

Clean energy

Nation's rural areas gearing up for wind power utilization plan BUSINESS FOCUS, PAGE 10



G7 slammed for meddling in internal affairs WORLD, PAGE 6



History on display

Exhibition showcases Bronze Age artifacts from Yangtze River region CULTURE, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2024

US friend hails Xi's respect in 39-year bond

He is 'great person and good friend' who bears details in mind, said Iowa businessman

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

When asked what has helped sustain President Xi Jinping's friendship with him over the past 39 years, Luca Berrone, a board member of Iowa Sister States and a seasoned American businessman, responded with one word: "Respect".

In 1985, Xi, then secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhengding county committee in Hebei province, led a five-person delegation to Iowa for a two-week visit.

Berrone helped arrange the schedule for the delegation, and he said he was the first person that Xi met during the Iowa trip.

"In his life, I was a nobody in 1985. I just happened to be the person that organized a trip and took him around and took the time to explain things," Berrone told China Daily in Beijing.

They accompanied each other for those two weeks visiting farms, feed suppliers and grain processing companies, which he said "was a great way to dialogue, exchanging information, and learn from each other".

"There are a lot of things about China that fascinated me and a lot of things that fascinated them about Iowa and the United States."

Xi and Berrone had their first reunion in 2012 in Beijing when Xi was vice-president.

"I did not see him for 27 years, but I believe that 27 years later, he respected me, still, to the point that he not only remembered my name, but he mentioned my name."

When it comes to respect, it takes two to tango. Berrone attributed his respect for Xi to "what he has done for China" in more than

the past decade and honoring the commitments that he has made.

Their most recent reunion took place in San Francisco in November during Xi's visit to the US, when Xi met briefly with him and other representatives dedicated to bilateral friendship.

During the meeting, Xi brought up details of his trip in 1985, how much he enjoyed the visit and meeting with Berrone's 4-month-old son for the first time in 1985 in downtown Muscatine.

Xi is "a great person and a good friend that managed to remember my details", and that made the experiences so meaningful, Berrone added.

In San Francisco, Xi unveiled the plan to invite a total of 50,000 young people from the US for visits and exchanges in China over the following five years.

Berrone said one of Xi's contributions is "the spirit of cooperation, citizen diplomacy and learning and caring about other people's culture and habits".

As next year marks the 40th anniversary of the trip in 1985, Berrone said he hopes there is going to be a great celebration. "It's amazing to me that (nearly) 40 years have passed, have gone by in a hurry," he said with a laugh.

Berrone came to China last week along with the second delegation from Muscatine High School, which he said "is a great testament to the success" of the first one in January, given the very short amount of time since then and the relatively small population of Muscatine — a town of around 25,000 people.

See Friendship, page 3



Luca Berrone

Show of solidarity



Demonstrators hold a banner on Sunday urging for an end to the conflict in Gaza during a protest in Paris, France. A crowd of around 2,000 people gathered to voice their support for Palestinians after a French court allowed demonstrations to go ahead. ANTONIN UTZ / AFP See story, page 7

Blinken to visit China, discuss bilateral ties

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit China from Wednesday to Friday amid intensive engagements recently between Chinese and US officials, in a trip that analysts said could lay the groundwork for keeping the bilateral ties on the right track.

Blinken will meet with senior Chinese officials in Shanghai and Beijing to discuss a range of bilateral, regional and global issues, such

Inside

- Editorial, page 11
- See more, page 7

as the crisis in the Middle East, the Ukraine crisis and the South China Sea, according to a statement released by the United States Department of State.

He will also discuss ongoing work to fulfill the commitments made by the two heads of state during their meeting in San Francisco in Novem-

ber on counternarcotics cooperation, military-to-military communication, artificial intelligence and the strengthening of people-to-people ties, the statement said.

Blinken's trip will follow a telephone conversation between President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden on April 2, in which both sides agreed to stay in communication and tasked their teams to deliver on the common understanding of the two presidents.

His trip also follows the visit by

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen from April 4 to 9. During her visit, Yellen reiterated that the US is not seeking to decouple from China, and she called for both sides to maintain communication.

Since Yellen's visit, there have been intensive interactions between the two countries. On April 11, Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone conversation with Blinken, exchanging views on the situation in the Middle East.

See Visit, page 3

Sino-US mutual understanding key to world peace

As United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken prepares to visit China again from Wednesday to Friday, the Biden administration finds itself at a crucial crossroads in defining the future of Sino-US relations. Across Asia, there's a palpable sense of urgency, a collective belief that the time has come for the US to grasp this moment and forge a new era of collaboration and mutual understanding with China, a move critical for global



stability and peace.

In order to foster a sense of normalcy and stability in bilateral relations, it is crucial for leaders from both the Democratic and Republican parties in the US to dispel the unfounded and irra-

tional perception of China as an existential foe akin to the former USSR during the Cold War era. Great intellectuals like American economist Jeffrey Sachs, Singaporean statesmen such as late Lee Kuan Yew, Kishore Mahbubani and George Yeo have unequivocally emphasized that China's economic resurgence poses no national security threat to the US.

Unlike other big powers in the past, China has no history as a mili-

tary colonizer but has, in fact, been a victim of many colonial invasions such as in the Opium Wars era. It has no foreign military bases in Mexico or Canada, it has no battleships or warplanes patrolling the seas near US territories such as California, Florida, New York or Hawaii. Let us also not forget that China and the US were strong allies during World War I and World War II.

See Relations, page 3

For nature's sake



On the occasion of the 55th World Earth Day, artist Kong Ning unveils her "Transparent Earth" installation at Beijing's Hong'en Temple on Monday. The 15-meter artwork symbolizes love for the planet and advocates coexistence of humans and nature. YI HAIFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

CITY IN JIANGXI FEATHERS ITS NEST BY EMBRACING DOWN JACKETS

Gongqingcheng upgrades technology to keep leading edge as apparel manufacturer

Editor's note: In a series of reports titled "Claims to Fame", China Daily looks at how some regions have earned wealth and recognition through specific products to realize the goal of rural revitalization.

By ZHAO RUINAN in Gongqingcheng, Jiangxi zhaoruinan@chinadaily.com.cn

In the 1950s, when a team of educated youths from Shanghai arrived in Gongqingcheng, Jiangxi province, ducks seemed like the best option to find a "golden egg" for the struggling local economy.

Ninety-eight zhiqing, or educated youths, had traveled to Gongqingcheng to develop reclaimed land near Poyang Lake, the country's largest freshwater lake. Their efforts to inject economic life into the area through agricul-



tural projects concentrated on duck breeding.

The number of ducks raised in Gongqingcheng ballooned from about 1,000 in 1959 to 80,000 in 1968, according to local government statistics. A dried-salted duck processing plant was established in 1965, and four years later, it was processing more than 90,000 ducks annually.

However, the increase in duck numbers generated a significant

amount of waste, which became an urgent issue due to the foul smell and feathers filling the sky during the summer.

In 1970, the plant sent staff members to a feather-processing factory in neighboring Hunan province to find out how the duck feathers could be utilized.

Later that year, the plant started feather-processing workshops with a 2,000-yuan fund, and trained 27 female workers to make down jackets.

In 1971, the Gongqingcheng Down Factory, a State-owned enterprise that would become famous around the nation and overseas, began operations, producing China's first batch of 3,000 down vests.

See Garment town, page 2

INSIDE Cusp of a new technological revolution Global Views, page 13 www.chinadailyglobal.com Member of ANN Asia News Network © 2024 China Daily Global All Rights Reserved Newsstand prices: US \$1, Canada C\$1, UK £1.50, Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling, Asia Pacific: Thailand 120, Philippines 120 php, Myanmar 2000 kyat, Japan 210 yen, Dubai 10 dirham, Pakistan 300 rupee

PAGE TWO



Yaya down jackets were hugely popular both at home and overseas in the 1980s. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above: Settlers arrived in Gongqingcheng in the 1950s.
Below: Ducks were raised in large numbers in the 1960s.



Left: Feather quilts were produced in the Gongqingcheng Down Factory in the 1980s.
Above: Huts where early Gongqingcheng settlers lived.



Above: Young workers were trained at Yaya in the 1980s.



Left: Yaya's jackets were a hit at the Canton Fair in the 1970s. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Below: A Yaya shop in Yichang, Hubei province, in 2019. LIU JUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Garment town: How it quacked the code to success



From page 1

Zheng Cuiping, 59, started working at the factory in the 1980s when she was a teenager, and stayed there until she retired. "I remember when I was a little girl, ducks were everywhere in the small town. I could hear their quack! quack! quack! A dried salted duck was a very popular product," she said.

In 1972, the first down jackets produced by the factory made a splash at the Canton Fair in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and sold out in the blink of an eye; Gongqingcheng's economic surge had been started by the waddling birds.

Starting out from the Gongqingcheng Municipal People's Government office building, "Garment Town" can today be reached in less than 10 minutes on foot by crossing a street and walking along Zhiqing and Yaya roads.

Hundreds of down jacket factories and retail shops are scattered through Garment Town. In winter, shoppers and retail buyers from other regions flock there to look for warm down coats, running their fingers over rows of clothing racks in search of the best purchases.

The county-level city produced 70 million down jackets in 2022 and an estimated 75 million in 2023, according to data from the Gongqingcheng Garment Industry Office.

Gongqingcheng has a population of only 190,000 people, with more than 30,000 engaged in down jacket-related industries, the office said.

The golden age of the city's down jacket industry can be traced back to 1989.

In May of that year, Xiong Guobei, a designer at the Gongqingcheng Down Factory, was asked to design and make down jackets for then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his entourage to be presented to them as national gifts during their historic visit to China.

The entire factory was thrilled by the opportunity. "To present the down jackets produced by us as national gifts to a foreign leader was a source of great pride and excitement for everyone," he said.

While he was extremely happy, Xiong said he felt under immense pressure.

The problem was that he could only estimate the visitors' measurements. "Their chest and arms are often about two centimeters wider and longer than ours, so when we were designing the

clothes, we added two centimeters to the sleeve length," Xiong said.

He eventually designed a long down jacket for Gorbachev with a raincoat-style large lapel. "The style was dignified and chic, rich in Chinese national characteristics, and also adapted to European fashion trends," he said.

On May 15 of that year, 32 sets of Yaya down jackets were presented to Gorbachev, his wife, and their entourage.

"I heard that our guests were satisfied, and I was very happy and proud," said Xiong, who worked at the factory until he retired.

Ups and downs

In 1983, the Yaya brand was registered with the National Industrial and Commercial Bureau. For a long time, its quality standards were the industry benchmark in China, and Yaya jackets were popular both at home and overseas.

At its peak, Yaya had captured one-third of China's down jacket market.

"Yaya was all the rage from the 1980s to the late 1990s. Many movie stars and government officers from across the country came to our workshops to buy our clothes," Zheng said.

But the factory couldn't meet the high demand. "At the end of the down jacket production line there were many cardboard boxes for the finished garments," Zheng said. "As soon as we finished one, it was placed in a box. Once a box was filled, it would immediately be taken away by some store manager."

However, by 2002, Yaya's domestic market share was only 2 percent, and the company faced bankruptcy.

Under reforms of the state-owned system it was transformed into a private company in 2011, but Yaya struggled to keep up with the rise of the e-commerce industry and the shift in consumer spending habits. It continued making annual losses, which led to another restructuring in 2020.

"After 2010, e-commerce emerged and it was extremely difficult for physical stores," said Li Yao, the company's CEO. "Yaya didn't catch up, and its market share plummeted significantly."

A stitch in time

Despite Yaya's challenges, newly established down jacket manufacturers in Gongqingcheng quickly embraced lives-

treating. Brands such as Uwuu and Daomuxi carved out successful operations through digital livestreaming and achieved significant sales growth.

Founded in 2010, Uwuu was one of the earliest down coat brands to embrace livestreaming, and in 2016 its gross merchandise volume reached 80 million yuan. "We joined short-video platform Douyin in 2019. Now we have more than a dozen livestreaming rooms, and our livestreaming operations team has more than 50 people," said Xiong Jing, one of Uwuu's founders.

Uwuu's GMV has grown from 100 million yuan in 2021 to 450 million yuan last year.

Similarly, Daomuxi has experienced

rapid growth. "In 2023, our sales reached 180 million yuan. We have followed two paths: domestic online platforms such as Taobao and Douyin and overseas platforms like Amazon, which have considerable sales," said Chen Ling, the company's deputy general manager.

In 2020, Yaya began its digital transformation and its gross merchandise volume reached 3.5 billion yuan.

The following year it set up livestreaming rooms at the base of Mount Qomolangma to showcase the warmth and performance of its down jackets in a cold, snowy environment. By 2022, its GMV had hit 10 billion yuan.

"The major contribution of Yaya, or the Gongqingcheng Down Factory, to the city is nurturing a generation of talents in the down apparel industry," said Wang Fang, head of Gongqingcheng's bureau of industry and information technology.

"The founders of the newly established brands have close ties with Yaya. Most of them worked at Yaya and have acquired a variety of knowledge from down production to garment manufacturing and sales," Wang said.

Former Yaya employee Zheng came out of retirement to take a job as a factory manager at Uwuu. She now oversees production at three manufacturing plants. Zheng said while the newcomers cannot match Yaya's huge production capacity, its craftsmanship and manufacturing knowledge have been passed on and are constantly being developed.

Government support

Gongqingcheng now has more than 500 down jacket enterprises, and the city's industrial chain is complete.

The city government's strong support has been a crucial factor behind the growth of the industry over the decades.

Mayor Liu Yangqing said that the government provides millions of yuan every year to support the down jacket industry. This includes tax incentives and allowances for new technology transformations. "The down jacket manufacturing industry is the leading industry and livelihood provider of Gongqingcheng city. This is because it has created a large number of employment opportunities," Liu said.

However, like Yaya, some outdated aspects of the industry need to undergo

technological transformation, Liu said. Gongqingcheng's down jacket industry is restricted by old manufacturing equipment and outdated business models.

The municipal government has organized a group of enterprises to hold training sessions on technological transformation.

In April 2023, Yaya introduced an intelligent hanging system, which increased the efficiency of deliveries by 30 percent and reduced labor costs. With the support of a government subsidy of 2 million yuan, Uwuu's factory installed an intelligent hanging system last year, which will become operational this year.

In 2022, Gongqingcheng announced that it would subsidize the purchase of intelligent production equipment. A 20 percent subsidy is given for equipment costing below 10 million yuan, and a 15 percent subsidy for equipment exceeding 10 million yuan.

Liu said the technological transformations have shortened employees' work hours and increased wages and efficiency. "In the long run, it is a good thing to reduce costs and increase efficiency," he said. "It is also the embodiment of new quality productive forces in traditional industries."

China National Commercial Information Center data shows that the down jacket apparel market increased from over 100 billion yuan in 2018 to about 156.2 billion yuan in 2021.

Gongqingcheng is also extending its production reach outside China.

In 2018, a company in the Gongqingcheng Export Clothing Industry Park signed a cooperation agreement with a Georgian foundation to construct a modern down jacket manufacturing plant in Georgia. In 2021, Gongqingcheng's down jacket apparel exports reached \$32.76 million, compared with \$14.58 million in 2017, an increase of 125 percent.

"We now plan to leverage the Belt and Road Initiative, and cross-border e-commerce to sell our down jackets to northern Europe and even colder places," Mayor Liu said.

The ducks bred for commercial purposes have disappeared after Poyang Lake stepped up its conservation efforts in recent years.

Nowadays, the down jacket manufacturers in the city import their feathers from across the country.



TOP NEWS

Visit: Two sides should meet each other halfway

From page 1

From April 14 to 16, Daniel Kritenbrink, assistant US secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and Sarah Beran, the US National Security Council's senior director for China affairs, visited China.

On April 16, Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun had a video call with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

In addition, as a follow-up to Yellen's visit, the economic and financial working groups of China and the US held their fourth meeting in Washington, DC, on April 16, with the two sides engaging in "in-depth, pragmatic and constructive" dialogue on the macroeconomic situations of both countries and the world, as well as on how to achieve balanced growth, among other topics.

Zhao Minghao, a professor of international studies at Fudan University, said all these interactions, including Blinken's upcoming visit to China, will help prepare for the development of the bilateral relations.

"Beijing and Washington should not carry out a dialogue simply for its own sake. They need to meet each other halfway and genuinely commit to bringing about practical results," Zhao said. "Can Washington put its words into action? This will be critical to the stabilization of China-US ties and their ongoing durability."

During a fireside chat on Friday with Graham Allison, founding dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng reemphasized that the China-US relationship should not be defined by competition, as there are many areas in which the two countries can cooperate.

“

Beijing and Washington should not carry out a dialogue simply for its own sake. They need to meet each other halfway and genuinely commit to bringing about practical results. Can Washington put its words into action? This will be critical to the stabilization of China-US ties and their ongoing durability.”

Zhao Minghao, professor of international studies at Fudan University

"This is like racing cars on a cliff's edge, where conceited drivers are most likely to end up falling into the abyss below," Xie said.

On China-US economic and trade relations, Xie stressed that such ties are essentially mutually beneficial.

"A trade war serves no one's interests," he said. "Ultimately, American consumers will pay the cost, American businesses will suffer losses, the international economic and trade order and global industrial and supply chains will be rattled, and the global recovery will be dragged down."

Relations: Collaborative approach need of hour

From page 1

Contrary to alarmist, unjustified anxieties and jingoistic rhetoric by some in the West, China's historical track record is one steeped in millenniums of cultural richness and philosophical enlightenment. It was not a colonizing power, even when its fleet of massive treasure ships and 30,000 sailors led by Admiral Zheng He of the Ming Dynasty toured different continents in seven epic voyages. From the profound humanist teachings of philosopher Confucius, tea culture, Taoism, the pacifist self-defense focus of Chinese martial arts to the artistic splendor of its poetry and exquisite cuisines, China has epitomized a civilization dedicated to peaceful self-development and societal harmony.

Unlike other countries which became big powers partly due to colonial military conquests, the peaceful rise of China was built on the Chinese people's almost infinite capacity for hard work, entrepreneurial vigor, creativity, innovations and the enlightened policies of its pragmatic leaders. In only a couple of decades of market-oriented reforms and social peace starting in 1978, China had liberated over 800 million people from poverty on a scale unparalleled in human history. The fallacy of viewing China through a lens of hostility and age-old racial prejudice by some in the West only serves to undermine constructive dialogue and exacerbate tensions. Instead of reacting to it with fear and envy, this noble nation deserves our respect, admiration and partnership.

Indeed, the peaceful rise of China has been a driving force behind global economic growth and technological advancement. To unfairly perceive its ascent as a zero-sum game is to overlook the interconnectedness of our globalized world and the immeasurable shared benefits of win-win cooperation.

In advocating for a shift away from adversarial posturing and unjustified trepidations, it is imperative for the US to recognize the mutual interests and rationality that underpin Sino-US relations. Rather than resorting to counterproductive, disruptive punitive measures such as trade sanctions and technological embargoes, a collaborative approach holds the key to addressing pressing global chal-

The peaceful rise of China has been a driving force behind global economic growth and technological advancement. To unfairly perceive its ascent as a zero-sum game is to overlook the interconnectedness of our globalized world.

lenges. From combating the crisis of climate change to countering transnational threats such as terrorism and cybercrime, from wars, poverty to public health issues, the convergence of Chinese and US capabilities offers the world a potent means of collective action.

Fostering strategic cooperation between the two nations is essential to stabilize the world's increasingly complex geopolitical environment. By transcending narrow-minded, xenophobic nationalism and embracing a spirit of partnership, the US and China can serve as linchpins of stability and rationality in an uncertain world. It is only through dialogue, compromise and mutual respect that the aspirations of global peace and progress can be realized.

In conclusion, the forthcoming visit of Blinken to China presents another opportunity for the US to help chart a course toward constructive engagement and collaboration. Significant progress in bilateral China-US relations can only happen if the two countries can show sincerity in both actions and words. By shedding the shackles of outdated and antagonistic Cold War mindset and embracing a vision of shared prosperity, both nations stand to reap the dividends of a more interconnected and harmonious world order.

