

Sounding a warning

IMF chief expresses concerns on weak growth rate, divergence

WORLD, PAGE 14



Country makes solar affordable worldwide

BUSINESS, PAGE 16



Flights of kites

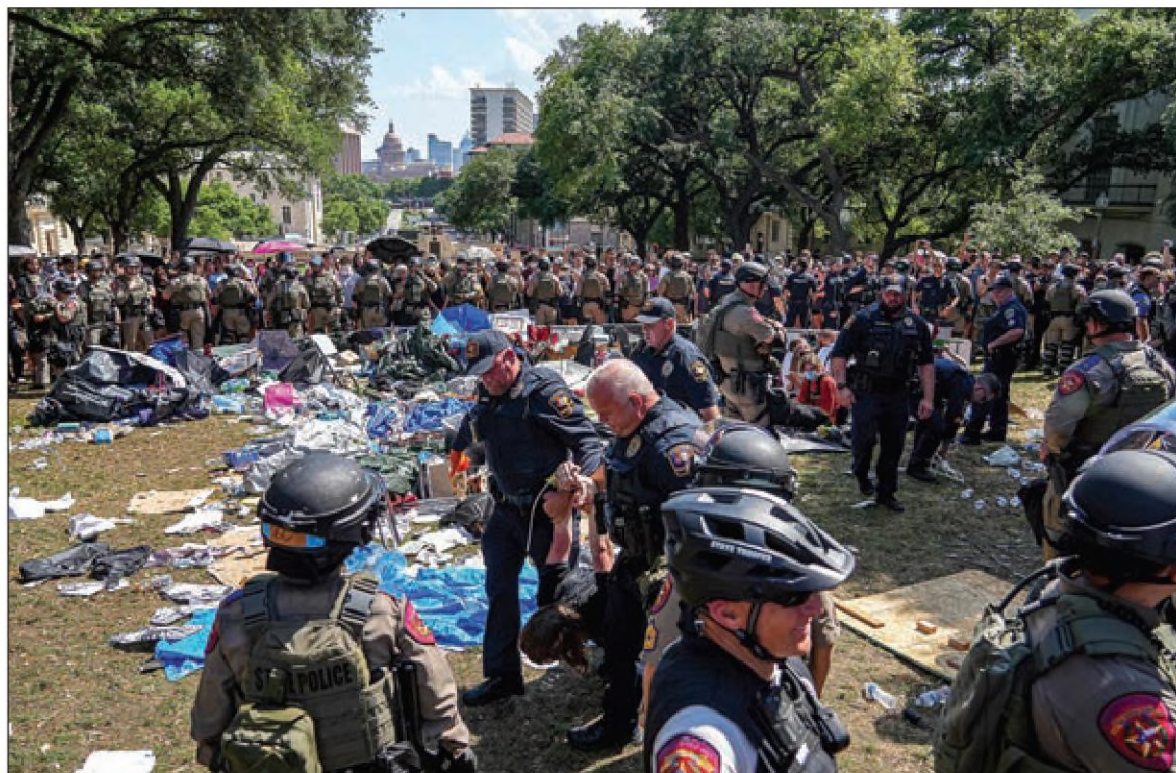
Ancient folk craft tradition floats across time, soars to new heights

THE HANDS OF TIME, PAGES 8-9

CHINA DAILY

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Police clash with protesters



A protester is taken away by University of Texas at Austin police on Monday at an encampment opposed to the Israel-Hamas war. AARON E. MARTINEZ / AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN VIA AP See story, page 15

Xi's Europe visit expected to bolster ties

Upcoming trips to France, Serbia, Hungary seen as key to global peace, development

By XU WEI xuweit@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping's upcoming state visits to France, Serbia and Hungary are expected to open new chapters of solidarity and cooperation between China and the three European countries, while injecting fresh impetus into the nation's ties with the European Union, said officials and analysts.

Xi, making his first trip to Europe in five years, will visit the three countries between May 5 and 10 at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

Lin Jian, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, said on Monday that the upcoming trip will serve to bolster bilateral relations, promote the overall development of China-EU ties, and strengthen global peace and development.

Xi's visit to France will come as both nations celebrate the 60th anniversary of bilateral ties this year, and one year after the Chinese president hosted President Macron in Beijing and Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

During the upcoming visit, Xi will hold talks with Macron to exchange views on bilateral ties and China-EU relations, and the two heads of states will meet outside of Paris for further in-depth interactions, according to Lin.

"China-France relations have long been at the forefront of relations between China and the West," Lin said, adding that the upcoming trip will hold significant importance for the continuation and advancement of the relationship.

Beijing aims to work with Paris in further consolidating political mutual trust, strengthening unity and cooperation, elevating the bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership to new heights, and injecting new vitality into the healthy and stable development of China-Europe relations, he said.

France is China's third-largest trading partner and third-largest source of actual investment within the EU, while China is France's largest trading partner in Asia and the seventh-largest globally, according to the ministry.

Ding Chun, director of Fudan University's Center for European Studies, said that stronger coordination

and collaboration between China and France, a major country that has long upheld strategic autonomy, will hold implications far beyond the bilateral ties.

"The enhancing of ties between Beijing and Paris will serve as a model for efforts to build up China's ties with other major countries and the EU," he said.

He added that there is broad room for China and France to tap into the potential for economic and trade cooperation, with both sides expected to continue building up people-to-people exchanges through events such as the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism this year.

The heightened coordination between China and France, which are both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, on global hot spot issues will be of great significance to global peace and stability, Ding added.

Lin, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, also highlighted the ironclad ties between China and Serbia, China's first comprehensive strategic partner in the Central and Eastern European region.

During the visit to Belgrade, Xi and Vucic will discuss elevating the position of China-Serbia relations, pointing the way for the future development of bilateral ties.

Beijing looks forward to working with Belgrade to take this visit as an opportunity to further consolidate the ironclad friendship, deepen political mutual trust, expand pragmatic cooperation, and embark on a new chapter in the history of bilateral relations, the spokesman added.

As for the trip to Hungary, Lin said that deepening the traditional friendship between Beijing and Budapest, which are celebrating the 75th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic ties this year, is in the common interest of both nations.

"This milestone visit will elevate bilateral relations to a new level, open a new chapter in China-Hungary friendly cooperation, and inject new vitality into the development of China-EU relations," Lin said.

Ding, from Fudan University, added that Serbia and Hungary both stand at the forefront of advancing Belt and Road cooperation with China.

The strengthening of ties between China and Hungary, which is set to take over the rotating EU presidency in July, will also serve to stabilize China-EU relations and enable the two sides to better manage their differences, he added.

AI data training supported by domestic chips

By MA SI in Beijing and YANG CHENG in Tianjin

China is making progress in leveraging supercomputers and domestic artificial intelligence chips for the training of AI data, as it copes with the restrictions imposed by the United States on exports of US company Nvidia's most advanced AI chips to the country, experts and company executives said.

Their comments came after China Mobile said on Sunday that its AI computing center, the largest of its kind among global telecom operators, had become operational in Hohhot, Inner

Mongolia autonomous region, and more than 85 percent of the AI chips used in the center are domestic ones.

Zheng Weimin, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, told China Daily that China is so far home to 14 national-level supercomputer centers, with some of them having surplus computing power.

Through coordinated hardware and software design, these resources can be leveraged for the training and inference of data for large language models, a key technology behind generative AI applications such as ChatGPT, he said.

A team led by Zheng has con-

ducted AI training on two large language models, such as LLAMA 7B, by using a domestically developed supercomputer. The training "has achieved results aligned with those from training on Nvidia's chip platforms, but at only one-sixth of the cost of renting Nvidia chips", Zheng said.

The remarks came as the prices of Nvidia's most advanced AI chips surged in China after the US government imposed tougher restrictions on exports of the chips to the country.

Zheng is not alone in exploring ways to harness supercomputers for AI training.

Kang Bo, head of the data intelli-

gence department at the National Supercomputer Center in Tianjin, told China Daily that "domestic supercomputers do have a cost advantage in terms of usage, as Nvidia chips' power consumption and prices become very high".

The supercomputer center in Tianjin unveiled an in-house large language model, Tianhe Tianyuan, last May by leveraging its supercomputing power. The center is renowned for developing and deploying China's top-ranking supercomputers, including the world-renowned Tianhe-1, Kang said.

See Tech, page 3

AGING POPULATION FORCES RETHINK ON FAMILY DUTIES, HEALTHCARE

Experts, academics consider innovations, reforms to deal with growing wave of elderly people

By WEI WANGYU weiwangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Wang Zhenhua, 88, from Wuhan, Hubei province, suffers from pancreatic cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and other medical complications. He uses a wheelchair and strug-

gles to stand up, but remains fiercely independent. "I just need to use the bathroom. I can walk there by myself. I don't need anyone's help," he said.

He believes that requiring help is a sign of being "disabled", which undermines his dignity. He doesn't want his family to

spend too much time and energy caring for him, nor does he want to incur the high cost of hiring a caregiver.

"We don't want aging to be just about survival. We need a life with dignity and fulfillment," said Ye Cuihua, Wang's wife.

See Elderly care, page 2



New 'report' on HK reeks of false narratives

The lengthy and boring 2024 Hong Kong Policy Act Report filed by the United States Department of State on March 29 regurgitates the same misinformation about the special administrative region's rule of law and freedom. Even the accompanying statement by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken instills in the Hong Kong populace a sense of distrust toward Washington.

Blinken's threat of visa restrictions on some Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government officials, among others, because of the enactment of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance will prove useless. Who would want to see such a hostile country anyway?

WORLD WATCH By Mark Pinkstone

Blinken concluded his statement related to the report with: "We are committed to continuing to work with Congress and the international community to stand with the people in Hong Kong in calling for the restoration of Hong Kongers' protected rights and freedoms, the immediate release of those unjustly detained or imprisoned under the National Security Law, and respect for the rule of law."

Let's get this straight. Hong Kong people are not calling for restoring their rights and freed-

oms; they have them now, especially after their sufferings during the US-touted rioting in 2019. Hong Kong people can do what they like and are free to do whatever they like within the framework of the law. Similar and more stringent laws are in force in the US, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and other places critical of Hong Kong's national security laws.

Blinken also called for releasing those "unjustly detained" under the national security laws. Obviously, the US consul general in Hong Kong has not kept his boss up to date on the trial of former Apple Daily publisher Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, charged

See Hegemony, page 3

Fashion with a message



Models showcase qipao, a traditional Chinese attire, on Friday at a fashion event held at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, the United States. The event was attended by nearly 300 guests including diplomats from various countries, representatives from international organizations and various sectors. SHA HANTING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE See story, page 3

TO OUR READERS

Due to the May Day holiday, we will publish 12-page holiday edition on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

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PAGE TWO

From page 1

The Wang family's situation will become more common as China's population ages and drives reassessment of how healthcare and eldercare are delivered, experts said. Even palliative care in an elderly person's last days will need to be looked at again.

The number of elderly people in China, those aged 60 and above, soared to 297 million, or about 21.1 percent of the population, last year, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

Family burdens

In the past, China's approach to elderly care has been predominantly family-centered, said Winnie Yip, a professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

"In China, there's a notable distribution where 90 percent of individuals prefer to receive care at home, 7 percent opt for community-based care, and a mere 3 percent turn to hospitals," she said. "This situation necessitates a comprehensive reform of the long-term care insurance system to ensure the well-being of the elderly, regardless of their financial status."

Yin Shushan, a scholar at the Institute of Population Research of Peking University said the traditional Chinese model of family care, once the cornerstone of elderly support, is under strain.

"The rapid pace of modern life, coupled with economic pressures, has eroded the ability of younger generations to provide the same level of care, leading to a palpable tension between tradition and contemporary realities," Yin said.

"So the country is compelled to re-imagine its approach to eldercare, balancing traditional values with innovations," he added.

Jing Jun, a professor of the Department of Social Science at Tsinghua University, believes that China's approach to elderly care isn't solely based on family values.

"Even those with strained family relationships still come together during the Chinese New Year, as traditional Chinese holidays emphasize family reunions," Jing said.

"However, the well-being of the elderly doesn't solely hinge on family ties. In China, there are numerous elderly communities based on mutual-aid elderly care. Elderly individuals help each other without blood ties, hence forming reciprocal relationships spontaneously," he said.

Professional approach

In the future, *hugong*, or professional caregivers, will play a greater role, which will require better standards and training. "It's also a matter of human resources, as the qualifications and training programs for caregivers are still being established," Yip said.

Zhang Qiaoqiao, a 39-year-old who works in Beijing, has employed a *hugong* for more than six years to look after her father who lives in Changsha, Hunan province.

"Seeking help from a *hugong* is the only way I can keep my life normal. I can't just quit my job and go home. Nursing home care can be rather expensive if you want someone who is a professional," she said.

Zhang's father is paralyzed and his care would be much easier if his home had equipment to help move him. "It is challenging for the nurse to lift my father up from the bed and transfer him to a wheelchair. Transferring him several times a day can be exhausting," she said.

Tan Xiaoyu, a *hugong* who works at the Wuhan Puren Hospital in Wuhan, Hubei, said mobility is crucial for the elderly.

"They have families and friends they want to spend time with," she said. "Being confined or bedridden can lead to blood clots, and even depression."

The cost of hiring a *hugong* is generally 200 (\$27.6) to 400 yuan per day, Tan said. Long-term care is a significant expense for ordinary families and is not covered by most medical insurances.

"The expenses are manageable for a short duration only if a person has many children, all of whom are working. Even when the expenses are shared, it drains a family's finances in the long run," she said.

The dilemma intensifies if parents require long-term care, compelling their children to either put their careers on hold or abandon them entirely.

"Maybe hiring a nursing assistant is the solution," said Wang Jing, a single mother grappling with her father's lung cancer diagnosis. "They might provide better care for my parents than I'm able to. As it is,



XING WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Elderly care: Balancing traditional values with innovations

my time is stretched thin between a full-time job and taking care of my son who's in elementary school."

Bigger picture

Arthur Kleinman, a professor of psychiatry and medical anthropology at Harvard University, said the emphasis is currently on improving the healthcare system, which includes mental health services, and in this regard, China is actually performing better than many other countries.

"It is crucial for medical professionals, scientists and researchers

like us to work hand in hand with our counterparts in China because these challenges are universal," Kleinman said.

"The insights we have gained in the United States can be shared with China and vice versa, with the ultimate goal being enhancing the lives of the elderly. This collaboration is at the heart of our commitment to caregiving," he added.

William Hsiao, an emeritus professor of economics at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, said China has to invest more in the

healthcare and social needs of the elderly. The Chinese government should set priorities and establish a framework to guide the allocation of resources, he added.

Scientists, sociologists and anthropologists are already cooperating with research institutions and industry partners to look at ways to innovate and improve support for the elderly.

Launched in 2018, the Social Technology for Global Aging Project unites various departments at Harvard University with the Jiangsu

Industrial Technology Research Institute and Yangtze River Delta National Technology Innovation Center at Zhejiang University.

The project draws on experts from various fields including anthropologists, economists, engineers, medical practitioners and designers, to look at holistic approaches to improving care for the elderly.

"By engaging directly with local communities, the team gathers insights and perspectives from the elderly population, aiming to pinpoint and address their primary

concerns, thereby providing valuable suggestions to facilitate governmental actions," said Wang Yuan, the project coordinator.

The project explores issues such as assisting elderly individuals with mobility problems, challenges faced by those without family support, and blending community services with effective management.

Through these collaborative efforts, researchers and government bodies are working together from multiple vantage points to devise practical solutions to the challenges posed by global aging, Wang said.

Many of the obstacles encountered by the elderly do not demand avant-garde technological solutions, but rather thoughtful application of existing technologies.

Wheelchairs, hospital beds and oxygen supplies, for example, might not represent the pinnacle of innovation, but they can greatly enhance the daily lives of the elderly.

Meanwhile, the combining of social sciences and industrial technologies is helping the elderly in China benefit from a richer variety of care services. Wearable exoskeletons, for example, are helping some elderly people overcome mobility limitations.

On the financial front, developing long-term care insurance that supplements the existing pension insurance model is also being addressed. Since 2016, long-term care insurance policies have been piloted in 15 cities, and were expanded to 49 cities last year, according to the Chinese government website.

Wang, the coordinator of the Social Technology for Global Aging project, said the elderly in many countries spend almost half of their savings on end-of-life care.

"Our project aims to make cost-effective assistance available for the elderly in China. If we succeed, other Global South countries can learn from our experiences," she said.

A 'good death'

Even in death, Chinese culture throws up challenges not seen in other countries.

Ning Xiaohong, director of the Palliative Care Center at Peking Union Medical College Hospital, told thepaper.cn that deaths that do not allow proper goodbyes are always regrettable. "We hope that every family gets enough time to prepare for a final farewell," she said.

End-of-life care in China faces a unique challenge, said Eric Krakauer, a palliative care physician at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School.

"Families may feel obligated, based on filial piety, to insist that modern life-sustaining treatments and machines be used to keep a family member alive even when these machines cause suffering and give the patient no chance to survive outside the hospital, said Krakauer, who runs a palliative care training program in China.

"If a family member recognizes that comfort is the best goal of care, and thus palliative care is the right type of care for a family member, others may criticize this opinion as non-filial or as 'giving up.' It appears to me that the meaning of filial piety needs to be reconsidered in the age of invasive life-sustaining treatments," he added.

Krakauer said palliative care is often misunderstood as a "giving up" treatment, which makes it even more difficult for many families to accept.

Further discussions on life and death are needed for patients, families and healers, especially in China, experts said.

