitors with an array of intelligent technological services at the Zhongguancun International Innovation Center, the main venue for the event.

Widespread use of technology has always been a prominent feature of the annual technological gala. This year's event, running from Thursday to Monday, highlights a variety of robots, and application scenarios and devices that integrate artificial intelligence-generated content.

Entering the south gate of Zhongguancun International Innovation Center, the first thing that catches the eye is the Xiaoguan robot at the information desk, inspired by the ZGC Forum's mascot.

"This is our new colleague, the naked-eye three-dimensional and AIGC-backed Xiaoguan robot," said Qiu Lijing, chairman and general manager of Zhongguancun International Exhibition Operation Management, introducing it to the media.

"The intelligent robot integrates

such technologies as naked-eye 3D aerial imaging, AIGC, and intelligent robot. It can provide precise guidance services with autonomous mobility and obstacle avoidance at the ZGC Forum, while the aerial imaging technology can achieve naked-eye 3D effects, providing real-time 3D interaction and explanatory services," Qiu said.

Xiaoguan also appears among the AIGC-interactive devices at the forum. By using the device to take a photo and upload it, the user can get a digital poster titled *My Technological Exploration Journey with Xiaoguan*.

Not far away from the information desk stands a lifelike humanoid robot providing consultation services to visitors behind the front desk. Equipped with the AIGC semantic large model, which enables intelligent responses to inquiries, the humanoid can provide information about the forum.

A few steps ahead, an intelligent coffee-making robot in the rest area attracts crowds of visitors. Its dual mechanical arms are capable of accurately replicating the latte art



A lifelike humanoid robot provides consultation services to visitors at the 2024 ZGC Forum on Thursday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

skills of a barista, producing latte art coffee that rivals handcrafted versions. It employs 11 sets of cameras to dynamically capture the subtle movements of a champion coffee art instructor.

Combining AI technology and the flexible rotation of a six-axis mechanical arm, the robot coffee

maker precisely presents the layered beauty of coffee art.

Also, through on-site portrait scanning and modeling, visitors can create unique avatars for themselves and share them on social media platforms.

Many other intelligent technologies on display include an intelli-

gent embroidery robot and a photography system that features automatic recognition technology that can track and adjust to subjects in real time to obtain the best angle and image quality.

As a national-level platform for global technological innovation and cooperation, the ZGC Forum has always advocated technological operations, Qiu said.

In addition to technological features, green operations are another highlight of the forum, according to organizers.

Items made from eco-friendly and recyclable materials, such as mineral water bottles, the forum's brochures, and reusable bags, are pervasive at the forum venue's rest area.

"We have been expanding the application of green materials," said a staff member of Zhongguancun International Exhibition Operation Management. "For instance, the forum tote bags carried by journalists are specially customized using PHA biodegradable eco-friendly materials for this forum."

Green technologies can also be

found in the forum's main venue itself. A giant skylight that is an ETFE (ethylene tetrafluoroethylene) membrane structure is an important embodiment of the venue's green practices.

ETFE is a highly transparent material that can increase indoor lighting and reduce electricity consumption. It also has a safety function. In the event of a fire inside the venue, it can directly expel smoke outdoors, according to an executive from a property development company.

Under the guidance of its theme: "Innovating for a Better World", the 2024 ZGC Forum has upgraded its technological operations and continues enhancing its hallmark of being intelligent, cloud-based and eco-friendly, Qiu said.

The forum plans to further improve its digital technology experiences, exploring the application of high-level technological products across multiple scenarios to enable participants to engage and share the fruits of technological progress, and experience the charm of digital technologies, according to Qiu.

# GLOBAL LENS



**From left:** Local artist Joseph Ouma conducts painting courses for children at the Kibera Arts District in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, Kenya, on Dec 23. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY Art entrepreneur Jamey Ponte (left), House of Friends art gallery construction head Pius Muga Oduma (center) and project leader Patrick Othieno pose on the venue's rooftop during its handover ceremony in Kibera, Kenya, in October. Young fashion models showcase designs made fully from discarded food containers during the Kibera Parade 2023 to celebrate the newly launched Kibera Arts District in Nairobi, Kenya, on Dec 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## ARTS FOR ALL

Cultural project puts smiles on slum residents

By WU XIAOHUI in Nairobi, Kenya  
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**O**n a Saturday afternoon in late December, groups of African girls and boys stepped out from streetside tin-roof salons, grocery shops and clothing stores, toward a new art gallery nearby, for a free concert performed by renowned Turkish-Canadian tenor Turgut Akmete.

A distinct, artistic vibrancy pulsed through the area, mixed with the hustle and bustle of daily life. This was not detected in a chic and developed cultural community — it occurred in Kibera's informal settlements, one of the largest urban slums in Africa, in Kenya's capital Nairobi.

Many local residents had never watched an opera before. An exhibition showcasing paintings from Kenyan visual artists was also held at the venue, receiving many visitors who had until then never entered an art gallery.

The gallery, called House of Friends, sported a brand-new white exterior. It functioned as an active hub of the Kibera Arts District, a flourishing project that was officially launched in late 2023 with a major parade.

The project's founder, Jamey Ponte, said the road was closed for the event, something that never happened before other than amid protests, and the move was "happily endorsed by the community".

Ponte, an American art entrepreneur more popularly known within the community as Babu or "Grandpa" in Swahili, has been living intermittently in Kibera for more than a decade.

The idea of creating a safe gathering space came to Ponte's mind after he witnessed the aftermath of Kenya's 2007-2008 post-election violence, which killed more than 1,000 people across the country.

Kibera is often known for its poverty, crime and drugs, a label many people from the area do not want to be identified with, Ponte said. "Today, if you stood out in front of the gallery, you are standing in the 100 percent safest space where it used to be at most 20 percent," he said.

At the House of Friends gallery, curator Joseph Ouma is a self-taught Kenyan artist who moved to Kibera when he was 5. Ouma, who spent his spare time offering free art courses for children in the slum, is currently working on the construction of a new two-level studio with the support of the project, which he expected to draw more international recognition and attract more artists and visitors worldwide.



Artists and children take part in the King's & Queen's Kibandas art project, where more than 100 small iron sheet shops are being transformed into community works of art, in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, Kenya, on March 30. PHOTOS BY WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY



**From left:** A street vendor and her child sit in front of a painted wall at the Kibera Arts District in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, Kenya, on March 30. Children stand in front of a hair salon with its wall painted by local artists at the Kibera Arts District in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, Kenya, on March 30.



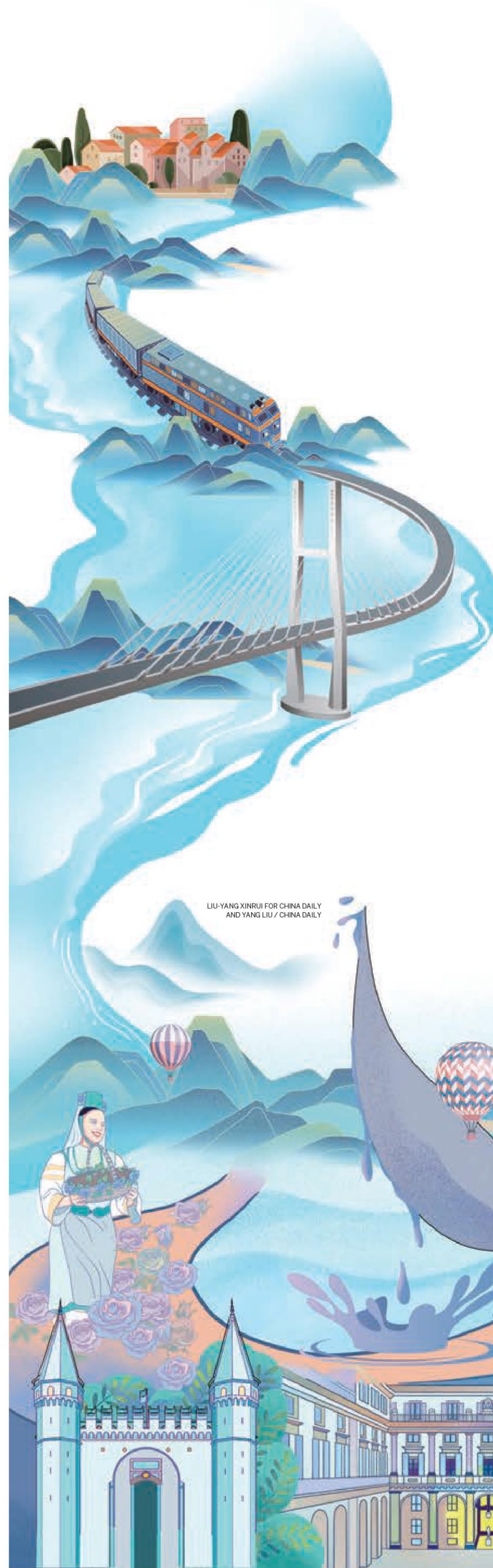
**From left:** An artist makes animal sculptures from recycled metal at the Kibera Arts District in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, Kenya, on Dec 23. A boy cycles past an animal sculpture made from recycled metal at the Kibera Arts District in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, Kenya, on Dec 23.

# VOYAH TAKES EUROPEAN MARKET BY STORM

### CHINESE NEV MANUFACTURER LEADING WAY FOR OTHER DOMESTIC AUTOMAKERS TO STEP OUT INTO OVERSEAS SALES

By CAO YINGYING  
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Editor's note: Driving a Voyah NEV, China Daily journalist Xu-Pan Yiru embarked on a marvelous journey across Europe. From north to south, she explored Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy, uncovering fascinating connections between Chinese and European cultures.



LIU-YANG XINRUI FOR CHINA DAILY AND YANG LIU / CHINA DAILY

**A** Chinese new energy vehicle marquee bearing the mythical Kunpeng as its logo embarked on a journey on the global stage, bringing the aesthetic and manufacturing prowess of the Eastern nation to the rest of the world.

Named Voyah, the premium NEV brand of China's state-owned automaker Dongfeng Motor, takes inspiration from the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zhou, also known as Zhuang Zi. In his masterpiece *Xiao Yao You* (Wandering Beyond), the Kunpeng is a legendary creature that can transform itself from a giant bird into a giant fish, symbolizing freedom without boundaries.

Voyah incorporates that concept into the brand's colors, logos, products and visual elements, creating a concept known as "Chinese elegance" that blends traditional Chinese culture with modern design principles.

The 4-year-old brand has three models on sale in the sedan, SUV and MPV segments, which are named the Passion, Free and Dream respectively.

**Free**  
Voyah's overseas journey began in June 2022 when its store opened in Oslo, the capital of Norway. It started presales in the country, which boasts the highest penetration of NEVs in Europe.

After three months, the first batch of 500 SUVs were shipped from Wuhan, Hubei province, to Norway, where they were delivered to customers.

Before that, the Free obtained European Whole Vehicle Type Approval, which allowed it to be registered and licensed in countries within the European Union.

Voyah CEO Lu Fang said: "The shipment of the first batch of the Free to Europe marked Voyah's entry into one of the world's most mature markets, where it will compete alongside international luxury brands and undergo scrutiny from overseas consumers."

"Voyah's international expansion not only represents a commercial endeavor but also demonstrates the internationalization of China's high-end NEV design, research and production standards," Lu said.

As the first model of Voyah's overseas expansion, the Free SUV is equipped with a 106.7-kilowatt-hour battery pack, offering a range of up to 631 kilometers under the Worldwide Harmonized Light Vehicles Test Procedure.

In terms of performance, it features dual motors, delivering a maximum power of 360 kW and peak torque of 720 Newton meters, enabling it to accelerate from 0-100 km per hour in 4.4 seconds.