The author is moderator of the Pansdesal Forum, a multi-award winning writer, columnist of "Philippine Star" and "Abante" newspapers, economics and politics analyst, poet, college teacher and real estate entrepreneur. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Taking a stand



Protesters hold placards during a rally on Monday in front of the Armed Forces of the Philippines headquarters in Manila, to denounce the largest-ever Philippine-US annual joint military drills. TED ALJIBE / AFP

‘Recoupling’ urged on scholarly exchanges

Decline in collaborations likely to have negative impacts in future

By ZHAO HUANXIN
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com

Leading scholars from China and the United States have worked extensively over the past two years to revive scholarly exchanges, which were suspended by the pandemic and affected by the "over-securitization" of US-China relations, said Scott Kennedy from the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

As a result, experts in Washington and Beijing have agreed that such exchanges can yield national security benefits, and that the issue is how to calibrate US-China scholarly "recoupling" to strike a balance between yielding the greatest potential of connectivity while minimizing any downsides.

Kennedy, senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese Business and Economics at CSIS, highlighted these points in *US-China Scholarly Recoupling: Advancing Mutual Understanding in an Era of Intense Rivalry*, a collection of essays published at the end of last month.

Contributed by participants in scholarly conferences and policy community meetings that the CSIS and Peking University organized in 2022 and 2023, the essays identified the "securitization of everything" as "dominant obstacles" to sustained scholarly ties, and appealed that scholarly exchanges must not become collateral damage of national security impulses.

"Over the last two years, there has been a concerted effort by scholars from both China and the United States to stem the tide of scholarly decoupling," Kennedy wrote.

Friendship: Nations called on to work on better trade ties

From page 1

"We need to be building bridges and not walls, first and foremost. We need to pay less attention to these inflammatory statements," he said.

As a word of advice to the visiting US students, Berrone said, "Don't look at your phone because what you see around you here today, whether it is a food stand, traffic lights, signs ... everything is so different and so wonderful."

As a keen observer of China and a corporate veteran, Berrone was quick to note China's GDP growth of 5.3 percent in the first quarter of this year.

The CSIS, along with Peking University, has attempted to provide leadership in the rebuilding of bilateral scholarly ties to avoid a more permanent scholarly decoupling, he said.

In 2022, Kennedy and Wang Jisi, founding president of Peking University's Institute of International and Strategic Studies, engaged in a pair of exchanges meant to break the ice by exploring the role of scholarly exchange in stabilizing US-China relations, which had plunged to the lowest point since the two countries forged diplomatic ties in 1979.

They scaled that up by bringing a large delegation of leading US-China experts to then hosting a similarly large delegation of Chinese experts at the CSIS last year.

Scholars then supplemented the conferences with additional private meetings with government officials, business executives, journalists and other scholars in both capitals.

"We're deeply worried about scholarly decoupling, about what can be lost and not much gained through the division and separation of what has been a unified global community of experts," Kennedy said at the launch of the report on March 27.

"So just as the US and China need to find a way to coexist, their scholarly communities need to do so as well."

The "over-securitization" is restricting a more comprehensive recoupling of ties, creating a "waxing" situation which is stifling research, limiting overseas study, reducing mutual understanding, and harming the national interest

of both countries, Kennedy said.

Kennedy argued that although scholarly exchanges among students, faculty, and programs are usually not designed with national security in mind and generate a wide range of societal benefits, they can yield national security benefits over an extended period.

Jie Dalei, a senior research fellow of Peking University's Institute of International and Strategic Studies, said China-US scholarly exchanges can further national security interests of both sides through addressing intractable problems, emerging issues and transnational challenges.

On the other hand, the national security consequences resulting from miscommunication and miscalculation or from failure in addressing common challenges are "otherwise potentially too catastrophic," he wrote in an article included in the report.

Andrew Mertha, director of the China Studies Program at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, said an indirect approach to observing and understanding China is inherently distortionary.

"China scholars need to be there, and their scholars need to be here," Mertha wrote.

Jessica Chen Weiss, a professor of China and Asia-Pacific studies at Cornell University, also pointed out that academic experts in both China and the US have taken the lead in warning against the perils of over-securitization and the collateral damage that overly expansive restrictions can have for beneficial ties.

"An approach that fails to take

stock of the benefits and only seeks to minimize the risks of interaction and integration will jeopardize not only shared interests but also each country's respective national interests," Weiss wrote.

Weiss noted that ties with China have not just brought economic opportunities and losses, they have also "scored major wins" for humanity.

Weiss proposed that for a brighter future, both countries must focus as much on advancing what is valuable in US-China economic, scientific and technological integration as they do on mitigating risks and costs.

Scott Rozelle, co-director at the Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions, noted that US-China scholarly exchanges are still occurring, but at a much lower level compared with five to 10 years ago, which he said is a "worrying trend".

A decline in scholarly exchanges is likely to have large negative impacts on growth, equity and happiness in China, the US, and the world as a whole. Hence, it could ultimately be harmful to national security, he wrote.

In the report, the experts have made proposals on how to change the status quo.

Kennedy proposed that to reverse the downward trend in US-China scholarly exchanges, direct, unambiguous public statements should clarify what types of research or scholarly exchanges are not related to national security, and declare that the countries should try to promote scholarly exchanges in these areas.

Mary Gallagher, director of the International Institute at the University of Michigan, highlighted the need for academic institutions to do more to engage the public and policymakers about the benefits of scholarly collaboration with China to the US.

"The case must be made that a complete decoupling of academic collaboration would hurt the United States more than it would hurt China," Gallagher wrote.

Yesterday once more



Italians dressed in Roman-era costumes parade to commemorate the 2,777th anniversary of the founding of Rome on Sunday in the Italian capital. PABLO ESPARZA / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

CHINA

By LI MENGHAN

limenghan@chinadaily.com.cn

With her cane leaning to one side, 69-year-old Hong Mei holds onto the handrails of the treadmill and walks slowly as she chats with her friends.

After undergoing surgery to repair a hip fracture, Hong has been visiting the newly opened community gym for about a month, arriving at 10 am most days. The gym is free for seniors in the community who can take part in exercise programs and follow rehabilitation instructions suggested for them after undergoing physical assessments.

However, as a senior resident of 380 Lane Community in Jing'an district in Shanghai, Hong is eligible for many other benefits under an integrated community pilot program.

"The recovery is going well, and my days with my senior friends are fulfilling," she said.

"It's healthy, cheap and convenient to have breakfast and lunch at the community canteen and a casual dinner at home," Hong said, adding that she participated in community singing and dancing activities two or three times a week before her surgery.

The community is one of 106 communities participating in the pilot program, which focuses on accommodating a set community population and providing easy access to basic public services.

The concept was proposed in 2010 by Wu Liangyong, a professor at Tsinghua University and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering, who took it as the basic living unit. Inspired by the "walkable neighborhoods" of Singapore, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development stipulated that an integrated community should accommodate a population of 5,000 to 12,000 people and guarantee residents convenient access to public amenities within a five-to-10-minute walk.

The close-knit nature of such communities is seen as ideal for elderly people who need easy access to activities, meals and health services. Living in such communities also gives elderly residents a greater sense of self-worth and the ability to interact with others.

China initiated the integrated community pilot program in October 2022, and in July last year designated a batch of pilot communities to better meet the needs of the elderly.

Second lease on life

Old residential areas constitute a significant proportion of housing in China as well as the pilot communities.

The 380 Lane Community is one such community with 5,270 residents across 46 buildings. Comprised of four residential areas established around 1995, elderly people account for nearly 50 percent of the residents. Some are retired professionals who still have a great deal to offer the community.

"I no longer perceive myself as a burden to my children, but I find I have a deeper sense of happiness," said 69-year-old Cheng Cuiqing, a retired doctor who volunteers at the health service desk in the community's public services center.

"Now, I'm able to take care of myself on my own, and I have things to do every day."

Cheng helps measure the height, weight and blood pressure of elderly people who come for free checkups. During the lunch break between 11



Residents practice musical instruments together at Leshan Community in Shanghai's Xuhui district in November. The community is participating in the pilot integrated community program. LI MENGHAN / CHINA DAILY

Integrated communities give elderly residents comfort, purpose

Program creates easy access to services, boosting older people's self-worth



Left: Residents learn about flower arrangement in Xianghu Community in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in November.



Right: Hong Mei uses a treadmill at a rehabilitation gym in 380 Lane Community in Shanghai. PHOTOS BY LI MENGHAN / CHINA DAILY

am and 1:30 pm, she spends around 15 yuan (\$2.10) on a low-salt, low-oil and nutritionally balanced lunch at the canteen.

She also goes to a nearby digital booth to scan a QR code to get a free mask. The digital booth has a remote tele-consultation machine for minor illnesses, and a 24-hour pharmacy dispensing both over-the-counter and prescription medication.

A 5-square-meter orange booth has been set up in the community for commercial businesses to provide services such as housekeeping, laundry and kitchen knife sharpening. However, as a condition of their operations, the businesses must employ at least one member from the community.

"We constantly adapt our services based on the needs of the residents. For instance, we helped one senior repair his old mechanical watch, and we offer on-site service to elderly peo-

ple who need to wash their curtains," said Gu Haibin, a local Party official. "Staff at the spot are all residents of the community, relieving the unemployment problem while providing more intimate services."

Ups and downs

Integrated community managers have been encouraged to address the issue of whether elevators should be installed in older residential buildings.

Many older buildings lack elevators, making it difficult for residents to get around. The absence of elevators impacts the elderly more severely as they find it difficult to go up and down stairs, which restricts their daily outings and social activities.

To address the issue, a community needs to persuade residents to agree to install an elevator and address issues such as where it will be located

and construction costs. Other matters to be looked at are the impact of the loss of light on the ground floor and the installation of wider elevator cabins to facilitate wheelchair access.

The local government provides a subsidy of 280,000 yuan for each elevator, and the remaining costs are borne by the building's residents in proportion to the height of the floor they live on, ranging from some 30,000 yuan to about 150,000 yuan. However, this can lead to disagreements as some residents, especially more able-bodied ones, do not see the need for the elevators and are unwilling to bear the costs.

As of February, standards have been met to install elevators in 15 buildings in the 380 Lane Community, with six already put into use.

In addition to elevators, the community builds or renovates various public amenities, including medical

clinics, canteens, repair centers and nurseries.

High-tech security

However, not all the communities involved in the pilot program are old, and some are testing new technologies.

Built around 2010, Park Community in Jiujiang's Chaisang district, Jiangxi province, is relatively new.

It is using advanced technology to enhance the security of the community and provide extra safety for the elderly.

Park Community has installed facial recognition and AI-monitoring systems, and intelligent security cameras to prevent unauthorized entry by strangers and eliminate potential safety hazards.

Sponsored by local tech companies, the community has provided smart bracelets to its nine elderly res-

idents aged 80 and above living alone. The bracelets can conduct real-time blood pressure and heart rate monitoring and send alerts to the user's emergency contacts. A warning is also sent when the user stays at home for three consecutive days.

Sun Zhaoyang, a 22-year-old community worker, said that the elderly residents' children and community workers are listed as emergency contacts.

"I'm responsible for three of them, and I visit them two or three times a week ... there has not been a single instance of them staying indoors for three days," Sun said.

Cao Jianbei, 85, lives in the community. His son, who works in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, told Sun that he felt more reassured with the changes that have happened in the community.

Although the public response to the Park Community pilot program has been positive, significant hurdles remain in renovating residential areas and improving public services.

Huang He, deputy head of Chaisang district, said that 6 million yuan has been spent as of November on the construction of the integrated community.

Government funds have been mainly used for road improvements and upgrades to rainwater and sewage pipes. Huang said a financing company had raised funds for improvement work on surrounding parks and roads and the construction of leisure areas.

He said the biggest challenge to the long-term operations of such communities is attracting external investment to provide the services. "It's hard for us to find another 6 million yuan (as of November) for other communities," Huang said.

Viable future

Zhao Dong, deputy head of the Zhejiang Provincial Urban and Rural Planning and Design Institute, said the sustainability of operations is important to the future of integrated communities.

Zhejiang leads the promotion of the integrated community program, as it has the most pilot communities, with the majority of them more developed than others.

The province also has rich experience accumulated through previous provincial projects in residential living environments.

Zhao said it is important to have a scientific approach to urban development by taking into account the layout of public amenities, maximizing the use of resources and alleviating operational pressures.

This holistic approach should also be applied to the running of an integrated community, which can be transformed from a nonprofit to a commercial organization or reduce operating costs through collaboration with private enterprises.

Xianghu Community in Hangzhou's Xiaoshan district is looking at ways to minimize the costs of the services they provide.

The community has a canteen equipped with cooking facilities. The canteen operator is exempt from paying the rent, but in exchange, they have to provide subsidized meals for the elderly.

Zhao said community canteens can expand their operations to provide food delivery services to nearby areas.

Xianghu Community earns additional revenue by charging a 100-yuan entrance fee for visitors who are curious and want to learn from the operation.

"Government, companies, communities and residents should join hands for a promising future," Zhao said.

Neighborhood provides children hands-on experience with nature

By LI MENGHAN

At a community farm located 100 meters from a kindergarten in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, nine distinctive paths decorated with different materials — such as volcanic rock, granite and cobblestones — have taken shape.

"This is the children's solution to the dirty and muddy ground, and each class is responsible for improving one path," said Xu Wei, head of the Xianghu Kindergarten in Xiaoshan district's Xianghu Community.

"One kid told me that grasping a handful of cobblestones and putting them in the fresh cement is both interesting and fulfilling."

With funding and support from the education bureau and the community, the kindergarten is committed to offering high-quality education to children. Located a short walk from the children's



Children at Xianghu Kindergarten get hands-on experience at the neighborhood farm in Xianghu Community, Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

homes, the 2,500-square-meter farm is devoted to nature education, igniting children's curiosity and guiding them to discover the answers to their questions

through exploration and hands-on participation.

"Teachers at our kindergarten pay special attention to children's creativity and independent think-



ing, blending their ideas and efforts in the building of the farm," Xu said.

The farm offers a variety of activities, including planting vege-

tables, breeding animals and catching fish and shrimp.

The vegetables are carefully chosen for their low-maintenance and unique growth characteristics.

For broad beans, for example, a point seeding method is used that requires climbing trellises. This helps children learn more about nature subtly and unconsciously while nurturing their practical skills and cultivating a sense of responsibility.

Early in October, children observed the wilting of a Chinese cabbage and checked the leaves under a magnifying lens.

After seeking advice from their grandparents and community elders, they tried various methods to control pests, such as spraying lime water, sprinkling diluted salt water and placing bug stickers. Whatever the method, the vegetables were saved.

"Most of the elderly in our district used to be farmers, who serve as technical support of our planting activities and develop deeper connections with their kids in the process," Xu said.

CHINA

Kites bring delight to inheritor

Gao Jiahui finds success with Jinji craft abroad

By HUANG ZHILING and PENG CHAO in Chengdu

Gao Jiahui, who hails from a family of kitemakers, is delighted that he has been able to transform his cultural heritage into a successful international business, having sold more than 10,000 kites overseas so far this year.

"My kites are sold in countries such as Vietnam, Myanmar, Singapore and Malaysia," he said.

Gao, 61, was born into a kitemaking family in Jinji township in Chongzhou city, Sichuan province. He is the fifth-generation inheritor of the traditional Jinji kitemaking technique, a provincial intangible cultural heritage.

Jinji township is renowned as the "hometown of kites", where kite-making dates back over 300 years. It is one of the largest kitemaking bases in China.

"Jinji kites are mainly in red, yellow, green and black, and commonly feature designs such as goldfish, swallows and Chinese dragons. They are all handmade," Gao said.

Growing up surrounded by colorful kites of different shapes and sizes, Gao began learning kitemaking from his father at age 15. After practicing the craft for seven years, he set up his own factory in his backyard.

With his exquisite craftsmanship, Gao soon became a major player in the local kite industry. At his peak, he employed as many as 1,000 people in his home village of Shuilu to make kites.

"We would use hundreds of kilograms of bamboo to make frames every day, and about 100 people were solely responsible for bamboo processing. There was also a large pot that kept boiling, to turn the flour into a paste," he said.

During kite season, which occurs around Chinese New Year, trucks from several southwestern provin-



Gao Jiahui displays parts of the kites he made at his workshop in Jinji township, Chongzhou, Sichuan province. ZHU DAYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

ces line up to load up kites made in the village. The annual sales revenue earned by Gao's factory ranges from 3 million to 4 million yuan (\$415,000 to \$553,000).

To meet market demand, Gao has been improving and innovating his kite designs over the years. In 1993, he developed a three-dimensional "frame kite". In 2005, he invented a triangular kite, which is still popular today.

His factory now produces more than 170 kinds of kites.

"The smallest kite we make is only 10 centimeters long, while the largest can be over 100 meters long," Gao said, pointing to a Chinese dragon-shaped kite hanging on the wall.

"It's 100 meters long with 108 dragon scales on its body, and each scale has a chicken feather at the end, making it look quite imposing when it flies," he said, adding that he had recently flown the kite at an international kite competition held in Chongzhou and won an award.

The materials Gao uses for kitemaking have constantly changed over the past four decades.

"In the early days, we used asbestos paper, then we switched to oil paper and plastic. Today, the most commonly used material is non-woven fabric, which is wind-resistant, durable under sunlight and easy to color," he said.

Kite structures have also been optimized for assembly and folding,

making them easy to transport and carry.

"Despite all these changes, we won't abandon our traditional technique," Gao said.

In fact, he said he has taught more than 30 apprentices the traditional Jinji kitemaking technique.

"The greatest joy of kites lies in making them," said Gao, adding that he hopes to pass on the craft to future generations.

With the local government's support, he has been regularly visiting several primary and secondary schools over the past four years to teach the students how to make Jinji kites.

Meanwhile, some communities in Chengdu, the provincial capital, and

even organizations from other provinces have invited him to give lectures and conduct training courses on kitemaking.

"All my life, I only want to focus on one thing, and that is to pass on the tradition of the Jinji kite. This is my mission," he said.

To further his goal, Gao established a local kite association last month.

"By making full use of the association, I hope to better promote the traditional Jinji kitemaking technique and contribute to rural revitalization by boosting local tourism and economic development," he said.

Contact the writers at huangzhiling@chinadaily.com.cn

Trading of used goods trending among youth

TIANJIN — From old clothes and books to furniture and bags, young people in China are embracing the trend of trading secondhand goods, allowing the once-discarded items to be circulated and shared.

A Beijing resident surnamed Zhang, who lives in Haidian district, decided to move as her rental contract neared its end. She recently put up large appliances, including a refrigerator and a washing machine, for sale on secondhand e-commerce platforms because she couldn't take them to her next destination.

Zhang sees the purchase of secondhand goods as a thrifty, environmentally friendly way to shop.

"These products are of good quality, relatively inexpensive, and better suit my needs," she said.

She represents a growing number of young people in China who view "green consumption" as a favorable choice.

According to a report on China's e-commerce green development, people born in the 1990s and 2000s have a better understanding of green consumption compared to other age groups.

Xianyu, one of China's largest secondhand goods trading platforms, saw its daily transaction volume exceed 1 billion yuan (\$140.9 million), with over 100 million users listing their unused items on the platform last year.

According to the company, customers born after 1995 account for 43 percent of its users, while those born after the year 2000 comprise 22 percent. Members of the former group each earned an average of 2,700 yuan from sales of their goods on the platform last year.

In an e-commerce industrial park specializing in secondhand goods in North China's Tianjin, whenever events are held, the park is always packed with people coming to "treasure hunt".

"Since its opening, the park has attracted 213 companies, and last year, the park's revenue reached about 420 million yuan," said Chen Wenlong, the person in charge of the park.

According to a 2021 report on China's secondhand trading carbon reduction released by Tsinghua University's Institute of Energy, Environment and Economy, secondhand trading covers almost all consumer goods categories, with a trading volume that surpassed 1 trillion yuan in 2020 and is expected to exceed 3 trillion yuan by 2025.

"However, the biggest challenge for many secondhand goods trading companies is the issue of transaction compliance," Chen said.

Experts said that the emerging idle economy is still in its early stages and requires practical measures such as filling policy gaps, improving recycling systems and exploring new trade routes to expand.

Yunnan brewing unique blend of coffee, tradition

KUNMING — A cafe in Southwest China's Yunnan province offers coffee lovers a unique and unforgettable experience: the opportunity to enjoy a delicious cup of joe in an ancient cave formed tens of millions of years ago.

Under stalactites decorated with colorful lights and with the sound of bubbling spring water filling the space, the cafe in the Gemstone Cave Scenic Area in Fumin county is unique as it is situated in a natural mountain cave, hundreds of meters deep.

Because of its ingenious design, the shop has become a popular place for visitors to rest, sip coffee and admire the beauty of nature.

"Opened in October 2023, our cave cafe is favored by consumers opting for more diversified and personalized experiences," said Jin Qianqian, a barista who has been working at the shop since it went into operation.