Health education, especially knowledge about palliative care in Chinese hospitals, is a crucial step forward, experts said. Cultivating a psychological acceptance of a "good death" also plays an important role in helping seniors find meaning and fulfillment in their final years.

"The understanding of 'good death' is completely personal, and has no universal standard, varying significantly from people to people," said Su Jing, secretary-general of the Center for Global Development and Health Communication Research in Tsinghua University.

Instead of viewing death as the ultimate endpoint, a "good death" should involve seeking out cultural and moral experiences that go beyond the physical aspect of life as it draws to a close.

"At this final stage, the essence of what is good emerges as a matter of open choice, emphasizing that the freedom, and dignity to make such choices, are fundamental necessities," Su added.

Fa Cuiwen and Xiao Xiangyi contributed to this story.

TOP NEWS

Precious cargo



The French 19th-century three-masted barque Belem sails through the Corinth Canal on Sunday carrying the Olympic flame during its journey to France. The vessel set sail on Saturday from Piraeus port near Athens, and is due in Marseille on May 8. ARIS MESSINIS / AFP

Shanghai facilitates payment convenience

City's move aims to benefit inbound travelers amid shopping festival

By WANG YING in Shanghai
wang_ying@chinadaily.com.cn

Shanghai is looking to extensively increase the number of point of sale machines that accept foreign bank cards to 80,000 this year, in an effort to offer convenience to inbound travelers, officials said.

That would be a significant jump from last year's 45,000 machines, Shanghai Vice-Mayor Hua Yuan said on Saturday.

The decision is included in a 15-item action plan that aims to facilitate payment convenience in the city. The plan was announced by Hua during the launching ceremony for the city's International Consumption Season and the fifth Shanghai Shopping Festival.

The action plan is committed to increasing the acceptance of

domestic as well as international bank cards in key retail scenarios, optimizing cash services at multiple levels, enhancing mobile payment convenience, boosting banking services, and establishing comprehensive service centers for foreign visitors at Shanghai's two airports.

To improve cash services, the municipal government will accelerate the upgrade of the city's self-service machines to allow cash withdrawals using foreign bank cards at Shanghai's self-service machines.

In the meantime, 650,000 purses containing coins will be made available at venues to facilitate cash payments, while convenience stores and taxis will be encouraged to have coins and bank notes on hand so they can provide change for those who pay with cash.

Shanghai also plans to increase

the number of foreign currency exchange points to 319 by the end of the year.

According to the plan, mobile payment services will be streamlined, including optimization of user interfaces, an increase in payment amount limits, and tailored services for the elderly.

Yang Jing, an official from the Shanghai Bureau of Culture and Tourism, was quoted by local news portal ThePaper.cn as saying that since the launch of the inbound tourism promotion campaign Visit Shanghai in December, the city has seen a rapid increase in the number of visitors coming from outside China.

The number of inbound foreign travelers to Shanghai reached 1.19 million in the first quarter of this year, a nearly sevenfold year-on-year increase and a 6.6 percent increase from the last quarter of

2023, according to data from Shanghai Customs.

For the five-day May Day holiday, which begins on Wednesday, Shanghai's two airports and its international cruise terminals are expected to handle 513,000 passenger trips, according to data from the Shanghai General Station of Immigration Inspection.

In addition to the action plan announced on Saturday, Shanghai's municipal government is taking other steps to provide a better payment experience for inbound travelers. For example, starting on April 15, point of sale machines have been added to all the service centers at Shanghai's subway stations to facilitate the use of foreign bank cards for purchasing subway tickets. The machines can handle domestic as well as international bank cards.

On April 12, a total of 50 taxis became the first in Shanghai to allow individuals, including expatriate residents and visitors, to pay with foreign bank cards. A total of 1,000 taxis with the optimized payment service are expected to be available in Shanghai by the end of June. The service will further expand to more than 2,000 taxis ahead of the seventh China International Import Expo, which is set for Nov 5-10 in the city.

Chinese culture opens its arms to embrace the world

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

China's ambassador to the United States Xie Feng welcomed nearly 300 guests from myriad backgrounds to the Chinese embassy in Washington, DC, for a fashion event on Friday.

"The Chinese civilization has run uninterrupted for thousands of years, exploring new ground through reform and innovation and gaining fresh vigor by drawing on other cultures," Xie told his guests. "China today is opening its arms wider to embrace the world and creating a better world with a more dynamic civilization."

The Experience Chinese Fashion and Arts event, jointly hosted with the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, saw guests being introduced to the unique charm of Chinese culture through fashion shows and *qipao* dances.

More than 20 models sashayed down the runway in over 200 specially tailored *qipao*, or traditional Chinese dress for women, made of exquisite fabrics with novel designs.

During intervals in the fashion show, dancers of the Xuejuan Dance Ensemble performed dances with delicate moves while wearing beautiful *qipao*.

Xie said *qipao*, which represents traditional Chinese attire, provides a window to understanding China.

Beauty is everywhere in the world, he said.

"What is lacking is not beauty, but eyes to perceive her, and a big heart and an open mind to appreciate the beauty of all civilizations," Xie said.

"China and the United States are different in history, culture, social system and development path. Nevertheless, these should not hamper our exchanges, but should encourage us to learn from each other," he added.

A single flower does not make a spring, Xie cited the Chinese idiom, saying there are more than 200 countries and regions in the world, and more than 2,500 ethnic groups and multiple religions.

"Each and every kind of attire, music and lifestyle is irreplaceable and is a shared treasure of mankind. This is why China has put forward the Global Civilization Initiative," he said.

"We look forward to working with other countries to jointly advocate respect for the diversity of civilizations, the common values of humanity, the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and robust interna-

It is our hope that fashion and art will serve as bridges for China-US cultural exchanges and mutual learning, and inject impetus into dialogue between and common progress of all civilizations."

Xie Feng, China's ambassador to the United States

tional people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

"It is our hope that fashion and art will serve as bridges for China-US cultural exchanges and mutual learning, and inject impetus into dialogue between and common progress of all civilizations."

During the event, guests had the opportunity to try on *qipao*, and stylists on site gave them exquisite makeovers.

Adorned in elegant *qipao*, guests posed for photographs in front of the embassy's decorated spiral staircase, windows and paintings. They were invited to grace the catwalk to express the beauty of civilizational exchanges and mutual understanding through the language of fashion, winning applause from the audience.

Among the attendees were Minister Jing Quan and Minister Counselor Chen Chunmei of the embassy, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States Luis Almagro and his wife, along with envoys and spouses from other countries and representatives of international organizations.

The event also featured the Ningbo Performing Arts Group, Ningbo Fenghua District Cultural Tourism Group and Zhejiang Chantel Gong Cultural Industry Development.

Gong Hangyu, founder and *qipao* designer for Chantel Gong, shared her knowledge of Chinese *qipao* culture and design through lectures at the George Washington University Museum and the Textile Museum, as well as the Chinese American Museum during her stay in Washington, fostering a deeper appreciation for the rich heritage and artistry of Chinese *qipao*.

Hegemony: People know the real story

From page 1

with collusion and sedition with solid evidence being unveiled during his ongoing trial. Otherwise, he would know that those detained were allegedly involved in criminal activities to overthrow the Hong Kong SAR government.

Last year, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs listed five categories of US hegemony: political (throwing its weight around), military (wanton use of force), economic (looting and exploitation), technological (monopoly and suppression) and cultural (spreading false narratives). The 2024 Hong Kong Policy Act Report falls under the final category — cultural. The entire report is full of false narratives taken as granted by the US agencies.

For example, the report alleges that the central and special administrative region authorities are "intensifying a crackdown" on

was justified in condemning the US report, which was compiled to serve the political purpose of maintaining US hegemony. Washington's attempt to undermine the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong will only expose its past wrongdoings, own weakness and ill will, which is doomed to fail.

Last year, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs listed five categories of US hegemony: political (throwing its weight around), military (wanton use of force), economic (looting and exploitation), technological (monopoly and suppression) and cultural (spreading false narratives). The 2024 Hong Kong Policy Act Report falls under the final category — cultural. The entire report is full of false narratives taken as granted by the US agencies.

For example, the report alleges that the central and special administrative region authorities are "intensifying a crackdown" on

Hong Kong's civil society, media, and dissenting voices, including the issuance of bounties and arrest warrants for more than a dozen "pro-democracy" activists living outside Hong Kong.

The so-called "pro-democracy" activists are alleged criminal insurgents fleeing justice and seeking protection in safe havens such as the US, the UK, Australia and other places. Not only is the West hiding these criminals, but it is also encouraging others to follow suit. It is natural that Hong Kong wants these offenders back to face a fair trial and offers a bounty for their return.

Hong Kong is just following standard practice worldwide. The FBI has offered a bounty of \$500,000 for information leading to the arrest of a pipe bomber near the Capitol the day before the Jan 6, 2021, insurrection. Many other bounties, including those wanted for the Jan 6 insurgency, range

from \$250,000 to \$5 million.

The people of Hong Kong know that the report is not worth the paper it's written on, and they know the real story is that Hong Kong is rapidly regaining its former glory through its own initiatives. It does not need the help of the US. However, this continual harassment is annoying and tiring, but to ignore it would mean accepting it, and that we will never do.

What is worrying about Blinken's statement is his reference to working with Congress and the international community to "restore Hong Kong's rights and freedoms". By doing so, he is arming them with false narratives to continually lambaste Hong Kong to oblivion. Unfortunately, Washington's politicians and allies follow blindly.

The author is a former chief information officer for the Hong Kong government, a PR and media consultant, and a veteran journalist. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Volatile yen



A man looks at the window of a money changer displaying the rate of various currencies against the Japanese yen, in central Tokyo on Monday. The yen swung wildly as it surged soon after hitting a fresh 34-year low against the US dollar, fueling speculation about government intervention. RICHARD A. BROOKS / AFP

Tech: More domestic AI chips used at data centers

From page 1

"Our supercomputer can handle both scientific and AI computing, including precise reasoning. We can utilize this integrated supercomputing system to accomplish tasks which previously required multiple systems to switch between. This is our advantage," he added.

The Ministry of Science and Tech-

nology has granted the center permission to set up a national public computing open innovation platform for next-generation AI, to expand its cooperation with more parties, Kang said.

Earlier this month, the center said it had found partners to promote the application of Tianhe Tianyuan in industries such as medical research, public security, customs and environ-

mental protection.

Kang said that on the basis of the Tianhe Tianyuan, the center has developed a "hospital AI brain" in collaboration with partners, which can help doctors assess diseases and provide treatment recommendations, as well as AI assistants that can help customs analyze data and also provide environmental protection suggestions.

On top of leveraging supercomputers for AI training, more Chinese companies are using domestic AI chips at their data centers.

Gao Tongqing, deputy general manager of China Mobile, said the company will commercialize three AI computing clusters this year, housing nearly 60,000 domestic AI chips, or graphics processing units, in total. They will help meet China's

skyrocketing demand for AI training of large language models in a wide range of industries such as transportation, healthcare, education and finance, Gao added.

Zhang Ping'an, CEO of Huawei Cloud, Huawei's cloud computing arm, which has developed in-house AI chips, said that as the US government tightens chip technology exports, it is almost impossible for the Chinese mainland to access 3-nanometer or 5-nanometer semiconductor manufacturing processes, the two most advanced

technologies which have already been commercialized overseas.

"Our innovation efforts should not focus solely on chip processes but rather on system architecture, leveraging our network bandwidth capabilities to the fullest. We should utilize our advantages in bandwidth and energy to compensate for the deficiencies in our chips and circumvent the restrictions," Zhang said.

Contact the writers at
masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Innovation showcase displays growing influence worldwide

ZGC Forum attracts a number of prestigious prize winners from various cutting-edge fields

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The 2024 Zhongguancun Forum in Beijing, which concluded on Monday, presented a global technological gala and showcased a wide range of latest technological innovations. A batch of policy incentives and heavyweight industry reports were also released at the event.

With the theme of "Innovating for a Better World", the ZGC Forum, as it is known, ran from April 25 to 29 and comprised 128 activities, including forums and conferences, technology exchanges, technological achievement releases and technology competitions, as well as a series of supporting events such as exhibitions, science popularization and a tech carnival.

More than 120 global top scientists and academics from home and overseas delivered speeches at the 2024 ZGC Forum Annual Conference Plenary Session and 60 parallel forums, sharing their insights into frontier technologies and related industries.

Of the speakers, more than 30 percent were from overseas, including over 10 Nobel Prize, Fields Medal, and Turing Award winners.

Yu Yingjie, a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Beijing Municipal Committee, noted the annual forum's expanding international influence on Monday.

Among those in attendance were also representatives from 218 foreign government departments and international organizations, and 162 domestic and international universities as well as participants from across the country.

Nearly half of those attending the forum's opening ceremony and plenary session, were foreign nationals, setting a new record compared to previous years. Of them, more than 300 traveled from abroad to attend the event.

Nineteen international organizations, including UNESCO, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation, as well as foreign government departments, organized 17 parallel forums. And nearly 600 speakers at the parallel forums, or 48 percent, were from overseas.

The business community in par-



Nearly half of those attending the 2024 ZGC Forum's opening ceremony and plenary session are foreign nationals. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

ticular showed keen interest in getting involved, with executives of 225 venture capital institutions, more than 100 unicorn companies, and over 10,000 tech businesses participating.

The 2024 Zhongguancun International Advanced Technology Competition, a key part of the forum, received 1,280 projects from 74 overseas countries and regions, accounting for more than 40 percent of the total number of entries.

During the 2024 Zhongguancun International Technology Trade Fair, technology matchmaking sessions designed for cooperation with multiple countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, South Korea and Japan were lined up.

As a result, a group of key international cooperation projects, including a sci-tech cooperation platform between Zhongguancun Science City and the Malaysian Research Accelerator for Technology & Innovation, which is Malaysia's central research & innovation commercialization agency that accelerates ideas

to market, were signed, burnishing the brand of the fair as a global technology trading event.

In total, 309 cooperation projects were signed during this year's ZGC Forum, with a combined contract value of 67.32 billion yuan (\$9.30 billion).

The ZGC Forum covered a variety of sectors. Especially in the field of artificial intelligence, diverse dialogues were conducted around hot topics such as model architecture innovation, AI ethics and safety, and embodied intelligence to enhance visionary research and assessment.

In the field of life sciences, significant cutting-edge technological achievements were announced focused on areas such as brain-machine interfaces and synthetic biomanufacturing, including a high-performance invasive intelligent brain-machine system and highly resilient and highly expressive red ball bacterium chassis cells.

In-depth discussions were held in space science too, focusing on the

extreme cosmos, ripples in spacetime, and other areas, and the latest technological achievements like the Zhuque-2 carrier rocket were also released.

Notably, the first in-orbit images captured by China's Einstein Probe astronomical satellite, which was sent into space in January, garnered global attention.

In addition, a series of high-level research reports were released on technology focus, trends in Earth science research, and the Chinese science fiction industry, among other things "of significant importance for grasping global trends at the forefront of science and technology".

During the forum, the Beijing authorities awarded more than 50 foreign-funded research and development centers to support foreign-invested businesses' development in the city. Also, nearly 100 research reports, standards and regulations, rankings, indexes and proposals were released, according to the organizers.

Impact of AI felt throughout five-day event

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As artificial intelligence has sparked technological revolution and industrial transformation, its influence was pervasive throughout the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum, which concluded in Beijing on Monday.

A highlight of the five-day event, also known as the ZGC Forum, was AI Day — the first in the annual forum's history.

On Saturday, a series of the latest innovation achievements and policies were released, underlining the host city's prominence in the AI research and industry landscape.

One of the technological achievements, a virtual girl named Tong Tong, developed by the Beijing Institute for General Artificial Intelligence, grabbed attention.

Driven by values and causality, the avatar based on artificial general intelligence has a distinctive "mind" that sets it apart from data-driven AI. It can make decisions based on its own "values" rather than simply executing preset programs.

The development of Tong Tong circumvents the reliance of current data-driven AI on massive computing power and large-scale data. Its daily training uses no more than 10 A100 chips, indicating that it does not require massive computing resources and huge amounts of data for independent learning and growth.

At the same time, Tong Tong has acquired intelligent generalization capabilities, making it a versatile foundation for various vertical application scenarios.

"If the Tong Tong's 'fullness' is decreased, she will find food herself, and if 'tidiness' is increased, she will also pick up bottles from the ground," said a BIGAI staff member. By randomly altering Tong Tong's



Girls learn about a high-performance invasive intelligent brain-machine system at the 2024 ZGC Forum. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

inclinations such as curiosity, tidiness and cleanliness, the avatar can autonomously explore the environment, tidy up rooms and wipe off stains.

Researchers said Tong Tong possesses a complete mind and value system similar to that of a 3 or 4-year-old child and is currently undergoing rapid replication.

"The birth of Tong Tong represents the rise of our country's independent research capabilities. It has shifted from the initial data-driven approach to a value-driven one, which has deeply promoted the emergence of technological paradigms and has had a significant effect on our scenarios, industries and economy," BIGAI Executive Deputy Director Dong Le said.

The goal of general AI research is to seek a unified theoretical framework to explain various intelligent phenomena; to develop a general intelligence entity with autonomous capabilities in perception, cogni-

tion, decision-making, learning, execution, social collaboration and others; all while aligning with human emotions, ethics and moral concepts, said BIGAI Director Zhu Songchun.

Also, among the tech presentations was the text-to-video large model, Vidu, from Tsinghua University in collaboration with Chinese AI company Shengshu Technology.