Compared to the domestic versions, Voyah has adapted different hardware and software for the European market and redesigned the vehicle body to offer



**Norway**

As one of the countries with the highest number of electric vehicles worldwide, Norway is the perfect location for an EV road trip. Xu-Pan Yiru, a journalist for China Daily, took on the challenge, making her way through the country's majestic fjords. Driving a Voyah EV for more than 560 kilometers of predominantly cold mountainous terrain, Xu-Pan's journey brought the technological prowess and aesthetics of Chinese EVs to the European country. Along the way, Xu-Pan was caught in a snowstorm with heavy snow blanketing the road, visibility was extremely poor and the car's tail began to freeze. However, the reliable pink Voyah endured the challenges posed by the harsh conditions.

During their journey, the Voyah attracted the attention of several tourists, while Xu-Pan was drawn to the familiarity and foreignness of the fjords, which brought to mind Edvard Munch's renowned masterpiece, *The Scream*, one of the world's most iconic artworks. Similarly, the poetic allure of China's Three Gorges has inspired timeless masterpieces of ancient poetry, such as the works of Li Bai.

up to 2 tons of towing capacity and an optional trailer hitch.

Terje Nygard, a product manager in an information technology company in Norway, became the first overseas owner of a Voyah. "The Voyah Free is a perfect family car with outstanding driving performance and intelligent features like the adjustable tri-screen. The in-car cameras monitor my driving status, and if I yawn, it reminds me to take a coffee break, making me feel safer while driving," he said.

**Dream**

In October, Voyah further expanded its presence, opening its first showroom in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The showroom in Denmark's capital city blends modern simplicity with Voyah's "Chinese elegance", incorporating elements from Nordic nature and the European nation's fairy-tale culture while providing a comprehensive car-purchasing experience for customers, including test drives, customization, delivery and maintenance services.



**Denmark**

In the streets of Copenhagen, a perfect blend of modern and ancient architecture crafts a unique atmosphere. Denmark is renowned for its minimalist home design, a style echoed in the design of Voyah vehicles. This aesthetic resonates particularly well with younger generations.

As Xu-Pan Yiru met with locals, this affinity for simplicity became apparent, with many viewers impressed by the design and advanced features on the Voyah electric vehicle she was driving. Chinese aesthetics has found popularity in the Danish market, highlighting the affinity between Western minimalism and Chinese design principles.

The words of Chinese philosopher Laozi, "The great form is without shape", underscore the value of spiritual openness and sensory dexterity, akin to keeping a cup empty to receive. This simplicity, imbued with profound meaning, subtly influences Western modernism.

Many contemporary Western artists draw inspiration from Laozi's teachings, incorporating them into various art forms such as choreography, design and music, enriching the discourse on aesthetics.

Voyah's Dream MPV is also available for sale in other European countries. Measuring 5.3 meters in length, the seven-seat electric MPV is suited for a big family as a luxurious business shuttle or can be used as a mobile office.

The exterior exudes grandeur, while the interior design is luxurious, providing a spacious cabin. The second-row seats are as comfortable as first-class seats on an airplane and are equipped with electric adjustment, heating, ventilation and massage functions. With the addition of Dynaudio and eco-friendly cabin materials for infants, the ride is exceptionally comfortable.

With a 108-kWh battery pack, the Dream can run 482 km on one charge. It can generate 489 horsepower, a top torque of 620 Nm and top speed of 200 km/h.

The model underwent extensive testing in the Nordic region for over 100 days, covering a total distance of 52,200 km. These tests encompassed various terrains, including city streets, suburban roads, highways and challenging



**the Netherlands**

The poetic names of Chinese colors — peach red, goose yellow, bamboo green, tile grey and red white — draw inspiration from the sun, the moon, mountains, rivers and all things in nature, bringing romantic poetry to life through traditional Chinese aesthetics.

The Netherlands is known for its vibrant tulips and famous paintings by artists such as Vincent van Gogh. From the Amsterdam Central Station to Van Gogh Museum, Xu-Pan Yiru asked Amsterdam residents which traditional Chinese colors they like best alongside the Chinese-made Voyah new energy vehicle.

Together, they synergize to create a harmony of East-meets-West. Surprisingly, she encountered two Dutch individuals who were able to speak Chinese, with one reciting the ancient Chinese poem *Climbing Stark Tower* in its entirety, leaving her astounded.

It seems that the world is speaking Chinese and that Chinese aesthetics is indeed making its way around the world.

environments like mountains, coastlines and tunnels in countries such as Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark.

**Passion**

At the 2023 eCarExpo in Copenhagen in late October, Europe's largest electric vehicle fair, Voyah exhibited the Dream and the Free, and held the European premiere of the Passion sedan.

The electric sedan is the first model based on Voyah's latest platforms, ESSA and SOA, which help the Passion to reach a class-leading level in a number of aspects, including performance and safety. These elements have made the sedan an exclusive choice for car buyers. And the Passion offers global customers a refreshing taste of traditional Chinese culture and Oriental aesthetics.

Yet beneath the charming looks is a wild beast made possible by Voyah's technological prowess.

The Passion can accelerate from 0-100 km/h in 3.8 seconds, rivaling an eight-cylinder supercar. Its top speed, which is



**Italy**

China Daily journalist Xu-Pan Yiru wore a *manjiaqun*, or horse-face skirt — a type of traditional Chinese dress — on the streets of Milan, Italy. In front of the Milan Cathedral, the fashion statement drew fascinated crowds as they gathered to take it all in. Some were even eager to try on these skirts, praising their beauty and how they have sparked their interest in Chinese culture.

This demonstrates that when Chinese aesthetics is experienced around the world, whether through *hanfu* (traditional Chinese attire) or innovative products like the Voyah electric vehicle, the world takes notice of China's unique charm.

The inspiration behind Voyah's unique logo design comes from the description of the mythical bird Kunpeng spreading its wings in the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zhou's masterpiece *Xiao Yao You* (Wandering Beyond).

The twin wings symbolize innovation and strength, reflecting the brand's aspiration to become a new force in the automotive industry, and to help people achieve a better life while realizing their personal value.

class-leading, can reach 210 km/h thanks to the output of its batteries, which can reach 500 kW.

Alexander Bachmann, head of product at Voyah in Denmark, said that although Voyah is a new player in Europe, it is backed by Dongfeng Motor, which has more than 50 years of experience in vehicle production.

"Voyah products are competitive and we believe they are a strong value option in the Danish premium market," Bachmann said at the expo.

"The combination of high quality, technology, electric range, high level of comfort and the design make the cars a strong and complete offer in the market, and our dealer network covers the entire country," he added.

In mid-April, Voyah held a launch event in Italy, introducing its three models to the country. The first batch of 100 Voyah vehicles quickly sold out. Bruno Mafri, CEO of the Italian dealership CarMobility, holds Voyah's products in high regard and expresses full confidence in the prospects of their

cooperation with Voyah.

"Voyah boasts excellent performance, comfortable rides and high safety standards, surpassing traditional luxury cars in Europe. We are committed to working closely with Voyah to provide Italian users with outstanding products and an unparalleled car-buying experience," Mafri said.

Within two years, Voyah successively entered European countries including Norway, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Italy.

**Beijing auto show**

At the ongoing Beijing International Automotive Exhibition, running from April 25 to May 5, Voyah is presenting its whole lineup and latest technologies. The automaker announced its new overseas strategy, focusing on Spain, Germany, Portugal, Belgium and other European markets, in efforts to lead the new era of Chinese brands overseas.

Voyah's international expansion is a microcosm of the growth of the Chinese auto industry. China replaced Japan as the No. 1 vehicle exporter in 2023.

According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, the country's vehicle exports totaled 4.14 million units in 2023, up 63.7 percent year-on-year. Of them, NEV exports reached 1.2 million units, jumping 77.6 percent year-on-year.

When talking about the advantages of Chinese NEV exports, Lu said: "China has the first-mover advantage to export. Whether in terms of electric technology or smart technology, we are relatively ahead."

"Second, there's an advantage in the industry chain. We have a complete new energy industry chain, from chips and electronic controls to motors, making China a comprehensive hub. This is also why Tesla chose to establish a factory in China."

"After decades of development, China's auto industry has formed a solid understanding of internal auto technology. For example, when competing with luxury brands such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi, demonstrates strong competitiveness in terms of handling, safety, smoothness and comfort."

**Milestone**

On April 9, the 100,000th Voyah, a new Dream MPV, rolled off the production line from its factory in Wuhan.

With monthly sales increasing for seven consecutive months in 2023 and annual production and sales exceeding 50,000 vehicles in that year, Voyah's cumulative production has reached 100,000 vehicles. It demonstrates an accelerated pace of high-quality development, driven by strong demand in the market.

You Zheng, deputy general manager of Dongfeng Motor and chairman of Voyah, said: "This is a milestone in the history of Voyah automobiles and a significant event in the history of Dongfeng's NEV development. It signifies that Dongfeng's efforts to build a high-end intelligent new energy brand have entered a new stage of development."



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## WORLD

## Pakistan seeks reset of ties in the Middle East

Emerging partnerships with Iran, Saudi Arabia still face obstacles, experts say

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong  
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The latest visits of senior officials from Iran and Saudi Arabia show the further strengthening of bilateral relations between Pakistan and countries in the Arabian Peninsula and the wider Middle East to seek solutions to common challenges, experts say.

They added, however, that although both sides can benefit from the emerging partnerships, it would not be seen positively in Washington, which may throw up some obstacles.

"The ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, the Ukraine crisis, the United States' unilateral sanctions on Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline ... and constant economic protectionism along with newly coined decoupling and delinking parameters encourage both sides to further strengthen their relationships," said Mehmoos UI Hassan Khan, executive director of the Center for South Asia and International Studies in Islamabad.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi wrapped up on Wednesday a three-day visit to Pakistan. It is reported to be the first visit by a head of state to the South Asian nation after its new government took charge.

During the visit, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Raisi agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade to \$10 billion in the next five years. They also vowed to cooperate in fighting against terrorism.

"Raisi's visit has certainly accentuated bilateral relations," said

Imran Khalid, an international affairs commentator based in Karachi, Pakistan.

Strengthening the ties will not only promote regional stability but also facilitate a joint counter-terrorism framework, which will benefit all stakeholders, he added.

Nonetheless, he warned, "Washington's subtle warnings to Islamabad regarding its growing ties with Tehran cast a shadow."

"This unilateral stance underscores the United States' interventionism," he said.

A high-level Saudi delegation led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud visited Pakistan on April 15-16. The two sides agreed to further promote economic cooperation and convert the strong partnership into a strategic partnership for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

## Renewed push

"Pakistan's renewed push to strengthen economic, commercial and investment ties with the Middle Eastern nations is a continuity of Islamabad's approach of 'regional recalibration' of its foreign policy, being pursued for the past several years," said Irfan Shahzad Takalvi, founder of the Eurasian Century Institute in Islamabad.

Last week, Sharif held a phone talk with the President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to discuss the enhancement of cooperation to counter challenges associated with climate change.

According to Takalvi, there is a strong realization among policy-

makers in Islamabad that close ties with regional partners — particularly in investment, commercial and energy arenas — are the need of the hour and "the way forward" for the nation.

"Luckily, the desire is reciprocal and countries in the Arabian Peninsula, as well as the wider Middle East, are expressing keen interest to join hands with Pakistan. Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE, Qatar and others are working with Pakistan to build mutually win-win partnerships," Takalvi noted. At the same time, he said he hopes the days of coercion and diktat from the West can be over.

Pakistan has been strengthening its ties with Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, which is very important for several reasons, said Gokhan Erel, Gulf Studies coordinator at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Turkey.

Besides economic assistance, there's also cooperation on security matters, Erel said. These improved relationships can "influence how Pakistan interacts with other regional players like Iran and India, helping Pakistan balance its regional diplomacy," he added.

Khan, at the Center for South Asia and International Studies, said that Pakistan has been a staunch supporter of countries in the Middle East for a long period of time.