Zhang Jian, general manager of the scenic area, said the cafe went viral on social media as soon as it opened.

Tourists from around the world, including from Japan and South Korea, have visited the spectacular karst cave to enjoy pour-over coffee and take in the awesome scenery.

Zhang said that the cafe attracts many visitors each weekend and holidays. Over 300 cups of coffee



From left: Visitors enjoy coffee at a cafe in the Gemstone Cave Scenic Area in Fumin county, Yunnan province, on March 16. JIZHEPENG / XINHUA A barista serves coffee for customers at a coffee shop in Menglian county, Yunnan, on March 19. CHEN XINBO / XINHUA

were sold every day during the Spring Festival holiday this year.

Over 30,000 people have visited the shop since its opening, and the owner is busy coming up with ways to enhance customers' experiences.

"In the future, we plan to hold music concerts and coffee competitions in this huge cave," Zhang said.

The cafe is just one of a slew of new coffee experiences available as part of an immersive coffee tour of Yunnan, China's main coffee-producing region.

As the coffee industry in Yunnan

now attracts global attention, coffee practitioners have been exploring innovative ways to promote coffee-related tourism and cater to the fast-growing population of coffee consumers in China. Coffee shops set in manors, farms, ancient architecture or on rooftops have all gained popularity among inquisitive tourists.

In Pu'er city, a coffee manor boasting an awe-inspiring mountain view is especially popular.

The manor's coffee brewing area, roasting area and other facilities are

interwoven across 20 hectares. A 60-yuan (\$8.50) ticket gives visitors access to nine kinds of pour-over coffee and a hands-on experience of the whole process, from bean to cup.

Xu Yan, a tourist from Hebei province, traveled more than 2,000 kilometers to the Xiaowazi coffee manor in Pu'er on a recent weekend.

At the viewing platform, Xu enjoyed the view of the drifting clouds and rolling mountains while sipping freshly brewed coffee made by baristas.

"Drinking coffee in the moun-

tain is a unique experience, and the coffee here tastes sublime," Xu said.

In addition to the coffee manor, Yunnan has also integrated coffee into its history.

In downtown Pu'er, historical blocks such as Daijiaxiang Street were once a choke point of the ancient north-south tea-horse trade route. Young entrepreneur Yang Fan knew that one of the century-old buildings would be the perfect venue for his cafe.

Old wooden beams, stone benches and other vintage paraphernalia can be seen everywhere in this old-fashioned cafe, which makes customers feel like they are in a traditional Chinese teahouse.

"We retained everything as before so that tourists can get a better understanding of the city's past," Yang explained.

The ancient dwelling is now a refurbished cafe serving quality coffee, adding cultural values to the beverage.

"Compared to common coffee shops, such a quaint and reminiscent cafe makes me feel more relaxed," said one tourist from Kunming, capital of Yunnan, who came to Pu'er for the weekend.

The tourist added that such experiences have won the hearts of consumers, and there are more and more people walking into coffee manors and specially designed coffee shops to start their own immersive, fragrant coffee journey.

XINHUA

XINHUA

China's rural museums promote local cultures

HAIKOU — Wang Zhenzhong, owner of a rural museum in a fishing village in the island province of Hainan, has gotten busier over the past two years as the number of visitors has increased.

A descendant of fishermen, Wang has collected items passed down by his family over the years, including nautical charts and compasses, and opened a museum near the venue of the Boao Forum for Asia in honor of his father and grandfather, who had both traveled across the South China Sea.

"The nautical charts I inherited

contain the stories of our ancestors fighting the wind and waves in the South China Sea, and those stories have been listed as a national-level intangible cultural heritage," said Wang, who also serves as the docent of the museum located in Paigang village.

Despite its small size, the museum has attracted visitors from across the country, who come for its unique exhibits and the culture it preserves.

With old photos and veteran fishermen on hand to tell stories, the museum offers tourists a place to

learn about the local culture and the courage of the anglers, said Du Yaping, a visitor from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

The site is one of a number of rural museums featuring local folk culture that have sprung up in China in recent years.

Museums are usually associated with gigantic buildings, eye-catching spotlights and massive collections in bustling downtown areas. Now, many museums demonstrating unique local cultures can be found in China's vast rural areas.

Located near a wide stretch of

cornfields in Xinjia village is a museum focusing on Mahu Opera, a traditional art of the Manchu ethnic group in Jilin province.

Developed on a site formerly used as a primary school, the opera museum has five exhibition rooms with nearly 2,000 objects on display, including manuscripts, masks, costumes, instruments and books, most of which were donated by Wang Songlin, a local inheritor of intangible cultural heritage.

"By exhibiting the items in the village, I hope to inform more people about this fading ancient art that

originated in the region," Wang said.

In 2021, China started to develop Jilin, Zhejiang and Shandong into pilot provinces for the construction of rural museums.

Zhejiang issued a guideline for the construction of rural museums in April 2022. It provides standards for rural museum construction, operation and management, and also calls for cultural heritage administrative departments and State-owned museums to strengthen management and support for the development of the sites.

According to the guideline, Zhejiang plans to build 1,000 rural museums from 2021 to 2025. As of Sept 30, 692 rural museums have been

built in the province, according to the provincial cultural heritage administration.

While modernizing its rural regions, China is also seeking solutions to preserve the distinct history and vibrant culture of its regions, with the construction of rural museums being an important part of this strategy.

Rural museums can effectively explore and inherit rural culture. With the development of the tourism market in China, museums with distinctive exhibits will continue to be included in tourists' itineraries, said Ma Chao, an associate professor from Hainan Normal University.

XINHUA

WORLD

AUKUS ties threat to peace in Asia-Pacific

New Zealand's shift in anti-nuclear policy may undermine regional stability: Experts

By KARL WILSON in Sydney and LIU JIANQIAO in Beijing

For 40 years, an anti-nuclear stance has been the cornerstone of New Zealand's foreign and security policy. But that may change, analysts say, as the country's conservative coalition government considers whether to drop such a stand and throw its weight behind the AUKUS trilateral pact.

In recent weeks, there has been a great deal of diplomatic activity among Australia, New Zealand and the United States with a focus on AUKUS, a security pact comprising Australia, the United Kingdom and the US, and on breathing new life into the ANZUS security treaty comprising Australia, New Zealand and the US.

New Zealand's involvement in ANZUS ceased in the mid-1980s after it instituted an anti-nuclear policy.

Earlier this month, New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Winston Peters met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and discussed regional security.

They said in a joint statement that New Zealand and the US were "working more closely than ever" on "shared challenges".

The statement highlighted New Zealand's long-standing membership in the US-led Five Eyes global intelligence network that also includes Australia, Canada and the UK, and its status as one of NATO's four "Indo-Pacific partners", along with Australia, Japan and South Korea.

Peters and Blinken endorsed the increased US military presence in the Pacific region, saying there were "powerful reasons" for New Zealand to engage with AUKUS and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad, an alliance comprising Australia, India, Japan and the US.

New Zealand is seeking to join Pillar II of AUKUS where it will share military technology with Australia, the UK and the US.

In a recent interview with Australian Associated Press, former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark warned of a "profoundly undemocratic" shift in New Zealand's foreign policy.

The government was taking the country on a "geopolitical shift which Kiwis didn't vote for", she said.

"New Zealand has worked carefully on a bipartisan basis for decades to balance its economic interests, democratic values and nuclear-free and independent foreign policy.

"This continues to be possible if politicians keep their nerve and are not drawn into geopolitical games driven from elsewhere."

Chen Hong, executive director of the Asia Pacific Studies Centre at East China Normal University in Shanghai, said New Zealand's decision to collaborate with AUKUS highlights potential disruptions to regional peace and stability.

AUKUS, primarily focusing on



New Zealand should approach its involvement in AUKUS with prudence and strategic foresight and jointly advance stable and far-reaching growth of its comprehensive strategic partnership with China."

Chen Hong, executive director of the Asia Pacific Studies Centre at East China Normal University

nuclear submarine collaboration, introduces the risk of nuclear proliferation in the South Pacific region, Chen said.

"Despite New Zealand's intention to join Pillar II of AUKUS, future potential risks associated with such engagements should not be ignored."

Global implications

The ramifications of New Zealand aligning with AUKUS would extend beyond regional dynamics, with significant global implications, he said.

He underscored the underlying motivations of AUKUS, which originated in 2021 with the aim of countering China's influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

"The concerted efforts by the US and its Western allies to enlist New Zealand in this small bloc represent a strategic maneuver to bolster their military capabilities," he said.

"This will not only escalate regional arms race and geopolitical confrontations but also undermine peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and even globally."

Wellington should consider its ties with Beijing — its largest trading partner — and think twice before making the final decision, he said.

"New Zealand should approach its involvement in AUKUS with prudence and strategic foresight and jointly advance stable and far-reaching growth of its comprehensive strategic partnership with China."

Grant Duncan, a political scientist in Auckland, New Zealand, said the current US administration "sees China as a major rival, so they need all the allies they can get in the Pacific".

The New Zealand military has been run-down in recent years to a point where "the country is practically defenseless", Duncan said.

On the other hand, the risk is that involvement in AUKUS would make New Zealand a potential target, he said.

Contact the writers at karlwilson@chinadailyapac.com.



A lake of meltwater has formed in the Swiss Alps on the tongue of the Rhone Glacier, which is retreating rapidly because of climate change, losing about half of its mass in the past century. MATTHIAS SCHRADER / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Europe is fastest-warming continent

PARIS — Europe is the fastest-warming continent as it endured a record number of "extreme heat stress" days last year, two leading climate monitors said on Monday, emphasizing the threat of increasingly deadly summers across the continent.

In a year of contrasting extremes, Europe witnessed scorching heat waves but also catastrophic flooding, withering droughts, violent storms and its largest wildfire.

These disasters inflicted billions of dollars in damages and affected more than 2 million people, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service and the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization said in a joint report.

The consequences for health were particularly acute, with heat singled out by these agencies as the biggest climate-related threat as global warming drives ever-hotter European summers.

"We're seeing an increasing trend in the number of days with heat stress across Europe and 2023 was no exception, with Europe seeing a record number of days with

extreme heat stress," said Rebecca Emerton, a climate scientist at Copernicus.

Heat stress measures the effect that the environment has on the human body, combining factors such as temperature, humidity and the body's response to establish a "feels like" temperature.

Last year, parts of Spain, France, Italy and Greece experienced up to 10 days of extreme heat stress, defined as a "feels like" temperature of more than 46 C, at which point immediate action must be taken to avoid heat stroke and other health issues.

Health risks

Extreme heat poses particular health risks to outdoor workers, the elderly and people with existing conditions such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

Twenty-three of the 30 worst heat waves on record in Europe have occurred this century and heat-related deaths have soared around 30 percent in the past 20 years, the report said.

Parts of Italy recorded 7 percent more deaths than normal in July,

with victims including a 44-year-old man painting road markings in the northern town of Lodi who collapsed and died.

The latest five-year averages show that temperatures in Europe are now running 2.3 degrees above preindustrial levels — twice as fast as the global average — and heat waves will become longer and more powerful in future, the report said.

This, coupled with aging populations and more people moving to cities, will have "serious consequences for public health", it added.

"Current heat wave interventions will soon be insufficient to deal with the expected heat-related health burden," it said.

Average sea surface temperatures in Europe were the warmest on record, the report said, with a severe marine heat wave in part of the Atlantic Ocean described as "beyond extreme".

Glaciers in all parts of Europe saw a loss of ice, while Greece suffered the largest wildfire in the history of the EU.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Maldives' ruling party wins election in landslide

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong wxiwenxu@chinadailyapac.com

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu's party won a landslide victory in Sunday's parliamentary elections, according to the country's election commission.

Muizzu's People's National Congress, or PNC, won 71 of the 93 seats, provisional results from the Maldives Elections Commission and media projections showed.

A total of 368 candidates from six political parties and independent groups contested the elections. A formal ratification of the results is expected within seven days of the elections.

Muizzu, 45, leads the coalition of PNC and the Progressive Party of Maldives.

Karori Singh, former director and emeritus fellow of the South Asia Studies Centre at the University of Rajasthan in India, said Muizzu has emerged very strong in his governance.

"In essence, the people in Maldives have overwhelmingly endorsed the policies of the Muizzu presidency," he said, calling it an important moment in the country's development path.

Maarj Farooq, deputy editor-in-chief of Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group, said the results were a "significant turning point" for the Maldives.

"This outcome could greatly enhance political stability and enable more focused governance, potentially accelerating economic and social reforms," Farooq said.

The strong mandate given to PNC may allow the Maldives to pursue a more independent foreign policy and development path, less influenced by external pressures, notably from larger regional powers, he said.



Officials prepare to count votes for the Maldives' parliamentary elections at a polling station in Male on Sunday. MOHAMED AFRAH / AFP

This shift could be seen as a renewal of sovereignty and self-determination, mirroring the profound effect of gaining independence, he said.

Khalid Taimur Akram, executive director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future in Islamabad, said Muizzu has emphasized the importance of preserving the strategic autonomy of the Maldives and diversifying partnerships to prevent undue reliance on any single country.

'Path toward prosperity'

"President Muizzu's administration has pursued an independent foreign policy that prioritizes the Maldives' national interests while fostering cooperation with multiple partners, which underscores the country's determination to lead a path toward prosperity and stability," he said.

The Maldives is an independent and sovereign country with the inherent right to shape its destiny and pursue a development path aligned with its national interests, Akram said.

"Muizzu's administration has actively pursued a diversified foreign policy, aligning with the global trend of seeking multiple partnerships to bolster economic development and stability," he said.

Muizzu was elected the eighth president of the Maldives in September and took office in November.

He served as minister of housing and infrastructure from 2012 to 2018 and mayor of the capital Male in 2021.

Muizzu has emphasized the importance of maintaining amicable relations with all countries, prioritizing economic development and safeguarding sovereignty, Akram said.

"The decision to send home Indian military personnel highlights the Maldives' commitment to preserving its independence and autonomy in defense matters," he said, adding that Muizzu's vision for the Maldives' foreign policy is based on the importance of economic development as a driver of diplomatic ties.

China congratulated the Maldives on the successful parliamentary elections and fully respects the choice of the Maldivian people, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Monday.

More than 280,000 voters were eligible for Sunday's elections. The Maldives Elections Commission said more than 207,000 people cast their ballots by 5 pm, putting voter turnout at more than 72 percent.

The parliamentary election was originally scheduled for March 17, which fell on the first week of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, but was postponed by the parliament, local media reported.

Wang Qingyun in Beijing and Xinhua contributed to this story.

G7 meddling in internal affairs condemned

By WANG QINGYUN wangqingyun@chinadaily.com.cn

China has slammed a communique issued by the Group of Seven foreign ministers, urging the bloc to stop interfering in other countries' internal affairs.

In the communique issued following a meeting in Italy last week, the G7 ministers said they were "seriously concerned" about the situation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea.

They also expressed "concerns" over issues related to Xinjiang, Xizang and Hong Kong, and mentioned the Taiwan question.

China is "strongly dissatisfied and firmly opposed to" the meeting manipulating China-related issues and disregarding facts, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Monday.

"The general situation in the South China Sea is peaceful and stable as a result of the joint efforts by China and ASEAN countries," Wang said. "There is no problem regarding the freedom of navigation in the region."

Regarding the Taiwan question, he said the most effective way to ensure peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is to uphold the one-China principle and oppose "Taiwan independence".

In addition, Hong Kong, which has restored order, is working toward thriving at a faster pace, he said, adding that Xinjiang and Xizang are enjoying harmony, prosperity and stability, and members of all ethnic groups live peacefully and happily there.

Shared development

"While focusing on its own development, China is committed to promoting shared development of all countries," he said.

Quoting World Bank figures, Wang said China's contribution to global economic growth is higher than that of the G7 countries combined.

China calls for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, firmly upholds the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and follows open and win-win cooperation, he said.

"In contrast, the G7 has held fast to the Cold War mentality, cobbled together small exclusive groupings and escalated regional tensions and conflicts," he said.

Wang urged the G7 to change the habit of deflecting blame and work with the rest of the world to uphold peace, enhance cooperation and advance development.

Briefly

PAPUA NEW GUINEA PM objects to Biden's 'cannibals' remark

Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape took objection to the "cannibals" remark, after comments made by US President Joe Biden about his missing serviceman uncle. Biden had "appeared to imply his uncle was eaten by cannibals after his plane was shot down over PNG during WWII", Marape's office said in a statement on Sunday. "President Biden's remarks may have been a slip of the tongue; however, my country does not deserve to be labeled as such," he said.

MIDDLE EAST 1st Iran group heads to Saudi for pilgrimage

The first group of Iranian Muslims traveled on Monday to Saudi Arabia for umrah, a year-round pilgrimage they had been barred from for almost a decade over a rift between Teheran and Riyadh, the official IRNA reported. They are the first Iranians to make the pilgrimage since Teheran and Riyadh agreed in a China-brokered deal last year to restore ties and reopen their respective embassies after more than nine years.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Prized possessions



Workers examine artworks salvaged from the Old Stock Exchange in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Sunday. The 400-year-old landmark was half-destroyed by a fire last week. EMIL NICOLAI HELMS VIA REUTERS

WORLDUS

'Thucydides Trap' avoidable, ambassador says

By HENG WEILI in New York
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

China's ambassador to the United States does not believe the two countries have to enter the "Thucydides Trap", where an established power feels threatened by a rising power, which could lead to war.

On a visit to Harvard University, Ambassador Xie Feng had a fire-side chat on Friday with Graham Allison, the professor who coined the term Thucydides Trap. Allison introduced the concept in his 2017 book *Destined for War*.

"In this globalized world, countries are not riding separately in some 190 small boats, but are sailing in one giant ship, sharing the same future. Only by pulling together can we find a way out, while pulling apart will only get us all drowned," Xie said.

"We will advance national rejuvenation through a Chinese path to modernization at home and promote world peace and development through building a community with a shared future for mankind internationally.

"Now that we have all realized the extreme danger of the Thucydides Trap, why should we still jump headlong into it? From the very start, China does not see the Thucydides Trap as inevitable," he said.

"We are willing to work with the US side based on the principles outlined by President Xi Jinping, namely, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, to promote the sound, steady and sustainable development of China-US relations, and jointly

navigate around the trap. Is the US side also ready to do so?"

Xie said the historic summit between President Xi and US President Joe Biden in San Francisco last November has not only injected stability into the bilateral relationship, but also formed a future-oriented "San Francisco Vision".

Since the meeting, the two sides have maintained interactions at various levels and conducted dialogue and cooperation in areas including foreign policy, economy and trade, law enforcement, agriculture and military-to-military relations.

On the fentanyl issue and other issues of concern to the US, China has fully shown its sincerity for cooperation, the ambassador said.

But dialogue and cooperation should be reciprocal and based on mutual respect, and one cannot focus on their own interests in the process, he said, adding that he hopes that the US side will take "earnest actions" to implement the two presidents' important consensus on issues of concern to the Chinese side.

The two leaders agreed that both sides should hold consultations on national security boundaries. They have started such consultations, but little progress has been made over the past six months.

Xie said although the US side agreed to hold such consultations in principle, it has been reluctant to go into detailed discussions. And when pressed, it would claim "national security is not negotiable".

"This is not a responsible attitude," the ambassador said.

Xie noted that there is indeed



US students and teachers pose for a group photo with their Chinese hosts after playing ping-pong at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School, Hebei province, on April 20. BAI LIN / XINHUA

competition between the two nations.

"The Chinese people do not shy away from competition, but any competition must be fair. It should be like competing for excellence in a racing field, not beating one another in a wrestling ring," he said.

"What the US side is having in mind, though, is not competition, but bullying. By slapping sanctions on Chinese companies according to its own domestic law, the US side is basically keeping Chinese players out of the game even before it starts.

"The US side has also forced other countries to ban exports of certain devices and technologies

to China, for instance, lithography machines. This is just like asking others to run barefooted or on straw slippers, while one wears high-tech track shoes in a race," he said.

"But even when barefooted, some top Chinese players, such as producers of electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products, have managed to take the lead."

But the US side, however, accuses them of being "over competent", causing "overcapacity" and posing a threat to other contestants, demanding they quit the game.

Xie said the relationship should not be defined simply by competition. "If we allow competition to

dominate China-US relations, it would only give rise to strategic risks. No one would come out as a winner," he said.

It would be "self-deluding" to suppress and encircle China in the name of competition on one hand, and try to manage competition and avoid direct conflict on the other, he said.