It is reportedly China's first inaugural video large model with extended duration, exceptional consistency and dynamic capabilities, with its comprehensive performance in line with top international standards and undergoing accelerated iterative improvements.

"Vidu is the latest achievement in full-stack independent innovation, achieving technological breakthroughs in multiple dimensions, such as simulating the real physical world; possessing imagination; understanding multicamera languages; generating videos of up to 16

Novel Si named winner of tech competition

By ZHANG LINWAN

zhanglinwan@chinadaily.com.cn

15,000 projects

have participated in the annual advanced technology competition since 2017

The seventh Zhongguancun International Advanced Technology Competition wrapped up in Beijing on Friday, unveiling the winner list.

Novel Si Integration Technology, a Shanghai-based startup focusing on silicon-based heterogeneous substrates, emerged as the champion out of 22 finalists.

"We hope to help solve the bottleneck problems in key components with our innovation achievements and make contributions to the country's homegrown chips," the company's chairman Ou Xin said during the award ceremony on Friday.

"We will continue our efforts to transform our research results into new quality productive forces," Ou said.

In second place were Neuracle Technology in Beijing and Photonic Crystal Technology in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. Meanwhile, Zhipu AI, a developer of AI large model, North Ocean Photonics, and Grand Hitek were tied in third place.

"After the final competition, a stream of investors, industrial parks' representatives and intellectual property partners reached out to me for collaboration," said Wang Yujing, chief technology officer of Neuracle. "The event offered us a prominent stage, enhancing our visibility in the industry."

Launched in March 2023, this session of the competition was aimed at projects from 10 fields. These included biomedicine, artificial intelligence, integrated circuits, big data and cloud computing. Of the total 3,164 project submissions, more than 40 percent were from overseas, indicating the event's progress in international involvement.

The competition also increased the prize money while expanding the scope of award recipients this year, according to Gong Weimi,

deputy director of the Administrative Commission of Zhongguancun Science Park.

The winner was given an award of 1 million yuan (\$137,996). Runners-up, as well as the top three projects in each field, shared nearly 3 million yuan.

In addition to pecuniary rewards, the event has established a service system for outstanding contestants, involving investment, talent recruitment, market matchmaking and listing guidance.

During the competition, the contestant Beijing Yixin Intelligent Technology, a startup in the big data industry, secured "angel investment" of 30 million yuan and signed a cooperation agreement with the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, according to the company's CEO Xiao Ye. An angel investor is a wealthy individual who provides seed money for a startup, usually in exchange for equity.

Under the cooperation agreement, the area will support Xiao's company including rent subsidies and talent grants.

As a key part of the annual Zhongguancun Forum, Gong said the competition has become a high-level platform for sci-tech cooperation and exchanges globally, as well as an important channel to select and nurture tech startups.

Since the competition launched in 2017, it has attracted 15,000 cutting-edge projects and provided subsidies of more than 800 million yuan to 219 enterprises.

Among the participating companies, 22 have become unicorn enterprises and 14 have gone public. A unicorn enterprise is a startup worth more than \$1 billion.

Cutting-edge exhibits fueling imagination

By HAO NAN

haonan@chinadaily.com.cn

320+ exhibitors

displayed more than 430 technologies, products and applications at the exhibition

An exhibition running throughout the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum until Monday has captured attention by showcasing a collection of "black technology" products, ranging from a fingerprint-sized chip to the world's largest solid-propellant launch vehicle, Gravity-1.

Launched at the Zhongguancun Exhibition Center, a venue for the forum, the exhibition displayed more than 430 technologies, products and applications from more than 320 scientific research institutions and enterprises based in Beijing.

They focused on various fields such as artificial intelligence; quantum information; commercial aerospace; life and health; and synthetic biological manufacturing, creating new scenarios for smart applications and providing visitors with a host of cutting-edge technology experiences.

Using naked-eye 3D technologies, for example, visitors can see cartoon figures "fly" out of the screen by standing about half a meter away.

Lenovo Beijing has developed a naked-eye 3D real-time holographic audio and video communication system. It can automatically capture eye movements, enabling people to see three-dimensional images without spectacles.

When the system is used for video conferences, the two sides can communicate as if speaking face to face, the company said.

In the 4D printing exhibition area, a mechanical arm demonstrated its precision by using its soft gripper to pick up an egg. Compared with 3D printing, 4D printing is an upgrade in terms of materials, technologies and applications, and can realize more precise control and operation.

As for commercial aerospace, the exhibition has attracted participation from six domestically leading companies to display an

array of debut products.

They included the Zhuque-2 rocket, the world's first liquid oxygen methane rocket to successfully enter orbit; the Gravity-1, China's more powerful commercial space launch rocket; and the Remote 2 Launch Vehicle, which created a record for China's highest number of multiple satellites launched at once.

This year, the commercial aerospace industry featured in the Government Work Report for the first time and is considered as one of the new growth engines for China's economy.

With great market potential and national policy support, commercial aerospace is expected to become a trillion-yuan industrial cluster, experts said.

Another highlight of the exhibition was Tong Tong, a virtual entity that can learn, adapt and express emotions. Developed by the Beijing Institute for General Artificial Intelligence, the "little girl" is the world's first AI child, who currently has an intelligence level equivalent to a child aged 3-4 years old.

Other exhibits included some major sci-tech results unveiled during the 2024 ZGC Forum.

Running from April 25 to 29, the exhibition was designed to showcase the progress and achievements Beijing has made in building itself into a global science and technology innovation center.

The event, covering an area of 10,000 square meters, was divided into 21 exhibition areas focusing on such themes as the forefront of world science and technology; the main economic arena; major national needs; improvement of people's health and the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

CHINA

With passion fruit growth, wealth ripens in Wuping, Fujian

By LI MENGHAN
in Longyan, Fujian
limenghan@chinadaily.com.cn

Taking advantage of its unique geographical and natural benefits, Wuping county's Xiangdong town in Longyan, Fujian province, has discovered a harmonious approach to environmental preservation and economic progress through passion fruit farming.

"Located in a high-altitude basin, Xiangdong town is ideal for the growth of passion fruit, as the area benefits from ample sunshine, a gentle climate and fertile soil," said Tong Junyu, Party secretary of the town.

However, according to Tong, the potential for growing passion fruit was not discovered until about 10 years ago, when the town became aware of the detrimental effects of its traditional pillar industry — pig farming — on the environment and the well-being of the local residents.

"Due to unregulated expansion of the pig farming industry, untreated excrement and breeding wastewater discharged directly into water sources, degrading the water to the worst level of China's five-tier system," he said, adding that the affected water sources are now at the second-highest level.

While searching for an alternative, Tong said Xiangdong experimented with various plants suitable for subtropical conditions. Taking into account the growth period and the available market, the town settled on passion fruit as the most favorable solution.

Not everyone was sold on the idea, though, at first.

"Although we told villagers that planting passion fruit can yield returns even in the first year, many people adopted a wait-and-see attitude," he said, adding that with the assistance of local government subsidies, large-scale cultivation was finally achieved in 2018.

The growing popularity of passion fruit as a source of wealth has led some migrant workers to return to Xiangdong. Feng Qingyong, whose family used to rely on government subsidies due to their low income, is among those who have returned.

"In 2019, I left my security job in Xiamen, Fujian, and went back to my hometown," said Feng, 57. "During the first year, the town allowed me to use 2,000 square meters of land at no cost, along with complimentary samplings and shelves for the fruit, and I had a good harvest."

He emphasized the importance of meteorological conditions in the growth of passion fruit, adding that the ideal temperature for growth ranges from 20 to 30 C, with optimal humidity levels between 70 and 85 percent.

Feng also mentioned that fertilization should not be carried out immediately after rain, and extremely high temperatures can have an adverse effect on the passion flowers' ability to bear fruit.

"Passion fruit cultivation requires patient and careful nurturing, but the return is worthwhile."

Feng Qingyong, farmer living in Xiangdong town in Wuping county, Fujian province

"Passion fruit cultivation requires patient and careful nurturing, but the return is worthwhile," he said.

After five years of operation, he has expanded his farm to an area of 6,667 sq m.

Last year, he made a net profit of 110,000 yuan (\$15,195), enough to cover the expenses of his son, who is currently studying at a university in Xiamen, a coastal city in Fujian.

Meanwhile, Xiangdong has established a complete industry chain, involving cultivation, processing and sales.

Wang Xiuzhen, a graduate from Beijing who had never worked in the fields, decided to return to her hometown and become an entrepreneur.

"While working as an e-commerce operator in a big company after graduation, I sensed a business opportunity from the substantial daily order volume of products at my company. This, coupled with the thought of promoting high-quality agricultural products from my hometown, led to my decision to return," she said.

Drawing on her proficiency in speaking the Hakka dialect, Wang acquainted herself with local farmers, absorbing essential insights into passion fruit cultivation and addressing their concerns about sales. She has become well-versed in all matters related to passion fruit.

"Given the particularity of online sales, it is crucial to choose a proper harvest time and avoid picking during rainy and frosty days to extend the storage duration," she said.

Wang added that processed products such as candied fruit and flavored yogurt have carried favor with customers, and the fruit could be useful in the biomedical field.

Last year, after assessing climate resources and the quality of the town's passion fruit, the provincial meteorological service center certified that Xiangdong is graded as the "extra best" place for the growth of this fruit. Wang lauded the center's endorsement, saying it helped foster trust in the product from consumers and made them more willing to buy.

"I will take root in my hometown, promote its beautiful scenery and quality products, and prosper together with my fellow villagers," she said.

Liu Qian and Li Zishuo contributed to this story.



A farmer tends to a passion fruit shrub at a plantation in Wuping county, Fujian province. HUANG YANHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY



Meng Zixuan, along with her father Meng Hua and mother Meng Haiqing prepare to paddleboard across the Qiongzhou Strait on Feb. 7. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Parents' perseverance inspires young paddler

After crossing Qiongzhou Strait on 12th birthday, brave boarder eyes new challenges

By CHEN MEILING in Beijing and SHI RUIPENG in Nanjing

Meng Zixuan, from Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, celebrated her 12th birthday in an extraordinary way — crossing the Qiongzhou Strait by paddleboarding, a feat that many people twice her age likely couldn't achieve.

The strait, which runs between the island province of Hainan and the mainland, is the third largest in China, with an average width of 29.5 kilometers. After conquering big waves and enduring physical exhaustion along with her parents, Zixuan successfully crossed it in 6 hours and 39 minutes, which made her feel "happy and proud".

"I fell into the water several times, and when seawater filled my mouth, I felt a bit panicked by the saltiness," she said. "I just climbed back up and continued paddling. I believed that as long as I had the confidence to face the challenge, I could overcome it."

On Feb. 6, Zixuan, her father Meng Hua and mother Meng Haiqing packed all the equipment they needed and drove 600 kilometers to the Xuwen Port of Zhanjiang, Guangdong province.

At 8:30 am the next day, they each set off on inflatable paddleboards heading for Haikou, Hainan. They were escorted by workers from a paddleboarding club, who trailed them on a power skiff.

The family paddled their boards individually when the sea was calm.

Whenever winds were heavy or waves were strong, the three of them would tether their boards together and paddle forward slowly. Whenever they felt tired or hungry, they would rest and eat.

Zixuan paddled faster than her parents. Whenever she noticed the distance between them had widened, she would wait for them and cheer them on.

During the first three hours, things progressed smoothly. But then the winds and waves grew stronger, and visibility gradually decreased. The family needed to be constantly vigilant to avoid colliding with buoys.

Soon, the mother began to feel fatigue, so Meng Hua tied his board to hers using rope. As they tried to navigate around a buoy, their rope got entangled with the buoy's mooring rope, and Meng Hua fell into the water.

Seeing this, Zixuan felt anxious and wanted to turn back to help. Luckily, her father managed to climb back onto the board.

Even when she fell and had to contend with waves as high as 2 meters to get back on her paddleboard, she insisted on finishing the task.

"When I felt exhausted paddleboarding, I was not scared. I was thinking about the things my father has always said to encourage me," she said. "Although it was dangerous, the thought of having my family by my side made me unafraid."

Meng Hua said he had wanted to challenge the Qiongzhou Strait as a child and finally decided to do it this year.

"When she heard her dad say he wanted to take on the challenge, she didn't really know what it was, but she said, 'I want to go too. You can't leave me behind,'" Meng Haiqing said.

Before embarking on the crossing, the family contacted the paddleboarding club in Hainan. The professionals there calculated various factors such as ocean currents, wind direction and weather conditions and suggested that the best time for the crossing would be from Feb. 6 to 9.

Feb. 7 happened to be Zixuan's birthday. The family decided to set off on that day to give her a birthday she would never forget.

The girl added it was meaningful for them to realize her father's dream together.

Steadfast spirit

Meng Hua is a retired athlete who was once a member of the Guangxi Water Polo Team and is now a swimming coach. Meng Haiqing is vice-chairwoman of Liuzhou City Swimming Association.

Meng Hua began teaching Zixuan how to swim when she was 4 years old. At the time, there were no heated swimming pools in Liuzhou.

"The water was very cold. Even us adults would get goosebumps and feel that bone-piercing chill when we went in it," he said.

Meng Haiqing recalled that although sometimes Zixuan cried from the coldness, her husband would still make her swim, as he believes success requires hard work and perseverance.

Six months later, the family swam together across the Liujiang River.

It was the Zixuan's first long-distance natural water crossing, but she was not afraid. Instead, she was very excited, Meng Haiqing recalled, adding that the experience inspired the girl to become more passionate about swimming and more confident in herself.

At age 6, Zixuan began taking swimming lessons every day after

school. Sometimes, she had to do her homework in the car while her mother drove her there.

After just a few years of training, Zixuan has emerged as a rising swimming star. She came in first place in a 100-meter freestyle swimming assessment for primary and secondary school students in Liuzhou, and second place in both the 4x50-meter freestyle relay and 4x50-meter medley relay for girls in the 15th National Games of Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

Meng Haiqing said she wants Zixuan to increase her confidence, persistence and courage through sports so that she will be able to face all difficulties when she grows up.

"Besides, swimming is a useful life skill and is good for health," she said, adding that she and her husband don't expect her to be a future swimming star but hope the experience can positively contribute to her development.

At first, Zixuan bristled at the difficulties she faced during high-intensity training. Now, she is in love with swimming and embraces the challenges, eager to hop in the pool every day.

"She would be unhappy if there was no swimming training today," Meng Haiqing said.

She said Zixuan likes taking part in challenging activities, even those not necessarily related to swimming. She has won multiple awards, including painting and playing the zither. "As long as it is safe, I will let her try whatever she wants," Meng Haiqing said.

She gives lectures about how to avoid drowning at primary and middle schools, and at swimming pool complexes every year. Zixuan likes to join in her presentations.

"She likes to help others in this way," the mother said.

She said her daughter now has even bolder aspirations, including surfing, rock climbing and even eventually scaling Mount Qomolangma, also known as Mount Everest.

Contact the writers at chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn

Power linemen protecting swans in Liaoning

SHENYANG — After completing a day of work as power linemen, Liu Yushan and his colleagues in Chaoyang, Liaoning province, often gather on the riverbank to observe the swans there.

For these employees of the State Grid's Chaoyang power supply company, bird-watching is more than just a form of relaxation, it's an integral part of their voluntary jobs each spring.

With the melting of snow and ice on the Linghe River, flocks of swans, either gracefully flying in the sky or joyfully frolicking in the wetlands of the Baishi Reservoir, attract numerous shutterbugs and tourists from near and far.

After parking near a bridge at dusk, the workers swiftly set up 17 long-range floodlights directed at a 66-kilovolt power line, a practice which ensures that swans do not collide with the wires and can safely navigate their way to their habitat on the Linghe.

Using a telescope, the workers meticulously observe the swans from a distance, diligently recording key details such as the number of birds, the date, weather conditions and temperature in their "Swan Diary".

This special initiative began in March 2018 after Liu witnessed a swan collide with a power line, which caused a loud boom.

"I saw it break its wing, and it whined continuously," he recalled. "That scene pained my heart."

To ensure the safety of these migratory birds, the Chaoyang power supply company decided to establish a swan-guarding crew comprising six power linemen, including Liu.

The company has also invited bird experts to offer lectures and collaborate on formulating swan protection plans.

Initially, the team regularly visited the Baishi Reservoir to study the birds' habits and flight trajectories.

They found that when swans flew back and forth from upstream to downstream on the Linghe during dusk and dawn, poor visibility due to the dim light made them highly susceptible to colliding with high-voltage lines.

After several rounds of discussions and tests, the company implemented various measures to prevent such tragedies, including the installation of red aviation warning balls, audible and visual alarms and remote floodlights.

"These techniques have greatly facilitated swan protection," said Gu Degang, one of the six swan guardians.

During peak times of bird activity in the evening and early morning, Liu and colleagues form two teams, operating in shifts to stand guard.

The spring weather in Northeast China can be unpredictable. Liu vividly recalled a particular incident last spring when a powerful gale swept in unexpectedly during the

night, causing the carefully placed floodlights to topple over.

Undeterred by the biting cold wind, Liu and his dedicated colleagues stood resolute. Despite their bodies swaying back and forth, they clung steadfastly to the lights.

"We stay with the lights, no matter how harsh the conditions," Liu said.

Their unwavering commitment has helped transform the Baishi Reservoir into a vital stopover habitat for migratory birds in northeastern Asia. Nowadays, about 80,000 birds, including swans and red-breasted mergansers, stop over at the Baishi Reservoir during their spring migration.

"Swan protection has seamlessly become a part of our life. As power workers, we are delighted to contribute to the development of an ecological civilization," said Yu Huan, another member of the crew.