He said Pakistan's economic survival has been directly linked to its workers' remittances and foreign direct investments from the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC, countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

*Xinhua and Jan Yumil in Hong Kong contributed to this story.*



Triathlon athletes dive into the Seine with the Eiffel Tower in the background during the men's 2023 World Triathlon Olympic Games Test Event in Paris on Aug 18. BERTRAND GUAY / AFP

## Parisians' Seine swimming dream within reach

PARIS — Going for a dip in the Seine on a hot summer's day has been the pipe dream of many a Parisian since swimming in the river was formally banned a century ago.

But floating on your back under the Eiffel Tower could very soon become a reality thanks to the Paris Olympics.

The river will be the star of the opening ceremony of the Games on July 26 and will host the triathlon and the swimming marathon. Then, if all goes well, next summer Parisians and tourists will be able to dive in too.

Like Zurich and Munich before it, Paris has been reclaiming its river with one of three new urban "beaches" to open under the windows of its historic town hall next year, with another almost at the foot of the Eiffel Tower.

Nearly 30 more, complete with pontoons, showers and parasols, are planned for the suburbs and along the Marne, which flows into the Seine just east of the French capital.

Once regarded as an open-air dump, former French president Jacques Chirac first floated the idea of swimming in the Seine in 1990.

But it was the current Mayor

Anne Hidalgo who really ran with the idea, making it a pillar of her Olympic bid in 2016.

Some 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) has been spent on colossal public works to counter pollution, with Hidalgo vowing to swim in the Seine herself in late June. French President Emmanuel Macron says he, too, will take the plunge, but is coy about saying exactly when.

For many, it feels like a long-held fantasy is finally within reach, a return to an 18th-century idyll when Parisians splashed naked in the Seine.

## Water quality concerns

But there is a big if to all this: the sometimes sharp fluctuations in the Seine's water quality after storms.

Disastrous Olympic test events last August have raised doubts over whether the triathletes and marathon swimmers will be allowed to race for gold in the river.

Most of the events had to be canceled because the water failed to meet European standards on two bacteria found in feces.

Unusually heavy downpours and a

faulty valve in the sewage system were blamed.

But it prompted the reigning Olympic marathon swimming champion Ana Marcela Cunha to call for a "plan B".

"The health of athletes should come before everything," the Brazilian great told AFP.

What happened to lifeguard Gaelle Deletang will not reassure her.

The 56-year-old, a member of the French capital's aquatic civil defense team, got "diarrhea and a rash" after swimming in the Seine in central Paris this winter, with the river looking decidedly brown in March as floodwater poured over some of its banks.

Several other volunteers "had a bug for three weeks ... and everyone had stomach upsets", she added.

Young adventurer Arthur Germain, also came across "zones where I had trouble breathing" from both industrial and agricultural pollution when he swam the whole length of the Seine in 2021.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## 'Supply chain diplomacy' suggested for US, China

By RENA LI in Los Angeles  
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It's time to forge a "supply chain diplomacy" reminiscent of the 1970s' Ping-Pong Diplomacy between the US and China, said experts at an online seminar.

Global supply chains have been facing the most severe shortages in 50 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions.

"We are aware that the supply chains that connect the US and China have been a large part of the cause of inflation, a word that hasn't been used since 1997 till 2018," John Kent, a professor at the University of Arkansas, said at the recent webinar titled "The US, China, and Supply Chain Diplomacy".

"Because of this, the once-efficient and well managed set of supply chains have clearly been disrupted," he said.

Claiming for himself the role of "clinical" professor at the J.B. Hunt Transport Department of Supply Chain Management, Kent said that the global supply chains are "sick" now.

"Perhaps it's time for an updated version of Ping-Pong Diplomacy," Kent said. "We need to bring together academic and industry experts from the US and China to work collaboratively on the supply chains of the future — we call it supply chain diplomacy."

Inspired by the historic Ping-Pong Diplomacy that helped thaw



Perhaps it's time for an updated version of Ping-Pong Diplomacy."

John Kent, a professor at the University of Arkansas, on the state of supply chains

relations between the US and China in the 1970s, Kent and his team even placed a symbolic ping-pong table in the back of their meeting room.

"The ping-pong table demonstrates the diplomacy, that we and our Chinese partners are getting along, having fun together, eating dinner together and socializing together," Kent explained. "Diplomacy can start with simple gestures of goodwill and open the door to more substantial discussions."

Over the past few years, Kent has worked with academics and industry leaders on a global supply chain diplomacy initiative led by the George H.W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations and the Supply Chain Management Research Center at the University of Arkansas, offering another diplomatic channel to supplement government-level diplomacy efforts.

While some advocate a decoupling of American and Chinese supply chains, Kent believes that

fostering strong trade relationships is a more effective strategy to reduce the risk of military conflicts. He said that countries actively engaged in trade are less likely to resort to direct confrontation.

"We feel that there is a significant number of supply chains that are still connected and will likely be connected between the US and China for years, maybe for many years to come," Kent said.

The US imports a variety of essential items from China, including raw materials and manufactured goods, while China benefits from American agricultural exports such as grains and meat.

Kent's colleague, Daniel Stanton, a supply chain executive, entrepreneur and educator, known as "Mr. Supply Chain", believes that the supply chain relationship between the US and China is one of the most "fascinating" in the world.

"Some people refer to China and US as the 'G2' because they're the top two economies in the world," Stanton said. "We're huge trading partners. China depends on the US to eat, and the US depends on China for pretty much everything that we buy."

However, since former president Donald Trump's protectionist stance led to the imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods in early 2018, the current landscape of US-China trade relations includes a 25 percent tariff on many Chinese goods.

"The tariffs on a lot of Chinese products right now are 25 percent.

So if you increase the cost of the stuff that you're buying by 25 percent, then we call that inflation," Stanton said.

He noted it's not accurate when people assume tariffs take advantage of the other country.

"The tariffs are really a tax that's paid by American consumers," Kent echoed. "It's actually the importers that pay the tariff. It's as simple as a plus sign on a calculator. It's not complicated math."

Many companies strategizing to deal with tariffs often face unintended consequences and supply chain inefficiencies. For example, a US fan manufacturer faces a 25 percent tariff on components, but not on imported fans.

That leads to higher costs for assembly in the US compared with China, yet the finished products must compete on price with Chinese imports.

"It shouldn't come as a surprise that prices have risen due to inflation. If priorities shift towards reducing inflation, we could consider reassessing tariffs as a potential solution. This could potentially benefit people in both China and the US," Stanton said.

Both experts emphasized that supply chain diplomacy serves not just economic interests but also as a platform for peaceful international engagement.

Despite concerns raised about domestic security, national security, competition geopolitically between China and the US, trade can maintain peace, as "when goods don't cross borders, troops likely will," Stanton said.

"The flow of products and services back and forth actually makes the world better, reduces the chances of conflict, increases peace," Stanton said.

"We should allow both countries to do the things that they do best," he added.

## Biden's proposed tariffs on Chinese steel criticized

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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US President Joe Biden has proposed tripling tariffs on steel products from China, a further protectionist move that experts called a "nothingburger" and "show biz".

Biden called for the tariff increase on steel and aluminum imports from China on April 15. Two days later, when he spoke at the US Steelworkers headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania — a battleground state for the 2024 election and a historical home for the US steel industry — he said he would ask the US trade representative to consider tripling tariffs on Chinese steel imports from the current 7.5 percent, for the US steel industry.

Biden said in the speech that it was Pittsburgh and union workers who elected him before, and he'll return the favor.

In reality, Biden's proposed increase to the tariffs by 300 percent is "a nothingburger", because it's going to have no real effect on the actual industry, Gordon Johnson, founder and CEO of GLJ Research, told China Daily.

"The amount of steel coming directly into the US from China is de minimis. It's basically nothing, because the tariffs on Chinese imports are already so high, that there are effectively no steel (imports) coming in from China directly," said Johnson, whose firm analyzes the industry.

"What Obama did way back in the day is he increased the tariffs on Chinese steel imports into the US to roughly 100 percent," said Johnson, referring to former US president Barack Obama.

"So if you're a Chinese steel maker and you want to export your product into the US, you can't, because effectively it will be taxed at the price you want to sell it at," he explained. Indirectly, Chinese steel does come into the US by way of other countries. Chinese steel makers do export to countries such as Brazil, Poland, Canada and Mexico, when China's domestic demand is weak. Then steel-makers in those countries export steel to the US, according to Johnson.

"If Biden really wanted to affect Chinese steel imports, he would put

tariffs on countries that China is exporting their steel to, and he's not addressing that at all," Johnson said.

"The proposal of increasing the tariffs on Chinese steel imports is taking the US populace to be dummies, as a lot of American people don't understand this," he said. "It's kind of laughable for people who understand what's actually going on."

He also noted that China's steel dictates global steel prices. "Keep in mind, China produces and consumes roughly 50 percent of the world's steel. The US produces and consumes roughly 4 percent," he said. "So as goes China's economy, as go US and global steel prices."

"I don't think there'll be any significant moves from China. Because I think they understand that Biden is doing this to try to look strong in an election year," he added.

But he noted that even though those in the US steel industry know this is going to have no impact, they will play the game and use the tariff increase short term as a means to hike prices.

Johnson called Biden's move "purely for show". "He can then go out and campaign to voters that he is being tough on China when in reality, he's doing nothing, because this is going to have no real effect on the actual steel industry," said Johnson.

Allen Carlson, an associate professor of government at Cornell University, shared a similar view. He wrote in a commentary that Biden's tariff proposal is less about economics and more related to US domestic politics. "More importantly, this election cycle promises to be more turbulent than any that has come before it. And China policy will inevitably get drawn into the maelstrom," Carlson wrote.

The tariff announcement comes amid the planned sale of US Steel to Japanese-owned Nippon Steel, which both Biden and former US president Donald Trump strongly oppose.

"It's an election year, both Biden and Trump are going to use the steel industry as a political football to try to cater to voters," said Johnson, adding that he expects "more of this stuff to come down the pipeline".

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## COMMENT

## Editorials

## EU's protectionist moves detrimental to mutually beneficial partnership

In the latest sign that protectionism has reared its ugly head in Europe, the European Commission has launched an investigation into China's public procurement of medical devices, purportedly to determine if European suppliers of devices have been given fair access in the country.

The probe, the first under the European Union International Procurement Instrument, could lead to the bloc imposing restrictions on Chinese medical device companies bidding in EU public tenders if there is substantial evidence to support the claims by some European companies that they are being treated unfairly in China in terms of market access.

The investigation was launched on Wednesday, just a day after the European Commission raided Chinese security equipment company Nuctech's Dutch and Polish offices — seizing its IT equipment and employees' mobile phones — on the pretext that the company, which makes airport, freight and baggage scanners, has received unfair State subsidies which put its EU peers at a disadvantage.

The unusual step the EU has taken against the Chinese company is, as Financial Times noted, "awkward" for the European Commission as it "signed off on spending EU funds to buy those products for use by national customs authorities". The media outlet provided an inkling of the motivation for the move as the company is one of those that the United States has targeted claiming that it is involved "in activities contrary to the national security interest of the US".

Given that the bloc is able to verify and resolve any issues through various other means, such as communication with the enterprise or relevant government departments, the raid on Nuctech and the investigation into China's public procurement of medical devices are worrying signs that the EU is willing to employ high-handed means to demonstrate to Washington that it is not soft on Beijing.

It is common that trading partners have differences and disputes. Yet rather than conducting dialogue and consultation to resolve them, the EU has instead sought to take unilateral actions against China — its third-largest partner for exports of goods and largest partner for imports of goods. This will inevitably and unnecessarily ratchet up trade tensions and undermine the mutually beneficial cooperation between them.

The EU has always taken pride in being the most open market in the world, with its international trade in goods and services accounting for around one-fourth of its GDP. Yet the series of steps that it has taken recently to suppress and restrict Chinese enterprises, with no justification, have raised concerns about the bloc turning against free trade.