"If we only aim at the minimum goal of avoiding conflict in China-US relations, then we would not be far away from going into one," the ambassador said.

In response to a question on the Belt and Road Initiative, Xie said China has always adhered to the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits in advancing BRI cooperation, so as to facilitate the revitalization of all countries and inject momentum into common development.

Narratives debunked

He said the BRI is not a geopolitical tool, but a widely popular, global public good. Instead of being intended for bloc confrontation, it is an open and inclusive platform for international cooperation.

Citing the success of the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway, the envoy stressed that the fruitful outcomes of Belt and Road cooperation have proved again that high-quality industrial capacity is not excessive globally and can generate more effective demands and boost economic growth.

He said the facts have debunked narratives smearing and spreading doom and gloom about the BRI.

Xie said an obsession with

hegemony is not in China's DNA.

"Assuming China would surely tread the old path taken by traditional Western powers is a serious miscalculation, and those believing 'strength determines the intention' are basically imposing their mind-set on others," he said.

Xie said China will always be a member of the developing world and is ready to share those dividends with other countries.

Xie also stated China's positions on anti-espionage law, nuclear policy and bilateral economic ties.

Foreign nationals have no reason to worry about their security as long as they abide by the law in China, he said.

On nuclear policy, he pointed out that China is firmly committed to a self-defensive nuclear strategy. China has pledged not to use nuclear weapons first, and follows a policy of not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-weapon-free zones unconditionally.

He said China stands for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons worldwide. On bilateral economic and trade relations, the ambassador stressed that such ties are essentially mutually beneficial.

"A trade war serves no one's interests," Xie said. "Ultimately, American consumers will pay the cost, American businesses will suffer losses, the international economic and trade order and global industrial and supply chains will be rattled, and the global recovery will be dragged down."

Pro-Palestinian protests at US colleges spread

By AI HEPING in New York
aiheping@chinadailyusa.com

At least 47 people were arrested at Yale University on Monday during pro-Palestinian protests, and new demonstrations broke out at other US campuses over Israel's war in Gaza amid growing concerns about the safety of Jewish students.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators have set up encampments at the University of Michigan and at universities in the Boston area, Sunday night, including at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Emerson College in Boston and Tufts University in Medford. Harvard University closed Harvard Yard until Friday in apparent anticipation of demonstrations.

Passover, a major Jewish holiday, started at sundown Monday night, and some groups have expressed fears for the security of Jewish students who will be celebrating.

President Joe Biden on Monday condemned antisemitic protests on college campuses and decried "those who don't understand what's going on with the Palestinians", he said, without expanding on what he meant.

As the New York Police Department built up a large presence around Columbia University on Monday, New York Governor Kathy Hochul visited the campus to address security concerns.

"Students are scared," Hochul said in a video posted on X. "They are afraid to walk on campus. They don't deserve that."

School administrators have tried to defuse the protests while balancing the free speech rights of protesters and the fears of many Jewish students, who said some of the demonstrations have veered into antisemitism.

At Columbia, where police last week arrested more than 100 pro-Palestinian demonstrators who had set up an encampment, the university canceled in-person classes on Monday.

The scene at Columbia University's growing encampment appeared quiet Monday morning. There were about



A man walking his dog stops to look at the area where students continue to hold a protest in support of Palestinians at Columbia University, during the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in New York City, on Monday. CAITLIN OCHS / REUTERS

70 green, blue and yellow tents on the lawn in front of the school library.

Early Monday, University President Nemat Shafik said that school leaders would be coming together to discuss a way to bring an end to "this crisis".

In a statement to the university community, Shafik said: "The decibel of our disagreements has only increased in recent days. These tensions have been exploited and amplified by individuals who are not affiliated with Columbia who have come to campus to pursue their own agendas."

US Representative Elise Stefanik, a New York Republican who questioned Shafik at a congressional hearing last week about antisemitism on the campus, wrote her a letter calling on her to resign, saying that "anarchy has engulfed the campus".

New England Patriots football team owner Robert Kraft, a Columbia

alum whose name is on the Jewish student center he helped to fund, released a statement Monday saying he no longer supports the university.

"I am no longer confident that Columbia can protect its students and staff and I am not comfortable supporting the university until corrective action is taken," Kraft posted on social media.

At Yale in New Haven, Connecticut, several dozen protesters were arrested Monday morning after officials said they defied warnings to leave an encampment at Beinecke Plaza on campus Friday night.

At the center of the University of Michigan's campus in Ann Arbor, more than 100 pro-Palestinian students have camped out in tents.

A group of about a dozen students holding Israeli flags stood nearby. A few police officers kept watch but didn't engage with the demonstrators. An announcement of the closure,

posted to yard entrance gates, warned of disciplinary measures against Harvard students and affiliates who bring in unauthorized structures such as tents or tables or block access to building entrances.

More than 1,500 Yale alumni, students and parents have signed a letter in support of the demonstrations there. The letter said that donations to the university should be withheld until the administration publicly commits to divest from companies that are helping to supply weapons to Israel.

The New York University Palestine Solidarity Coalition, a group of New York University organizations, have organized an encampment of tents in a circle formation in front of the Stern School of Business. The encampment has been surrounded by metal barricades, and NYU campus security officers are controlling entry and exit from the grounds.

Bird flu raises concern of WHO

By MAYZHOU in Houston
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the rising number of bird flu cases has raised "great concern" because it had an "extremely high" mortality rate among those who had been infected around the world.

The WHO's data show that from 2003 through March 2024, a total of 889 worldwide human cases of H5N1 infection had been recorded in 23 countries, resulting in 463 deaths and a 52 percent mortality rate. The majority of deaths occurred in Southeast Asian countries and Egypt.

The most recent death was in Vietnam in late March, when a 21-year-old male without underlying conditions died of the infection after bird hunting. So far, cases in Europe and the United States have been mild.

Jeremy Farrar, chief scientist at the WHO, said recently that H5N1, predominantly started in poultry and ducks, "has spread effectively over the course of the last one or two years to become a global zoonotic — animal — pandemic".

He said that the great concern is that the virus is increasingly infecting mammals and then develops the ability to infect humans. It would become critical if the virus develops the ability to "go from human-to-human transmission", Farrar said.

In the past month, health officials have detected H5N1 in cows and goats from 29 dairy herds across eight states in the US, saying it is an alarming development because those livestock weren't considered susceptible to H5N1.

The development worries health experts and officials because humans regularly come into contact with livestock on farms. In the US, there are only two recorded cases of human infection — one in 2022 and one in April this year in Texas. Both infected individuals worked in close proximity to livestock, but their symptoms were mild.

Wenqing Zhang, head of the WHO's global influenza program, told the Daily Mail that "bird-to-cow, cow-to-cow and cow-to-bird transmission have also been registered during these current outbreaks, which suggest that the virus may have found other

routes of transition than we previously understood".

Zhang said that multiple herds of cow infections in the US states meant "a further step of the virus spillover to mammals".

The virus has been found in raw milk, but the Texas Health Services department has said the cattle infections don't present a concern for the commercial milk supply, as dairies are required to destroy milk from sick cows. In addition, pasteurization also kills the virus.

Darin Detwiler, a former food safety adviser to the Food and Drug Administration and the US Agriculture Department, said that Americans should avoid rare meat and runny eggs while the outbreak in cattle is going on to avoid the possibility of infection from those foods.

Nevertheless, both the WHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said that the risk the virus poses to the public is still low. Currently no human-to-human infection has been detected.

On the potential H5N1 public health risk, Farrar cautioned that vaccine development was not "where we need to be".

According to a report by Bar-ron, under the current plan by the US Health and Human Services Department, if there is an H5N1 pandemic, the government would be able to supply a few hundred thousand doses within weeks, then 135 million within about four months.

People would need two doses of the shot to be fully protected. That means the US government would be able to inoculate about 68 million people — 20 percent — of 330 million in case of an outbreak.

The situation is being closely watched by scientists and health officials. Some experts said that a high mortality rate might not necessarily hold true in the event the virus became contagious among people.

"We may not see the level of mortality that we're really concerned about," Seema Lakdawala, a virologist at Emory University, told the New York Times. "Pre-existing immunity to seasonal flu strains will provide some protection from severe disease."

Agencies contributed to this story.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8998

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8999

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

twitter.com/chinadaily

facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900, San Francisco,

CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

471 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K9

Tel: 416-481-5706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is

published daily except weekends by China

Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New

York, NY 10036. Periodical postage paid at

New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite

2800, New York, NY 10036.

BUSINESS

JOIN THE CONVERSATION; FOLLOW US ON TWITTER · CHINA DAILY

HIGHER GROUND

Market mavens downplay volatility

By SHI JING in Shanghai
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

External market volatility may have necessitated some adjustments in China's A-share market of late, but the capital market's inherent resilience and potential for a long-term bull run remain intact as regulators have been stepping up efforts to facilitate its high-quality development, experts said on Monday after taking stock of last week's tech meltdown in the US stock market.

In the United States, the so-called Magnificent Seven, comprising technology giants such as Microsoft, Meta and Nvidia, shed over \$930 billion in their market value over the past trading week. It is the biggest weekly drop since November 2022.

Given the global nature of the institutional investors that drive the world's stock markets, the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index fell by 0.67 percent on Monday, while the Shenzhen Component Index slid 0.43 percent.

External uncertainties have been increasing, said Qiu Xiang, joint chief strategist at CITIC Securities. Market expectations for the US Federal Reserve cutting interest rates have dropped quickly. The volatility of risky asset prices and non-US dollar currencies have thus intensified.

Elevated geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have driven up commodity prices, exacerbating concerns over global inflation. Overseas investors' outlook on liquidity is thus impaired and the global financial market has become more bumpy, he said.



A view of Nvidia's booth during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

While agreeing that stock markets worldwide have switched to a "risk-off" mode due to rising market volatility, market insiders suggested Chinese investors adopt a more defensive strategy.

Experts at China Securities are still confident that a long-term bull run will unfold gradually in China, thanks to the "increasing positive factors in the Chinese market."

Earlier this month, the State Council announced measures supportive of the market. These were followed by more measures introduced by the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog. Together, they will help build up the resilience of the A-share market, said China Securities analysts.

The sets of new measures that the CSRC announced late on Friday aim at stepping up support for technology companies, further lowering trading costs and enhancing connectivity with overseas markets. They will attract more medium- to long-term capital to the A-share market, said Wang Yi, chief strategist

of Huatai Securities.

According to the 19 detailed rules released by the CSRC to further regulate mutual fund trading fees, the commission rate of asset managers' products passively tracking stock performance should not be higher than the market's average stock trading commission rate. The market average will be regularly released by the Securities Association of China.

A mutual fund company's annual trading commission via a stock brokerage will be no more than 15 percent of the former's whole-year securities trading commission, a rate set at 30 percent at present.

The new rules, effective from July 1, will push mutual fund companies to come up with more product innovations, said Yang Delong, chief economist of First Seafrost Fund.

As commission is lowered, mutual fund companies will attach more importance to investment management, potentially delivering more profits to investors via innovative products. Only when mutual fund investors are more comfortable

with such investments will more capital enter the market, which will help usher in a long-term bull run, he said.

Overseas investors seem content with the latest measures. They bought A shares worth over 1 billion yuan (\$138 million) on Monday via the stock connect program linking the Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong bourses.

On Friday, the CSRC introduced 16 measures to facilitate the high-quality development of technology companies in terms of IPOs, restructuring, bond issuances and private equity investments.

Tian Lihui, director of the Institute of Finance and Development at Nankai University, said that the new measures will provide all-round support for technology companies. This in turn will help advance China's technology innovation and industrial upgrade. More capital will be directed to companies with higher innovation potential, which in turn will raise the investment value of the capital market, attracting more investors, he said.

More funding needed for developers

Property sector remains biggest soft spot in nation's pursuit of growth

By ZHOU LANXU
zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

There is a pressing need for the central government to provide funding support for the resolution of real estate developer debt risk as it remains the biggest soft spot in China's economy, experts at a top think tank said on Monday.

Zhang Bin, a senior researcher at the China Finance 40 Forum think tank, said the Chinese economy has seen positive changes in the first quarter as industrial production accelerated, exports expanded and consumer sentiment improved.

Addressing CF40's quarterly macroeconomic report release on Monday, Zhang said that China's first-quarter real GDP growth of 5.3 percent has exceeded the annual target of about 5 percent.

However, the report said that as inflation remained low, nominal economic growth was still relatively low at 4.2 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, even below the 4.6 percent recorded in 2023. Generally speaking, a nominal growth rate equals the real growth rate plus inflation.

This means that corporates and households still face sluggish income growth and relatively weak sentiment, said Zhang, who is also a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

"To date, we've not overcome insufficient demand and subdued inflation," Zhang said, adding that the biggest downside risk arises from the real estate sector due to developers' lingering cash flow issues and growing debt pressures.

China's growth in the consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, stood at zero year-on-year in the first quarter, while investment in real estate development slumped 9.5 percent, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

Not only has investment in property proved a major drag on economic growth, Zhang said, but the sector's downturn has intensified fiscal difficulties for some local governments and restricted growth in fiscal spending.

The "whitelist" approach in place, which is aimed at providing selected

real estate projects with sufficient lending, will likely reap some outcomes in easing developers' cash flow stress, but may not fully resolve the issue as banks need to be responsible for the credit quality of their loans, he said.

To further address the issue, Zhang said that there is an urgent need for the central government to promote asset restructuring among major distressed real estate companies, including perhaps devising an asset disposal scheme and providing funding support via measures like buying up debt.

"Developed countries have relevant experience that China can reference. The resolution of the issue cannot be delayed any further and requires prompt action," Zhang said, adding that real estate is systematically important for the economy and local governments alone are not capable of resolving the sector's issue.

The CF40 report released on Monday also stressed the need to facilitate local governments extending their outstanding debt to ensure a stable cash flow condition, while citing the risk of a potential escalation of trade frictions.

Guo Kai, executive president of the CF40 Institute — a research institute affiliated with the forum — said the potential of another round of trade frictions is "a risk that cannot be overlooked," which could significantly disrupt China's export growth, possibly in the second half of the year or the first half of next year.

Zhang added that further interest rate cuts are necessary to reduce mortgage rates while restrictions on housing purchases should be lifted where possible to boost residential property demand.

Both China's one-year and over-five-year loan prime rates, the market-based benchmark lending rates, remained unchanged from the previous month on Monday, after the over-five-year LPR, which serves as the mortgage rate benchmark, dropped by 15 basis points in February to 3.95 percent.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said last week that the PBOC has strengthened countercyclical adjustments to create a sound monetary and financial environment for economic recovery.

Tax policy to better support economic recovery

By LIU ZHIHUA
liuzhuhua@chinadaily.com.cn

China's fiscal authorities will intensify efforts in areas like fully supporting sci-tech innovation and expanding domestic demand to further facilitate economic recovery, a senior official from the Ministry of Finance said on Monday at a news conference in Beijing.

"Fiscal revenue and expenditure registered in the first quarter showed that fiscal policy has come into play early with accelerated delivery of effects, providing strong support for the continuous improvement of the economy," said Wang Dongwei, vice-minister of finance, adding that for the next step, the ministry will focus on six key fronts to consolidate upward momentum of the economic recovery.

For one thing, the ministry will

fully support industrial advances through scientific and technological innovation, he said.

"Aligning with national strategic needs, we will increase investment in basic research, applied basic research and cutting-edge research, and promote the accelerated implementation of a number of major national sci-tech projects to support the research of disruptive and cutting-edge technologies and seek breakthroughs in key core technologies," Wang said.

The ministry will also implement structural tax and fee reduction policies focused on supporting sci-tech innovation and the development of manufacturing.

Additionally, it will coordinate the application of policy tools — such as special fiscal funds and government investment funds — to support the growth of strategic

emerging industries and the accelerated transformation and upgrade of traditional sectors.

Data from the ministry showed on Monday that the country's fiscal expenditure expanded 2.9 percent year-on-year in the first quarter.

In the first quarter, national general public budget revenue totaled about 6.09 trillion yuan (\$840 billion). After adjusting for special factors — including reductions and delayed collections of some taxes — the comparable growth was approximately 2.2 percent, continuing the positive growth trend.

Among the fiscal revenue, tax revenue totaled around 4.92 trillion yuan. If excluding special factors, tax revenue for the period actually grew stably.

To expand domestic demand, Wang said the ministry will make coordinated use of policy tools

including treasury bonds, local government special bonds and central government budgeted investments, to effectively promote effective investment. It will also further improve supportive fiscal policies to promote consumption in areas like vehicles and home appliances, he added.

In addition, it will promote coordinated development between regions and strengthen the implementation of the fiscal budget and supervision of fiscal performance, to get the most out of fiscal funds.

To better balance development and risk management, the ministry will promote the prevention and resolution of local government debt risks, accelerate the implementation of a package of related measures and push for the reform and transformation of local government financing platforms.

Foreign firms in Guangdong sharpen their competitive edge

By LI WENFANG in Guangzhou
liwenfang@chinadaily.com.cn

A number of foreign-invested companies in Guangdong province are whetting their competitiveness to better serve the growing and increasingly demanding market.

For the Shenzhen plant of Germany's Bosch, manufacturing upgrade has been the focus over the past few years. This includes better automation of production lines, interconnection of work stations, forecast of production based on big data and optimized interaction between workers and equipment.

The plant, which produces automobile wiper arms and wiper blades, generated a three-fold growth in sales in the past three years, with China becoming the top automobile manufacturing country last year, said Zhou Fang, director for commercial responsibility at the unit.

The growth in the Chinese market has outpaced that of the export market, Zhou added.

The plant has benefited from a rich supply of materials, components and human resources, and

innovation in Guangdong province for its rapid business development, she said.

China is a target market for Finnish lighting products maker Ledil Optics Technology (Shenzhen) Co and a greater number of products focused on China have been developed by the local team, said its general manager Petri Mikkola.

For Ledil, China's strength is its efficient development platform and the company is able to support local customers with its strong R&D team. "Our target is to be closer to customers and recognize local needs more effectively," he said.

There is significant demand in China, which is different from other locations, with different architectural lighting, city structures and sizes.

China is also the main manufacturing location for the group, thanks to the rich resources available to tackle newly developed products, Mikkola said.

The company has been devoted to developing fresh trends in environmentally-friendly lighting, energy saving and less light pollution.

China is also the main market for Italian automobile brake system producer Util (Guangzhou) Auto Parts Co.

The company invested an additional 15 million yuan (\$2.07 million) earlier this year for a new fine blanking press.

The investment helped the company generate the best net profit ever in the first quarter this year, said Massimo Trionte, CEO of Util China.

"We decided to invest because we want to stay in China. We think there is a lot of opportunity in China. The market is huge.

"We have a lot of suppliers here and we call them partners. We develop together because we know what the final customers want.

"We have to upgrade their technology. Otherwise, we cannot compete with the local (firms)."

Chinese manufacturers have shifted their focus from quantity to quality, safety and environmental considerations in the past decade, he observed.

Miao Peiyun, chief operating officer of Adritz (Foshan) Intelligent



A view of the booth of Bosch during an expo in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Manufacturing, attributes the Austrian company's continuous growth to its strong team, significant spending on R&D and a resilient supply chain.

The company produces equipment for the hydropower, pulp and paper, metals and separation industries.

As part of its efforts to practice smart manufacturing, the compa-

ny in 2022 started to promote digitalized modules to its suppliers, which are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises.

The second phase of the unit being built in Foshan is designed to be more digital and environmentally friendly, with costs expected to be cut by 10 to 20 percent, thanks to more robots being installed, Miao said.

Briefly

Yunnan sees tourism boom in first quarter

Southwest China's Yunnan province received 300 million tourists from home and abroad in the first quarter of this year, up 5.3 percent from a year earlier, according to the provincial department of culture and tourism. The province's tourism revenue totaled over 391.7 billion yuan (\$55.1 billion) in the first quarter, up 16.1 percent year-on-year, the department said.

Q1 water conservancy investment up 4.4%

China's investment in water conservancy facilities rose 4.4 percent year-on-year to 193.3 billion yuan (\$27.2 billion) in the first quarter. The figure was higher than previous records for the period, Vice-Minister of Water Resources Chen Min said at a news conference on Monday. China began 9,683 new water conservancy projects in the first quarter, up 33.8 percent year-on-year, Chen said.