XINHUA

Editor's Note: As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.

Carbon capture tech makes oilfield go greener

Underground CO₂ storage in Liaoning cuts emissions while boosting oil extraction rate

By YAN DONGJIE and WU YONG in Panjin, Liaoning

Through the development of carbon capture, utilization and storage technology, an extraction area in PetroChina Liaohe Oilfield, located in Panjin, Liaoning province, has been injecting the carbon dioxide produced during the extraction process into underground storage over 3,000 meters deep. This not only effectively reduces carbon dioxide emissions, but also increases the recovery rate of petroleum.

Ma Chenglong, head of the sixth oil extraction area in Liaohe Oilfield and the person-in-charge of the CCUS cyclic injection station, said that since the trial operation of the first carbon storage facility, the 229 Block CCUS cyclic injection station, in Liaohe Oilfield in December, nearly 50,000 metric tons of liquid carbon dioxide isolated from petroleum production emissions have been injected underground.

"This is the only carbon storage facility in Liaohe Oilfield, and by 2026, it will be able to store 100,000 tons of carbon dioxide," Liang Fei, a senior engineer at the research institute, said. "The total carbon dioxide storage capacity can reach 2.36 million tons, which is equivalent to the function of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by planting a forest of 950,000 trees in an area of 10,000 mu (667 hectares)."

The construction of this carbon storage facility is an important project for Liaohe Oilfield to help reach national dual carbon targets and achieve green, low-carbon and clean development.

In September 2020, President Xi Jinping announced at the 75th United Nations General Assembly that China strives to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, which is China's dual carbon goal.

Peak carbon dioxide emissions refer to the time when carbon dioxide emissions no longer increase, after which they gradually decline.

Carbon neutrality refers to offsetting carbon dioxide or greenhouse gas emissions through activities such as afforestation, achieving relatively "zero emissions".

"Liaohe Oilfield has large carbon emissions and Liaoning is also a province with high carbon emissions, making the task of carbon reduction arduous. The strategic project of car-



Above: An aerial view of the 229 Block CCUS cyclic injection station in Liaohe Oilfield in December. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Left: Staff members at Liaohe Oilfield monitor the operation of the CCUS cyclic injection station in March. YAN DONGJIE / CHINA DAILY

Right: A worker adjusts equipment at Liaohe Oilfield. ZHAO CONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

bon storage facilities in Liaohe Oilfield is not only based on favorable conditions, but also an urgent need for the national dual carbon strategic development," Wu Yi, chief expert of Liaohe Oilfield, said.

Injecting gases such as carbon dioxide underground and ensuring their stable storage without leakage places high demands on geological conditions. Wang Zhipeng, director of the injection station, said the 229 Block meets these conditions precisely — the underground rock formations have high hardness and density, and the cap rock is also firm. Oil reserves in this area are 3.58

million tons, with the majority being heavy crude oil, which is difficult to extract. Through the operation of the CCUS cyclic injection station, not only has the carbon dioxide emissions problem been solved, but the extraction efficiency has also been increased from around 10 percent to 40 percent, Wang said.

Oil exists in different forms at different depths underground, and different geological conditions and oil states require different extraction methods. For example, in some areas, oil can be directly extracted. While in others, water injection is needed. In areas where rock formations have

high density and low permeability, such as low permeable oil layers, gas injection is required to aid in oil recovery.

"The concrete floor we are standing on has high density, and it is difficult for water to pass through it. When the underground rock formations that contain oil have high density, injecting high-pressure gases like carbon dioxide can help to force out the oil stored in the formations and increase the extraction rate," Wang said.

Construction began for the CCUS cyclic injection station in the 229 Block in March last year. Since its

completion in December, over 40,000 tons of carbon dioxide have been injected underground, leading to an increase of over 6,000 tons in oil production.

Liang explained that in recent years, nearly 80 percent of new geological reserves in the Liaohe region are special lithological oil reservoirs such as tight oil and shale oil, which have a large oil expansion rate and low permeability. Their carbon absorption capacity is three to four times that of water, and it has been confirmed that carbon dioxide has a significant oil displacement and energy supplementation effect, as

well as good viscosity reduction effect.

It is estimated that there are 262 potential blocks suitable for CCUS applications in the Liaohe area, with a carbon storage capacity of over 200 million tons, making it a natural large carbon storage facility.

Luan Ruizhi, director of the CCUS project department at the Oilfield Technology Research Institute, said Liaohe Oilfield has the deepest burial and the most diverse types of CCUS projects in the country, which means that some problems have no domestic solutions and must be resolved independently.

In order to construct the carbon storage facility, employees from Liaohe Oilfield collaborated with dozens of experts and professors from several universities, including Dalian University of Technology.

"Compared to overcoming high-temperature and high-pressure technology, overcoming the corrosion of the wellbore is the most critical issue," Luan said. Once the injected carbon dioxide encounters water in the formation, it will generate acidic liquid, and the acidity is directly proportional to the mineralization of the water.

The mineralization level of the formation water in the Liaohe region is very high. And if not controlled, it can corrode the wellbore into fragments within a year.

Hence, researchers coated the surface of the wellbore with a protective film to isolate the acidic liquid from the wellbore. Based on the composition of the acidic liquid and the material of the wellbore, they developed a chemical agent, quaternary ammonium salt, to slow the corrosion rate of the wellbore by over 99 percent.

In addition to technological breakthroughs, independently developed equipment for the CCUS project at Liaohe Oilfield has significantly reduced costs.

Wang explained that the cyclic injection station includes important components such as the hydrocarbon removal unit, carbon dioxide pressure swing adsorption unit, and pressurized dehydration unit. The price of a single set of domestically produced equipment can be reduced to less than one-tenth of the price of imported equipment from the 1990s.

Currently, three carbon capture facilities and one cyclic injection facility have been completed and put into operation at the CCUS cyclic injection station, with a maximum daily processing capacity of 240,000 cubic meters, possessing an annual carbon capture capacity of 137,000 tons and an injection capacity of 208,200 tons.

Contact the writers at yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

Smart systems can lead to better production processes

By YAN DONGJIE and WU YONG in Panjin, Liaoning

To comply with China's "dual carbon" goals and new international policies, the local government and companies in Liaoning province have been exploring digital systems to monitor carbon emissions during the production process, attempting to find emission-reducing pathways through data analysis.

Since the establishment of the Panjin Green Development Innovation Center in 2021, the local government has introduced a dual carbon digitalization project, which digitally records carbon dioxide emissions from key carbon-intensive companies, similar to financial accounting.

"Digitizing carbon emissions in traditional industries can help companies reduce costs and increase efficiency, while the government's application of digital systems can help manage carbon-emitting enterprises in the region," Ye Hailiang, CEO of Zhiyuan (Liaoning) Zero-emissions Technology, said.

Ye and his team have been researching enterprise digitalization since 2015. He said that since China proposed the dual carbon goals in 2020, which include reaching the peak of carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and

achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, digitalization of carbon emissions has garnered more attention from both the government and enterprises.

"In the past, doing business required manual bookkeeping. Later, with the advent of computers and financial systems, as business transactions occurred, accounts were naturally formed, and the analysis data could also be automatically generated, greatly improving operational efficiency," Ye said.

"The same applies to carbon emissions. However, calculating emissions is more complex than financial accounting, so a system that collects and analyzes data is even more necessary."

Over the past three years, intelligent carbon emission recording systems have been adopted by the government in three districts and one county in Panjin and trial operations have been conducted in some chemical enterprises.

Panjin, a coastal city in Liaoning, is built on an oilfield due to its abundant underground oil resources. Also, its coastal wetlands boast rich flora and fauna, and the Liaohe River Estuary National Nature Reserve is famous for the presence of rare animals such as spotted seals and red-crowned cranes.

"Panjin's oil and chemical indus-

try chain has decades of history with many chemical industries, making it a key area for carbon emissions. However, Panjin also places great emphasis on ecological environmental protection, so it has developed relatively advanced carbon regulation," Ye said.

He explained that through the system, real-time data on carbon emissions at various stages of the production line can be calculated. Additionally, it can comprehensively calculate how much of a company's carbon emission quota has been used under national policy requirements, facilitating production planning.

"Furthermore, by analyzing the emissions at each stage, suggestions for improvement of the production process can also be made," Pan Guohui, an engineer at Zhiyuan (Liaoning) Zero-emissions Technology, said.

Corporate carbon emissions generally stem from energy consumption, such as coal burning, as well as from other chemical reactions in the production process, and from carbon dioxide generated in the production process, including from electricity, heat, transportation and materials.

"After the application of digital systems, companies can identify high-carbon emission points in the production process. For example, burning smaller coal particles

instead of large chunks can lead to significant improvements. Similarly, replacing coal boilers with electric boilers is also an effective method, all of which can be analyzed based on actual data," Pan said.

He added that using imported materials from abroad with long-distance transportation can increase carbon emissions, and the system can help analyze whether adjustments should be made.

"On a global scale, the EU's carbon tariff has entered a trial operation phase. For developing countries, it is likely to establish a green trade barrier," Pan said.

In October, the European Union started the transitional phase of applying the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, a tool to put a fair price on carbon emitted during the production of carbon-intensive goods that are entering the EU, which is also called a carbon tariff.

After a three-year transitional phase, the EU will start asking companies exporting goods covered by the CBAM to EU countries to register and buy CBAM certificates in 2026. Goods, which have carbon-intensive production and at most significant risk of carbon leakage such as cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilizers, electricity and hydrogen, are included.



A driver charges a customized electric public bus in Panjin, Liaoning province, on April 10. Four customized electric buses were deployed in Guchengzi town in Panjin in March. PAN YULONG / XINHUA

"China is a major exporter of aluminum. Taking this as an example, the carbon border tax requires the calculation of how much carbon emissions are produced in the process of aluminum production, as well as its carbon footprint, tracing the production processes of upstream enterprises. Therefore, every point in the entire industry chain needs to be accurately calculated," Pan said.

Similarly in China, some "carbon trading" pilots were initiated as early as 2011. According to Xinhua News Agency, the national carbon market officially began trading in July 2021.

"As the country gradually improves these calculation standards, the calculation factors for carbon emissions will become increasingly clear," Pan said.

Currently, the calculation factors for carbon emissions vary around the world. The alignment and mutual recognition of calculation factors for China, the EU and the United States still needs to be perfected and connected.

"We look forward to unified standards in the future and hope that Panjin's practice of digitalizing carbon emissions can provide some positive experience for the world to draw from," Pan said.

Fengtai takes aim at international talent pool

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Fengtai district of Beijing is boosting efforts to attract top global talents to promote its construction of an international talent port.

Located in the southern part of the capital's central urban area, Fengtai is a major spoke serving Beijing's strategic position as the national hub for politics and culture, as well as a center for international exchanges and technological innovation. In 2023, Fengtai district achieved a regional GDP of 218.75 billion yuan (\$30.19 billion), representing a year-on-year increase of 6.5 percent.

Giving high priority to talents, Fengtai has introduced a series of guidelines and plans aimed at finding and retaining the best candidates. Last December, the district issued its action plan for promoting talent support and security, including four major specialized actions implemented through classified plans for different types of talents from key industries, basic engineering professionals, management experts and youth.

"Implementation of the action plan will accelerate the gathering and cultivation of a group of outstanding talents and teams who lead in technological innovation, promote industrial development, and unleash innovative vitality in Fengtai district," said Liu Jifei, an official of the district.



A view of Beijing's south Central Axis, where Fengtai district is located. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Beijing's district prioritizing multidimensional service coordination

"This will create a multi-level talent structure, ranging from strategic and industry-leading talents to professional and youth talents, which will provide solid support for the high-quality growth and development of Fengtai," Liu said.

Leveraging government services and unique industries, Fengtai has dedicated itself to creating a diverse and integrated platform for international talent exchange and growth, emphasizing multi-dimensional ser-

vice integration and shared resources.

In a bid to support its strong industrial system, the district has established its first human resource service industry park, which will be operated under the development mode of integrating talents, services, finance and industry. The park combines public employment and talent services, providing accurate full-chain services such as project introduction, policy matching, entrepreneurial

investment and talent housing.

"Talents are crucial for enterprises, and we are thrilled to see the implementation of these favorable policies. With the support of the support of development mode that combines talent, service, finance and industry, we believe it will serve as a powerful driving force for our future recruitment of high-quality talents," said Han Haixia, director of the human resource department at Eve Group, a clothing business in

Fengtai. "At the same time, it is also our responsibility to strengthen talent construction and contribute to the development of the district."

Last December, Fengtai district rolled out guidelines to promote the high-quality development of the human resource service industry, focusing on strengthening support for talent cultivation, market development and technological innovation. The guideline includes 19 specific measures aimed at enhanc-

ing development of human resource services and promoting high-quality growth. Eligible high-quality human resource service enterprises that enter the district can receive up to 50 million yuan in support.

To promote the joint construction and sharing of human resource services across the district and city, Fengtai has built a local branch of the Beijing Human Resources Consulting Association, which has established standards and industry services regulations, and provides assistance for human resource service enterprises to develop in an orderly manner.

Besides attracting talent through dedicated actions and improved human resource services, Fengtai has launched innovative recruitment strategies. For example, last year, the district launched a program aimed at attracting workers according to specific criteria. It recruited 78 community managers and 304 community staff members from across the city.

Additionally, the district has formed an employment and entrepreneurship alliance with 40 members to promote resource complementarity. The alliance has established three committees to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, skills development, and employment. Through various methods, it hopes to achieve mutual benefit and regional advantage integration.



From left: Startup business representatives and officials of Fengtai district sign agreements with the Fengtai sub-park of the Zhongguancun Science Park during the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum for Overseas-educated Talents. Business representatives of five international universities' overseas student entrepreneurship businesses sign contracts to settle in Fengtai sub-park during the forum. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Overseas students crucial link in development chain

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Overseas students are an important talent pool for the country and a source of new quality productive forces for development, providing crucial support for China to achieve high-level technological self-reliance.

That was the message delivered by Yang Jinbai, president of the Beijing Overseas Friendship Association, in an address at the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum for Overseas-educated Talents, held on Saturday during the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum in Beijing.

Yang said it is hoped that overseas students will shoulder the mission of serving the country and pioneering technological and industry innovations, and thus serve as a bridge and link for Beijing's opening-up and talent introduction efforts.

With a theme focusing on calling on overseas-educated talents to work together to empower the new quality productive forces, the forum, organized by authorities including the BOFA, the Beijing Talent Work Bureau and the Fengtai district government, attracted officials, professionals and business representatives to hold discussions on the development of returned overseas students.

During the forum, Beijing's International Talent Port was announced to be settled in Fengtai district. The port, which is the first of its kind in the city, is set to be a new talent landmark for the core carrier area of the city's south Central Axis as a hub of national culture and international communication.



Officials of the Beijing Talent Work Bureau and Fengtai district launch the International Talent Port project during the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum for Overseas-educated Talents held in Beijing on Saturday.

The talent port, co-built by the Beijing Talent Work Bureau and Fengtai district, is positioned to serve national strategies, promote the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and attract global talent. It will focus on prioritizing talent development and adhere to sustainable development principles that emphasize talent services and the talent industry to create an innovative, open and inclusive talent ecosystem.

For talented teams that settle in the port, Fengtai district said it will offer tailor-made support, including preferred positions, youth innovation incubators and talent service stations. Mobilizing resources such as industrial funds, incubation carriers and government services, the district will establish an innovation support system integrating government, indus-

try, academia, research and commercialization for talent growth and industrial development.

Relying on the vibrant green environment and the cultural and artistic strength along the south Central Axis, the talent port aims to create a high-quality talent ecosystem, constantly improve the working environment and enhance the attractiveness of the city for talent, officials said.

Simultaneously, the forum witnessed the Fengtai sub-park of the Zhongguancun Science Park signing agreements with five talent recruitment partners of student associations, including the Chinese Students and Scholars Association of Cornell University, the University of Toronto, the University of New South Wales, Durham University and Waseda University.

In addition, five international uni-

versities' overseas student entrepreneurship businesses signed contracts to settle in Fengtai sub-park.

The signing of the partners of student association contract by Zhongguancun's Fengtai park has injected the international resources of the park with new vitality, officials said. The two parties will cooperate in areas such as talent training, career planning and entrepreneurship counseling, providing comprehensive and accurate services for returned overseas students.

Jong-May Urbonya, who hails from the United States, is a founder of one of the five overseas student entrepreneurship companies that signed with Fengtai. China's favorable business environment and talent services made it an easy choice, said Urbonya, who started the business that uses digital technology to empower the inheritance and promotion of traditional Chinese poetry culture.

Currently, the Fengtai park is building three industrial parks featuring digital economy, intelligent manufacturing and low-altitude economy, which require a large number of high-tech and innovative talents. The park is committed to an efficient and precise business environment, maintaining international advantages, and exploring a distinctive international development path with industry-leading participation.

"We hope to broaden our talent recruitment channels through this signing ceremony and gather outstanding talents from all over the world to create greater power and productivity," said Cui Xulong, deputy head of Fengtai.

Support for skilled personnel pays off

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Last year, Ning Yupeng, president of Beijing Zhyu Technology, was included in the second Fengze Plan — a talent support program launched by southern Beijing's Fengtai district.

Founded in 2005, Beijing Zhyu Technology is a high-tech company specializing in commercial cryptography and the internet of things security.

Ning said being included in the Fengze Plan was not only an encouragement, but reaffirmation of his decision to move the company to Fengtai's Lize Financial Business District in 2021.