The EU already launched a major probe into imports of Chinese electric vehicles in October, while also looking into alleged subsidies received by Chinese suppliers of wind turbines and solar power equipment destined for Europe, which could lead to the group slapping much higher tariffs on Chinese products.

The EU's raids on Nuctech prompted the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU to lodge a protest, saying they "send a detrimental message not only to Chinese enterprises but to all non-EU companies conducting business in the bloc".

Europe turning increasingly protectionist bodes ill for the development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the EU.

There is a high degree of complementarity and shared interest between the Chinese and EU economies. The EU should honor its words of commitment to the open market and the principle of fair competition, and stop wantonly going after and restraining Chinese companies under various pretexts.

The two sides should strengthen their communication and coordination to solve the problems that exist between them.

## Low-key welcome shows what's expected

The Chinese side's nonchalant attitude to the Shanghai leg of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's three-day visit to China, which is about culture, education and business, poses a sharp contrast with the positive attitude it showed toward that part of US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's visit from April 6 to 9.

That is a manifestation of Beijing's dissatisfaction with what the US side has done to improve ties since the two heads of state agreed on the importance and urgency of repairing bilateral relations in their talks via telephone on April 2.

Reinforcing the discrepancy between the words and deeds of the US, the US House of Representatives passed two bills on Saturday providing weapons worth billions of dollars to China's Taiwan island, and banning TikTok, with the latter bill passing the Senate on Wednesday.

Besides, the largest US-Philippine joint military drill in decades was launched on Monday in waters close to Taiwan in the South China Sea. And days before that the US installed middle-range missiles in the north of the Philippines' Luzon island covering not only Taiwan and its surrounding waters, but also the whole southeast coastal region of the Chinese mainland.

If that's not enough, the US side has recently begun scaremongering about China's "overcapacity", and it has threatened to triple its already punitive tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum products, and ban Chinese electric vehicles and solar panels.

It has also hyped up its fabrication that Beijing has chosen Moscow over the West. That is why, on Tuesday, in a rare move before the senior foreign official's visit, Beijing issued a release that technically served to remind the visiting top US diplomat of five priorities for stable relations: seeing bilateral ties correctly, strengthening dialogue, managing risks responsibly, promoting cooperation and shouldering the responsibilities of a major country.

That's a typical Chinese diplomatic approach signaling Beijing's discontent with the US side doing exactly the opposite of what it said it would do on April 2.

The points Beijing has laid out for Blinken are the five pillars of the San Francisco Vision that was an outcome of the common understanding reached between the Chinese and US leaders at their summit in November. That was hatched from the principles of the United Nations-centered international relations, reflecting the Chinese side's long-term commitment to promote Sino-US relations on an equal footing, with mutual respect and through win-win cooperation.

However, what the US has done shows the Joe Biden administration has only intensified its endeavors to define and steer bilateral ties "from a position of strength". That was something that the Chinese side firmly rejected during the first face-to-face meeting between senior officials of China and those of the Biden administration in Anchorage, Alaska, in March 2021.

In the face of the Biden administration not honoring its words with deeds, China deserves credit for the strategic composure it has shown and restraint it has exercised. Despite the US' continuous attempts to bully, coerce and provoke, which the US side disguises under the cover of competition, cooperation and confrontation, Beijing has held fast to the belief that cooperation is both possible and the key to friendly relations.

Although, as some Western media noted, no red carpet was rolled out for Blinken at the Shanghai airport upon his arrival, the top US diplomat should be well aware that as well as the redlines his hosts have demarcated, they still view the visit as an opportunity to expand common ground so long as those redlines are respected.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Going all out to bring reform to give innovation an effective boost

China's efforts to build itself into an intellectual property power has achieved remarkable success in recent years, with 921,000 invention patents authorized in 2023, up 15.3 percent year-on-year, as shown by data released by the China National Intellectual Property Administration at a news conference on Wednesday.

In the Global Innovation Index 2023 issued by the World Intellectual Property Organization, China had 24 of the world's "top 100 science and technology clusters" by the end of last year, ranking first in the world for the first time. It was also the first time that China became the economy with the most clusters ranked among the top 100, overtaking the 21 clusters of the United States, the index showed.

The industrialization rate of Chinese

enterprises' invention patents exceeded 50 percent for the first time in 2023, maintaining growth for five consecutive years. Up to now, more than 1,700 universities and scientific research institutions across the country have registered 914,000 patents, including 636,000 invention patents. Therefore, it remains an important task for them to realize patent transformation and application to realize the patents' potential.

The IPR regulator and other relevant departments previously issued a program aimed at revitalizing patent stocks in universities and research institutions, which has produced marked effects. In the next step, the authorities will continue to accelerate the revitalization of existing patents while making efforts to promote the transformation and com-

mercialization of patents, so as to promote the industrialization of a number of high-value patents, and use cost-effective intellectual property rights to help cultivate and develop new quality productive forces and promote high-quality development.

In order to improve the intellectual property rights protection system, China is speeding up the formulation and introduction of the implementation plan for the construction of the system, to resolve the problems of easy IPR infringements, long period and high costs of IPR protection, and low compensation. This aims to improve the systematization, specialization and facilitation of IPR protection, and foster a better innovation and business environment.

— GUANGMING DAILY

## US should enhance competitiveness instead

The United States has started expressing concern over China's "overcapacity" in new energy recently. However, this argument is unworthy of even rebutting.

In a highly specialized global economic system, output and demand cannot be limited to a certain country or region. For example, 80 percent of chips produced in the US and cars produced in Germany are exported, but did anyone ever call it "overcapacity"?

According to the International Energy Agency's projections, to achieve carbon neutrality goals, the global demand for new energy vehicles will reach 45 million in 2030, and the demand for new photovoltaic installed capacity will reach 820

gigawatts, approximately 4.5 times and four times those in 2022, respectively. As the world's largest renewable energy market and equipment manufacturer, China's high-quality production capacity is not overcapacity, but capacity urgently needed by the world.

The reason why China's new energy products have a comparative advantage over those of their Western counterparts is not because of government subsidies, but because of enterprises' independent innovation, the complete industry and supply chains, large-scale market and rich human resources. Some in the US also accuse China's new energy industry of affecting the future of US enterprises

and workers. But it is the US' Inflation Reduction Act that supports auto companies to transform to new energy vehicles, leading to traditional car manufacturing workers losing their jobs.

From a political perspective, with the US presidential election later this year, both candidates are promising measures against Chinese electric vehicles. It is evident that the "overcapacity" argument put forward by the US is merely a pretext for protectionism and a tool to woo votes and seek personal gains. Blocking the entry of high-quality and affordable Chinese new energy products will only hinder the global green transformation.

— CHINA MEDIA GROUP

## What They Say

## Workload at grassroots level hard to ease

The voices calling to ease the workload of grassroots civil servants have become increasingly louder recently, exposing a key issue directly concerning the high-quality development of the country.

The hierarchical bureaucratic system of China means that although the grassroots government departments at sub-district and village levels constitute the large base of the pyramid-shaped governance system in the country, they are in charge of providing the majority of public services in their respective jurisdictions.

Governments at the county- and city-level and above have a complete architecture in which each bureau or department is responsible for one field of government work, such as agriculture, commerce, industry and technology, civil affairs, finance, environment protection, land and resources, education and public health. But when it comes to the village- or sub-district-level government departments, an office of several staff members might be responsible for the practical work related to all of these aforementioned fields in a village or community, which in many cases are

home to tens of thousands of people.

And the policies, rules and regulations are rolled out by county- and city-level government departments, which translate into implementation of the provincial authorities' directives that are derived from the principles and guidelines of the central authorities. And it is their effects that determine how grassroots offices are evaluated by their superiors.

Many of the directives, policies and instructions they receive have specific requirements, objectives and deadlines and how the grassroots officials perform in these regards is assessed according to a strict accountability system.

Those judged to have failed to fulfill their duties might even be investigated and punished, even though not all the tasks on the to-do list and the policies they receive from the upper-level departments fit local conditions. So they have to make necessary adjustments to ensure they can achieve the desired effects.

These grassroots civil servants face pressure from both their superiors and the people. On the one hand, almost all the upper-level departments, up to the central authorities, conduct regular or unannounced examinations and inspections of how their policies and regulations

are carried out at the grassroots level.

That means the grassroots civil servants, aside from their busy daily work, which might entail them being on-call round the clock for days, during the COVID-19 pandemic period for example, have to respond to these higher-level authorities' inspections at any time. Due to their reliance on their superiors for financing and evaluation, the grassroots civil servants actually have little space to bargain with their bosses. Multitasking, under great pressure, is therefore a typical feature of the work of grassroots civil servants.

At the same time, they have to address all kinds of complaints from the public and help them resolve their practical problems in daily life ranging from a broken streetlight to a missing manhole cover.

That more than 1,800 grassroots civil servants had died by 2020 in the national campaign to eliminate abject rural poverty speaks volumes of the work pressure and risks related to their duties.

It is hoped that the campaign the central government has recently launched to ease their work-related pressure and unnecessary workload does not at last trickle into an extra workload to be added to the shoulders of these unsung heroes.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Wang Huiyao

## There's a path beyond Thucydides trap

On March 27, the country's top leader and a group of US businesspeople and academics agreed that the existing and rising powers can avoid the "Thucydides trap". The meeting was held just days after the release of the book, *Escaping Thucydides's Trap: Dialogue with Graham Allison on China-US Relations*, at the Center for China and Globalization. The timing of the book is critical, because the US presidential election in November will likely define the future of US-China relations amid a complex geopolitical landscape marked by trade disputes and regional conflicts.

In recent years, I have engaged in numerous discussions with Graham Allison, a leading analyst of national security, at events at the CCG as well as other places around the world, leading to the creation of our book. Through a series of questions and answers, we have examined the dynamics between rising and established powers, seeking paths for peaceful competition between China and the United States.

On March 22, 2024, Allison and I jointly released the English and the Chinese editions of the book at CCG's headquarters in Beijing. At the book launch, we also had a number of meaningful discussions on the future of Sino-US ties that drew on key themes from the book. Allison, who first articulated the concept of the "Thucydides trap", addressed the matter head-on: a US-China rivalry is inevitable, but so is cooperation when our need for survival requires it.

It all began with Thucydides, considered by some as the father of history, who introduced a key concept in his seminal work, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. The concept is essential to the analysis of history, highlighting the perilous power dynamics between rising and ruling powers. At the heart of his analysis is the Thucydides' trap — an almost inevitable conflict that ensues when a rapidly rising power, such as Athens in ancient times, poses a significant threat to an established dominant power, such as Sparta. This dynamic, illustrating the tension between an emergent force and the established power made the Peloponnesian War almost inevitable.

If we look at today's global landscape, we will realize that no country in history has risen as rapidly and extensively in such a short time as China. From a country where, till the 1990s, 90 percent of the population lived on less than \$2 a day, China has not only succeeded in eradicating extreme poverty but also become the world's largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The fact that this remarkable transformation has occurred in four decades and is unprecedented, has made the US uncomfortable because, having shaped the post-World War II international order and being the only superpower after the end of the Cold War, it cannot bear to see the rise of an equally powerful country. This is where the Thucydides trap comes in.

Moreover, trade tensions, geopolitical challenges, and issues such as the Taiwan question have become flashpoints in US-China relations, emphasizing the need to avoid the "Thucydides trap", because now, more than ever, collaboration is crucial.

During the book launch, Allison used a compelling analogy to illustrate the intricate China-US interdependence. He lik-

ened the two countries to "conjoined twins", sharing vital organs but with two distinct heads and minds, and bound by the existential imperative to "coexist or perish". This drives home the point that engaging in harmful actions, even if momentarily satisfying, ultimately results in self-harm.