BUSINESS

Santen eyeing bright future in Chinese market

Japanese ophthalmology firm recently completes building factory in Suzhou

By ZHU WENQIAN
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Santen Pharmaceutical Co Ltd, a Japanese firm specializing in ophthalmology products, said it plans to address a growing demand for eye care goods in China, especially given the country's aging demographic trends.

The Osaka-based company completed construction of its new factory, Santen Vision Park, in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, earlier this month. For Santen, after Japan, China stands as one of the largest overseas markets globally in terms of business size and operational size.

The new highly automated factory located in Suzhou Industrial Park will complement its existing facility in the city.

In addition to meeting the rising demand in China for prescription ophthalmic solutions, it will also help reinforce the company's production and supply structure in the country, Santen said.

800 million

number of eye drop bottles that Santen's new plant is expected to produce annually in the first phase

"With the completion of Santen Vision Park, we are confident that we will be able to contribute even more to the eye health of Chinese people in the future," said Takeshi Ito, president and CEO of Santen.

With construction completed in three years, the new plant is expected to see production capacity exceed 800 million bottles of eye drops annually in the first phase. The factory is scheduled to be put into operation by 2027, following commissioning alongside required qualification and certification phases, and will significantly boost Santen's manufacturing capacity.

A smart facility, the new plant will feature an integrated platform for real-time visualized data, and logistics will be supported by automated guided vehicles and rail-guided vehicles. It aims to secure sufficient production capacity for innovative new production and established supply chains in the Chinese market.

"Most of the products we sell in China are prescription medicines, and many provide solutions for issues like glaucoma and dry eyes," said Mark Dawson, chief product supply officer at Santen.

"Santen Vision Park will ensure that we have capacity to meet the growing and diverse needs of Chinese patients, and contribute to eye health in China," Dawson said.

China is becoming an older society with a large and growing population of seniors. By the end of last year, people aged 60 and above reached 296.97 million in number, or 21.1 percent of the total population, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

In addition, 216.76 million people were aged 65 and above, accounting for 15.4 percent of the nation's population. When the number of those 65 and older reaches 14 percent of the total population, this indicates that the country has become a deeply aging society, the NBS said.

It is estimated that more than 200 million seniors suffer from presbyopia and cataracts. Among the elderly aged between 60 and 89, the incidence of cataracts is about 80 percent in China, said the Chinese Ophthalmological Society.

Entering the China market in 1988, Santen is also working on the development of a treatment for slowing the progress of myopia — or nearsightedness. The company hopes that its efforts will play a part in resolving this issue in China, and it would like to better serve the Chinese people and contribute to the Healthy China 2030 initiative.

For global eye treatment products using hyaluronic acid, an important component of artificial tears, Santen is a major player in the sector. Other major industry players include Japan's Senju Pharmaceutical Co Ltd, Germany's Alchemed GmbH, US-based Bausch Lomb and South Korea's LG Life Sciences Ltd, said LeadLeo Research Institute, a market research provider.

Sales of eye treatment products using hyaluronic acid reached 2.32 billion yuan (\$320 million) in China in 2021. Between 2017 and 2021, the compound annual growth rate of the market was 11.8 percent. By 2026, sales are expected to hit 3.39 billion yuan, LeadLeo found.



A cloud company employee addresses visitor queries during a telecom expo in Beijing in July.
LI XIN / XINHUA

Telecom innovation set to turbocharge China's new quality productive forces

BEIJING — China is pushing for the convergence of next-generation communication with technologies such as big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence, aiming to empower various industries and develop new quality productive forces.

With innovation playing the leading role, new quality productive forces mean advanced productivity that is freed from traditional economic growth modes and productivity development paths, and feature high-tech, high efficiency and high quality.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has reported that 5G applications have been successfully integrated into 74 of the 97 major sectors of the national economy.

This includes significant advancements in key areas such as industry, mining, power and healthcare, where 5G is being promoted on a large scale.

Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer of the MIIT, said 5G is currently progressing toward 5G-Advanced or 5.5G, and there is an increased focus on the research and development of 6G and terabit optical networks.

According to a research by Zhongtai Securities, 5G-A is poised to become the cornerstone for a low-altitude economy, offering comprehensive information services that include life cycle management, intelligent decision support, security and AI-assisted drone supervision.

These capabilities are essential for the safe and efficient operation of low-altitude flights, a burgeoning sector within the economy and

an example of developing new quality productive forces.

New quality productive forces are driven by revolutionary technological breakthroughs, innovative allocation of production factors, and deep industrial transformation and upgrading. A prime example is the emergence of futuristic industries.

The MIIT and several other government units have issued a guideline on the innovation and development of humanoid robots as part of efforts to encourage development of new quality productive forces, said Shan Zhongde, vice-minister of industry and information technology.

According to a research note by Guosheng Securities, the humanoid robot market is expected to surpass the 1 trillion-yuan (\$138.1 billion) mark in market scale in the future, with 6G playing a significant role in this growth. It will be capable of supporting intelligent dialogue and training for robots by gradually enhancing their level of intelligence.

The research suggests that 6G will boast features such as ultrahigh speed, ultralow latency, global coverage, massive connectivity, ultrahigh reliability and ultralow energy consumption. It is expected to fuel development of game-changing technologies like quantum communication.

Smart manufacturing is the core technology and main focus that will enable the transformation of China's manufacturing industry from being large in scale to becoming stronger in capability and competitiveness, said Shan.

To this end, China is improving infrastructure including moderately and proactively planning for the deployment of information infrastructure such as 5G, computing power and mobile internet of things.

In March, the world's first 400G all-optical interprovincial backbone network officially became commercially available in China.

Compared to the previous generation of backbone networks, its transmission bandwidth has increased by four times, and the energy consumption per bit has been reduced by 65 percent. Data volumes that previously would have taken 10 minutes to transmit can now be completed in just over two minutes, thanks to the new network developed by China Mobile.

It is expected that by mid-2024, the company will fully realize high-speed interconnection between the eight hubs of an initiative channeling computing resources from the country's east to the west, establishing a major all-optical interprovincial backbone network.

The telecom industry in China has developed rapidly in recent years. As of the end of March, the cumulative number of 5G base stations built nationwide has reached 3.647 million, with a 5G user penetration rate exceeding 60 percent, according to MIIT data.

As China continues to lift market access restrictions in the manufacturing sector, it will also promote the opening up of sectors including telecommunications to create more trade and investment opportunities for foreign investors.

Ingka Centers sets up major store in Xi'an

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Shopping business operator Ingka Centers, whose parent company is the same as that of multinational furnishings firm Ikea, launched its largest store in western China on Thursday, as part of its expansion into the Chinese market.

The Livat Xi'an in Shaanxi province, located in Yanta district, is the ninth shopping center for the group nationwide.

With a size of nearly 20 soccer pitches and total investment of 4.3 billion yuan (\$593.6 million), it is the largest wholly foreign-owned commercial project in the province.

During launch day on Thursday, local residents crowded the place that featured a mix of brands from electric vehicles, toys, apparel, catering, cinema and gyms.

On the same day, Ikea launched its second store in Xi'an, the Ikea Yanta Store, in the Livat shopping center. The number of visitors to the center has exceeded 230,000.

Cindy Andersen, Ingka Centers' managing director who attended the opening ceremony, said that Livat Xi'an embodies its strong commitment to empowering communities across China, seamlessly blending work, life, leisure, dining and shopping in an accessible and sustainable manner.

"Livat Xi'an isn't just a destination. It's a celebration of the endless possibilities when people come together," said Andersen, citing the company's new Livat shopping center in Shanghai later this year.

Last year, Ingka Centers saw 121 percent growth in visits, and has almost 100 percent occupancy in its operations in China, she said.

"It means that the meeting place concept we are bringing is also relevant to people. We continue to see the same trend," Andersen said.

"On visitation, we are in double-digit growth this financial year. We have seen a decade of growth in the China market. This is a fantastic place where we will continue to develop and grow our business together with people and their communities."

Regional urban centers such as Xi'an, Changsha of Hunan province, and Chengdu of Sichuan province have become hot places for commercial real estate and retail brands to seek growth in recent years.

The Livat shopping center in Xi'an is also where Nordic style meets the rich heritage of the ancient capital.

"It's not enough to offer space. You need to offer relevance, and add value to people and communities," said Andersen.

As retail and physical commerce rebound, the "first store economy" has emerged as a new highlight in the consumer market in western China.

These first stores cater to personalized and diversified consumer needs with exclusivity and novelty, providing new momentum to energize urban commercial districts and unlock consumer potential.

Among nearly 400 brands at Livat Xi'an, there are 22 first stores in the Northwest, 20 in Xi'an and over 50 regional debuts, said the company.

More than 160 brands also debut in flagship and concept store formats, offering consumers a range of fresh store designs and diverse products and services.

Ingka Centers aims to leverage these first launches to create a scale effect, attracting more visitors to offline gatherings, and revitalizing the consumer market in Yanta district, Xi'an and the Northwest region, she said.

To offer a more integrated and convenient shopping experience, Livat and Ikea will continue to introduce the Livat and Ikea joint membership, allowing customers to enjoy dual membership benefits and participate in various activities, such as exclusive free parking and points redemption.

With better transportation, services, Inner Mongolia scenic spot now a hit

By ZHUANG QIANGHE
and PANG BO

Aershan Mountain, located in the county-level city of Aershan, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, is known for its luxuriant forests, delectable mountain produce, natural mineral springs and sprawling grasslands.

Currently, domestic visitors can be seen en masse in Aershan under the Hinggan League by first arriving at Ulaanhot — another county-level city under Hinggan — by air, in addition to Mongolian and Russia tourists coming to tour Aershan, all part of the Greater Hinggan Mountains.

Since 2014, the city has been encouraging its residents to turn the local lucid waters and lush mountains into invaluable assets.

But realizing even faster and easier transportation is a paramount task for the city, which is working to upgrade Aershan Airport, and launch bullet trains to run between Aershan and Ulaanhot, Aershan and Hailaer district under neighboring prefecture-level city Hulunbuir, said Zhu Minghong from the local publicity department.

Zhu said the city, which has also renovated the local section of the

G331 National Highway, as well as built three local highways to address tourist surges, aims to have 5 million tourist arrivals this year, producing revenue of over 7 billion yuan (\$979 million).

She said that so far, a five-pronged approach has taken shape in Aershan — setting up a leading body, designing more scenic spots with upgraded facilities, perfecting transport infrastructure, launching promotional events and recognizing those contributing to its tourism.

The city established a leading body — composed of government officials and tourism entrepreneurs — during the 2023 Aershan Tourism Conference, implementing the two concepts of "making the whole city into a scenic spot" and "integrating beautiful views into the whole city."

It also designed 12 new consumption modes including ecotours, sojourns through ice and snow, and waterborne tours, and developed 11 new domestic and international air routes, in addition to opening 10 new tour landmarks and 10 existing immersive travel products such as forest and pasture trips.

"Currently, the city's brand influence and popularity of its tourism are increasing day by day," said Wang Meishuang, Zhu's colleague.

In addition to perfecting its transport infrastructure, Wang said Aershan is also launching various promotional events.

The city asked Aershan Cultural Tourism Development Co Ltd and Greater Hinggan-Aershan Tourism Development Co Ltd to spearhead a recent event, witnessing strategic agreements with travel agencies from Russia and Mongolia, as well as 126 travel agencies from 28 other Chinese provincial-level regions, she said.

"Russian and Mongolian visitors are our priority for business expansion this year. We will create more high-quality tourism products and routes for them, as well as provide better services," said Yang Mei, manager of Inner Mongolia Senlu International Travel Service, at the event.

Izmerlaf Anton, general manager of Satellite Tourism Co at Ulan-Ude, capital city of the Republic of Buryatia in Russia, said: "The unique charm of Aershan not only attracts Chinese tourists, but much attention from foreign visitors. We will actively promote it and attract more international tourists, so as to let the world perceive the beauty of Aershan and help it become better known around the world."

Wang Jianbo, deputy general



Tourists experience a snow ride in Aershan Mountain, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. SUN YAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

manager of Greater Hinggan Tourism Development Co Ltd, said the city commended 52 outstanding individuals, 13 government departments and 17 enterprises that made outstanding contributions to its tourism development.

Forestry worker Yu Jiujiang, now 60, has answered the city's call enthusiastically, inviting several of his colleagues from the forest farm to start a tourism cooperative.

Starting with four horses, they took tourists on sled rides to experience the fun of ice and snow, and later opened a rural restaurant.

Working as a tour guide and now owning 28 horses himself, his family's business in Linsu village, Bailang (White Wolf) town, is now a favorite choice for tourists.

Currently, Yu's cooperative can easily earn a profit of some 190,000 yuan annually, and is contemplating an expansion of business.

Yu said his 40 years as a forestry worker have shown that Aershan Mountain has become more beautiful, adding that "its ecology is getting better every year".

Contact the writers at
zhuangqianghe@chinadaily.com.cn

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Hinterland to benefit from wind power thrust

NEA move to tap abundant energy source, scattered land mass to help low-carbon future

By ZHENG XIN
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

China's rural areas are gearing up for a wind energy boom on a comprehensive utilization plan for the renewable power source, which is expected to further boost the development of clean energy in the nation.

The National Energy Administration has recently put in place a plan to further promote wind power in rural regions. This is an attempt to take advantage of the abundant and widely distributed wind energy resources, fully utilize scattered land in these regions and facilitate the green and low-carbon transformation of rural energy.

The administration encourages joint investment in small-scale wind projects in rural areas by wind power enterprises and local governments and emphasizes the importance of farmers increasing their income through the initiative.

The grid-connected price of electricity will be based on the current year's policy for grid-connected new energy electricity prices, it said.

While wind power development in China has been mainly focused on large-scale projects in western regions, including Xizang autonomous region, Ningxia Hui autonomous region and Inner Mongolia autonomous region, the initiative opens up new market space for wind power in the country, said the administration.

It will also play a role in promoting development, expanding investment and stabilizing growth, said Wang Dapeng, deputy head of the new energy and renewable energy department at the NEA.

"Calculating based on the industry's general expected rate of return of 6 percent to 8 percent, a 3 to 4-megawatt wind turbine can generate an additional income of 50,000 yuan (\$6,900) to 100,000 yuan per year for the village collective," said Wang.

"Further integration of rural wind power with distributed photovoltaics and biomass power generation in China's countryside will help adjust the rural energy structure, promote rural energy revolution, and contribute to achieving the country's dual-carbon goals."

The initiative will drive the growth and expansion of related



Technicians inspect wind farm operations in Hinggan League, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in May 2023. WANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

industrial clusters such as wind power equipment manufacturing, installation, and operation and maintenance, while also improving related supporting industries such as smart grids and energy storage technologies, said Qin Haiyan, secretary-general of the Chinese Wind Energy Association.

The wind power industry will usher in broader development opportunities, Qin added.

"China's ambition to step up wind power in its rural regions will lead the wind power industry to explore a new development path beyond large-scale turbines, large bases and centralized systems," the industry insider said.

"China possesses abundant wind energy resources distributed widely across the country. With breakthroughs in low wind speed technology, most regions, particularly the central, eastern, and southern areas which have relatively lower wind speeds, are now equipped with development conditions with potential resources available for development exceeding 3 billion kilowatts."

Qin said several rural regions in China are facing high electricity prices while lacking the land resources

to develop large-scale wind power plants, which makes utilization of distributed wind power an important way to achieve the country's goal of carbon peak before 2030.

Immense potential

Solar power has already gained ground in China's rural regions over the past few years, and has led to savings in rural communities by replacing expensive and inefficient traditional fuels.

China's rural regions, encompassing over 90 percent of the nation's total land area, hold immense potential for the development of rural renewable energies. According to a guideline underpinning green development in urban and rural areas released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, green development will cover urban and rural areas comprehensively by 2035, with an increased cut in carbon emissions.

Qin said it is necessary for wind farms to be located near the source of power consumption. He also highlighted the importance of local grid operators to ensure wind power grid connection, with a focus on local and nearby consumption.

"Compared with cities, China's



Workers install a fan blade onto a wind turbine at a power farm in Ningxia Hui autonomous region in January. YUAN HONGYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

rural areas have more empty spaces to install wind power systems at lower costs," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

"Since the development of distributed wind power in rural areas also leads to extra earnings for residents and helps reduce power expenses, local governments and power sup-

ply companies should continue to simplify processes to better tap the potential of distributed wind power in China's rural regions as long as it is legal, compliant and beneficial to the industry."

According to the Chinese Wind Energy Association, there are now approximately 690,000 administrative villages nationwide. Four 5-mW turbines on scattered land such as

fields, village outskirts, and rural roads in 100,000 villages could lead to a wind power installed capacity of 2 billion kW, it said.

Currently, wind power development in China is primarily focused on large-scale projects, and the development of distributed wind power is slow, which restricts the market space for wind power in the country, it said.

According to Lin, energy demand in rural regions has been surging in recent years thanks to demand for heating in winter, accelerated modernization of agriculture and improved mechanization levels in agriculture.

"During the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, new energy has been emerging as a significant driving force, with wind power showing great potential," he said.

"The initiative, along with the integration of distributed photovoltaics, biomass power generation, geothermal energy, and other renewable energy sources, can adjust the rural energy structure, promote the rural energy revolution and contribute to achieving carbon peak and neutrality goals."

In rural areas of China, wind energy resources are abundant and widely distributed. By fully utilizing scattered land in rural areas and promoting the development and utilization of wind power according to local conditions, it can significantly contribute to boosting the collective economy of villages and achieving the significant goals of carbon peak and neutrality, he added.

Li Fei, vice-president of domestic turbine maker Xinjiang Goldwind Science & Technology Co Ltd, said in addition to promoting the green and low-carbon transformation of rural energy, the measures are also likely to benefit wind developers and turbine manufacturers in the country.

Goldwind said the expansion of distributed wind power in China's rural regions will bring broader development opportunities for the wind power industry.

However, considering the high construction costs, strict grid connection requirements, and various environmental limitations, the initiative sets a higher threshold for wind power technology and it is necessary that the companies ensure returns are predictable, Li said.

Therefore, it is essential to actively promote the integration of source, grid, load and storage, which will take in excess power from renewables when demand declines, and enable renewable facilities to function more like traditional power plants, he added.

Chinese turbine manufacturers lead in taking products to foreign shores

By ZHENG XIN

Chinese wind turbine makers are not only exhibiting their prowess in domestic markets, but are also expanding to foreign ones, as the related technology evolution between China and the rest of the world is diverging quickly, according to a recently released report.

Chinese companies commissioned 1.7 gigawatts of wind projects in 20 overseas markets last year, including five EU member states, almost three times as many markets as in 2018, according to the 2023 Global Wind Turbine Market Shares report from research provider BloombergNEF.

Technological advances that have led to a steep reduction in the price of turbines have offered a chance for Chinese companies to expand their exports, it said.

Chinese turbine manufacturer Xinjiang Goldwind Science & Technology Co Ltd had the largest foreign footprint of the Chinese players, with 748 megawatts, followed closely by Envision with 561 mW. The rates of Chinese-made wind turbines delivered outside the country, the world's largest market, are 20 percent lower than those of US and European companies, said the report.

China accounted for two-thirds of global build, while the US was the second-largest market, adding 7.2 gW. European countries added a record 15.3 gW in 2023, up from the

13.2 gW installed in 2022, it said.

According to BloombergNEF, out of the top 10 firms providing turbines worldwide last year, six were Chinese, which commissioned 65.1 gW out of the 118 gW total capacity commissioned in 2023.

"It's no surprise that Chinese turbine makers dominate the top five in our ranking, as buildout of gigawatt-scale wind projects sent installations soaring last year," said Cristian Dinca, wind analyst at BloombergNEF and lead author of the report.

Goldwind maintained its pole position as the world's leading wind turbine supplier, commissioning 16.4 gW of projects last year, 95 percent of which were in its home market. Chinese green technology company Envision Group took second place, adding 15.4 gW.

According to Qin Haiyan, secretary-general of the Chinese Wind Energy Association, supportive industrial policies have played a key role in the rapid development of China's wind energy sector over the past few years, making it the world leader in terms of renewable energy capacity and technical advancement.

Wind power is not only "green," but also cheaper compared with traditional fossil fuels, including coal, which makes it a preferred option, he said.

Qin said the sector will embrace massive development opportunities amid China's commitment to



An offshore wind farm equipped with turbines from Chinese manufacturer Mingyang Smart Energy Group is seen off the coast of Zhuhai, Guangdong province. ZHOU GUOQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

achieving carbon peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060.

With 7.6 gW, China was once again the largest market for new offshore wind capacity, accounting for more than two-thirds of the global total in 2023, said BloombergNEF.