"What attracted me was the district's industrial structure and industry clusters," said Ning, who learned that Lize had brought together numerous businesses in commercial cryptography, showing a trend toward industrial consolidation. Besides, the State Cryptography Administration's office of security commercial code administration, China's commercial code regulator, is also located in Fengtai.

"We have more opportunities here to engage with enterprises in the industry and grow with them together," Ning said.

In April 2023, Fengtai released nine incentives to promote the development of high-tech industries, including financial support for outstanding enterprises, institutions and laboratories. The incentives made enterprises more confident when recruiting, employing and retaining talents, Ning said, adding that he was impressed by the district's determination and sincerity in drawing companies and investment.

As Ning expected, his company has reached some cooperation deals with Sinoinfosec Beijing Technology, an information security giant headquartered in Lize.

According to official data, as of June 2023, there were 1,048 enterprises in the Lize financial zone. More than 70 per-

cent come from finance and tech industries, which have become a cornerstone of the district to attract talents and enterprises, local officials said.

Fengtai is also committed to improving its services and creating a better environment for career development. Last summer, the district held an array of activities with the theme of "welcome students home" to attract talents from home and abroad. The term "Fengtai students" specifically refers to alumni and graduates who have studied and worked in the district, but broadly speaking, it means all people and entities that are willing to develop in or cooperate with the district, according to local officials.

In April 2023, Beijing Fengtai International Talent Development Group was established. It operates in a market-oriented manner and focuses on talent policies in collaboration with governments, institutions and enterprises. So far, the local government has built 90 "talent stations" across the district, which offer services such as policy consulting, conferences, exhibitions, leisure, and entertainment.

For the benefit of expats working in Fengtai, an all-in-one reception counter was established in the government administrative service center to provide multiple services. It has also launched a WeChat mini-program for people seeking assistance in housing, employment, investment and entrepreneurship.

To enhance people's livelihoods and retain more talents, the district has ramped up efforts to procure housing resources, providing decent, affordable apartments through government-subsidized rental housing projects.

As of July 2023, more than 1,900 apartments had been assigned to employees of key enterprises in the district, with hundreds more available for new college graduates.

'Opportunity list' aids regional integration

By YUAN SHENGGAO

With its ongoing efforts to attract new talent, Fengtai district of Beijing is playing a crucial role in facilitating integration of human resources in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

Last fall, the district initiated an opportunity list for the coordinated development of talent in the region, which provides nearly 1,000 resources for talent cultivation, ecological optimization and industry coordination, targeting talents in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. The list covers sever-

al industries, including technological innovation, aerospace, rail transit, digital finance, education and culture and healthcare.

The opportunity list, which was announced in November, offers 12 items ranging from practical training, empowerment and innovation to entrepreneurship. For example, lists focusing on innovation and business performance have offered more than 100 opportunities provided by enterprises such as the China Quality Certification Center, Beijing Easpring Material Technology and Pan-China Group, providing new opportunities

for talent exchange and enterprise-coordinated development in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

A series of activities targeting young talents in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region have also been implemented.

In February, the first Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei youth entrepreneurship camp opened in Fengtai, with four Beijing-Tianjin startup companies signed to settle in the camp on its opening day. Currently, the camp provides 54 shared workspaces and seven preferential policies, including accommodation discounts for enterprise employees and one-month free rent

for the first-time use of workspace.

Jiangxin Gongying, a cultural technology startup business, was one of the first companies signed to settle in the camp.

"The 'live and create complex' in Fengtai provides a high-quality living and entrepreneurial environment for us entrepreneurs from Tianjin and Hebei as well as startups that aspire to contribute to the development of the capital, which creates a strong sense of belonging and security," said Fang Yi, a partner of Jiangxin from Tianjin.

The district will continue to improve the camp as well as other programs such as alliances and "township meeting rooms" to facilitate the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

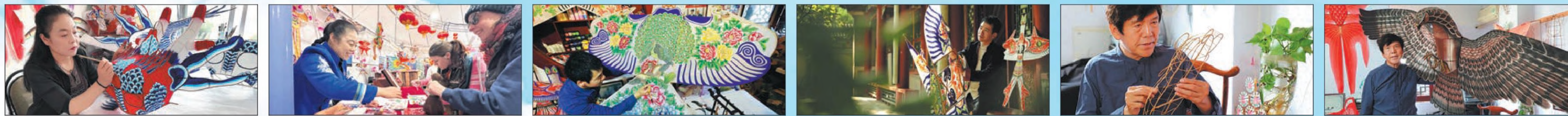


A staff member (center) introduces Fengtai's "welcome students home" project to participants. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ADVERTORIAL

THE HANDS OF TIME

Editor's note: Traditional arts and crafts are supreme samples of Chinese cultural heritage. China Daily is running this series to show how master artisans are using dedication and innovation to inject new life into the heritage. In this installment, we explore how traditional kite-makers give flight to their creativity today.



From left: Yang Hongwei, 58, is an inheritor of kite-making techniques in Weifang, Shandong province. Yang introduces exhibits to visitors at the International Kite Festival in Berck-sur-Mer, France, in late April. Miao Bogang, 43, paints on a swallow kite. He is a representative inheritor of "Cao's kites" in Beijing. Wei Guoqi, 63, works on the intricate bamboo frame of a kite. The artisan from Tianjin is known for his lifelike kites.

Many people hold at least one memory of a kite from their childhoods — be it a simple yet classic diamond or a colorful bird-shaped kind with vividly flapping wings.

It could be a sunny spring day in a pastoral landscape with family members. As the wind picks up, the flyer runs as fast as they can, until the kite ascends high into the sky and dances in the air.

The kite that Yang Hongwei, 58, from Yangjiabu village in Shandong province's Weifang, remembers, however, is slightly different. It was a gigantic dragon-headed centipede that stretched for 360 meters and took dozens of people to fly.

That was at the third Weifang International Kite Festival in 1986. To celebrate their village's legacy of crafting kites, her grandfather, Yang Tongke, and uncle, Yang Qimin — both master kite-makers — boldly envisioned and created a model 10 times bigger than any they'd ever made.

Weifang is renowned as the "world capital of kites," and Yangjiabu village has long remained at the heart of local production.

Yang Hongwei, who was born to a family of artisan kite-makers in the village, became a national-level representative inheritor of Weifang kite-making techniques this year.

"Here in Weifang, we have a saying, 'there's nothing you can think of that can't fly.' We have the ideal wind conditions, and so many kite lovers, top-notch artisans and different kinds of handmade kites," she says.

Yangjiabu is small enough to qualify as a village, yet is home to two national-level intangible cultural heritage items — kites and Yangjiabu New Year pictures, a type of traditional woodblock printing used to decorate people's homes during Spring Festival.

Both art forms emerged in Yangjiabu in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and prospered in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

"Our kites' decorations draw inspiration from the New Year pictures, so each one carries its own story and auspicious connotations," Yang Hongwei says.

She brought a variety of representative Weifang kites to the recent 37th International Kite Festival in Berck-sur-Mer, France, including a dragon-headed centipede kite with images of 100 children, which are often depicted as the subjects of local New Year pictures.

The kite features a dragon head with a body and tail fashioned from around 50 discs, each of which is hand-painted with images of children, carrying wishes for



Dragon-headed centipede kites made by Yang Hongwei, a national-level representative inheritor of kite-making techniques in Weifang, Shandong province, which is renowned as the "world capital of kites". PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

longevity, wealth, prosperity and other blessings.

"Throughout history, kites have been close to people's daily lives and influenced by folk traditions," says Ma Zhiyao, a professor at Tianjin University who specializes in folklore and intangible cultural heritage.

"They have not only become embedded in folk culture but also provided entertainment and physical activity. This heritage has been passed down, demonstrating the enduring vitality of Chinese civilization."

Kites' origins can be traced back to the

late Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC), with historical accounts attributing their invention to the philosopher Mozi, who spent three years crafting a wooden hawk, which is considered a prototype for today's kites.

Later, master carpenter and engineer Lu Ban made improvements by substituting wood with bamboo.

Kites are considered one of the earliest forms of aircraft. Ancient books recorded their functions in aerial reconnaissance and transmitting military intelligence.

During the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), inventor Cai Lun improved papermaking techniques, leading to the invention of "paper hawks," which resembled kites as we know them today.

"Kites' origins reveal the remarkable ability and creativity of ancient China to imitate nature and explore its mysteries," Ma says.

"They observed birds and thought of using wood and paper to make objects that could soar in the sky. They were driven by curiosity and a spirit of scientific exploration to understand and harness the power of wind."

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the relative stability and prosperity made paper more affordable, and kites truly became part of people's lives.

As kite-making techniques became more refined, varieties adorned with imagery and that produced sound effects were developed.

This period gradually also saw kite flying becoming a custom during festivals. Late Tang-era poet Luo Yin wrote a poem about kite flying on the Cold Food Festival, which then fell directly before the springtime Tomb Sweeping Day and was later merged with it.

The custom was popularized in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). By the Ming and Qing dynasties, significant progress was continuing in design, style, production, decoration and flying skills.

"Many literati liked to make silk kites as gifts for their families and friends. They'd carefully select refined materials and then paint the silk cover by hand. These kites were exquisite and lasting," Ma says.

Novel development

One of history's most famous kite lovers is Cao Xueqin, a literary giant of the Qing Dynasty who wrote the seminal novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber*. In the book, kite flying was portrayed as a pastime of the genteel protagonist family and was also used as metaphors for the characters' destinies.

FLIGHTS of KITES

An ancient folk craft tradition floats across time and still soars to new heights, Cheng Yuezhu reports.



In the book's 70th chapter, a main character suggests kite flying to "let go of bad luck" — a belief traditionally associated with kites.

"In the past, when it came to Cold Food Festival and Tomb Sweeping Day, kite flying was considered a 'key custom,'" Ma explains.

"After making sacrifices to ancestors, people would fly kites, which on one hand expresses thoughts about family members and on the other lets go of all unhappiness and ill omens."

And on Dragon Boat Festival, which was traditionally believed to be the most poisonous day of the year — with mosquitoes and flies breeding in large numbers, as well as various bacteria multiplying in summer — people would fly kites, representing the shaking off of misfortune, so that family members could live long and healthy lives, Ma adds.

Cao wrote another book in his later years that compiled the kite-making techniques of both southern and northern China, recording the skills of kite making and flying, using mnemonic rhymes and illustrations to help readers understand and remember these techniques.

"When Cao wrote the book, his main wish was to help people with disabilities or otherwise struggling financially to acquire a skill, so they could support themselves," says Miao Bogang, 43, a representative inheritor of "Cao's kites."

The book, however, was only privately collected and withdrawn from circulation until 1943, when Kong Xiangze, who was then a student of painting and sculpture, was assigned by his teacher to transcribe a borrowed manuscript, which turned out to be Cao's work on kites.

Due to time limits, Kong only managed to make records of 14 of the 43 varieties in the book, and later spent decades working on restoring and refining these techniques, which he named "Cao's kites."

Miao was a kite-making enthusiast in his teenage years and was introduced to Kong Lingmin, son of Kong Xiangze and an inheritor of "Cao's kites," who recognized Miao's talent and diligence, and took him in as an apprentice.

"I've followed him in studying 'Cao's kites' for more than 20 years, during which time I've come to truly understand the techniques for making, and the principles of flying, kites, as well as Cao's humanitarian spirit when he wrote this book," Miao says.

"Both masters (Kong Xiangze and Kong Lingmin) told me: Skills belong to individuals; culture belongs to societies. So, we as



Top: A design of "Cao's kites" is inspired by Chinese classic novel *Journey to the West*. Above: Scarves featuring kite patterns are one of the innovative efforts by Miao Bogang's team to promote traditional "Cao's kites" in Beijing.

inheritors have been focusing on passing down kite-making techniques and sharing this culture with as many people as possible."

Flying into the future

Weifang, Beijing, Tianjin and Jiangsu province's Nantong are four major areas that are celebrated for distinctive kite-making techniques. They all boast their own unique features yet share the same dedication to preserving, inheriting and promoting traditional craftsmanship.

In Tianjin, there is a family known as

"kite Wei" after late Qing Dynasty virtuoso artisan Wei Yuantai, who's widely known for crafting exquisite, lifelike kites. In 1915, 11 of his works were exhibited and won a gold medal at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. The Wei family's fifth generation continues to inherit and perfect the "four techniques" — crafting the frame from roasted split bamboo, pasting such materials as paper and silk onto the frame, painting images on the body and finally flying the kite.

The Wei family is proud to display their new bamboo frameworks, which are the very basic yet fundamental structures.

"In my opinion, the main features of our kites are their intricacy and details. We exclusively use the Moso bamboo from Sichuan province, and each frame must be crafted using strips from the same bamboo," says Wei Guoqi, 63, the fourth-generation and national-level inheritor of "kite Wei".

The thin bamboo strips are carefully roasted over fire and bent to intricate shapes, then joined together by *sumiao* (mortise-and-tenon) joints to form a three-dimensional framework that's light yet sturdy.

In addition to making kites, Wei Guoqi also hosts lectures and workshops at schools and universities. His son, Wei Bowen, is now taking up the baton as the fifth-generation inheritor.

"We are still seeking innovations, such as changing the traditional models with more streamlined structures," Wei Guoqi says.

"The kites may vary in size, but we strive to make the small ones vividly lifelike, and the large ones exquisite and unique."

Ma says the "four techniques" are a test of people's temperament, patience and dedication. Only those passing the test can truly become an inheritor of the artistry.

"Kite making, among other intangible cultural heritage forms' craftsmanship, tests whether the inheritors can persevere in monotonous work and continuously strive to refine their skills. It is, in essence, a process of character-building and self-cultivation," he says.

"From an item as modest as a kite, we can see Chinese people's attachment to the cultural values associated with happiness, positivity and health. This is why the thin string linking us to kites and culture has endured until today and kite flying remains a cherished part of contemporary life."

Contact the writer at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

Enthusiasts chase sky-high thrills of wind power

By CHENG YUEZHU

Until you see it with your own eyes, it might be difficult to envision the surreal scenes at a kite festival, which to kite lovers are ordinary encounters.

Often on a vast expanse of grassland or beach, myriad fantastic and sublime creatures — birds, Chinese dragons, whales, octopuses, and iconic cartoon characters — command the sky and look down upon the attendees. It seems there's nothing human imagination can conjure that can't take flight.

Many kite festivals also include contests, which are must-see events. Under the skillful maneuvering of virtuosos, different kinds of kites ascend into the heavens and perform jaw-dropping stunts.

There is never a lack of pulse-pounding moments, when sudden wind shifts cause two rival kites to cross paths. But most of the time, thanks to the swift yet elegant control of the flyers, the kites come to terms and return to their own tracks.

While conventionally considered a spring activity in China, for veterans, flying kites is a year-round endeavor.

Gao Zhenying, 66, a kite athlete with Beijing Kite Association, says that she goes to a park near her home almost every morning and flies her kite for two hours, usually a simple, single-line eagle kite that can circle in the sky as long as there's a gentle breeze.

When she retired in 2005, Gao began accompanying her husband, Zhao Shiming, 68, also a veteran athlete, and other kite lovers to take photos for them.

"I quite liked the kites, so after a while, taking photos was not enough, and I was tempted to try my hand at flying one. I began with dual-line triangle kites and immediately liked the feeling," she says.

Usually one person controls one kite, but she soon learned to handle a kite in each hand and draw circles or squares in the sky with them. Later, mastering quad-line stunt kites and traditional kites came equally naturally to her.

Gao's mantra on her social media account, "Fly with joy every day", encapsulates her passion for the sport. Whether it's to a nearby park or a distant holiday destination, the couple often gather with fellow



Youngsters have a hands-on experience of kite making at Beijing International Kite Festival in mid-April. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A gigantic kite takes flight at the Beijing festival.

enthusiasts and practice flying in formation, undeterred by chilly weather or strong winds.

One of these experienced flyers, Huang He, 52, has a similar experience to Gao — initially spurred by seeing other kite flyers and wanting to have a try, and then driven to persevere out of genuine passion.

"I first got involved in the late 1990s. Our group of flyers has gained recognition in domestic competitions, but I believe that what truly

matters is not technique but persistence," Huang says.

"We're a tight-knit group. We spend more than 300 days flying kites outdoors every year; that's nearly every day, except during adverse weather conditions. It shares similarities with all sports. When you practice enough over a sufficient long period of time, your skills naturally improve."

Basic skills

In traditional Chinese kite flying contests, it is essential that competitors make their own kites, for visual appeal is part of the scoring criteria, which means that the basic skills of kite making are also required by flyers.

"Kite flying is an activity that combines sport, art and culture, which is what makes it so appealing to me. It is rare for me to find an activity with so many elements that are attractive to me. From making the kite, the whole process enriches me and gives me a sense of achievement. I think it nurtures all-around personal growth," Huang says.

All members of the Beijing Kite Association and also Chinese Kite



Chinese cultural elements like Peking Opera masks are popular patterns on kites.

"Kite flying is an activity that combines sport, art and culture, which is what makes it so appealing to me."

Huang He, 52, kite athlete

Association, Gao, Zhao and Huang are frequent contestants at international kite festivals and championships, winning awards with their solo or kite ballet performances. Even so, before each competition, they would tirelessly practice the choreography.

"It's hard to find an ideal time with perfect wind conditions," Gao says. "Sometimes, when there's no wind and I'm anxious to practice coordination, I memorize the movements by heart and imagine myself as the kite, my own movements imitating how the kite should move to the music's rhythm."