This concept aligns with the Chinese phrase, "you are in me, and I am in you," which the top leader quoted during a meeting with a bipartisan US Senate delegation, which included Democrat Charles Schumer, on Oct. 9, 2023. This notion is rooted in Chinese culture and contrasts with the often binary "black and white" thinking that marks discourse in the US, advocating instead for a more intertwined and connected approach.

The Chinese president was the first

global leader to truly explore the concept of "Thucydides trap", even before the publication of *Destined for War: Can America and China Avoid Thucydides's Trap?* in 2017. He has often said that there is no inherent "Thucydides trap" in the world but that strategic miscalculations among major powers could inadvertently create one.

As a student and colleague of former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, Allison shares Kissinger's perspective that Sino-US relations are perilously poisoned, yet insists that coexistence is achievable. He believes that through steadfast communication and thoughtful diplomacy, major powers can transcend the historical inevitabilities that Thucydides described.

In his role as a Harvard professor and former US government official, Allison significantly influences the narrative on US-China relations. He argues that cooperation between the two countries is not just mutually beneficial but also essential for survival. So the two powers should work together by setting aside their differences and focusing on their fundamental interests — chief among them being national survival.

The idea of interconnection has broader implications, especially considering the fragmented nature of the current global order, which lacks a common goal for collective action. It further underscores the necessity of exploring strategies to bridge divides and establish a framework for peaceful competition. Such was the impetus behind Allison's seminal work, *Destined for War*.

His follow-up work, *Escaping Thucydides's Trap*, directly responds to his earlier analysis based on our robust dialogue on how to prevent conflicts. This dialogue critically examines the triggers that could lead to war and proposes viable strategies for steering clear of the Thucydides' trap, drawing on historical lessons that underscore the possibility and necessity of peaceful coexistence.

In his new book, Allison refutes the "fatalist" view on potential conflict between the US and China, asserting that a conflict is "not inevitable" and, instead, advocates for adjustments in behavior and proactive steps to prevent a tragedy of historic proportions. Unlike many Western figures who continue to view China as a threat, Allison objectively views China's progress, respects its right to development, and lauds its achievements, and supports constructive competition, comparing it to the Olympics.

The author is founder of the Center for China and Globalization. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

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## The world indeed is divided as West versus 'Rest'

The world is now divided more or less between pro-United States or pro-West countries and "the Rest" as most countries are appalled by the double standard, hypocrisy and bullying of the US and some of its allies.

That the US uses double standard was evident on April 18 when it vetoed the UN Security Council resolution on granting full membership of the United Nations to the State of Palestine. The fact that 12 of the 15 Security Council member states, including close US allies Japan, the Republic of Korea and France, voted in favor of the resolution, and the United Kingdom and Switzerland abstained makes the US action even more shocking.

This is just one sign of how isolated the US has become due to its blind support for Tel Aviv in the Israel-Palestine conflict, which entered the 200th day on Tuesday. Worse, the US now doesn't even feel the need to hide such bias.

On Wednesday, US President Joe Biden signed a bill providing a \$26 billion foreign aid package to Israel, including a large cache of weapons despite the worsening humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza. In December, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken played a key role in bypassing US Congress to provide US military weapons to Israel at a time when the entire world was shocked to see the incessant Israeli bombing of Gaza.

## Besides, rampant gun violence, widening wealth gap, and increasing racial discrimination and homeless people are plaguing the US society.

At a press conference on the 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on Monday, Blinken said: "Hamas's horrific attacks on Israel on Oct 7 last year and the devastating loss of civilian life in Gaza as Israel exercises its right to ensure that those attacks never happen again, have also raised deeply troubling human rights concerns." His speech is disturbing because US politicians have been saying that Hamas should be held responsible for the deaths of 34,000 Palestinians, including more than 14,000 children. But the rest of the world strongly disagrees.

The US and some of its allies have doubled down on their double standard after Iran retaliated against Israel for attacking the Iranian diplomatic compound in Syria and killing two senior Iranian generals. The US and G7 "condemned Iran in the strongest terms" and threatened to impose fresh sanctions against Iran, in sharp contrast to their silence on Israel's actions and their description of the horrific situation in Gaza as merely "unacceptable".

When the US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, applauded the condemnation of Iran's retaliation at the UN by 48 members assembled by the US, she accidentally revealed that more than 140 UN members disagreed with the US on the issue.

European Union Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell said in February that "if the current global geopolitical tensions continue to evolve in the direction of 'the West versus the Rest', Europe's future risks being bleak". But the US has refused to recognize that. As Blinken pointed fingers at the human rights records of one country after another, he forgot to mention the worsening human rights situation in the US.

After being complicit in the atrocities in Gaza, the US has kept mum in the face of the gross violation of women's rights after the US Supreme Court abolished the abortion rights in November 2022, revoking *Roe v Wade*.

Besides, rampant gun violence, widening wealth gap, and increasing racial discrimination and homeless people are plaguing the US society. The UN Human Rights Committee's report in November criticized the US for its policies on not just women's reproductive rights, but also torture of women, excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies and its policies on immigration.

The US' barbaric embargo against Cuba has been condemned by the UN General Assembly members every year for more than 30 years, but no US leader has had the guts to correct the US policy. The US continues to abuse its financial power to sanction numerous countries, including its latest threat of imposing sanctions on Pakistan if it continues work on a gas pipeline linking Iran.

Such bullying and double standard used by the US will only sow the seed of division and hatred, and isolate the US and some of its allies from the rest of the world.

Sun Jiashen

## 'Nuclear-free world' a Japanese ploy to dispose toxic water

Tokyo Electric Power Company began discharging the nuclear-contaminated water from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the sea for the fifth time on April 19. The company had previously announced that it would discharge about 54,600 metric tons of radioactive water in seven rounds in the 2024-25 fiscal year (April 2024 to March 2025). The problem is that the water contains about 14 trillion becquerels of radioactive tritium that could damage the marine ecology and harm human health.

The Japanese company's action is in total contrast to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's recent speech to the United States Congress. Addressing the Congress, Kishida said that as a native of Hiroshima, he is committed to promoting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Since assuming power, Kishida has never let an occasion go by without using the so-called anti-nuclear narrative and projecting Japan as the only victim of nuclear bombs.

In 2020, Kishida published a book to promote his political thoughts, but surprisingly the book didn't propose any specific plan to build a "nuclear-free world". In June 2022, at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Kishida proposed "peace visions", mentioning practical cooperation to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. And in May 2023, the Hiroshima summit issued a joint document on the Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament.

Kishida pretended to hold high the banner of "denuclearization" to attract the attention of the world. But the call to build a nuclear-free world was Kishida's ploy to construct a narrative in line with Japan's security and environmental interests, and thus to occupy the moral high ground. On the surface, Kishida advocates the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but ignoring global opposition and the threat it poses to the marine environment and ecology and human health, he backed TEPCO's decision to dump the radioactive water into the sea.

TEPCO had been tampering with safety records for years — since much before the Fukushima nuclear accident — and there is evidence to prove that. In 2002, the company's senior officials resigned after being charged with tampering and falsifying nuclear power plant safety records. In January 2007, the company admitted in an investigation report that since 1977, it had been doctoring data to cover up safety hazards detected in 199 regular inspections at its three nuclear power plants, including the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

The company has also been concealing facts. After the Fukushima accident in March 2011, experts said a core meltdown had occurred in units 1 to 3 of the Fukushima plant. But TEPCO refused to admit it, only saying it had suffered "core damage". It was only after two months that it admitted that the "core had melted". Even after that, it blamed the massive earthquake and the devastating tsunami

it triggered for the Fukushima plant accident, while ignoring its failure to fulfill its responsibilities.

The "safety myth" construed by TEPCO to cover up the "man-made disaster" gave it enough bargaining chips to stage the painful drama which allowed it to go ahead with its decision to discharge the radioactive water into the sea as "a last resort".

Moreover, TEPCO has always had stooges and sympathizers in political circles, and it has never stopped luring politicians with special offers. For instance, many senior government energy officials joined TEPCO as members of the board of directors after they retired.

As for the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, it was set up under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and remained affiliated to the ministry from 2001 to 2012. This sparked widespread public protests, with people asking how a ministry promoting nuclear energy could regulate the use of nuclear energy.

In August 2023, TEPCO started discharging the radioactive water from the Fukushima plant. Even after facing widespread opposition from the international community, Japan did not direct the company to change its radioactive water discharge plan. Instead, it tried to build a so-called nuclear safety narrative by subtly changing the term "nuclear-contaminated water" to "nuclear-treated water" to make the radioactive water in the Fukushima plant sound less harmful.

To restore Japan's image that has been damaged by the nuclear wastewater discharge decision, the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formulated a dissemination policy under which it may invest about 70 billion yen (\$450 million) to deal with so-called false information. Specific response measures include the Japanese government more strictly monitoring negative information and publicizing positive information in an attempt to influence the people's understanding of the radioactive water discharge plan.

But since it is calling for building a "nuclear-free world", the Japanese government should take practical actions on the radioactive water discharge issue, because the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot be at the cost of the environment and human health. The Japanese government should also attach due importance to the legitimate rights of other countries, especially its neighbors, to be protected against nuclear contamination and consult all stakeholders and international organizations on how to safely dispose of the nuclear-contaminated water after proper treatment. And it should stop building the meaningless narrative of a so-called nuclear free world.

The author is an assistant researcher at the Center for the Institute of East China Sea Issues, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## GLOBAL VIEWS



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

YANG BOJIANG

# Calming tempers in Northeast Asia

Deepening cooperation in the region, cooling down hot spots and enhancing mutual trust between China and the US will go a long way toward achieving this objective

Northeast Asia is now the battleground for a great power rivalry and the reshaping of the international order, due to its enormous potential for economic growth and security strategies, as well as the complex geopolitical environment and relations among countries.

Compounded by the United States' increasing strategic investment, historical issues in the region are difficult to resolve, real-world contradictions keep

emerging while tensions and security risks are on the rise.

First, geopolitical divisions and suspicions among major powers have increased the risks of confrontation.

The US has encouraged and authorized its allies to support its regional strategies, exacerbating bloc confrontation in the region. While managing the risk of a US-China conflict, the Joe Biden administration uses multilateral means to mobilize its allies to compete with China. This not only escalates the confrontation between the US and China, but also has a significant impact on the strategic choices of countries in Northeast Asia.

With US mediation, the Camp David Principles pact was announced in August 2023 during the trilateral leaders' summit of the US, Japan and the Republic of Korea, aiming to expand trilateral security and economic cooperation and "institutionalize" cooperation in regional security and other areas, including conducting military exercises and trilateral summits every year.

Second, the regional arms race is escalating, with noticeable trends toward autonomous security and competitive security.

At the end of 2022, Japan issued three security documents including its new national security strategy, which abandons its exclusively defense-oriented principles and focuses on developing preemptive "counterattack capabilities", including acquiring various types of long-range missiles.

On the pretext of the Ukraine crisis, Japan has been trying to find a legal basis for strengthening its military systems and increasing military investment. Since 2013, Japan's military expenditure has surged by nearly two-thirds. According to the budget for the 2024 fiscal year approved by the parliament on March 28, Japan's defense budget exceeds 7.9 trillion yen (\$52.1 billion), up more than 16 percent from 2023.

Third, security hot spots are heating up, posing greater challenges to

crisis management.

With a fragmented and complex geopolitical structure, it is hard for Northeast Asia to transform and construct new systems. More than 30 years after the end of the Cold War, Northeast Asia still suffers from its consequences, grappling with even more friction and conflicts.

Among them, the Korean Peninsula remains a hot spot of traditional security issues. Under the pressure from the Biden administration, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been frequently test-firing missiles. Meanwhile, the US has intensified sanctions, and Japan and the ROK have conducted frequent military exercises around the peninsula, attempting to constrain the DPRK through trilateral security cooperation. Since Yoon Suk-yeol took office as the president of the ROK, inter-Korean relations have deteriorated and tensions have been rising on the peninsula.