In offshore wind, Chinese turbine maker Mingyang Smart Energy

Group doubled its annual installations to almost 3 gW in 2023, becoming the largest global supplier of turbines at sea for the first time, it said.

Mingyang unveiled plans last year for a new offshore wind turbine which, at 22 mW, will be the largest such turbine in the world.

Industry experts believe the wind power sector in China will grow rapidly in the coming years, with wind turbines becoming bigger, entailing taller hub heights and larger rotor diameters.

There has been a trend of making wind turbines larger and more powerful, typically by increasing their

physical size and capacity to generate more electricity, said Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute.

Larger turbines are often more efficient and cost-effective, leading to improved performance in the wind energy industry, he added.

China's accumulated offshore wind capacity is projected to double by 2025, increasing from 30.5 gW by the end of 2022 to more than 60 gW, said the National Energy Administration.

Wind turbine technology evolution is diverging quickly between China and the rest of the world, said Endri Lico, principal analyst of global wind supply chain and technology at Wood Mackenzie.

China continues to turn a profit while accelerating new product launches, he said.

Chinese original equipment manufacturers have dominated the domestic and international markets with an unprecedented number of new turbines, achieving the global lead in average turbine size.

Average offshore turbine ratings in China surpassed Europe in 2023 with 9.5 mW and 9.4 mW, respectively, while in onshore, Chinese OEMs leapfrogged Western peers by installing 5.4 mW versus 5.1 mW, respectively, according to Wood Mackenzie.

COMMENT

Editorials

US continues to act in defiance of world's desire for just solution to Palestine issue

Two days after the United States vetoed a draft resolution recommending the granting of full membership of the United Nations to the State of Palestine, the US Congress approved \$95 billion in foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and other US allies.

The US' moves serve to show that Washington poses the biggest obstacle to resolving the crisis in the Middle East and getting much-needed humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Despite its claims that it supports a two-state solution, the US continues to act to the contrary.

Justifying the US veto, US Deputy Permanent Representative Robert Wood said United Nations Security Council members have a special responsibility to ensure that their actions further the cause of international peace and security and are consistent with the requirements of the UN Charter.

Yet on Saturday, the US Congress, despite the domestic and international condemnation of Israel's persecution of the Palestinians in Gaza, approved the provision of \$26.3 billion in assistance to Israel in a bundle of US aid bills. While allocating \$9.2 billion for humanitarian purposes, including in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, the bill stipulates that none of it should be used to fund the UN Relief and Works Agency, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. And of the rest, \$5.2 billion is for replenishing and expanding Israel's missile and rocket defense system; \$3.5 billion for buying advanced weapons systems and \$1 billion to enhance its weapons production; with \$4.4 billion earmarked for other supplies and services to Israel.

It is hard to see how that furthers the cause of peace and security as the US' support only provides more fuel for Israel's war machine.

Since the Gaza conflict broke out on Oct 7, more than 34,000 Palestinians have been reportedly killed by Israeli forces in Gaza, including 10,000 women. Over 1 million Palestinians are now facing starvation in the south of Gaza, with their lives under constant threat from Israeli bombing on a daily basis.

Yet, the grim situation in Gaza has failed to move those on Capitol Hill to show any compassion for the plight of the trapped Palestinians, instead they have stuck to their guns in support of Israel.

It seems the US' favoritism to Israel has no limits, even though it is increasingly perceived as being complicit in what Tel Aviv is doing in Gaza.

To stand together with its closest Middle East ally, the US has cast off any pretense of being the champion of human rights.

Realizing lasting peace in the Middle East has proved to be a hard nut to crack for the international community. But a primary reason for that is the US not only lacks sincerity in mediating peace in the region it is also setting obstacles in the way of achieving that goal.

A glance at the US' behavior since the Israel-Palestine conflict broke out unmistakably reveals that the US has adopted a two-faced approach. As Israel's war continues to wreak havoc, high-ranking US officials, in the face of the fierce domestic and international pressure, issued scathing criticism of Israel's inhuman conduct in Gaza. The US has also participated in hostage negotiations along with other players in the region, launched airdrops of aid in Gaza, and pushed Israel to open a second checkpoint in north Gaza to allow in more humanitarian assistance. Yet all these are essentially meaningless given the unwavering support the US gives to Israel either in terms of its military assistance or its diplomatic backing in the UN.

The recent flare-up in tensions between Israel and Iran represents another turn for the worse as it pushes the region toward a broader and hotter conflict. Washington should know its seemingly unconditional backing of Tel Aviv tarnishes its own credibility in the world arena and imperils the very fabric of peace and stability in the Middle East. Its self-serving and ill-judged Middle East policy has been the prime cause of the chaos in the Middle East, it is high time the US discarded its selfish and jejune calculations and behaved as a responsible member of the international community.

Same old line from Blinken will not lift ties

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to China from Wednesday to Friday comes at the right time to help ease the tensions that have quickly built up between China and the United States on South China Sea issues, the Taiwan question and trade disputes.

The largest United States-Philippines joint drill in decades, dubbed Balikatan 2024, or "shoulder-to-shoulder" drill, which involves around 5,000 Philippine and 11,000 US troops and lasts 19 days in waters close to the Taiwan island in the South China Sea, kicked off on Monday.

On Saturday, the US House of Representatives passed the "Indo-Pacific" Security Supplemental Bill worth about \$8.1 billion, most of which will be spent by the Democratic Progressive Party authorities on strengthening the island's armed forces. The other bill passed by the House on the same day targets TikTok.

On Wednesday last week, US President Joe Biden called on the US Trade Representative Office to consider tripling the existing Section 301 tariff rate on Chinese steel and aluminum in response to what he claimed were China's "unfair practices" and to support US steel manufacturing and shipbuilding.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration is weighing the possibility of banning Chinese-made electric vehicles in the US market, claiming the cars have "spying" potential and the Chinese government subsidizes their manufacturing.

After dealing with the Biden administration for so long, Beijing will not have any illusions about the US side's "commitment" to managing disputes with China "in a responsible way" as it claims it seeks to do.

During his last visit to China in June last year, Blinken underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and reiterated there has been no change to the US' "one-China policy"; "based on the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances". He just pretended to ignore the fact the "one-China policy" Beijing urged the US side to uphold has never been and must not be based on the "Taiwan Relations Act" or the "Six Assurances", both of which are fabrications of the US to back the secessionist forces on the island.

Such conflicting assurances, which only serve to intensify the Sino-US tensions, also prevailed in his remarks on the fraught economic ties between the two countries during his last China trip. While claiming that he would address China's alleged "unfair and nonmarket economic practices and recent actions against US firms", Blinken sought to explain that the US' de-risking policies were not equivalent to decoupling and its targeted actions are necessary to protect US national security. But the world can clearly see that it is the US that is bullying, containing and coercing China.

That being said, if Blinken's China visit is part of the efforts agreed by the two heads of state of China and the US during their last talks by telephone on April 2 to "strengthen dialogue and communication, avoid miscalculation and promote cooperation", the top US diplomat will have his work cut out to convince his hosts that the US is acting to that effect.

With the US flexing its military, financial and economic muscles against China in various ways, the Biden administration has left the Chinese side little space in which to misinterpret its China policy.

That being said, if the top US diplomat continues to repeat the same old line, rather than actually trying to address the issues by talking on an equal footing with mutual respect, his coming visit will just prove to be another talk-for-talk's sake chicken-and-duck dialogue.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huxin Dongjie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029

News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366

editor@chinadaily.com.cn

Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631

ads@chinadaily.com.cn

Subscription: +86-400-699-0203

subscription.chinadaily.com.cn

App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Song Chen



Opinion Line

The real reason behind fluctuations in global foreign exchange market

In recent days, the currencies of emerging market countries have caught everyone's attention because of a weak streak, with the Indonesian rupiah falling to a four-year low, the Malaysian ringgit tumbling to its lowest exchange rate since 1998, and the Indian rupee dropping to a record low. On April 16, the MSCI Emerging Market Currency Index that tracks more than 20 currencies dipped 1.2 percent from what it was on April 9.

However, the currency depreciation of emerging economies does not lie in their economic fundamentals. In its latest World Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund predicts that Asia, which has been hit the hardest by recent currency depreciation, will contribute 60 percent to global growth this year. As the IMF stresses, it is US monetary policy and macro data changes that pose external challenges to economic activity in the region.

While emerging market currencies weaken, the US dollar continues to strengthen. As of April 18, the dollar

index rose by 2.41 percent in a month, and 6.5 percent from its 52-week low. According to the IMF, if the US Federal Reserve keeps its benchmark interest rate at its 23-year high for much longer, it will put great pressure on the currencies of emerging market countries, those in Asia in particular. That will not only affect emerging market currencies, but also the global financial market.

International investment institutions are changing their optimistic expectations for the global financial market and expressing rising concerns over the risk of "second-time inflation" in the United States because of declining hopes of the Fed cutting interest rates.

In terms of fiscal monetization, the scale of US federal government expenditure and deficit is still high, and excessive fiscal expenditure leads to the rapid expansion of the scale of its government debt issuance. The IMF recently warned that the huge US fiscal deficits are fueling inflation and pose a "significant risk" to the global

economy. A recent report released by the organization shows that the US is expected to run a fiscal deficit of 71 percent of GDP next year, compared with an average of 2 percent for other advanced economies, highlighting the need for Washington to address the huge imbalance between its spending and income.

Against the backdrop of high US interest rates and a strong dollar, currency risks in emerging market countries still exist, and their central banks and monetary policymakers still need to maintain vigilance, use monetary reserves to support short-term liquidity, and strengthen the ability to resist risks. Given that new trade barriers and rising protectionism could fuel inflation, the US federal funds rate could fall slower than expected. At the same time, excessive spending in the US could lead to higher global financing costs, increasing the risk of reigniting inflation and undermining long-term global fiscal and financial stability.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

Japan should face squarely its historical issues

The legal process could take time but whatever the final outcome, that the descendants of 18 Chinese "comfort women" who were sexually exploited by Japanese soldiers during World War II have filed lawsuits in the Shanxi High People's Court against the Japanese government is a welcome move.

As early as 1992, some "comfort women" had demanded an official apology as well as compensation from the Japanese government; the case first came up for trial in a Japanese court three years later. With the help of lawyers from both countries, and after prolonged litigation from 1995 to 2007, the Japanese court finally admitted to the historical facts but didn't entertain the demand for apology or compensation.

A self-contradictory ruling that

admits to historical facts while absolving their government of any responsibility or compensation for the same makes the public doubt if their judiciary is really that independent when it comes to sensitive issues. Actually, the extremely long time the Japanese court took to issue a verdict in the first place, namely 12 years in which some of the women who had suffered passed away, was also seen as an effort to ensure the case dies a natural death. On Sunday, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida sent a ritual offering to the Yasukuni Shrine, where 14 class-A war criminals of the then imperialist Japan are worshipped, an indication that the Japanese leadership is far from getting rid of its militarist past.

On Friday, the Japanese government reportedly cleared new middle

school textbooks that claim the "comfort women" system existed but was "not coercive". This is what some Japanese middle school students will read when the new academic session starts in the autumn of 2025. The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Korea issued a statement in this regard, even setting up a meeting with the Japanese ambassador there to convey their reaction. It goes to show that attempts by Japan to deny past atrocities will not be accepted.

In 2021, a Seoul court had ordered Japan to compensate 12 "comfort women", increasing the possibility of the victims from the ROK getting justice from a domestic court. It also springs hope for all those who suffered the humiliation of being "comfort women".

—ZHANG ZHOU XIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Data show general upward growth trend holds firm

It is normal for there to be short-term fluctuations in growth figures between months. A high base in the early period, seasonal factors, etc, all have a certain impact on relative growth from month to month.

The Chinese economy is in a critical period of economic recovery, transformation and upgrading. As the complexity, severity and uncertainty of the external environment increase, economic recovery will not be linear and will inevitably be accompanied by fluctuations and twists and turns. However, short-term data fluctuations do not affect the fundamentals of economic recovery.

A comprehensive analysis of the first quarter data shows that more indicators reflect the general trend of high-quality economic development.

For example, investment in high-tech industries increased by 11.4 percent year-on-year, 2 percentage points higher than that from January to February, and 6.9 percentage points higher than all investment; the added value of industries such as intelligent vehicle equipment manufacturing, semiconductor device special equipment manufacturing, and integrated circuit manufacturing registered increases of 61.5 percent, 40.6 percent and 18.5 percent respectively.

That means high-end, intelligent, and green industries are booming, new products, new business formats, and new models continue to emerge, and the cultivation of new quality productive forces is accelerating.

In the long run, the positive trend of China's economy remains stable. At present, the country is implementing a series of major measures to compre-

hensively deepen institutional reforms and supply-side structural reforms, focusing on expanding effective demand through coordinated efforts.

The latest economic forecast data from the International Monetary Fund also confirm the positive prospects of the Chinese economy. The organization predicts that from 2024 to 2029, China will account for about 21 percent of new global economic activities, the United States will account for nearly 12 percent, and the rest of the G7 members will account for about 8 percent.

According to the latest forecasts of the IMF, 75 percent of global economic growth in the next five years is expected to be concentrated in 20 countries, of which China, India, the US and Indonesia will contribute more than half of global economic growth.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Qi Dongtao

Can Lai end deadlock in cross-Strait talks?

After winning the Taiwan leadership election in January with a 40 percent vote share, the second-lowest in the island's electoral history, Lai Ching-te faces the first major test: his inaugural address on May 20. The speech will be closely observed and analyzed by major global players including the Chinese mainland and the United States that are eager to know what is Lai's stance on cross-Strait relations.

Democratic Progressive Party leaders, from former island leader Chen Shui-bian to outgoing leader Tsai Ing-wen, have made some friendly gestures toward the mainland in their inaugural speeches.

In his inaugural speech in 2000, for example, Chen promised to not seek "Taiwan independence", change the island's name, write "one country on each side" of the Taiwan Strait into the "constitution" or alter the status quo via a referendum. The mainland's response was to watch and wait, allowing Chen to fulfill his promises.

Tsai, on the other hand, vowed in 2016 to manage cross-Strait affairs according to the "constitution" and laws and regulations such as the "act governing relations between the people of the Taiwan area

Clearing these hurdles by fully embracing the one-China principle is essential for any meaningful dialogue to be held.

and the mainland area", and avoid issuing sensitive statements such as those on "Taiwan independence" and the 1992 Consensus.

But both Chen and Tsai resorted to "Taiwan independence" to divert Taiwan residents' attention from their failure to address the island's problems, stirring up anti-mainland sentiments to secure their re-election. The DPP claims that its initial goodwill gesture was not reciprocated by the mainland, prompting it to seek "Taiwan independence". But the fact is that the DPP never truly abandoned its "Taiwan independence" agenda.

So will Lai repeat his predecessors' mistakes?

Lai has said he wants to hold cross-Strait talks in order to ease tensions with Beijing. But his election with a thin majority has diminished his status. And the mainland, drawing from talks with

Kuomintang, posits that the DPP abandon its "Taiwan independence" agenda and accept the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China.

But will Lai agree to these terms? Recently, Wu Chun-chih, DPP's director of mainland affairs, said the "Taiwan independence party platform" adopted in 1991 was a product of the times and has been effectively replaced by the "resolution on Taiwan's future" in 1999, which has become the DPP's consensus.

This could be seen as a response to a suggestion by three US scholars before the election on the island that Lai dismantle the "independence platform" after being elected, potentially moving toward dialogue with the mainland. But a detailed analysis of the DPP's official documents on cross-Strait ties shows the situation is different.

Three pivotal documents shape the DPP's stance toward the mainland: the 1991 "Taiwan independence party platform" advocating for the establishment of a "sovereign and independent republic of Taiwan"; the 1999 "resolution on Taiwan's future" proposed by Chen Shui-bian before 2007; and the 2007 "resolution on making Taiwan a normal country", which pushes for legal independence by changing the name of the island, making it a

"United Nations member".

But the fact that the DPP bases its stance on the mainland on the "1999 resolution", which asserts de facto "Taiwan independence", is unacceptable. The DPP has not formally announced the "1991 platform" has been replaced by subsequent resolutions, yet the "2007 resolution", which openly advocates for legal independence, should prompt the mainland to respond to the island's provocative moves.

Lai's past remarks, especially after he stepped down as the head of the island's "executive legislature" in January 2019, advocating for a new "constitution" tailored for Taiwan, are seen by the mainland as a step toward legal independence, exacerbating tensions.

The three documents therefore are major obstacles to talks between the two sides of the Strait. Clearing these hurdles by fully embracing the one-China principle is essential for any meaningful dialogue to be held. Only by accepting these premises can cross-Strait talks progress.

The author is a senior researcher at the East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

The author is former deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily. kangbing@chinadaily.com.cn

Regulated used-car market could drive growth of green vehicles

China is taking measures to boost domestic consumption in order to invigorate its slowing down economy. One of the measures is to provide government subsidies to encourage enterprises, including manufacturers, to upgrade their equipment and individuals to replace their old household appliances and cars with new ones.

Cars are among the most expensive movable assets of most families. According to available data, by the end of 2023, China had 435 million motor vehicles, of which 336 million were cars and trucks, with 24.56 million of them being registered or having received a license plate last year. In fact, for the past 10 years, more than 20 million vehicles have been added to the national fleet every year. That means, starting from now, at least 20 million vehicles will become 10 years old every year and should be either scrapped or sold in the used-car market — indicating a huge second-hand car trade business.

Also, millions of charging piles have been set up at convenient locations, even inside residential compounds.

Data also show that last year, 18.41 million motor vehicles changed hands in the used-car market for a total value of 1.18 trillion yuan (\$162.99 billion). The fast-increasing number of cars and the subsidies given to people to sell their old cars, observers say, will help increase the used-car trade by 45 percent to about 2 trillion yuan before 2027.

A lot more people, I believe, will sell their gasoline-burning vehicles in the used-car market so they can try their hands at electric vehicles (EVs). As a matter of fact, I could be one of them. When I bought my petrol-powered SUV three years ago, I planned to use it for five to seven years while waiting for EV makers to further extend the battery life and the government to set up more charging stations/piles.

But things seem to be moving faster than I expected. While three years ago, most EVs could cover 300-400 kilometers after charging the battery once, today the EVs can cover 600 km on one charge. Also, millions of charging piles have been set up at convenient locations, even inside residential compounds.

These changes, along with my shrinking wallet, have made me think of changing from a gasoline-powered car to an EV, because I could save two-thirds of the cost of fuel. I have resisted the impulse to sell my car and buy an EV mostly because I love my SUV, which has run a little over 10,000 km in three years. Another reason is the unpleasant stories both the sellers and buyers have told me about the used-car market.

A recent CCTV special program followed a man into a used-car market in Beijing. When the man tried to drive his car into the market so that specialists could check it and offer him the right price, he was stopped at the entrance and told by the guard that the market allowed only buyers, not sellers, inside. While driving to a nearby parking lot, as guided, he was stopped several times by people who said they were interested in buying his car. But the prices they offered ranged from as low as 20,000 yuan to a high of 70,000 yuan, leaving him puzzled.

During his hour-long trip, the man failed to see any authoritative dealer. One dealer said he bought the old cars mostly from agents who obtained the vehicles at lower than expected prices outside the market, suggesting foul play.

Stories of second-hand car buyers being cheated by sellers using doctored documents have also been doing the rounds. Worse, the victims failed to get the fraudsters punished, as they deserve, because it's difficult to get the necessary evidence.

I am hesitant to venture into a used-car market or go to a dealer because of such stories. I am also hesitant because I have no idea if the dealers I meet would be trustworthy and offer the price my beloved car deserves.

I am not an expert in used cars or the used-car business. But I really think that government authorities and supervisors should make greater efforts to regulate the used-car market before they can expect more car owners to sell their old cars and buy EVs, thereby reducing carbon emissions.

Jin Yongming

A maritime community for promoting peace

April 23, 2024, marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army Navy, which is dedicated to maintaining peace in the seas surrounding China.

Yet the South China Sea remains turbulent, because countries such as the Philippines continue to make provocative moves and involve non-regional parties into the fray, thereby disrupting regional peace and stability, and posing a threat to peace in the Asia-Pacific.

The idea of building a maritime community with a shared future, as proposed by President Xi Jinping in April 2019, is an inclusive approach to ocean governance and committed to upholding regional peace. The approach will help address various maritime challenges by integrating natural attributes, economic interests and cultural values, and addressing ecological concerns and security problems.