As this year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and France, as well as the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism, China was the first-ever guest country of honor at the 37th International Kite Festival in Berck-sur-Mer, France, between April 20 and Sunday, with events organized by the China Cultural Center in Paris and kite-makers from Weifang in Shandong province, China.

Liu Hongge, director of the China Cultural Center in Paris, says that the kite is a key image representing the friendship between China and France. In 1958, the two countries produced a film titled *Fengsheng* (The Kite), which was called *Cerf-volant du Bout du Monde* in French. The first color children's film made by the People's Republic of China, and the first coproduced with another country, it tells of the adventures



Gao Zhenying (left), 66, and her husband, Zhao Shiming, 68, have grown from kite enthusiasts into professional athletes.

such as lion dances, martial arts, performances of traditional Chinese instruments and tea ceremonies.

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Huang He, 52, competes at the Beijing kite festival in mid-April.

and friendship between Chinese and French children created by a kite.

"As the organizer of guest country events, the China Cultural Center in Paris continues to leverage the image of kites, using them as a medium to tell stories about kite culture in China and France, foster mutual understanding between peoples, and contribute to the success of the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism," Liu says.

Increasing popularity

Within China, the Chinese Kite Association hosts an annual series of kite festivals and events that attract the participation of a wider and more vibrant group of enthusiasts. Li Yiyang, 21, is one of the youngest members of the Beijing Kite Association and yet he has taken responsibility as the leader of the association's Team One, and has won awards at multiple contests.

"I've got family members who are into kite flying and who took me along, so I've been fascinated by the sport since childhood. In the past six or seven years, I think I've gained a solid understanding of it," Li says.

"At first, it was just a hobby and a way to get outdoors and exercise, but when I got more involved, I discovered its rich cultural and historical connotations. So I started delving into kites from two main

perspectives, their history and their role in competitive sports."

As he pursues his studies, Li flies kites at weekends, and in his spare time learns about them, including how to paint and make kites, as well as doing historical research.

Between traditional and stunt kites, he is more inclined toward the former, especially kites characteristic of Beijing, and has adopted local kite-making techniques and cultural elements.

"To me, the charm of kites lies first in allowing me to go outdoors and get some fresh air. It's beneficial to health and keeping fit. Studying kite-making has also been an opportunity to constantly improve my handcrafting and painting skills," Li says.

"Whenever I attend classes in intangible cultural heritage or discuss with my peers, I try to share what I know about traditional Beijing kites. I hope that more young people in China and around the world will get to know more about kites, their role in traditional Chinese culture and the sportsmanship of flying kites."



Online Watch the video by scanning the code.

CULTURE



Composition salutes cherished heritage

Dunhuang and the Palace Museum celebrated in piece that acts as a dialogue spanning thousands of years, **Chen Nan** reports.

When he was a sophomore student at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts with a major in composition, Kam Shing-hei made his first trip to the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Gansu province.

He was overwhelmed by the UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is known for nearly 500 caves carved into cliffs between the 4th and 14th centuries.

"I was intrigued by the exquisite murals and sculptures. After returning to Hong Kong, I read lots of books about Dunhuang and learned about the murals. It seemed that I was ushered into a new world," says Kam.

Later, the young musician returned to Dunhuang a number of times. After graduating, he joined the Hong Kong Gaudeamus Dunhuang Ensemble as its composer-in-residence and is now its artistic director.

Last year, the ensemble premiered *A Dialogue between Dunhuang and the Palace Museum — Across 2,000 Years of Chinese Heritage*, a concert featuring compositions by Kam and another composer-in-residence at the ensemble, Chu Kai-yeung.

The concert was held in Quanzhou, Fujian province, Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Haikou, Hainan province. Last Tuesday, the ensemble brought the concert to Beijing and on the following day, it was staged in Tianjin. It was the first time for both cities to host the concert.

As young musicians played ancient musical instruments, the audience also enjoyed giant murals projected onto the big screen behind the stage.

"Although the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang and the Palace Museum in Beijing are from two different eras, spaces and realms, they both link together and express 2,000 years of Chinese culture. Through this concert, the historical dialogue between the two world heritage sites is told through nine pieces," says Kam.

The Palace Museum is also known as the Forbidden City, China's imperial palace from 1420 to 1911.

The composer adds that the idea for the concert started in 2022 when he was invited to compose music to mark the opening of the Hong Kong Palace Museum.

"The murals are colorful, so is the architecture of the Palace Museum in Beijing. Their colors inspired me to write music," says Kam, adding that Chu, who was studying compo-



sition with Guo Wenjing at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, wrote music inspired by the Palace Museum.

"He (Chu) told me that he went to the Palace Museum almost every week and he felt so touched and inspired when he visited the museum," adds Kam.

One of the pieces that Chu wrote is named after the museum. In it, he portrays the magnificent imperial palace by using instruments, such as the *pipa* (a four-stringed Chinese lute), the *ruan* (a traditional plucked instrument) and the *sheng* (ancient Chinese wind instrument).

Chu also wrote a piece titled *Sorrow of a Changsha Woman*, which features two *ruan* and a *sheng*, adapted from ancient Chinese compositions studied by the renowned scholar and polymath Jao Tsung-i.

In *Fugue in C Major*, Kam borrowed the ancient Chinese compositions found in Dunhuang and combined them with a fugue, a compositional technique mostly used in Western classical music. He was also inspired by the murals of the Mogao Caves, especially the hand gestures, which led him to write *Offering*.

For the concert, Kam also composed *Thank You for Your Time*, which he dedicated to the people working at the two ancient sites, guarding and preserving their treasures.

"We also call the concert 'a tale of heaven, earth and humans'. The Mogao Caves in Dunhuang is like a



From top: The Hong Kong Gaudeamus Dunhuang Ensemble performing *A Dialogue between Dunhuang and the Palace Museum — Across 2,000 Years of Chinese Heritage* in Beijing last Tuesday; musicians of the ensemble play work in Beijing inspired by the Mogao Caves; and composer Kam Shing-hei.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

heaven to us. The Palace Museum is on Earth. The people who work at the two sites connect their history to the present day," Kam adds.

The idea of launching the Hong Kong Gaudeamus Dunhuang Ensemble started with Leonie Ki Man-fung, the ensemble's honorary director and founder, who took a group of aspiring young musicians from Hong Kong to visit the Mogao Caves in 2017, many of them seeing the site for

the first time.

The first cave they visited was Cave 112. It is dimly lit, and only four people are allowed inside at a time. They had to be extremely careful not to touch or damage the murals, which feature the famous image of the goddess playing a *pipa* behind her back.

"When we had dinner that night, the students cried, telling me how much they loved and were touched by the murals. It was at that moment that I was inspired by this profound experience to establish an orchestra," says Ki, a major figure in the advertising industry of Hong Kong.

In 2018, she founded the Hong Kong Gaudeamus Dunhuang Ensemble. By adapting ancient Dunhuang musical scores, Ki hopes to share Dunhuang's art and culture with people from around the world and give the Chinese ancient scores a modern touch.

"Dunhuang was a place where culture, ideas, religion, and art from different countries met," says Ki. "Hong Kong also plays a role as an East-meets-West hub for international cultural exchange."

"When we performed in Dunhuang on Sept 15, 2018, in front of the famous nine-floor Big Buddha Cave No 96, with support from the Dunhuang Academy, I felt very proud," Ki says.

Contact the writer at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn

Young artist finds imagination makes impression

By LI YINGXUE
liyngxue@chinadaily.com.cn

A plastic bag, a chip bag and a girl's face — the three elements were combined to create a bizarre and unique sculpture named *Fantasy Plastic Bag*, which is reminiscent of the feeling of reading Franz Kafka's *The Castle*.

The sculpture was created by the young Chinese artist Chen Yanran, who is also known as Chloe Chen, as a showcase of her imagination as she delves into the depths of consciousness and manifests it in tangible form, amplifying the sensory potential of art.

In the bustling aftermath of her triumphant show at ComplexCon Hong Kong 2024 in March, the art world is once more abuzz with her work.

In April, enthusiasts were afforded an encore as Chen's solo exhibition took center stage at Tsutaya Books in Daikanyama, Tokyo. Renowned as filmmaker Takeshi Kitano's bookstore of choice and dubbed the "Cultural Forest", this iconic venue hosted her work from April 8 to 21.

In Tokyo, the 19-year-old artist unveiled her latest artworks and sculptures, each a vivid exploration of the dynamic interplay between Eastern and Western cultures in an age marked by rapid technological growth and the overload of information.

"During the major three-day exhibition in Hong Kong, I was somewhat nervous because of the large crowds. However, the atmosphere at the Tokyo bookstore exhibition was quieter, making me feel more at ease," Chen says. She has more than 233,000 followers on Instagram, many of whom have expressed eagerness to see her work in person.

Besides *Fantasy Plastic Bag*, Chen also presented the sculpture *Dragon*. The aesthetics of the traditional Chinese zodiac are a source of creative inspiration to the Generation Z artist, and the piece has been featured on the cover of the magazine, *Wonderland*.

In addition to sculptures, Chen also presented multiple prints at the exhibition. The postapocalyptic surrealist aesthetic of *Me and My Friend* shows a girl navigating the desolate wastelands with a strong sense of unease, as she contemplates the ruined world.

Chen studied drawing in Tokyo at 16 and was deeply influenced by urban culture and manga art. This was her second time to hold a solo exhibition in Tokyo. Last year, her debut solo exhibition *Nowhere* garnered widespread attention and recognition in the Asian art world.

According to Pei Lifan, a seasoned art agent, Chen's artwork

started gaining attention from galleries when she was just 13.

She is also a favorite of major international brands such as the Italian notebook line Moleskine and the French luxury label Balenciaga for her artistic creations.

At her solo exhibition in Tokyo last year, most of her pieces were bought by collectors, Pei says.

"Whether in Tokyo or Hong Kong, her work has been widely appreciated, especially the sculptures with a cyberpunk style. Many people have asked if they could be mass-produced or turned into collectible figures," Pei says.

Pei says that Chen's work all has a dreamy feel, with her self-expression at the core.

"She's a perfectionist. Her paintings are very detailed and complex. She keeps revising the details of her paintings," Pei says.

Chen says that when she paints, she likes to have background noise, often choosing to work to anime like *Detective Conan* or *Crayon Shin-chan*.

"I enjoy watching Japanese animation aimed at women, and I also like Japanese and European movies, especially horror films," she says.

Outside of painting, she enjoys visiting museums and antique toy shops. "I'm fascinated by toys and faces. Most of my inspiration comes from things I've seen and the toys I collect."

Chen mentions that sometimes she has surreal dreams, elements of which she incorporates in her art to visualize her dreams and share her dreamscapes with others.

Girls are often the focus of her work. "The depiction of girls probably comes from a deep reflection on the self. Characters created at different times, more or less, reflect my own struggles or exploration of issues in the real world," she explains.

"Some of them visually represent my artistic personality, but they don't completely represent me," she adds.

In 2023, Chen founded her art studio — Accro Studio, the Chinese name of which means "endless" — which symbolizes her limitless exploration of the world of art.

Recently, Chen has received an offer from the Rhode Island School of Design, and has applied to start her studies after wrapping up her exhibition. "I feel there's always room to improve in my painting," Chen says, adding that she is looking forward to university life.

Apart from expanding into sculpture from painting, she also hopes to explore animation and try her hand at creating moving installations, as well as developing her own toys.



Clockwise from top left: Chen Yanran's sculpture, *Dragon*; the 19-year-old artist from Beijing; and two other sculptures, *Spinning Girl* and *Memory Box*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Editorials

Musk's visit exposes malignancy of Washington's 'overcapacity' claim

Coming hard on the heels of the rather gloomy visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, whose agenda for his trip seemed to be to hype up the US administration's latest stay-away smear that China is dumping green products in overseas markets, Tesla CEO Elon Musk's unannounced visit to Beijing had a much brighter atmosphere and sent a more positive message.

For Beijing, which is under tremendous pressure due to the United States-led Western push for economic decoupling and attacks on its leading industrial sectors, of which the exporting of alleged "overcapacity" is the latest manifestation, Musk's visit was a testament to its continuous commitment to openness.

Sustaining a mutually beneficial partnership with one of the US' leading technology leaders and EV manufacturers serves as a telling rebuttal of the US' allegation that China is trying to squeeze the space for the green products of other countries, both at home and overseas.

Meeting with Musk on Sunday, Premier Li Qiang called Tesla's China venture "a successful example of China-US economic and trade cooperation".

It is clear that in his talk with the Tesla CEO the Chinese premier was extending a welcome to all foreign companies and making a clear rebuttal to the US' "overcapacity" charge.

Coinciding with Musk's arrival was the news that all the models produced at Tesla's Shanghai factory have met Chinese data security requirements. Since the Chinese authorities had concerns about the US company's data collection, Tesla vehicles have faced various restrictions in China. With all such restrictions expected to be removed, the appeal of Tesla products to Chinese consumers will certainly get a boost. It will also enable the country to accelerate the perfecting of the company's Full Self-Driving software, which will further boost the appeal of its products.

But Beijing is not bestowing special favors on Tesla. It does not want the US EV-maker to be a lone example. It wants Tesla to be followed by more companies from outside the country.

Every new energy vehicle in China, every renewable energy project built by Chinese enterprises, and every Sino-foreign cooperation in the field of climate change, are examples of China's new energy industry providing the world with the high-quality green production capacity that is imperative to realize the global climate goals.

China's green production capacity is high-quality production capacity that promotes green development. The US is distorting facts and accusing China of "excess production capacity" in order to justify its protectionist policies and undermine efforts to repair Sino-US relations.

The Philippines will only shoot itself in the foot

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr is behaving roguishly by denying there was a gentleman's agreement between his predecessor and Beijing over the maritime disputes between the two countries.

The Philippine government has announced that the "backward deal" between its predecessor and Beijing over the South China Sea issue is contrary to the national interests of the Philippines and is not valid.

The very fact that he said this confirms there was such an agreement, one which helped to stabilize the situation in the South China Sea.

The understanding between the two governments was that Manila could send supplies to those occupying the ship it had stranded on Ren'ai Reef but not materials to repair the disintegrating vessel or build facilities there. It was not a secret agreement as current Philippine government officials refer to it.

The gentleman's agreement between the two governments, according to the spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the Philippines, was meant to bring the situation under control, safeguard peace and prevent conflict.

Both sides abided by the agreement until Manila broke it in February 2023, seven months after the new Philippine government took office.

The Chinese government has repeatedly sought to communicate with the Marcos government about the agreement in order to find a way

to manage the dispute.

Earlier this year, the two sides had agreed to a "new model" of providing supplies to Ren'ai Reef through consultations between the militaries of both countries.

However, the "new model" was abandoned unilaterally by the Philippines.

By denying there was a gentleman's agreement or by referring to it as a "secret one", the current Philippine government is displaying its mountebank nature. What it is saying and doing is further aggravating the situation.

The Philippine government does so because it firmly believes that it has the support of the United States. The Philippines agreed to give the US military access to four more Philippine bases in 2023, supposedly in response to China's moves.

On April 22, nearly 17,000 Filipino and US troops kicked off a three-week joint combat training exercise in the South China Sea, the largest in decades.

It is Washington's support and encouragement that have bolstered the courage of Manila to provoke Beijing. But Beijing will never be cowed and it will never give in on the question of sovereignty and territorial integrity. If Manila chooses to play hardball, Beijing will respond accordingly.

The worsening situation in the South China Sea is not in the interest of the Philippines. It should not expect to benefit from messing up the situation at Ren'ai Reef. Instead, it will only shoot itself in the foot.

US' callousness and hypocrisy know no bounds

Shortly after Israel intensified its air strikes on Rafah, a city in southern Gaza into which more than 1 million Palestinians have been pushed by Israel's military campaign, the United States announced that Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia this week to start his seventh mediation tour since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict on Oct 7.

"The Secretary will discuss ongoing efforts to achieve a cease-fire in Gaza that secures the release of hostages and how it is Hamas that is standing between the Palestinian people and a cease-fire," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Saturday.

That statement on Blinken's latest "pro-peace" shuttle diplomacy suggests that the United States is hell-bent on continuing to pour oil on the flames of the conflict while posing as an earnest peacebroker.

That Israel's air strikes on Rafah came as US President Joe Biden signed into law legislation that includes \$26 billion in assistance for Israel, the majority of which is earmarked for military spending, simply makes a mockery of the top US diplomat's mediation efforts, a key objective of which, according to Miller, is to "prevent the conflict from spreading".

After the US became the only party to veto a United Nations Security Council draft resolution to grant UN membership to the State of Palestine earlier this month, which is a necessary step to realize the two-state solution that the US allegedly

supports, the US side still feels no qualms about claiming that it wants "lasting peace and security in the region, through a pathway to an independent Palestinian state with security guarantees for Israel".

With large-scale student protests against the Biden administration's lopsided pro-Israel policy engulfing the US, Blinken should be in a better position than before to realize that the root cause of the crisis is not that Israel's security has not been guaranteed, but Israel's greed that has not been satisfied yet.

The US has been covertly encouraging Israel to continuously encroach on Palestinian territories on the other side of the 1967 borders over the past decades, during which the US' closest ally in the Middle East has never stopped trying to grab parts of its neighbors' territories as its own land.

Blinken is therefore obliged to explain to his Middle East hosts whether the US can only accept a Palestinian state that is under its own control or governed by a proxy government of Washington since what the US vetoed in the aforementioned UNSC draft resolution is exactly what in the eyes of the majority of the international community is an independent Palestinian state.

The world can clearly see Washington and Tel Aviv are on the same page regarding the future of the Palestinian state and that it is not Hamas but the US that "is standing between the Palestinian people and a cease-fire".