Fourth, coordination mechanisms are failing amid a broken regional order. Against the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis, the divide in the regional order has become more pronounced. The US and Japan are attempting to lead the reshaping of the regional order, touting a "free and open Indo-Pacific" order.

The US and Japan have different security interests and security concepts from China and Russia, which can be traced back to the disagreement between the two sides on the post-World War II international order, when the former pursued the San Francisco system, while the latter insisted on the positions presented in the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation.

Amid a shaken regional order and intensified ideological conflicts, security coordination in Northeast Asia is completely lost, and a stronger US-led alliance system has exacerbated group confrontation and regional division.

Fifth, political security factors have hindered regional economic cooperation.

Since the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations and the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic ties in the 1970s, economic and trade cooperation between China and the US as well as its allies has soared.

However, the US is worried that economic cooperation between China, Japan and the ROK will upset US-Japan and US-ROK military alliances. Geopolitical security incidents have "coincidentally" taken place whenever countries in the region achieved or were about to achieve major economic integration.

For example, Japan illegally detained Chinese fishermen and a

trawler in the waters of the Diaoyu Islands in 2010; the US and the ROK deployed the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile defense system in 2016. These took place at a time when China-Japan cooperation, China-ROK cooperation or China-Japan-ROK cooperation was about to make breakthroughs.

It is evident that the deepening security dilemma in Northeast Asia is dragging the opposing sides into a vicious cycle of muscle-flexing. It is crucial to address, or at least alleviate, the dilemma through the following approaches.

First, deepening cooperation among countries in the region and strengthening the bonds of practical interests. Japan and the ROK have close and profound economic ties with China. The three economies are mutually dependent and structurally complementary.

However, pressured by the US, Japan and the ROK have been following its lead attempting to build "small yards with high fences", excluding China from the international high-end industry and supply chains. This approach is neither viable nor beneficial to the interests of Japan and the ROK.

Given their geographical proximity and shared interests, cooperation among China, Japan and the ROK is naturally in line with economic rationality and the national interests of all parties.

Second, making every effort to cool down regional hot spots, rather than stoking the fires. In the past two years, the DPRK's missile tests and US-Japan-ROK joint military exercises have heightened tensions and posed great security risks in Northeast Asia.

On March 28, the United Nations Security Council vetoed a US-proposed resolution to renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 Committee, namely the DPRK Sanctions Committee, for another year, terminating the panel's oversight of sanctions against the DPRK. This is an important step to cool down tensions.

The past 30 years have shown that imposing sanctions and military confrontation do not help resolve issues on the Korean Peninsula. Instead, activating reversible clauses in sanction resolutions and alleviating the humanitarian difficulties in the DPRK can help ease tensions and promote the denuclearization of the peninsula.

Third, enhancing mutual trust between China and the US, as well as among countries in the region, and promoting the establishment of dialogue and consultation platforms.

Although Northeast Asia sees the most geopolitical and great power strategic interactions, there has been no effective, regionwide security coordination mechanism. Moreover, it is difficult to restart multilateral mechanisms, such as the Six-Party Talks, involving China, the DPRK, the US, the ROK, Russia and Japan, which once played active roles in regional security coordination. China has tried to explore constructive security partnership initiatives with both Japan and the ROK, but has encountered setbacks.

Despite all these extensive differences, it is the common aspiration of all to pursue peace, stability and prosperity. In this respect, perhaps the 2024 super-election year can bring some hope and opportunities for change to Northeast Asia.

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

LI WEI

# Point of contest

Technology will be the key factor in the strategic competition between China and the US over the next decade

Since Joe Biden took office as the president of the United States, the country has adopted a "smart competition" policy toward China. Internationally, it strives to build and enhance US-led economic alliance networks, reinforcing the G7

and establishing new regional economic cooperation mechanisms such as the "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for

Prosperity, the US-EU Trade and Technology Council and the Minerals Security Partnership. The US has also identified strategic full-cum nations — such as the United Kingdom, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and India — for industrial and technological cooperation on a bilateral level. It aims to form a coordinated stance against China in global economic competition. Domestically, in a departure from the norm, Washington has adopted legislation with an industrial policy nature in infrastructure, chips, new energy and among others, to comprehensively boost the revival of US industries.

However, under the extreme pressure from the US, China's political, economic, and social systems have shown great resilience. In contrast, the US is bearing the brunt of various high costs. Especially after facing two geopolitical crises — the Ukraine crisis and the Palestine-Israel conflict — the dominance of US global hegemony seems stretched. In this context, the US has adjusted its strategic goal from defeating China over the short term to outcompeting China over the longer term, aiming to replicate the victory over the Soviet Union without warfare in 10 years. The next decade will see decisive strategic competition between China and the US.

For China-US relations over the next decade, technological competition will be the key factor in this decisive battle. The global hegemonic status of the US depends on it having leading capability in technology. The powerful military and financial hegemonies of the US — the two critical pillars for its hegemony — are both reliant on the US' capacity for technological innovation. Otherwise, these two hegemonies would be difficult to sustain. The competition between China and the US in the technological field is divided into two dimensions — the competition in tech innovation and the competition in tech application, which is highly dependent on a relatively complete industrial ecosystem. Currently, the US' domestic tech innovation ecosystem has not been greatly impacted, and the nation's overall tech innovation system, represented by Silicon Valley, remains quite active. The US' ability to lead technological innovation in the international eco-

nomics system is still very strong, especially apparent in the field of artificial intelligence, with companies such as Apple, Nvidia, Google Inc, Microsoft and SpaceX showcasing the strong technological innovation capability of the US private sector. However, due to a large amount of industrial transfer and domestic industrial decline, the US has been negatively impacted in terms of tech application and industrialization. For example, even with its leading technologies in the electric vehicle industry, Tesla still chose to invest and set up factories in China to win the global competition.

The US is in a state of "deindustrialization" against the backdrop of globalization, and its tech innovation lacks sufficient support in industrial transformation and application scenarios. Hence, the nation's tech innovation can be described as "innovation without industrial support". This is also a main reason why the Biden administration is promoting a modern industrial strategy centered on "friendshoring" or "reshoring".

Meanwhile, to compensate for the lack of domestic application scenarios, the US is actively advancing its tech diplomacy, improving its innovation environment and enhancing its innovation drive through international tech cooperation. Currently, the Biden administration is vigorously conducting tech diplomacy in semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and aerospace, building a transnational technology cooperation network to enhance its leading capability in the technology field. Among these efforts, the most noteworthy are the US' construction of a chip alliance and the Artemis Accords, aimed at advancing a new round of lunar exploration and the utilization of space resources. The chip alliance aims to prevent China from achieving technological breakthroughs in the semiconductor industry by establishing multinational coordinated technology export controls. The Artemis Accords is intended to win the initiative in the moon race against China through multinational cooperation and resource sharing.

China on its part has a strong industrial base and a complete industrial ecosystem, with enterprises such as Huawei, DJI, BYD, CATL and Commercial Aircraft Corp of China continuously seeking incremental technological innovations and securing significant technological accomplishments. China's proactive industrial clusters provide strong industrial support for tech innovations of businesses, and the nation's vast consumer market offers abundant application scenarios for tech innovation. However, China is facing challenges in the development of basic science and bringing in talent. Moreover, if the US forms a technology alli-

ance against China with other Western countries, cutting off China's overseas technology sources, China may face high costs for systemic tech innovation on its own. Therefore, how to maintain China's innovation capacity and momentum under the pressure from the US is a test for the rise of China as a major country.

In the coming decade, China should strive for balanced efforts in several aspects, including systemic institutional design and reform, to comprehensively enhance its tech innovation capacity.

First, balance the innovation led by State-owned enterprises and that led by private enterprises. State-owned and private enterprises have different characteristics and strengths in tech innovation. SOEs, with their strong financial resources, technological capacity and focus on long-term planning serve as the main force in technological innovation. Private enterprises are more flexible, market-oriented and sensitive to new technologies. The two types of businesses need to cooperate and complement each other. For example, in the face of the competitive pressure from the US in the space field, China should not solely rely on State-led investment but also encourage private enterprises to join the exploration of space technology.

Second, balance efforts to encourage incremental innovation and disruptive innovation. The US is a country rich in innovative spirit, thus able to take the lead in multiple technology and industrial revolutions. In contrast, Japan excels at incremental innovation, with strong national technological strength. In this sense, China needs to strike a balance between encouraging the accumulation of technologies while promoting disruptive technological innovations in order to take the lead in the technology sector.

Third, balance efforts to encourage independent and open innovation. China must strive to strengthen weak links in its economic system to enhance its self-sufficiency in core technologies. However, technological innovation follows its own patterns, and any significant technological innovation involves the division of labor and joint efforts of all humanity. The more intense the competition between China and the US becomes, the more China needs to enhance its openness to technological innovation, actively engage in technology diplomacy, carry out technological cooperation with countries around the world, and bring in global talents.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

## CULTURE



Visitors to the *Wandering in the Gardens of Jiangnan* exhibition examine the introduction and models of traditional Chinese Jiangnan gardens at the event held in Paris last week. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## CULTURAL JOURNEY

# Watering the gardens of friendship

Exhibition in Versailles and other European venues shows how civilization benefits from creativity and imagination, **Zheng Zheng** reports in Shanghai.

The grandiose Versailles Palace is a place etched in history, and its ornate grounds were the perfect setting for *Wandering in the Gardens of Jiangnan*, an exhibition that attracted throngs of people in the hope of glimpsing what results when Eastern design meets Western style.

The exhibition, which took place last week in Paris, and which is set to run in Germany and other countries later, interprets the mutual appreciation between civilizations by re-creating the splendor of traditional Chinese gardens in historic European settings.

Chinese gardens are not merely beautiful spaces, but reflections of spiritual and cultural ideals, explains Zhang Ming, 55, curator of the exhibition and director of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the College of Architecture and Urban Planning at Shanghai's Tongji University.

"Chinese and European gardens are the product of different views of nature. Our exhibition brought Jiangnan gardens to the renowned French gardens of Versailles, immersing visitors in the charm of the traditional gardens of the two countries," he adds.

Divided into two sections, *Garden Scenery* and *Garden Realm*, the exhibition, put together by the Information Office of Shanghai Municipality and hosted by Tongji University, unfurled a mesmerizing tapestry of history and garden design from Jiangnan, the region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

*Garden Scenery* delved into the historical evolution, design principles, and traditional craftsmanship of Jiangnan gardens through models and videos of the Yu and Fangta gardens of Shanghai, as well as the Wangshi Garden of Suzhou, the Jichang Garden of Wuxi, and the He Garden of Yangzhou, all in Jiangsu province.

*Garden Realm* invited visitors into a realm of artistic installations that evoked the essence of these living works of art.

Underscoring the cultural milieu that gave birth to the gardens, the



**Left:** The model of Fangta Garden in Shanghai on display at the exhibition in Paris, with the garden demonstrating the integration of historic sites into a contemporary public space. **Right:** The model of Jichang Garden of Wuxi, Jiangsu province, is also on display, showcasing the art of incorporating nearby landscapes.

“Chinese and European gardens are the product of different views of nature. Our exhibition brought Jiangnan gardens to the renowned French gardens of Versailles, immersing visitors in the charm of the traditional gardens of the two countries.”

**Zhang Ming**, the exhibition curator

opening ceremony of the exhibition at Versailles featured a concert of traditional Chinese musical instruments, such as *dizi* (Chinese bamboo flute), and a performance of Kunqu Opera, one of the oldest forms of Chinese opera, which was inscribed on the UNESCO's representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008. One character's words from the excerpts of *The Peony Pavilion* by Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) playwright Tang

Xianzu resonated fittingly with the theme of the exhibition, "How can one know spring's charm without wandering in gardens?"

"I have never seen such charming Chinese garden art before," a local visitor was quoted as saying after watching the performances. "The lingering flute melody reminded me of 17 years ago when my family and I traveled to China, starting a special connection with the country. I am moved and amazed by this wonderful experience of Chinese gardens."