From a historical and cultural perspective, the concept of a maritime community with a shared future reflects the traditional Chinese values of harmony and coexistence. Throughout history, China has viewed the oceans as a source of connectivity, trade, and cultural exchanges. The ancient concept of "harmonious oceans" embodies the idea of peaceful coexistence among coastal countries, and the concept of a maritime community with a shared future extends this concept into contemporary maritime governance, emphasizing cooperation, mutual respect and sustainable development.

At its core, the concept seeks to achieve symbiosis and sustainable development between humanity and the marine ecology. It recognizes the interconnectedness of the marine ecosystem and human activities, and emphasizes the need for responsible stewardship of marine resources. By fostering cooperation and collaboration among maritime countries, the initiative aims to address common challenges such as marine pollution, overfishing and habitat destruction.

The objectives of building a maritime community with a shared future can be categorized into several key areas. Politically, it seeks to promote inclusiveness, as opposed to hegemony, and peaceful development. On the economic front, it aims to harness the potential of the maritime economy while ensuring that countries have equitable access to marine resources. Culturally, it advocates for an open and mutually enriching exchange between maritime cultures. And ecologically, it prioritizes marine environmental protection and the sustainable management of marine ecosystems.

To realize these objectives, it is essential to integrate the principles and spirit of a maritime community with maritime laws. This integration will provide a legal framework for cooperative governance and management of the oceans. The legal basis of the maritime community can be found in international maritime laws such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

However, existing maritime laws cannot safeguard the common interests of the global community. Some traditional legal principles often prioritize individual state interests over collective well-being.

Therefore, there is a need to adopt a new approach that would prioritize ecological integrity and better safeguard common interests — perhaps the concept



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

of a global interest space, also known as an "international public domain" can serve the purpose, because it recognizes certain areas of the oceans as shared spaces that are not controlled by any state. To effectively manage these spaces, new legal mechanisms, such as ecosystem-based management and precautionary principles, must be adopted by states and international organizations.

A maritime community with a shared future is aimed at promoting cooperative management of global marine interests, and ensuring sustainable use and development of the oceans. But while it is difficult, almost impossible, to apply the principles of a community with a shared future in areas under national jurisdiction, they can be applied in areas beyond

national jurisdictions and functional regimes of the oceans — in order to better protect the marine environment, promote scientific research, facilitate navigation, launch search and rescue operations, and fight transnational crimes.

But the application of a maritime community in specific areas requires balancing competing legal principles, such as UNCLOS, the common heritage of humankind, and the principle of sovereign equality among states. But achieving this balance will require dialogue, cooperation, and compromise among maritime countries.

Building a maritime community with a shared future based on maritime laws represents a significant step toward comprehensive ocean governance. By promot-

ing cooperation, mutual respect and sustainable development, a maritime community with a shared future can help address the maritime challenges and safeguard the health of the oceans. But collective efforts from maritime countries, international organizations and other stakeholders will be needed to realize this vision. In short, by working together, we can build a brighter future for our oceans and ensure their well-being.

The author is a professor at the Institute for China's Ocean Security, Ocean University of China, and a senior researcher at the Institute of Ocean Development, Ocean University of China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

DARYL GUPPY

Blinkered view

By ignoring rapid development of China's digital economy and other factors, Fitch presents false outlook

Rating agency Fitch downgraded its outlook for China in its most recent report. But the tenor of the report suggests that its economic assessment underestimates some significant factors. Although Fitch acknowledges the structure of the economy is changing as China shifts to a new growth model, it appears not to recognize the full significance and driver of this transition in its report.



Applying the traditional framework of economic analysis leaves Fitch on shaky ground. Veteran US analyst of the Chinese economy Nicholas Lardy writes in Foreign Affairs that it is important to distinguish between cyclical and structural factors. One cyclical factor is China's industrial production which recorded its fifth straight month of expansion while core consumer prices are firming. Construction is a significant cyclical factor. China Evergrande Group, one of the biggest names in China's property market, is the obvious example which seems to support the conclusions of Fitch.

However, Geoff Raby, former Australian ambassador to China, points out that the government has deliberately avoided implementing the stimulus packages of the past which would only add to housing oversupply. Instead, policies have supported lending to complete projects rather than starting new ones. In 2023, the construction floor area completed exceeded the area started for the first time. This is a good start in reducing the excess property construction and restoring balance to the economy.

The central government could have chosen to bail out Evergrande. Had it done so the China detractors would have condemned the government's intervention in the workings of a free economy.

When the central government did not come to the rescue, the same China detractors took this as evidence that the Chinese economy would "collapse" because this was considered to be the biggest threat to the world's second-largest economy.

This type of liquidation is common practice in Western economies so there are well established processes to assist in

China is transforming from a manufacturing-based economy to a powerhouse of technological innovation. This seismic shift will help China avoid the so-called middle-income trap. Escape from the trap comes with increased productivity and for modern China that productivity comes from the digital economy.

successful restructuring without leading to economic collapse. Assets may be liquidated at a loss, but this does not mean the assets disappear. They become assets of another company operating with different balance sheet expectations. Fitch seems to assume this cannot be applied in China.

The Fitch conclusions also ignore the impressive history of China's successful economic responses when faced with adversity. The response to the 2008 global financial crisis pulled the world away from the edge of the economic abyss. At the time, Western economists also warned it would lead to the collapse of the Chinese economy. It didn't.

Part of the current response is the new bond issuance quota for local governments which was set at 3.9 trillion yuan (\$538.8 billion), versus 3.8 trillion yuan in 2023. This signals the central government's willingness to take a higher share of the burden of meeting growth targets, as local governments face slower fiscal revenues and depressed land sales.

Chinese economic policy is not developed on-the-run in response to the shifting sands of public hysteria. It is the product of careful analysis that adopts a long-term strategic perspective. The development of green and blue industries long before the West took these issues seriously is a good example of this strategic thinking.

New energy vehicles accounted for 30.25 percent of new vehicle registrations in China in

2023. Western auto manufacturers are alarmed by the oncoming wave of competition because they have failed to develop in this area.

Raby says that the idea that China's economy is struggling is news to those in the resources, energy, green industry or automobile sectors. In these sectors, China's demand continues to surge or, alternatively, depending on who is speaking, China's capacity "threatens" foreign competitors.

"The Fitch revision has reflected the fundamental concern over China's fiscal health and its ability to drive growth in the long term," said Dan Wang, chief economist of Hang Seng Bank China.

But the Fitch report fails to adequately factor in the advances in the digital economy and the impact this has on productivity and subsequent economic growth.

China is transforming from a manufacturing-based economy to a powerhouse of technological innovation. This seismic shift will help China avoid the so-called middle-income trap. Escape from the trap comes with increased productivity and for modern China that productivity comes from the digital economy.

China is making a transition to becoming the most advanced digital economy in the world and the rating agencies simply do not know how to measure its impact. In 2023, China's online retail sales hit 15.42 trillion yuan (\$2.17 trillion), up 11 percent year-on-year. The mobile payment penetration rate stood at 86 percent — ranking first in the world.

The measure of China's economy is no longer how many miles of railway track are added each year. But it continues to be measured using industrial statistics that, while relevant, do not accurately fully describe the emerging economy.

The Fitch outlook underestimates the impact of China's digital economy. Fitch's fact-blind assessment misleads the public on the correct understanding of China's economy.

The author is an international financial technical analysis expert and a former national board member of the Australia China Business Council. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CAI CUIHONG AND ZHANG LUYAO

Cusp of a new tech revolution

During this period of turbulence and transformation, China should push for the implementation of initiatives to benefit all

With the rapid development of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum technology and biotech, the world stands again at a critical juncture of technological revolution. The new technologies have not only revolutionized the production modes and lifestyles of humanity, but also presented opportunities for transforming the global order. The world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation. The influence of the new technological revolution is manifested in three aspects.



Cai Cuihong



Zhang Luyao

First, the impact of new technologies on strategic security has prompted some Western countries to politicize technology issues and abuse the concept of security, intensifying the competition between major powers in the technology sector. Advancements in technology have catalyzed a shift in the focus of strategic competition between major powers — from trade to technology. The United States' China-containment strategy has evolved from a trade war into a comprehensive competition in politics, economy, technology, and industry, with "tech-decoupling" becoming the most prominent feature.

Second, the application of new military technologies has tipped the strategic balance between some countries. Featuring military-civilian dual use, advancements in digital, automated, and intelligent military technologies have had profound implications on the global security landscape, which can be seen in the Ukraine crisis and the Palestine-Israeli conflict. Major powers such as the US, the United Kingdom and Russia have proactively scaled up investment in and deployment of new military equipment, which will change the deterrence situation between nations, bring new adjustment to strategic stability mechanisms, and transform the international order.

Third, the escalation in technological competition and the emergence of a new-type arms race between major countries have been compounded by the over-politicization and misuse of the security concept by some Western countries has led to security dilemmas. Consequently, some countries are compelled to engage in crisis management during this period of transformation and turbulence. Against such a backdrop, new mechanisms are urgently needed.

In this shifting international landscape, China is committed to building a more inclusive international order and striving for peace and development. China seeks to constructively improve the current global order by addressing outdated or ineffective elements through enhanced rules and mechanisms.

Currently there is a lack of universally accepted and binding international rules in the field of emerging technologies, and countries are proactively putting forward their own solutions. China, on the one hand, should participate in the formulation of rules for new technologies such as next-generation telecommunications and facial recognition where it takes a lead in the world. On the other hand, it needs to share its experience and insights in new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence, which have high demand for rules, and provide references for drawing up international rules in these fields.

Besides, the new technological revolution has created the demand for building a new global governance architecture, which, however, is still in the making. Out of self-interests and security concerns, some Western countries tend to prioritize competition over cooperation in the fields of technology. But uncertainties involved in the development of emerging technologies have brought about common risks and challenges, and created problems that require concerted efforts to solve, which makes it possible to build a new global governance system. It is important for China to grasp the opportunities in this period to transcend the mentality of competition and build a new technology governance mechanism featuring cooperation, thus pushing for the establishment of a new global order.

Meanwhile, we are witnessing a significant transition in the international order, marked by the phasing out of old structures and the emergence of new ones. This period of turbulence and transformation presents a crucial opportunity for China to share its vision for a cooperative and inclusive future.

At a 2017 speech at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, Chinese President Xi Jinping elaborated on China's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, aiming to create an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security, and shared prosperity.

While retaining the reasonable part of the old international order, China's proposals also aim to reform the old system to accommodate the needs of different social systems and countries at different development stages. From the perspective of international relations, an inclusive international order will make the global system more stable and legitimate, and, from the perspective of the technological revolution, an inclusive international order will be the ultimate solution for problems such as bridging digital gaps, solving algorithm discrimination, and establishing AI ethics.

In short, China should seize the opportunities during this period of turbulence and transformation to push for the implementation of initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative with the aim of letting the new technological revolution benefit all countries through technology cooperation, R&D investment, and integration of industrial chains. In this way, the country will help the world cope with common challenges and crises through collaboration and development and jointly establish a more fair and reasonable global order.

Cai Cuihong is a professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University. Zhang Luyao is a doctoral student at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs at Fudan University. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

CULTURE



Clockwise from top left: *Possess or Loss*, inspired by the Qing-Dynasty (1644-1911) literary masterpiece, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, is performed at a theatrical park in Langfang, Hebei province. Performers of *On Broken Bridge* from the Zhejiang Wuju Opera Troupe receive the audience's applause during the 2024 World Theatre Day celebrations held in Langfang last month. A group of children star in the play *The Compendium of Materia Medica*. The play, *Xianheng Inn-Return to Hometown*, is performed during the festivities. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Within the hallowed halls of a theatrical complex in Langfang, Hebei province, where the intertwining corridors of indoor theaters and myriad scenario spaces converge with the open expanse of outdoor stages, one can effortlessly immerse themselves in the rich world of the dramatic arts.

Traditional Chinese operas, contemporary dance, mime, multimedia theater, musicals and a variety of other performances by both artists from home and abroad adorn the tapestry of experiences.

In some chambers hosting theater workshops, led by artists from countries including France, Cuba and Poland, visitors, irrespective of language barriers, blur the lines between performer and spectator, delving into self-discovery through artistic expression where drama and music intertwine.

That's a scene from the 2024 World Theatre Day celebrations recently co-hosted by the China Theatre Association and the International Theatre Institute, a leading performing arts organization founded in 1948 by theater and dance experts and UNESCO.

March 27 marked World Theatre Day, initiated in 1962 by the theater institute headquartered in Paris. It celebrates the art form of theater and raises awareness among governments about its cultural and economic significance.

This year, the celebrations took place at Langfang's Silk Road International Arts Center, with over 300 guests from around the world attending the event, and more than 1,000 spectators enjoying the performances.

As an integral part of the celebrations, an event called A Dialogue of Global Theatre Practitioners invited notable figures to deliver keynote speeches addressing their under-

standing of how theatrical arts influence individuals and society.

These figures included Pu Cunxin, a distinguished stage actor and president of the CTA; Lemi Ponifasio, the World Theatre ambassador of the theater institute; Jessica Kaahwa, a director-actress from Uganda, and Chen Yan, a playwright and vice-president of both the Chinese Writers Association and the CTA.

Pu holds that art serves as a bridge among nations with different languages and cultures.

"I have performed in many plays reflecting both ancient and modern China, as well as classics from abroad, such as those written by Shakespeare, Chekhov and Ibsen," he says.

"These foreign literary classics have enriched me greatly. At the same time, I interpret their stories using my own understanding, imagination and expressive methods, making them a part of global theater."

Most of the festivities were held in the theatrical theme park, Unique Dream of Red Mansion. Themed around the literary masterpiece *A Dream of Red Mansions* written by Cao Xueqin during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the park adopts an avant-garde approach to explore the inner world of the novel's characters and continue the narrative from the perspective of readers across different eras through various immersive theaters and scenarios.

Pu mentions that he has visited the park twice and is impressed by its architectural marvels.

"I hope such international events will allow theater practitioners from around the world who come to Langfang to appreciate unique Chinese theatrical artistry and enable Chinese and foreign theater practitioners to engage in dialogue, and foster understanding, communication and collaboration," Pu adds.

Kaahwa further emphasizes the

Stage set for theater to play key role

Langfang hosts celebration of dramatic arts, **Xing Wen** reports.



Actors interact with theater enthusiasts during the event.

importance of cultural exchange for theater practitioners.

"We need children to immerse themselves in the rich cultural diversity of different regions by participating in local traditions, rituals and storytelling practices," says

Kaahwa, who is also a veteran drama educator. "Practitioners gain valuable firsthand experience, which not only enriches their artistic understanding but also enhances their appreciation of the diversity of human expression.

"By learning from local traditions and storytelling techniques, theater practitioners can infuse their work with authority and relevance, creating performances that resonate with the audience on a profound level. In essence, this cultural exchange fosters a rich exchange of knowledge and creativity, benefiting both the practitioners and the recipient community."

Hao Rong, president of the Central Academy of Drama, agrees.

He further underscores the crucial role of theatrical arts in fostering the personal development and critical thinking abilities of young people. He advocates for drama as a pivotal aspect of aesthetic education for the whole of society.

"Through engaging in role play in theaters, adolescents could actively explore societal dynamics, diverse characters and narratives, thereby cultivating their own ethical, moral and philosophical outlooks," he says.

He also notes that modern theater education in China began later than in the West, leading to a gap. To bridge this divide, he emphasizes the importance of professionalizing drama education and integrating it into teacher-training programs.

In the midst of ongoing wars and turmoil in certain regions of the world, a message titled *Art Is Peace*, penned by the 2023 Nobel Prize in literature laureate Jon Fosse for the 2024 World Theatre Day, was presented during the festivities.

In his address, he emphasized: "Art, good art, manages in its wonderful way to combine the utterly unique with the universal. It lets us understand what is different — what is foreign, you might say — as being universal. By doing so, art breaks through the boundaries between languages, geographical regions, countries. It brings together not just everyone's individual qualities but also, in another sense,

the individual characteristics of every group of people, for example, of every nation."

Chen adds that drama is one of the oldest forms of art that tells the stories of civilizations.

"Through portraying various challenges and conflicts faced by humanity, as well as how people collaborate and communicate to resolve these issues, it conveys the values of human civilization. Drama holds a unique advantage in communicating shared human emotions, thoughts and values," Chen says.

Therefore, Chen encourages theater practitioners to leverage art's communicative power to explore mutual understanding and trust, aiming to bridge the gap and foster a "hand-in-hand" connection among people from different cultural backgrounds.

During the celebration, there were also roundtable sessions held with the themes *A Bridge to Connect People's Hearts*, *A Platform for Cultural Diversity* and *A Stage for the Young*, further highlighting the different roles theater plays in today's world.

Also, the theater institute, the CTA and the Silk Road International Arts Center in Langfang have jointly signed a memorandum of cooperation to advance the planning and promotion of the 32nd World Theatre Festival in 2025 to be held in Langfang. This marks the potential hosting of the international festival in Langfang, promising a unique cultural event for global theater artists and enthusiasts.

Contact the writer at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn



Online Watch the video by scanning the code.

Qinghai's pastoral pasturelands prove perfect for poetry

XINING — Norpal Gyal often loses himself in the beautiful sights of Qinghai Lake, like its flying water birds, rippling blue-green waves and meandering flocks of sheep, which look like pearls scattered on the grasslands.

Norpal Gyal is a herder and poet from Qinghai province. The 63-year-old lives in Yermo village in Gangca county in the Haibei Tibetan autonomous prefecture, which is located beside Qinghai Lake, the country's largest inland saltwater lake.

Every morning, he sets out with a book, a tablet computer and a camera bag slung over his shoulder.

Following the gentle rhythm of the herd, he makes his way toward a winter pasture not far from home, to start a day of grazing and writing poetry by the lake, which has been dubbed a "cradle of poetry."

"Like music and painting, poetry is a form of expression," says Norpal Gyal. "When you feel that life is difficult, read poetry. When you get bored with herding, read poetry."

He has loved reading since he was a child, especially books about philosophy and history, and says his love of reading and understanding life blossomed after reading *Stray Birds*, a collection of poems by Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore.

He was eventually forced to drop out of school because of illness.

"When I was stuck at home, a sense of gloom enveloped me. I would often look at the sheep on the grasslands in a daze, wanting to say something, but I was the only one in that vast space," Norpal Gyal recalls.

"That's when I thought I would chronicle the changes to each blade of grass and every dewdrop through poems."

One of those poems reads as follows: *The bright flowers bloom into the sky in the summer, and the seeds in the autumn become full. The white robes sewn in the winter are*

taken away as gifts by the spring breeze.

Norpal Gyal not only captures observations of everyday life in his poetry but also documents the changes to his own life and hometown.

In 2010, his family of six moved into a new home. Although they no longer depend solely on herding, he holds onto this way of life, as he believes that herding is his source of inspiration for poetry.

To date, Norpal Gyal has written more than 200 poems. Last June, his third collection of verse was published by the Qinghai Ethnic Publishing House, the summation of

nine years of work.

According to Gyume Dorje, vice-chairman of the Qinghai writers' association, Norpal Gyal has been breaking through boundaries in poetry for more than 40 years, articulating his reflections on life with a blend of quiet contemplation and incisive language.

He is not alone in delving into poetry in the Qinghai Lake area. Local herders say they often chant verses to one another during breaks as their flocks graze.

Last June, the biennial Qinghai Lake Poetry Festival was launched in Gangca county, attracting 80 poets from China and abroad in

pursuit of inspiration.

According to Medrup, vice-chairman of the Qinghai provincial federation of literary and art circles and chairman of the Qinghai writers' association, the rapid development of rural writers in Qinghai has both fostered and pooled creative energy for the production of work focused on the theme of rural vitalization in recent years.

The work of the poets encapsulates the beautiful scenes of harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature in the province, Medrup says.

XINHUA

LIFE

Despite saying he would retire seven times, Japanese animation legend Hayao Miyazaki has never truly kept that promise. However, his lack of commitment has been good news for his fans.

The Boy and the Heron, the director's latest outing, and which earned him his second Oscar for Best Animation following *Spirited Away* in 2003, has grossed over 730 million yuan (\$100.8 million), topped China's box office consecutively for two weeks between April 3, its opening day, and April 14.

For die-hard fans eager to delve deeper, an ongoing exhibition leads into some of the most iconic scenes from Miyazaki's movies, from the mysterious woodlands in *Princess Mononoke* to the bathhouse in *Spirited Away*.