Shame on the US for sending its top diplomat to the Middle East to talk about a cease-fire while it continues to supply Israel with weapons.

Song Chen



Opinion Line

Improving business environment to attract more foreign investment

The number of newly established foreign-funded enterprises in China reached 12,000 in the first quarter of this year, a 20.7 percent year-on-year increase, data released by the Ministry of Commerce shows.

The State Council, China's Cabinet, in March issued an action plan aimed at attracting foreign investment by promoting high-level opening-up, which puts forward a practical policy framework for addressing specific problems faced by foreign-funded enterprises in China. This also demonstrates China's sincerity and determination to open wider to the outside world, which is of great significance to consolidating foreign investment confidence in China.

The actual use of foreign capital in China reached 1.1 trillion yuan (\$151.82 billion) in 2023, making it one of the biggest foreign investment users in the world for many

consecutive years. In the first two months of 2024, the number of newly established foreign-funded enterprises in high-tech industries increased by 32.2 percent year-on-year, with the proportion of actual used foreign capital in these sectors in China's overall actual use of foreign capital increasing by 1.2 percentage points over the same period in 2023.

This shows that China's large market, sound supply chain and full-fledged public service network help in attracting foreign investment. If targeted measures are taken to solve the problems faced by foreign enterprises investing in China, it will help better attract foreign investment.

China should further improve its pre-establishment national treatment and negative list management system for foreign investment, and promote the revi-

sion and improvement of relevant laws, regulations and normative documents. It should take pilot free trade zones in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong and other areas as the carrier, give full play to the advantages of foreign enterprises rallying global scientific and technological resources, and try to achieve breakthroughs in scientific and technological innovation in those fields with market potential.

It should explore the establishment of coordinated rules for opening-up and prudential regulation of the financial sector, and guide foreign institutions to engage in domestic financial services in a safe, steady and orderly manner.

The country should work harder to optimize the business environment, and promote the establishment of an equal policy system for both domestic and foreign investment.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

Learning to coexist with wildlife crucial

Since early April, multiple incidents of wild monkeys attacking people in a village in Wanning, Hainan province, have been reported. At least nine people including children have suffered injuries.

With increasing efforts at ecological protection, more wild animal habitats are being restored and there is greater overlapping of wildlife and human habitats, leading to increasingly evident conflicts.

Local governmental agencies responsible for wildlife protection can, by establishing an effective warning system through monitor-

ing and data analysis, protect local residents from wild animals. For example, by installing cameras and sensors to monitor wildlife activities in real-time, residents can be promptly notified via mobile applications or broadcast systems if any dangerous wildlife behavior is detected, while regularly releasing official reports on wildlife activities can alert residents to remain safe.

The bear management plan in Yellowstone National Park in the United States has effectively reduced bear attacks by restricting the distance between tourists and bears, providing food storage con-

tainers, and conducting bear safety education for tourists.

By raising public awareness, strengthening legal protection, and scientifically managing areas where wildlife and human activities overlap, it is possible to achieve coexistence between wildlife conservation and human safety.

It's also necessary to recognize that wildlife conservation and human safety are not mutually exclusive, nor is it a simple dichotomy of "human lives matter more" versus "wildlife conservation matters more".

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

Tokyo should mend its provocative ways

China has enough reasons to lodge solemn representations to Japan, as it did on Sunday, after five Japanese lawmakers trespassed on Friday into waters near China's Diaoyu Islands allegedly for a maritime "inspection".

The lawmakers, including former defense minister Tomomi Inada, were reportedly conducting an inspection tour organized by the city of Ishigaki in Okinawa Prefecture. Their irresponsible action is undoubtedly a deliberate provocation to Beijing. According to the Chinese embassy in Japan, the China Coast Guard has taken necessary measures to deal with the issue in accordance with the law.

The Diaoyu Islands are an inherent part of China's territory since ancient times. The archipelago that Japan invaded decades before World War II should have been returned to China immediately after Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945 according to relevant historical files.

But Tokyo handed over the Diaoyu

Islands to the US military that year on the pretext that the islands were under the jurisdiction of Okinawa. The Diaoyu Islands were subsequently used as a shooting range for the US military. In 1970, the US handed over jurisdiction over Okinawa to Japan, "giving" it the Diaoyu Islands.

Yet China's determination and will to safeguard its territorial integrity and sovereignty and maritime rights are unwavering. China strongly urges Japan to stop all political provocations, on-site disturbances and media hype, and return to the correct track of managing differences and disputes through dialogue and consultation to avoid further escalation of the situation. That the CCG's patrols in the waters around the islands have become a regular practice means China is able to deal with the Japanese side's provocations.

The Fumio Kishida government's one-sided pro-US diplomacy downgrades Japan into a proxy in Washington's geopolitical game in the Asia-Pacific. That blind gambling

threatens to derail the otherwise healthy development of Sino-Japanese relations, which harms the common interests of both sides and the region.

That the Diaoyu Islands did not become an obstacle to the two countries normalizing their diplomatic ties and promoting economic and trade cooperation is thanks to the political wisdom demonstrated by both sides in shelving their differences for the common development of the two countries.

But if Japan is determined to unilaterally discard that consensus and throw its weight behind the US' China-containment strategy, it should realize that no one is allowed to violate China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, and China remains steadfast in safeguarding its lawful rights. If Tokyo turns a deaf ear to the Chinese side and continues to sabotage China-Japan ties, it will be held accountable for the dire situation its irresponsible behavior will cause.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huijia 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

COMMENT

Yang Jinsong

Tourism industry on way to full recovery

There have been strong signs since last year suggesting the tourism sector is on way to full recovery. Passenger trips within the country in 2023 increased to 4.89 billion, 93.3 percent more than the previous year, with domestic travelers spending 4.91 trillion yuan (\$691.2 billion), up 140.3 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

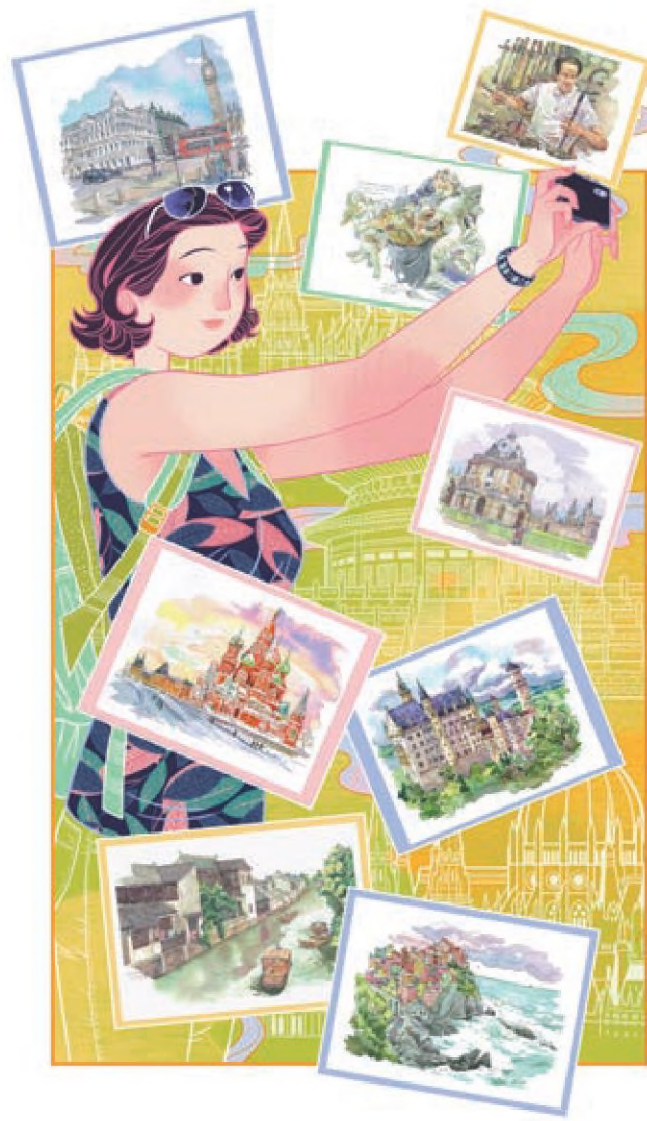
The huge domestic tourism market has been helping stabilize the global tourism industry as well as driving its growth. The number of tourists in China has been continuously increasing over the past four decades, with domestic passenger trips jumping from less than 500 million in the 1980s to more than 6 billion in 2019 at an average annual growth of about 10 percent.

China boasts both one of the world's largest inbound tourism markets and a massive domestic tourist industry, which has been fast recovering after the COVID-19 pandemic. Official data show that during the eight-day Spring Festival holidays in February, 474 million domestic passenger trips were made, up 34.3 percent year-on-year, with the total domestic tourism spending increasing 47.3 percent year-on-year to about 632.69 billion yuan. Also, about 119 million domestic passenger trips were made during the three-day Qingming Festival holiday earlier this month, an increase of 11.5 percent over the same period in 2019, with the domestic tourism industry's revenue reaching 53.95 billion yuan, up 12.7 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

A large number of Chinese tourists have traveled or are willing to travel abroad this year, while other countries are learning from China's innovative development model to make their tourism industries more resilient. For example, barbecue in Zibo, Shandong province; *malatang*, a soup containing boiled meat and vegetables seasoned with mouthwatering, spicy scarlet chili oil, in Tianshui, Gansu province; and the ice-snow tourism festival in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, all have boosted domestic tourism. Their sound infrastructure, clean image and excellent public services have attracted even foreign internet influencers.

The huge domestic tourism market and supporting industries are China's advantages, and they have accumulated rich experiences which the global tourism industry can reference. China's tourism industry is treading the right path to optimize the tourism products, promoting the high-quality development of tourist destinations and developing new tourism formats.

China's inbound and outbound tourism sectors both have performed well this year. During the Spring Festival holidays, Chinese people made 3.6 million outbound trips, close to the 2019 level. And while the number of outbound passenger



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

trips could reach 130 million this year and inbound tourist footfalls could recover to 50 percent of the 2019 level, the inbound tourism markets of the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and the Taiwan island province are expected to make fast recovery, according to the China Tourism Academy.

Therefore, it can be safely said that China's tourism industry is on way to full recovery and is injecting new impetus into the global tourism industry. China's tourism industry shares with the rest of the world its development opportunities

and strives to promote the development of a more open, more cooperative and higher-quality tourism market. For example, many tourist destinations across the world have benefited from Chinese tourists, as the swelling numbers of Chinese tourists in other countries have helped create more jobs and boost people-to-people exchanges.

The Chinese government has been taking measures to boost the tourism sector, for example, by encouraging Chinese nationals to visit foreign countries, which incidentally will help the global tourism

industry to recover. The fact that an increasing number of Chinese tourists visited countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative in 2023 means more Belt and Road countries benefitting from the growth of China's tourism market.

Besides, China's high-quality opening-up requires high-quality cooperation and exchanges among countries, which tourism readily provides. Since the second half of last year, China has been introducing plans to make travel for foreign tourists easier. In July, China resumed visa-free entry for the citizens of Singapore and Brunei. From December, French, German, Italian, Malaysian, Dutch and Spanish nationals can get a 15-day visa-free entry into China for business, tourism, family visit and transit purposes.

Also, from March 14 this year, China has granted visa-free entry on a trial basis to visitors from Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg. Before that, in January, the National Immigration Administration introduced five new measures to facilitate foreigners' entry into the country, which include relaxation of port visa application requirements and provisions of visa extension, providing replacement and issuance services at local immigration departments for foreign nationals visiting or staying in China for non-diplomatic, non-official purposes, such as trade, investment or entrepreneurship or for visiting relatives.

Moreover, foreign nationals can enjoy 24-hour direct transit without undergoing border checks at nine major airports including those in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xiamen and Guangzhou. And while multiple-entry visas are available for foreigners, the requirements for visa have been streamlined for foreigners staying in China.

In addition, the government will launch a series of targeted measures to address existing problems and propel the inbound tourism market. For example, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism said at a news conference in March that it will make it easier for payments at various places such as tourist attractions, cultural and performance venues and star-rated hotels.

The government attaches great importance to people's desire for a better life, which includes good travel experience. The government links this desire with the recovery and sustainable development of the global tourism industry. The positive impact of the recovery of China's tourism sector will encourage more countries to work together to boost the global tourism industry.

The author is director of the International Institute at the China Tourism Academy. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

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

It's a shame to accuse good Samaritans of being perpetrators

My wife and I were walking to a subway station when we saw an old man sitting on the ground. A man and a woman, both in their 70s, were trying to help him stand up.

"We were passing by when we saw the old man lying face down, seemingly unconscious, in the bushes on the pavement. I managed to move him out of the bushes," the man in his 70s told us when we inquired about what had happened.

"I've got the old man's home phone number (from his mobile phone or ID card) and called his son several times but got no answer. I've also sought help from the police," the old lady said.

My wife and I decided to wait, hoping to do something to help the old man.

While comforting the old man and helping him drink some bottled water, we learned that he was 87 years old and his son was hearing impaired. He said he lived nearby and could walk back home if we helped him get up on his feet. But when he named the area where he lived, we realized he was in a daze, for the area was more than 10 kilometers away.

The man in his 70s said he had a sick wife to take care of at home, so we requested him go home. While my wife and the old lady tried to get some more information from the old man, I rushed to the nearby subway station where the police officers would likely stop their car when they came.

In some cases, people have first made sure they have the evidence, such as videos or photos, to prove they are innocent before helping accident victims.

After I led the police car to the spot, my wife and the old lady passed on whatever information they had gathered from the old man to the police officers, who quickly decided to take the old man to the police station to get more clues from and take better care of him. We have no idea what happened to the old man after we helped the police officers get him into the police car. We hope he is alright and has been reunited with his family.

"I couldn't help lending a helping hand to the old man, although it could bring trouble. His condition reminded me of my mother's experience," my wife said later. Her 90-year-old mother had fallen down several times near her home in the past few years and each time she got help from kind-hearted neighbors.

The "trouble" my wife was worried about were blackmail cases involving accident victims and good Samaritans. In some cases, the victims have sued the persons who helped them, claiming the latter were responsible for their condition in the hope of getting compensation. In most such cases, the victims couldn't identify the real culprits.

For instance, an old woman who fell down and fractured her leg at a bus station in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, in 2006 sued a young man, claiming he was responsible for her injury, but the man said he had actually helped the old woman after she fell down. A local judge, however, ruled that the young man shoulder 40 percent of the cost of treatment, saying "if it were not you who knocked down the old lady, why did you take the trouble of helping her and sending her to the hospital?"

The ruling sparked a public debate, with many people criticizing the judge for "lowering" the moral standards of society. There have been many reports in the following years of accident victims dying for want of timely medical treatment because people driving or walking by were afraid to help them lest they get into unnecessary trouble. In some cases, people have first made sure they have the evidence, such as videos or photos, to prove they are innocent before helping accident victims.

Such a society is certainly not what we want. The Nanjing judge was reportedly removed from his post, and the old woman and her family had to go into hiding after a public outcry. Since then, many local governments and social organizations have organized events to honor good Samaritans, hailing them as heroes and role models, and laws and regulations have been revised to better protect the rights of benefactors.

We are happy to have offered help to the old man. But we hope we are not dragged to court for that. Mutual help is a valuable tool for humans to tide over difficulties.

Maritime community of shared future sets sail

Editor's note: More than 30 experts from different research institutions and universities shared their views on the need to build a maritime community with a shared future at the Third Future Ocean Forum: Theoretical Innovation and Practical Exploration of the Maritime Community with a Shared Future that was held in Qingdao, Shandong province, on April 20-21. Excerpts from the speeches of three of the experts follow:

Chances of potential flashpoints flaring up

In terms of potential future risks, several critical points require China's attention. First, the Ren'ai Jiao issue in the South China Sea has been simmering since the Philippines started delivering construction materials to the Ren'ai Jiao and attempted to make it a permanently occupied military base. Also, the Philippines is consistently trying to stir up public opinion against China.

Given the pattern of the Philippines' provocations, a peaceful resolution to the issue appears difficult. Hence, maintaining the status quo while allowing Manila, on humanitarian grounds, to send limited supplies to the World War II-era military vessel it deliberately rammed into Ren'ai Jiao in 1999 citing the excuse of mechanical fault and now wants to build facilities around it appears to be the most pragmatic way to address the issue.

Second, Manila has indicated it may seek fresh arbitration on Chinese activities near Houteng Jiao. That it has been gathering evidence, especially on marine environmental damage and alleged interference in fishing activities near Houteng Jiao, makes the issue a big legal challenge.

The new arbitration, if the Philippines seeks it, will have far-reaching consequences, affecting relations and setting a precedent for other countries in the region to take similar actions. So China must closely monitor the developments and take measures to protect its interests.

The situation in Liyue Tan, where the Philippines desperately wants to unilaterally exploit the resources, poses a threat to China's maritime interests. If Manila proceeds with its plan to extract

resources from Liyue Tan, it will undermine regional stability and jeopardize China's strategic and economic interests. While diplomacy should be used to settle the issue, China also needs to respond assertively to protect its national interests in the South China Sea.

A consistent and principled approach is essential to help resolve the issues through dialogue and diplomacy, and safeguard China's interests in the South China Sea.

Wu Shicun, chairman of Huayang Research Center for Maritime Cooperation and Ocean Governance and founding president of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies

A holistic, consistent approach needed

A good knowledge of international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, is necessary to understand the South China Sea dynamics, and why the United States has been intervening in other countries' disputes, deploying its military and conducting "freedom of navigation" operations in the South China Sea.