Representing more than 2,000 years of evolution, the gardens chosen trace the diverse influences on classical Chinese garden techniques and artistic philosophy.

Meanwhile, the exhibition also looks to the future, shedding light on the garden as a model of tradition meeting modernity.

Co-curator Yang Chen, an associate professor also from the College of Architecture and Urban Planning at Tongji University, says they chose five distinctive gardens from four major cities as highlights spanning a long history.

The Yu Garden, a Ming Dynasty private garden, manifests the overarching themes and geomantic principles of Jiangnan. The Wangshi Garden exemplifies the concept of the literati retreat through its landscaped pools. The Jichang Garden showcases the art

of incorporating the features of nearby landscapes, using them in the garden. The He Garden features the wonder of intricately piled rockeries.

As China transitions from classical to modern parks, the inclusion of Fangta Garden demonstrates the integration of historic sites into a contemporary public space, according to the curators.

The enduring relevance of Jiangnan gardens lies in their ability to harmonize human-made environments with the natural world in sustainable, yet aesthetically rich ways. As modern society grapples with the challenges of urban development, these ancient insights offer wisdom and guidance for creating human, eco-conscious spaces to serve the public.

Interwoven with the historical gardens is a selection of contemporary art installations by artists from China and France, such as Ru Xiaofan, Zhang Xiaoli, Zhou Yang, and Alex Long Yuan. Their paintings, photographs, and multimedia works establish a dialogue between the ancient and modern, inviting visitors to ponder the evolving trajectories of China's garden culture.

One of the exhibition's centerpieces was the map of Jiangnan gardens — a visualization developed by researchers from Tongji University that details nearly 2,000 historical gardens in 50

cities. It captures the grand scale and density of garden making that once defined this region.

The exhibition came at a momentous time for Sino-French relations, as this year marks the 60th anniversary of the two countries' diplomatic ties. Both countries have promoted cultural exchange as an avenue for deeper mutual understanding. This exhibition is also part of the *Our Water: Flowing From Shanghai — Intercultural Dialogues Among World Cities* series, making its first stop in Paris, according to the Information Office of Shanghai Municipality.

Seen against this backdrop, the exhibition underscored the art of gardening as a historic meeting point between Chinese and European aesthetics. While classical European gardens mostly emphasized humankind's influence over nature, Chinese traditions focused on harmonizing human construction with nature, according to the curators.

Both resonances and divergences between civilizations can be seen through gardening. "Such intercultural dialogue helps us better appreciate different perspectives," says Yuan Jialin, curator and director of the international publishing department at Tongji University Press.

The exhibition brought to mind an era when European royalty and intellectuals were enthralled by China during the 17th and 18th centuries. The term "Chinoiserie" refers to a popular style of design that grew out of the European understanding of Chinese and wider Asian styles, Yuan adds.

Chinese concepts of natural scenery, water features and pavilions permeated French design under the Sun King Louis XIV, when he built the Trianon de Porcelaine in 1668, the first Chinese-style garden in Europe, according to the curators.

Following its French run, the exhibition will be taken to other countries to bridge cultures through the universal language of nature.

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## What's on



*Seeing the Tiny, Knowing the Profound*, at the National Art Museum of China, is an exhibition of dozens of works of refinement and delicacy by Liu Dachuan. On show are different kinds of ceramics such as plates, vases and pen holders, all decorated with paintings and calligraphy so small that a magnifying glass may be needed to read the characters. The sophisticated technique demands good calligraphy, and practitioners must also be versed in the rules of pottery so that the characters do not deform during firing. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng district, Beijing. 010-6400-1476.

## Minute writing

Ceramic mini-calligraphy is a craft that integrates two time-honored forms of Chinese art and crafts: ceramic making and calligraphy. It was listed in 2014 as a State-level intangible cultural heritage.

## Over the clouds

Last year, the Yunnan Art Museum mounted an exhibition of women artists to illustrate not only the province's distinctive natural and

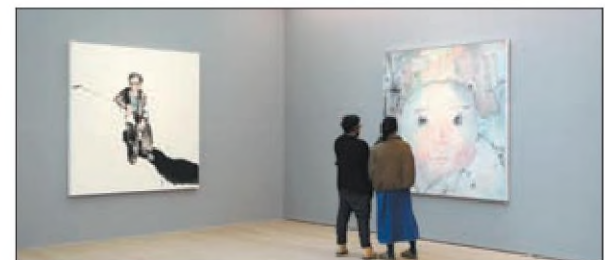


cultural landscapes but also the careers of female painters living there. Garnering much acclaim, the museum's second installment of the exhibition is currently on show at its Kunming base. *Silent Poetry Above the Clouds* runs until May 12. It brings together dozens of oil paintings by 33 women working in Yunnan, a province that has inspired artists with its remarkable scenery, environmental diversity and various ethnic cultures for many years.

Their vivid strokes lend a poetic twist to the hills, rivers, villages and people of the land that is home to attractions like Dali and Shangri-La, cities said to be hubs of the soul. It is a celebration of the vigor of their lives and the gifts they embody. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 118 Wuyi Lu, Wuhua district, Kunming, Yunnan province. 0871-6316-3665.

## Urban strokes

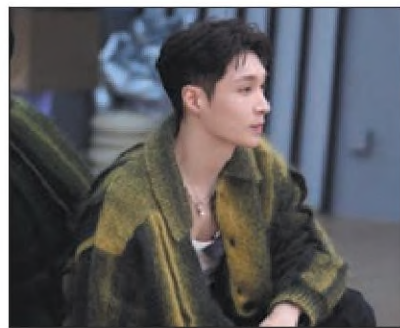
When Liu Qinghe began studying at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in the 1980s, he enrolled in the *lianhuanhua* ("sequential drawings") department, where he learned how to make the palm-sized picture book. Although he later studied ink art for his master's degree and has been devoted to ink paintings since, his study of *lianhuanhua* bequeathed a lifelong influence that lends his creations a narrative sense.



Now a professor of ink art at his alma mater, Liu's namesake exhibition at Tang Contemporary Art, curated by Cui Cancan, reviews developments to his work over four decades. It examines how his childhood in Tianjin, early training in *lianhuanhua* and years of living in Beijing have shaped his ink pieces. The show runs through to May 7. Exhibits include his New Urban

series, which is of vital importance to his exploration with ink. He has created urban landscapes that focus on the states of mind of people as they juggle between the feelings of excitement, confusion and agony of metropolitan life. 11 am-5:30 pm, closed on Mondays. 798 Art Zone, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang district, Beijing.

## LIFE



Most Chinese born since the 1990s know the quote: "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration". This saying is frequently found on posters that grace their primary school classrooms' walls.

This adage, widely attributed to American inventor Thomas Edison, emphasizes that great accomplishments rely less on innate talent than on relentless hard work. And it has long served as the motto for pop star Zhang Yixing, who was born in Changsha, Hunan province, in 1991.

Zhang, who's also known by his stage name, Lay, wears many hats, including singer-songwriter, music producer, dancer and actor.

Scouted for his adorable appearance at the age of 6, he first appeared on TV in the drama, *We the People*.

Later, his early exposure to music, and his study of instruments like piano and guitar, paved the way for his participation in various TV musical-talent shows.

In 2008, Zhang launched his music career after winning a global casting audition for South Korean giant SM Entertainment. Four years later, he rose to fame as a member of K-pop boy band EXO.

Since 2015, he has shifted his focus to the home market, expanding his repertoire to include film, TV dramas and reality shows. He has garnered over 50 million followers on Sina Weibo.

He says the importance of hard work on the path to success is indisputable.

Despite juggling multiple roles, he finds himself easily transitioning among them.

"Entering a scene naturally puts me in the right mindset," he says.

But Zhang explains that he began to question this inspiration-versus-perspiration motto that had guided him as he entered his 30s and reflected on his career.

"I sometimes felt exhausted," he admits.

"Could I achieve success without the one percent inspiration? Not necessarily. Now, I believe both hard work and inspiration are equally vital."

Today, Zhang is determined to find his own balance between diligence and inspiration on the road to new achievements.

### Mixing it up

He wants to relax more. Since collaborating with many international music professionals, he has noticed his foreign counterparts often seem to be more chill, while he tends to take things too seriously.

On April 17, Zhang released a new single, *Psychic*. It is a collaborative effort with foreign music producers, namely Americans Rykeyz, Sean Douglas and Kyle Reynolds, and British singer-songwriter James Abrahart.

The song's music video was shot in Dubai, with a production team of people from 20 countries.

"It's been a wonderful time," says American cinematographer Idan Menin, who served as the video's director of photography.

"Lay has been outstanding. He's one of the hardest working people I've met."

The track is available in Chinese, English and Korean, and features a dynamic blend of genres, melding emotive R&B chords with garage-style beats and bassy undertones.

"Once one of my songs catches the attention of overseas listeners, curiosity leads them to search my name, exposing more people to my songs infused with traditional Chinese cultural elements," Zhang says.

Zhang's signature musical style is "M-pop", which entails blending Mandarin pop music with outside influences. He introduced this concept with the release of his third album, *NAMANANA*, in 2018.

By the time his fourth full-length album, *LIT*, was released in 2020, he had clarified his vision for what kind of music he wanted to create within the "M-pop" framework.

"These songs blend traditional Chinese and Western pop instruments, feature lyrics in both Chinese and foreign languages, and tell Chinese stories. The music videos are visually enriched with Eastern aesthetics," he explains.

He discovers boundless inspiration for pop music from his Chinese roots. Such influences include the iconic book, *Shanhaijing* (Classics of Mountains and Seas); the Silk Road-era cave murals of Dunhuang in Gansu province; and *Xizhouqu* (Song of West

# A Chinese beat for the world stage

Singer-songwriter Zhang Yixing enables mainstream music from his homeland to go global, **Xing Wen** reports.



**Top left:** Pop idol Zhang Yixing acts as the producer in a recently aired international talent show, *Show It All*. **Right:** Zhang performs the single *Flying Apsaras* which was inspired by the Dunhuang murals in Gansu province. **Above:** The versatile singer-songwriter aims to promote traditional Chinese culture to a larger foreign audience in his own way. **Left:** Members from the Malaysian girl group Dolla strut their stuff.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



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Isle), a ballad from the Northern and Southern Dynasties (220-589).

"Many traditional Chinese music pieces are slow. Their grand, expansive feel is derived from their plodding rhythms. But younger audiences prefer catchy rhythms. Typically, I choose to preserve this atmosphere while sacrificing the catchier beats," he explains.

"So, some of my songs are very distinctive in style but not necessarily pleasing to the ear."

### Sounding out

Likewise, he has explored the rich tapestry of Chinese narratives to carve out a space for self-expression.

Take, for instance, the song, *Lian* (*Lit*), the title track of the album, *LIT*.

It derives its name from the Chinese word for lotus — *lianhua* — which symbolizes purity and nobility in traditional Chinese thought.

The song commences with a grand operatic introduction that recounts the saga of General Xiang Yu (232-202 BC), a tragic hero in Chinese history.

Along with such traditional Chinese instruments as the *xiao* (a vertical bamboo flute) and *pipa* (a four-stringed lute), the song also integrates a contemporary industrial bass line, drawing a parallel between the tragic hero, Xiang, and the poetic lotus. Zhang has been called "white lotus" by detractors, who perceive him as less innocent than he appears, and he uses the song to shrug off their criticisms.

The lyrics include the line "taking China to the world", which represents Zhang's greatest ambition.

He has long hoped that more Chinese music could be enjoyed overseas.

"Singles such as *Lian* (*Lit*) and *Flying Apsaras* serve as my 'calling cards'. When interacting with foreign musicians or producers, I often show them the music videos for these songs," he says.

He has found they're most captivated by songs' visual presentations, which is why he invests a lot of time and effort in producing music videos with powerful Eastern aesthetics.