Jointly organized by Chinese and Japanese partners, *The Studio Ghibli Story Immersive Art Exhibition*, the first of its kind in the country, kicked off on April 12 and will run until Oct 31 at the Shanghai International Media Port's Art Center.

The project, which took 122 days to mount, features 24 exhibit areas in three venues and covers 2,800 square meters in which 52 digital projects have been installed to create an immersive effect.

More than 10 Japanese craftsmen specialized in the polishing of props to make them appear aged and consistent with their period, were dispatched to Shanghai to help.

As they enter the venue, visitors will be greeted by a giant statue of Totoro, the beloved fantastical creature from the 1988 movie *My Neighbor Totoro*. Clutching a red umbrella much like the traditional Chinese oilpaper umbrella in one of its paws, the statue stands 6 meters tall, making it the largest of its kind in the world.

"Totoro has become a symbol of Japan, and the umbrella is a sign of China. We hope this design conveys our wish to enhance cultural exchange between China and Japan," says Motohiro Konoe, founder of Tsukuru Inc., which cooperated with Unlimited Art, the art brand of Chinese ticketing platform Damai, to organize the exhibit under the authorization of Studio Ghibli.

Konoe says it was finalized in a mere four months, even though an event of this scale typically requires seven months. The expedited timeline was chosen so that the exhibition could open simultaneously with the screening of *The Boy and the Heron*, which was originally scheduled for release on the Chinese mainland during the summer, he adds.

Konoe also says that the exhibition has been curated to appeal to the preferences of Chinese visitors, and incorporates many immersive elements.

The entrance to the exhibition hall is a tunnel made of fake printed "stones", that is filled with a sense of mystery. As visitors arrive, they can see the poster for the 1984 movie *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* apparently suspended in midair, as if by magic. Set in a post-nuclear futuristic world, the film was one of the first to pave the way for Studio Ghibli's global fame.

Continuing inside is like traveling back in time, as fans see their favorite characters and settings from Miyazaki classics over the past 40 years emerge one after another.

Around one corner, visitors



Shanghai showcases Miyazaki's magic

Joint exhibition takes visitors to the fantastical worlds of Japan's beloved animator, **Xu Fan** reports.



There's a divine feeling when the sunlight filters through the glass roof during the day, which deeply moves me."

Daisuke Nishikata, executive director of Studio Ghibli

The Studio Ghibli Story Immersive Art Exhibition, the first of its kind in the country, provides an up-close experience of legendary Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki's classic movies, such as *Ponyo*, with Toshio Suzuki, chairman of Studio Ghibli, admiring the film-inspired scene (top); *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (above left); *Spirited Away* (far left) and *My Neighbor Totoro* (left) with Suzuki patting a character.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

might encounter the robot from *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986) hidden among towering trees, and walking down another path, they might come across the mouthwatering bakery from *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989).

What might dazzle fans the most is taking the elevator to the main exhibition area that has been specially designed to display props and stills of *The Boy and the Heron*. Underneath the massive glass ceiling, dozens of "Warawara" — the white, blob-like spirit creatures from the movie's magical in-between world — are suspended, appearing to gently welcome them.

"Such a design has never been attempted in previous Japanese exhibitions. There's a divine feeling when the sunlight filters through the glass roof during the day, which deeply moves me," says Daisuke Nishikata, the executive director of Studio Ghibli.

Nishikata also reveals that *The Boy and the Heron*, which was released in Japan last July, has taken the shortest time of all Miyazaki movies to be released in China.

Saying that he has discovered that the director has a large fan base in China, Nishikata says that he wishes the exhibition and future cooperation with Chinese partners will bring more joy to Chinese audiences, and allow more people to get to know the studio founded by Japanese producer Yasuyoshi Tokuma in 1985.

An entire wall at the exhibition takes a retrospective look at Tokuma's dedicated attempts to boost cinematic exchange between China and Japan.

Known for discovering Miyazaki, it was Tokuma who appointed him as director of *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* in 1984, propelling Japan's now most prestigious animator to fame and global recognition. In 1990, Tokuma arranged for *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* to be shown in China, making it the first Miyazaki movie to be shown in mainland cinemas.

When asked about what the company has taken from the experience, Yu Shuitao, brand manager for Damai's Unlimited Art, says that they have learned the Japanese spirit of craftsmanship.

She says that the exhibition features a hallway designed to showcase a collection of 600 books, brought from Japan by Studio Ghibli.

"Even the way we arranged the books was done in a manner that closely replicates the style of Studio Ghibli. Our Japanese partners paid great attention to every aspect," Yu explains.

He Mi, president of Damai, says that the exhibition is the largest investment in a thematic exhibition in which Damai has ever participated or collaborated.

He says that the company has managed the complex procedure of organizing a Sino-Japanese exhibition on a very tight schedule, efficiently handling aspects such as importing props.

Yu adds that the Shanghai exhibition marks a good start for learning from the experience of international cooperation and hopes that it will help them organize exhibitions of work by Chinese artists in foreign markets in the future.

Contact the writer at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese version of Harry Potter tie-in unveiled for World Book Day

The People's Literature Publishing House released a new Harry Potter tie-in book on April 13 in the run-up to World Book and Copyright Day, or World Book Day in short, which falls on Tuesday.

Revolving around the curriculum of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, it features content from the British Library's exhibition *Harry Potter: A History of Magic*, and includes valuable Harry Potter-themed collections and sections of author JK Rowling's manuscripts.

This year marks the 24th anniversary of the release of the first Chinese editions by the People's Literature Publishing House, which introduced the series to the Chinese market and continues to be its domestic publisher.

Over the years, the publishing house has produced a variety of Harry Potter publications for Chinese readers, including paperbacks, collector's editions, Chinese-and-English bilingual editions and illustrated editions, as well as various tie-in books.

The British Library exhibition

was held in 2017 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the publication of the first book in the series. The original English version of the book was published under the same title. By that time, the series had sold 450 million copies, had been translated into 79 languages and had been made into 8 blockbuster films.

It serves as a bridge connecting real world items with the spellbound world, and extends the magic for readers who were not able to visit the exhibition.

The oldest items in the British Library's collection are Chinese oracle bones dating back to the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC). One of them was among the displays, and was listed as the oldest exactly datable object in the exhibition.

"The Harry Potter stories are rooted in centuries of popular tradition. Predicting the future, for instance, has a long history," Julian Harrison, lead curator of the exhibition, writes in the book.

Harrison then proceeds to explain

in detail how the ancient people used oracle bones to tell the future, possibly by engraving and heating them until they cracked.

The reverse side of the bone that was exhibited records a lunar eclipse seen in Anyang, Henan province, on the night of Dec 27, 1192 BC.

"These artifacts were known historically as 'dragon bones', emphasizing their magical qualities," Harrison writes.

The book explores thousands of years of magical history, under the guidance of experts and by following the Hogwarts curriculum, from the Care of Magical Creatures and Herbology to Defense Against the Dark Arts and Astronomy.

"I could never have imagined I was about to embark on a remarkable journey, that I was but one of a legion of fellow travelers around the world embarking on the same journey, all of us falling under the spell of this unknown author, JK Rowling, a spell that, 20 years on, only grows more powerful," says Steve Kloves, screenwriter and producer on a number of



At an event in Beijing ahead of World Book Day, a Harry Potter tie-in book in Chinese was launched. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

films in the Harry Potter series.

Also joining that journey is Wang Ruiqin. She was the first of the series' Chinese editors, and has participated in the copyright purchase of the series in 1999.

"It touches me because it is about growing-up, and about courage and

wit in the process," Wang says at the Chinese version's launch in Beijing.

"And I suppose People's Literature was chosen because of its long tradition and achievements in publishing translated work," she adds.

Zhai Can, who is part of the younger generation of editors overseeing Harry Potter titles, says that she was chosen because Wang believed that the only requirement was that an editor be a genuine fan of the series, or a Potterhead.

The Chinese version of the new book is the work of two such Potterheads, Xiang Xun and Dong Yi, who were the winners of a contest held by the publisher to locate fans to help with the translation. Over the past 24 years, the house has held many live events bringing together Harry Potter fans. The two translators were pursuing higher education respectively in Britain and the United States when they were approached in 2018.

Like veteran translator of the series Ma Ainong, who says she's been thrilled by Rowling's humor

and has burst into laughter at times when working on the translations, the duo say they enjoy translation very much, and were greatly honored by the experience, which they described as a "dream coming true".

"We are Harry Potter fans, and though we split the work in two, we communicated without any hurdles," says Dong Yi, who is a geography major.

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." That well-known quote by Arthur Clarke suits the new publication well, the editors say.

Zhang Jinshuo, director of the National Zoological Museum under the Institute of Zoology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Tsinghua University astronomy professor Cai Zheng, also shared their thoughts with readers at the launch.

"As the book shows, Rowling's magic is based on the real world, and animals make up a great portion of her imagination," Zhang says. "The traits of certain animals in Harry Potter's world take us by wonder, which is exactly a reflection of our understanding of the real animals."

XINHUA AND CHINA DAILY

CULTURE



Left: A visitor wearing traditional hanfu clothing attends the exhibition at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. WU XIAOLING / XINHUA



Center: The exhibition highlights the compelling tale of ancient Chinese civilization through many bronze relics on loan from six institutions in Hubei province. CHANG JUN / CHINA DAILY



Right: Liz Nichols, a volunteer at the Asian Art Museum, introduces Chinese history to a group of students at the exhibition. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY

CULTURAL JOURNEY

US exhibition showcases ancient splendor

Bronze Age artifacts more than 2,000 years old from Yangtze River region provide unique insight into China's fascinating history, report **Deng Zhangyu** in Beijing and **Lia Zhu** in San Francisco.

A captivating exhibition at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco offers a clue to the vibrant Bronze Age cultures that flourished along the Yangtze River more than 2,000 years ago.

As the biggest archaeological exhibition traveling from China to the United States after the COVID-19 pandemic waned, *Phoenix Kingdoms: The Last Splendor of China's Bronze Age* met an appreciative audience at the museum on Friday, showcasing more than 260 items of remarkable artifacts unearthed from aristocratic tombs in Hubei province.

The exhibition was co-organized by the Asian Art Museum and Hubei Provincial Museum. It showcases a diverse range of objects: intricate bronze vessels, jade ornaments, musical instruments used in ancient ceremonies, and weaponry employed in battles. Lacquerware, a hallmark of luxury and refinement, also features.

The exhibits are loaned from six cultural institutions, including the provincial museum, the Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, and Jingzhou Museum. Many of the pieces on display, such as bronze vessels, lacquerware and jade objects, have traveled outside China for the first time.

Li Qun, director of China's National Cultural Heritage Administration, said at the opening ceremony that it is the largest show of cultural property China has organized in the US in recent years and represents the magnificent and romantic charm of Chinese culture to the US audience.

"Supported by in-depth academic research and the latest archaeological findings, it showcases the continuity, unity, peacefulness, inclusiveness, and innovativeness of Chinese civilization," said Li, who is also China's vice-minister of culture and tourism.

In November, President Xi Jinping met with President Joe Biden in San Francisco, inaugurating the future-oriented "San Francisco vision" to enhance the stable, sound and sus-

tainable development of the China-US relationship.

Li said the show is an example of transforming that vision into reality. He called for close cooperation between museums in China and the US in future to allow both the Chinese and American people to understand and respect each other's cultures and values.

The exhibition received strong support from China's National Cultural Heritage Administration and partner museums in China, which loaned important pieces from their collections, such as the standing crane-like creature with deer antlers, and the painted drum with a pedestal design of phoenixes on tigers' back, said Jeremy Zhang, the museum's curator of Chinese art.

The show consists of five sections that vividly illustrate the achievements in art, music, technology, and design of the Zeng and Chu states, two vassals of the Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-256 BC) in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, a cradle of China's early civilization at the end of the Bronze Age.

Zhang said that, like Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt, the Zeng state's long and splendid history was revealed by recent archaeological discoveries and their musical instruments, represented by the bronze bells, which astonished the world.

"The objects traveling from Hubei to California allow us to entertain and inform our audience through a magical art journey crossing time and space. I'm sure that our audience will feel the beauty of China's early art and better understand how these regional cultures finally integrated into Chinese civilization via these latest archaeological findings," said Zhang.

"We are witnessing a golden age of Chinese archaeology. *Phoenix Kingdoms* bridges the gap between myth and history, allowing visitors to come face-to-face with the past through these stunning artifacts," said Jay Xu, director and CEO of the Asian Art Museum and a specialist in early China, at the opening ceremony.

Zhang emphasized the previously unknown significance of these states. "These exquisite artworks, national treasures in China due to their rarity and beauty, serve as missing links between myth and recorded history," he explained.

It is such a rare opportunity for American audiences, since the artifacts, like textiles that were previously too fragile to be excavated or travel, can now be shared with the public thanks to improved environmental controls and scientific advances, said Anne Kaahn, a docent of the Asian Art Museum.

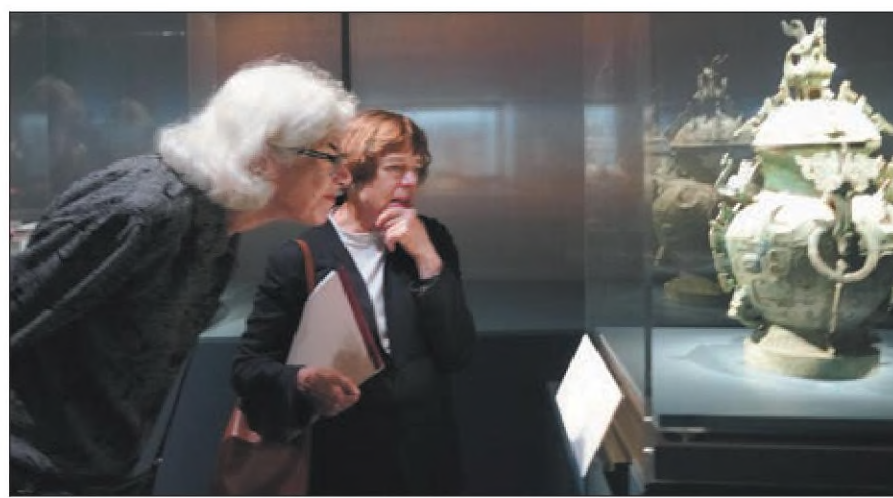
"People should really get in and see this. You'll learn how incredibly sophisticated Chinese history is," she told China Daily, adding that even those who have no prior knowledge of Chinese history can appreciate it.

"The bronze work that they did — it's hard to replicate that today. It's so intricate, and just the idea that people were buried with these things!" she said. One of the pieces that Kaahn recommends to visitors is the 16 writhing dragons that resemble snakes, which make up the base of a drum from the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng (433 BC).

Other highlights include the ornament with a design of two raptors on a mask (2200 BC), the oldest piece on view and the bronze double-walled square *jian-fou* cooler, a technological marvel.

The *jian-fou* was also found in the marquis' tomb. The cleverly engineered vessel-within-a-vessel could keep refreshments, like millet ale, cool for lavish festivities during warm months — and was perhaps the first metal cooler in recorded history.

The exhibition has garnered significant interest, attracting visitors from all walks of life. Huiqi Demke, an 11-year-old visitor from Utah, is eager to learn more about Chinese history. "I've been studying Chinese for



Top: Visitors examine a cultural relic known as a lei, a type of ritual bronze object decorated with resting birds, at *Phoenix Kingdoms: The Last Splendor of China's Bronze Age*, at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. WU XIAOLING / XINHUA



Above: A bronze cultural relic in the form of a painted crouching deer at the exhibition. XINHUA

five years, and I'm always fascinated by Chinese culture," she told China Daily. "This is an amazing opportunity to learn and share what I see here with my classmates." Zhou Maoyi, deputy Chinese consul general in San Francisco, emphasized the exhibition's role in fostering cultural exchange. "This is a rare chance for Americans to delve into the brilliance of Chinese culture from over 2,000 years ago," he said. "We hope it opens a new window for people, especially young visitors, to appreciate the richness of Chinese history and traditions."

Li from the National Cultural Heritage Administration also said: "I sincerely hope that cultural heritage institutions and museums from China and the US will work closely together, promoting equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness to jointly compose a new chapter of China-US people-to-people exchange."

The Asian Art Museum had the idea of holding the show 10 years ago. It took them five years to prepare, with the help and support of their Chinese counterparts. Since 2013, it has cooperated with key museums in China to bring the famous Terracotta Warriors and cultural relics of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) to the US. The *Phoenix Kingdoms* is seen as a prequel to the previous exhibitions.

There are more shows planned by working with Chinese museums, including bringing more Chinese artwork to the US and holding traveling Asian Art Museum exhibitions in China, Xu added. "The language of art can transcend cultures," said Xu. The exhibition will run through July 22.

Contact the writers at dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

See more by scanning the code.

Eight books on social sciences have won Wenjin Book Awards this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Nowadays, algorithms and AI largely decide what we see," Wang Lei, a professor at the Communication University of China, said. "If we don't deliberately read, we cannot nurture the capacity to independently think and actively absorb knowledge. "Reading is a fascinating adventure from one world to another," he said. "Thanks to the Wenjin awards, we're encouraged to set off on that journey."

Awards give books an exciting chapter

By WANG KAIHAO
wangkaihao@chinadaily.com.cn

In the digital era in which people's attention is often distracted by fragmented, eye-catching information, Tuesday's annual World Book and Copyright Day is probably one of the few moments that remind people of the irreplaceable importance of reading, in what may now be termed the old-fashioned way.

The Wenjin Book Awards, which are bestowed by the National Library of China every year for this special occasion, was organized as a key event ahead of the day — and as a guide for readers. The list of winners of the 19th Wenjin Book Awards was released in the national library in Beijing on Friday. Among China's highest honors in the publishing industry, the awards are mainly given in non-literature genres.

Twenty titles in three categories — children's books, pop science, and social sciences — stood out from the nearly 2,500 submissions across the country to gain the top

awards, and an extra 41 were honored by making it to the final round.

From themes that seem to be far removed from today's reality, like astronomy and archaeology, to subjects that are deeply influencing our everyday life like artificial intelligence and silicon chips, the awardees cover a wide range.

"In the winners' list, we've seen top-tier experts writing approachable books for the general public, focusing on history, architecture, and traditional culture," Wang Yuguang, a Peking University professor and a jury panel member for the social science genre, commented. "But we also find more entries related to livelihoods, education, and the society we live in."

For instance, among the eight winning titles in this genre, there is *Looking for Liao Ling*. Zhao Feng, an archaeology professor at Zhejiang University and a famous researcher of ancient fabrics, traced the history of silk during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) following a reference in a famous stanza by the poet Bai Juyi.

Meanwhile, in *The Archaeology*

in *Zodiac Animals: Discovering China From Twelve Animals*, Yuan Jing, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, chose a fresh angle to reconstruct how these animal totems gained their status through analysis of bones and relics bearing their images.

Individual stories are equally powerful at awakening collective memory, as *To Approach the Dearest People* indicates.

When Song Zhixin sorted through her parents' belongings after they both passed away, she accidentally found letters written by her father to her mother during the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53) and some diaries from the battlefield. She compiled them into the book.

"I want to create a more immersive experience for today's people to approach that war, thanks to my father's vivid descriptions," Song said.

In terms of pop science, panel member Wang Yusheng, a researcher with the China Science and Technology Museum, said that the six winners reflected scientists'

personal feelings in pursuing academic achievements.

"When discipline segmentation gets more and more detailed in modern times, sometimes we realize that we've neglected other fields that we should focus on," said Chen Yong, a geophysicist and an academician at Chinese Academy of Sciences. "That's why we often admire naturalists like Charles Darwin. So how about writing a small book that concerns our shared home, the Earth?"

That is the origin story of his book *Dynamic Earth*, which reminds human beings to retain their awe of nature.

Six more winners are in the children's book category. Lai Xue-mei, a book critic and a judge of the awards, said Chinese children's books have greatly advanced in recent years, breeding many stories with warmth and concerning various topics like local cultures, environment issues, and humanity.

For instance, Cen Xiaoxian, a teacher based in Foshan, Guangdong province, praises the lion



Eight books on social sciences have won Wenjin Book Awards this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

dance, a signature form of intangible cultural heritage in her hometown, and wrote the children's novel *Lion Girls* to cheer for young people chasing their dreams.

The Wenjin Book Awards are named after Wenjin Ge, a former Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) royal library in present-day Chengde, Hebei province, which contributed key collections to the national library. The awards were launched in 2004.

Contact the writers at dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn



Online
See more
by scanning
the code.