"Numerous treasures from traditional culture await exploration by today's young artists. Through our creativity, we can showcase the richness of Chinese culture to the world in a cool way," he says.

The ambition of "taking China to the world" extends beyond his own music. Recently, he has taken on the role of producer of an online program aimed at forming an influential Chinese girl group.

The program, *Show It All*, provides a platform for Chinese singers and dancers to engage in exchanges and compete with international counterparts, such as the American group Boys World, the Thai girl group Pixie and the Malaysian girl group Dolla.

The program allows young female singer-dancers to compete to match international standards by performing alongside talented female music groups from around the world.

Simultaneously, it fosters cross-cultural dialogue between Chinese and foreign youth across various dimensions of cultural life. For example, the adoption of the mutual visa-free policy between China and Malaysia enabled the Malaysian girl group Dolla, on their inaugural visit to China, to perform local songs and present traditional Malaysian attire to Chinese singers and dancers.

Zhou Kui, director of the China Online Video Research Center affiliated with the Communication University of China, says that, for Chinese participants, this peer-to-peer competitive pressure is not only a series of challenges but also a force driving progress. The program assists these Chinese contestants in exploring and defining their unique cultural and stylistic positioning in the international arena, providing multiple rounds of simulation before they formally enter the international market.

"I hope to introduce our Chinese girl group to the world and offer these young women a broader global perspective," says Zhang.

"Balance" is something Zhang used to highly value in his life and work, and effort and talent. Yet the 32-year-old says he is still on the journey to achieve balance.

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## Teacher-turned-livestreamer inspires viewers to fall in love with books

Hundreds of thousands of bookworms tuned in to Xinhua's livestream interview with teacher-turned-influencer Dong Yuhui on the eve of this year's World Book and Copyright Day, which fell on Tuesday.

Known for his engaging speeches, encyclopedic knowledge and witty ad-libs, Dong shared his personal story and thoughts on reading.

"Inside books, we can find the most intense feelings, the most profound wisdom, the loftiest moral sentiments and the highest aspirations of human beings," the teacher

says during the show.

The quote quickly circulated online and featured in media headlines.

The 31-year-old influencer, who was born in rural area of Shaanxi province, is popular on China's video-sharing platform Douyin. He is also a senior partner at New Oriental's e-commerce unit, East Buy.

As an enthusiastic book-lover since childhood, Dong has always peppered his livestream sessions with anecdotes and quotes from renowned figures in history, ranging from Confucius to Shake-

spere, from ancient Chinese poet Du Fu, to the late Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

"I am reading with Dong right now. So thankful that you have inspired me to read print books once again," one netizen from Guangdong province writes in the interview's comment section on Weibo.

Two years ago, Dong was an ordinary livestreamer pitching agricultural products to online consumers on East Buy's Douyin channel, which was grappling with a lukewarm market response and stagnat-

ing subscriber numbers.

During a show in early June 2022, he cited German philosophers Nietzsche and Hegel.

Over 10,000 viewers watched that show, catapulting Dong to unexpected stardom. Within two weeks, the tally of subscribers surpassed 10 million, boosted by Dong's shows. According to a report from East Buy, net profits in the 2023 fiscal year reached 971 million yuan (\$136.64 million), with 10 billion yuan in gross merchandise volume.

"Put down the mobile phone and

enjoy the fragrance of books. Over the past two years, my biggest takeaway from Dong Yuhui's livestream channel is to fall in love with books and awaken my love of reading," says a viewer from Sichuan province.

In January, New Oriental launched a new Douyin channel for Dong, which currently has over 18 million subscribers. Books and magazines are a major category in the new channel's window display. Thanks to Dong's recommendations in several shows, *The Last Quarter*

of the Moon, by novelist Chi Zijian, has sold nearly 3 million copies through the channel.

In the interview on Monday, Dong also weighed in on the question of how books can change a person's life.

"The life that we refer to here cannot be merely defined by results — what kind of job you get, whether it is decent and well-paid or not, or how much profit you get from reading. That is too narrow a definition. In life, we read to enlighten ourselves."

XINHUA

LIFE



# A CENTURY OF CLASSROOM REVOLUTIONS

Latest season of TV series focuses on 11 modern masters who changed the way China teaches, Wang Ru reports.

百年巨匠，薪火相传

The Miyun Reservoir in suburban Beijing, one of the largest water conservancy projects in North China, plays a significant role in providing water to the capital. But not many people know this major project was actually designed by a group of university students as their graduation project.

In 1959, under Jiang Nanxiang, the then headmaster of Tsinghua University, who encouraged his students to combine theory with practice, students from the Department of Hydraulic Engineering undertook the project under the guidance of Professor Zhang Guangdou, who helped with prospecting and design.

As a result of the efforts of two groups of graduates, the design was completed. Graduation projects at Tsinghua were revolutionized, and mere words and images on paper were turned into actual, practical design tasks.

This is one of the stories told in the new season of *Century Masters*, which focuses on 11 noted educators, among them Peking University head Cai Yuanpei, promoter of mass education Tao Xingzhi and physical education advocate Jiang Nanxiang, which aired on China Education Television in March.

Produced by the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, *Century Masters* is dedicated to people renowned for their mastery in different areas. Earlier seasons focused on famous artists, architects and writers.

According to Chen Hong, deputy head of CETV, and also the general director for the series, the new season seeks to preserve and protect the educational practices, ideas and progress of the subjects, and nurture young people in the process.

"During the course of the development of education in China over the past century, many diligent, knowledgeable and accomplished master-level educators have driven the social and historical development to varying degrees," says Chen.

"We want to crystallize the wisdom and sweat of countless educators, a precious legacy for future

generations, and open a window to showcase the country's progress," he adds.

Chen says they mostly choose educators who were early headmasters of universities, or who promoted educational revolution and development in China, adding that other educators will feature in future seasons.

Many of them also made great achievements in other areas. This series, however, focuses on their contributions to education.

Unlike artists who produce physical creations, the contributions of educators are often theoretical, and so are difficult to depict visually. To circumvent this, the crew brought the educators to life by illustrating their ideas through snapshots of their work and life.

For example, the two episodes about Ma Yuehan, a pioneer in advocating for physical education at Tsinghua University, explore his habit of regular exercise maintained since childhood, his participation in national and international competitions at university, and the way in which he benefited from being in good health.

Drawing on his long involvement with sports, Ma believed that qualities nurtured by physical exercise, such as courage, perseverance, confidence and resolution, become part of the life experience of students, and help them develop good qualities as citizens.

"Athletic sport is the most effective, suitable and interesting approach to cultivating good citizens," he wrote in his 1926 book, *The Transfer Value of Athletics*.

Lesser-known details about the subjects of the series have also been uncovered. For example, in the episodes about Cai Yuanpei, a prominent educator known for the reforms he undertook as headmaster at Peking University, the series' creators discovered why Cai habitually got up early to study or work.

"When we were filming in his hometown of Shaoxing in Zhejiang province, we found out that when he was a student, Cai was sometimes



**Clockwise from top:** The Miyun Reservoir in suburban Beijing, which is one of North China's largest water conservancy projects, is a graduation project some Tsinghua University students designed in the 1950s; an old photo of educator Cai Yuanpei; Ma Yuehan teaching a student in the 1950s; a statue of educator Ye Shengtao at a primary school named after him in Suzhou, Jiangsu province; crew members filming in May last year in an ancient town in Suzhou, where Ye once worked; the Ma Yuehan Stadium in Xiamen, Fujian province, commemorates Ma, who advocated for physical education. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



challenged by difficult questions that he could not solve," says Zhang Jianzhong, a director involved with filming and editing the Cai Yuanpei episodes.

"His mother would advise him to rest and get up early to continue thinking. After following her advice, Cai found that he was more energetic in the early morning, and could more easily solve his problems. His habit was born as a result," he adds.

The production crew combed through biographies, letters and manuscripts, visited memorial halls and sites related to their subjects,

and interviewed family members, colleagues, students and scholars studying them.

For Chen, two groups of most valuable interviewees were people working at memorial halls, and researchers specializing in studying the lives of their subjects.

"Because of their lengthy experience telling, organizing and digging into the stories of these people, the guides at memorial halls often tell warm and touching stories about them," says Chen.

Scholars present a more comprehensive, systematic understanding

of the person and their contributions, and were sources of reliable information.

To ensure accuracy, the first draft of each episode was written by a scholar. Then, the directors revised the draft to make it more suitable for a documentary. For example, the episodes on Cai were the work of Chen Hongjie, who has written a biography about him.

"If our directors had jumped into the sea of literature, they might not have been able to find the most important events in the educators' lives and work, the most significant decisions they made, or the stories that typify the value of their ideas. So we invited professional researchers to build frameworks for us," Chen Hong says, adding that due to limited length of episodes, a large amount of material gathered could not be used in the series, and will be published in book form in the future.

Sun Xiufeng, director of the episodes about Ma, says he was impressed by how one of his students, an 88-year-old professor at Tsinghua University by the name of Wu Wenhui, was eager to be interviewed about his former teacher.

"He said that many people he knew his age didn't enjoy such good health as he did, and that he still took part in cultural and physical activities organized by the community. He owes all this to his habit of exercising, formed as a Tsinghua student under the guidance of Ma. He even choked up when he recalled details," says Sun.

Artificial intelligence technology was used in the production. In one episode about Cai, deepfake imagery based on photos and a video was used to make a lifelike re-creation of a scene of Cai managing teachers at Peking University in 1917.

"I believe there's enormous room to create with the help of AI that is still waiting to be explored. AI tools will become better and more varied, enhancing the beauty and influence of documentaries," Chen Hong says.

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CULTURAL JOURNEY

## Visitors hop onboard charming ancient ferry culture

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Once a bustling hub on the Yangtze River, the Xijin ferry dock in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, has shaped the area's culture, architecture and folk customs.

Italian traveler Marco Polo is said to have disembarked there when he arrived in Zhenjiang from Yangzhou, another city in Jiangsu, in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Although the original ferry is gone now, its charm remains.

Today, after years of restoration, the area has become the Xijin ferry historical and cultural block. Here, visitors can immerse themselves in ancient ferry culture while enjoying various leisure activities.

Zhai Dezhi, general manager of Zhenjiang City Construction Industry Group, explains that the local government started renovating and protecting the entire area in the 1980s.

Now, the revamped neighborhood in the old city offers cultural



**Left:** The Xijin ferry historical and cultural block in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, dates back 1,300 years to the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and boasts nearly 40 protected historical and cultural sites. **Right:** The area offers cultural displays, traditional markets, tourism destinations and creative spaces. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

displays, traditional markets, tourism attractions and creative spaces enjoyed by locals and travelers alike.

"We're focusing on blending culture

and tourism to create a leisure hub that also invigorates the nighttime economy. We've crafted many unique Zhenjiang experiences," Zhai says.

"The area is buzzing. Some people

say they love Zhenjiang even more because of the Xijin ferry."

During this year's Spring Festival holiday, the area welcomed 260,000 visitors, marking a 73 percent

increase over 2023. More than 70 percent were from outside the city. And the district's overall tourism revenue reached around 8 million yuan (\$1.1 million).

Zhai also points to plans for night tours of the ancient ferry area to nurture after-dark tourism through sightseeing, cultural experiences, dining and shopping.

The Xijin ferry historical and cultural block dates back 1,300 years to the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It's crucial for studying the history of China's transportation along the Yangtze River and the Grand Canal. The area boasts nearly 40 protected historical and cultural sites.

According to Wang Minsong, a member of Zhenjiang's cultural heritage protection expert group, the preservation of historical areas involves maintaining the authenticity of relics, the distinctive features of historical buildings, the integrity of spatial layouts and local lifestyles.

"Adhering to the principle of 'rescue first, protection as a priority,' we've focused on restoring buildings in the Xijin ferry area," Wang explains.

"All the preserved buildings are in use. None are vacant"