China's approach to the South China Sea issues is multifaceted. It has been balancing sovereignty claims with efforts to maintain stability and safeguard its economic interests. Late leader Deng Xiaoping's principle of shelving disputes to pursue joint development in such cases encapsulates this strategy, emphasizing cooperation alongside territorial assertions.

However, translating this policy into action is challenging. The maritime disputes necessitate a nuanced approach that balances assertiveness with coopera-

tion. While stability is essential, it must not come at the expense of fundamental rights. Achieving this delicate balance requires a deep understanding of the region's complexities and a commitment to constructive engagement.

In fact, to resolve the South China Sea conundrum, we need to shift from conventional wisdom toward pragmatic diplomacy. Adopting a holistic approach that prioritizes dialogue, cooperation and respect for international law offers the best path toward stability and prosperity in this vital maritime domain.

The need to urgently resolve the South China Sea issue cannot be overstated. Failure to defuse the underlying tensions risks affecting not only regional stability but also global security. By acknowledging the complexity of the situation and adopting a collaborative approach, stakeholders can work together to develop the South China Sea into a zone of cooperation rather than conflict.

Gao Zhiguo, president of the Chinese Society of Law of the Sea, and former judge of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

Hierarchy of needs should be addressed

The vision of a maritime community with a shared future encompasses various layers rooted in diverse interests. Through the lens of Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs theory," we can discern distinct levels of demands and environmental concerns. For instance, maritime disputes often revolve around questions of territorial ownership and belonging, and climate change-induced marine disasters highlight the urgency of

addressing these issues.

Contemplating a world marked by diverging interests may prompt skepticism about the feasibility of forging a maritime community amid such unfavorable circumstances. But there is no denying that hope persists amid these challenges — for example, regional initiatives promote partnerships, as can be seen in the case of ASEAN and China.

The pursuit of a comprehensive maritime community remains an ideal worth striving for, even if it is achieved gradually. A realistic appraisal of the power dynamics underscores the importance of legal frameworks in shaping perceptions and managing conflicts.

The conflicting assertions of sovereignty, especially in the South China and East China seas, underscore the real threat hegemony poses to China's national interests. Given the threat of the environmental crisis and terrorism, there is a need to take a cautious approach to international relations.

After all, safeguarding national interests is a prerequisite for nurturing a global community. Without this, a shared future would remain elusive. Sovereignty, security and development are the basis for a shared future. The concept of a maritime community with a shared future can be viewed through various lenses, from the "Thucydides trap" to a perpetual peaceful arrangement. By reflecting on our place now, we can navigate our path forward.

He Zhipeng, dean of School of Law, Jilin University

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

GLOBAL VIEWS

ZHANG YANSHENG

Looking ahead

China's strategic choice in promoting further opening-up can help overcome the flaws in globalization

Globalization has manifested differently at various stages of societal development.

During the eras of colonial expansion and the formation of the world market, Western powers supplied industrial products to the world and sourced raw materials from their colonies, establishing a "center-periphery" industrial division of labor.

After World War II, international organizations facilitated the liberalization and convenience of global trade and investment. The import substitution industrialization strategy became a common choice for emerging developing countries.

By the 1980s, free trade and market-oriented reforms were widely adopted by countries, ushering in an era of "hyper-globalization".

In the 1990s, hyper-globalization coupled with the information technology revolution led to a tripartite international division of labor where the United States and Europe provided markets and technology, East Asia supplied industrial manufactured goods, and resource-rich countries provided energy and mineral resources.

However, during this period of global openness, after reaping the benefits of the tech and financial bubbles, the US fell into the sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2007 and the subsequent financial crisis of 2008. In a speech on the New Washington Consensus, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan conducted a thorough reassessment of US policies since the 1980s, which focused on tax reductions, deregulation, privatization over public action, and trade liberalization as objectives, which eventually led to the hollowing out of US industries.

Why does globalization, based on Western rules, constantly change but never make significant progress?

Globalization has three deep-seated flaws that are difficult to overcome. First, globalization has created an open and interdependent global village but failed to establish a workable global economic governance mechanism or multilateral adjustment mechanism to handle global economic imbalances.

Second, while globalization has created an economy that maximizes welfare based on market mechanisms, it has failed to fairly distribute the profits gained by the cross-border flow of capital and technology nor has it established a global safety net and multilateral compensation mechanisms.

Third, despite fostering a golden age of global economic and trade growth, globalization has not resolved the contradictions of geopolitical conflicts triggered by shifts in the relative power of major

nations, nor has it established a multilateral political and economic coordination mechanism.

Therefore, the Western-driven new globalization is characterized by geopoliticalization and de-sinicization. Even though China repeatedly stresses that it does not seek hegemony, the US is intent on preventing any transfer of power to China in the process of globalization. It is therefore trying to prevent China from taking the lead in technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum information and microelectronics, which could potentially spark a new technological revolution.

It also seeks to prevent China, through its governance, ethos and self-cultivation, from winning the hearts of the global population, and to prevent the modernization of Chinese culture from becoming influential soft power.

In this context, the push by the US toward decoupling and trade protectionism has become a stark reality. Since 2010, China has faced a completely new international policy environment, with countries such as the US and Japan revising their trade policies or shifting toward a new form of capitalism.

Recently, developed Western countries that have developed close trade ties with China have started to adopt new industrial policies to guide or intervene in industrial development. Studies by Oxford and Harvard universities have found that the number of observed industrial policies globally was only 34 in 2010, but it has surged to 1,594 by 2021, among which protective policies have increased from 8 percent to 48 percent.

The global cross-border investments that benefited China in the past have been widely disrupted by geopolitical conflicts and investment protectionism. A study by the Peterson Institute for International Economics noted that while Chinese mergers and acquisitions only accounted for 4 percent of their sample, 15 percent of them were subjected to scrutiny.

Another study by the International Monetary Fund found that in 2021, foreign direct investment flows between geopolitically close countries accounted for 52 percent of total flows, significantly higher than those between geographically close countries.

Western countries that used to have close exchanges and cooperation with China have been influenced by the US' strategies of reshoring, nearshoring and friendshoring, and emulated the US in decoupling their trade, technology and industries with China.

Japanese companies' overseas investments will primarily focus on Western "nearshoring" sectors, accounting for 55 percent to 75 percent of the country's investment expansion this year. "Friendshoring" sectors will make up 44 percent to 55 percent of the expansion; while expansions

below 43 percent will mainly include Thailand, Singapore and the Chinese mainland (27 percent).

In the new international environment, the influence and destructive power of economic security have significantly increased. Following the financial crisis, globalization has stalled and global supply chains are being restructured, necessitating strategic, structural and cost adjustments for security, while intensified global geopolitical conflicts have exacerbated the decoupling trend, undermining global economic stability.

Since the launch of the reform and opening-up policy, China has achieved significant economic growth. From 1990 to 2021, the ratio of Japan, Germany and China's GDPs relative to that of the US shifted dramatically: Japan's share fell by 31 percentage points, Germany's by 11 percentage points, while China's increased by 71 percentage points.

What exactly did China get right with its reforms and opening-up?

First, China seized the major strategic opportunities to participate in the global economic cycle, integrate into the international division of labor, engage with globalization, and integrate into the global community. Second, it aligned its institutional mechanisms with international norms. Third, it enhanced its overall national power and international industrial competitiveness.

The underlying logic has been to focus on economic development as the central task, adhering firmly to the idea that development is the absolute principle; to follow the pragmatic approach of seeking truth from facts; and to open up and introduce foreign competitors to stimulate the catfish effect in the domestic market.

For its next steps, China should primarily focus on its transition into the new development stage by following the new development philosophy, fostering a new development paradigm, and pursuing the development of new quality productive forces that can achieve major breakthrough in the country's efforts to go global.

The author is a chief researcher of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

This article is contributed to China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

ZHANG JIE

No push over

The US will not be able to exclude China from the regional production and supply chains

In a trilateral summit in Washington in April, the United States, the Philippines and Japan reached agreement on maritime security cooperation, and announced that the US and Japan will support the Philippines through a set of new economic partnerships, including developing the Luzon Economic Corridor, stepping up investment in infrastructure, and building clean energy and semiconductor supply chains.

These moves are part of the US' latest efforts to strengthen its alliances and advance "de-sinicized" supply chains in the "Indo-Pacific" region.

As technological and industrial revolutions are reshaping the international and regional orders, the US has focused on supply chain competition with China to "confine" China and maintain its dominance in the "Indo-Pacific" regional order.

As a result, economic issues in the region are "securitized" and future security issues will be "economized". As long as a country is tied to the US supply chain, it is inevitable that its security policies will be aligned with the US.

Impacted by the ongoing technological transformation and geopolitical competition, the global economy and security equilibrium is undergoing a historic shift. In the Asia-Pacific region, the US is hyping up "economic security" and pushing its allies to restructure regional production and supply chains, with a focus on high-tech industries such as semiconductors, in an attempt to "decouple" economies from the Chinese economy.

Since 2023, the US and its allies have accelerated this process. The US, Japan and the Republic of Korea have implemented various policies targeting key industries such as semiconductors, new energy vehicles and digital trade, and incorporated them into bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation with Southeast Asian and South Asian countries.

In South Asia, India has been leveraging the reshuffle of the US production and supply chain, aiming to achieve fast-track growth in the manufacturing sector, a move supported by the US.

Other South Asian countries, however, are struggling with weak manufacturing foundations and challenges in industrial transformation. If this trend continues, South Asia may shift from a mutually complementary economic pattern to an India-centered model, with South Asian countries becom-

ing part of the US-dominated global production and supply chain.

In Southeast Asia, the Philippines has fully aligned itself with the US, while countries such as Vietnam and Malaysia are betting on both sides. While becoming the US and Japan's new favorite destinations for investment and technology transfer, they are not giving up cooperation with China, thus competing and cooperating with China at the same time.

During Joe Biden's visit to Vietnam in September 2023, he acknowledged Vietnam's significant potential as a major player in the semiconductor industry. He expressed support for the rapid development of Vietnam's semiconductor ecosystem and willingness to enhance cooperation to elevate Vietnam's status in the global semiconductor supply chain.

In March 2024, during US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's trip to the Philippines, he visited local semiconductor companies, describing the Philippines as an "increasingly critical partner" in ensuring the resilience of the chip supply chain.

With the goal of "de-risking" and "de-sinicization", the US-led Western countries are pushing for the transfer of production and supply chains, which will lead to a fragmented economic pattern in the Asia-Pacific region. Smaller countries will be forced to take sides, affecting their approaches to security and foreign policies.

However, it is not an easy task for the US to exclude China from its production and supply chains. After decades of participating in Asia-Pacific cooperation, China has formed close economic and trade ties with countries in the region and is at the heart of regional integration.

Asia-Pacific economic integration is still steadily progressing, with particularly active trade investment, infrastructure, and digital interconnectivity. Regional supply chains and industrial networks are deeply intertwined. At the same time, China's advantages in geographic position, industrial ecosystem, market size and talent pool provide vast opportunities for cooperation between China and other economies in the Asia-Pacific region.

Strategic adjustments among major powers in the Asia-Pacific region are expected to continue into the future. Under the overlapping impact of the US-China strategic competition and the technological and industrial revolutions, the international and regional landscape, once based on maintaining sovereignty and military strength, will be increasingly influenced by economic and tech-

nological competition in the future. This will increase the complexity and uncertainty of the security situation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Facing the complex changes in the Asia-Pacific region, it was proposed at China's Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference in December 2023 that building a community with a shared future for mankind is how China responds to questions of what kind of world to build and how to build it. The goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity.

Guided by this principle, China will seek to prudently handle relations with major powers, particularly the US, in dealing with Asia-Pacific affairs, especially in a time when the US is using the production and supply chains as a new tool to contain China.

Although the US' comprehensive strategic competition with China is not going to change fundamentally in the short term, both sides should value the necessary communication to avoid misunderstandings and misjudgments. A series of high-level interactions between China and the US since 2024 have demonstrated their basic consensus of stabilizing bilateral relations.

More important, China should continue to actively work with its neighbors to build a community with a shared future in the region, strengthen its strategic coordination with small and medium-sized countries in the region, mitigate the risks of regional division and confrontation, and seize the opportunities for unity and cooperation.

China has always attached importance to the aspirations of small and medium-sized countries in the Asia-Pacific region for economic development and regional cooperation. In the future, China should continue to advocate the Global Development Initiative, advance the high-quality cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative, explore new growth drivers with a focus on emerging sectors, lead the restructuring of regional production and supply chains, and work with small and medium-sized countries in the region to achieve stable and sustainable socioeconomic development.

The author is a researcher at the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The author contributed this article to China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

WORLD

Rise again



People visit the remnants of the old sunken town of Pantabangan on Sunday in the Philippines' Nueva Ecija Province. Due to a severe drought, the centuries-old settlement submerged since the 1970s has reemerged, attracting tourists despite the extreme heat. EZRA ACAYAN / GETTY IMAGES

Dozens killed after dam bursts in Kenya

NAIROBI — At least 42 people died when a dam burst its banks near a town in Kenya's Rift Valley, the local governor told Agence France-Presse on Monday, as heavy rains and floods battered the country.

The dam burst near Mai Mahiu in Nakuru county, washing away houses and cutting off a road, with rescuers digging through debris to find survivors.

"Forty-two dead, it's a conservative estimate. There are still more in the mud, we are working on recovery," Nakuru Governor Susan Kihika said.

Monday's dam collapse raises the total death toll over the March-May wet season to 120 as heavier than usual rainfall pounds East Africa,

compounded by the El Nino weather pattern.

Meanwhile, the Kenya Red Cross said on Monday it had retrieved two bodies after a boat carrying "a large number of people" capsized over the weekend in the flooded Tana River county in eastern Kenya. Video footage shared online and broadcast on television showed the crowded boat sinking, with people screaming as onlookers watched in horror.

On Saturday, officials said 76 people had lost their lives in Kenya since March.

Flash floods have submerged roads and neighborhoods, leading to the displacement of more than 130,000 people across 24,000 households, according to govern-

ment figures released on Saturday.

Schools have been forced to remain shut following midterm holidays, after the education ministry announced on Monday that it would postpone their reopening by one week due to "ongoing heavy rains".

"The devastating effects of the rains in some of the schools is so severe that it will be imprudent to risk the lives of learners and staff before watertight measures are put in place to ensure adequate safety," Education Minister Ezekiel Machogu said.

The monsoons have also wreaked havoc in neighboring Tanzania, where at least 155 people have been killed in flooding and landslides.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Yoon holds 1st meeting with leader of opposition

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong
kelly@chinadailyapac.com

Though no agreement was reached during the first meeting between South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and opposition leader Lee Jae-myung, experts said it still represented a positive outlook for future communication.

"The president had a deep, frank and candid conversation with the leader of the main opposition Democratic Party," Lee Do-woon, senior presidential secretary for public relations, said.

Though the two sides did not reach any agreement, there were areas where they shared a general understanding, he said at a briefing after the meeting.

Yoon met with Lee Jae-myung at the presidential office in their first meeting since Yoon took office in May 2022.

The meeting came after the president called the opposition leader on April 19 and proposed to meet for talks following the landslide victory by the Democratic Party, or DP, in the general elections on April 10.

Yoon's ruling People Power Party secured only 108 seats in the 300-member National Assembly.

The meeting lasted over two hours, exceeding the original plan of an hour. But DP spokesman Park Sung-joon said he was disappointed with



South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol (right) shakes hands with main opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung at the presidential office in Seoul on Monday. HONG HAE-IN VIA AP

the outcome as he could not see any change in the government's stance.

Noting that the meeting was conducted in which Yoon responded to Lee Jae-myung's requests, Park said it seems that Yoon did not show any willingness to change the direction of his policies on restoring people's livelihoods, which the DP had insisted on.

Before the closed-door discussion began, Lee Jae-myung made a speech of about 15 minutes, during which he criticized the policies of the government.

He asked Yoon to accept the DP's general election pledge to hand out 250,000 won (\$182) each to the entire population, accept a special probe into suspicions surrounding a Marine Corps member's death last year, and a special bill to investigate the Itaewon tragedy that killed 159 people in a Halloween crush in 2022.

Lee Jae-myung also asked the president to resolve allegations against people around him, including his family, which was seen as a reference to first lady Kim Keon-hee, who was involved in a gift scandal.

In terms of the government's plan to

increase the medical school admission quota, Lee Jae-myung said the policy direction is correct and the opposition party is willing to cooperate.

David Tizzard, assistant professor of Korean studies at Seoul Women's University, said the meeting is a very important concession, not just in terms of listening to the people, but also listening to the nation and the opposition party.

Noting that Lee Jae-myung's speech was both detailed and wide-ranging, Tizzard said the public focus will be on how the two sides can work to restore disrupted medical services due to strikes in response to the government's plan to increase medical school admissions.

"All of these issues will be incredibly complicated and they will take time to sort out. Whether they will be able to reach agreements remains to be seen," Tizzard said.

However, the meeting is indeed important as the two parties showed that they are willing to come together and cooperate on certain issues although they might be at ideological loggerheads domestically, he said.

Talks in Cairo, Riyadh boost cease-fire hopes

Diplomatic efforts gather steam for end to humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
jan@chinadailyapac.com

Hope for Israelis and Palestinians agreeing to a truce is gathering steam amid meetings in Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the humanitarian catastrophe that has reduced Gaza to rubble after months of relentless fighting.

Representatives for Hamas were set to travel to Egypt's capital Cairo on Monday for a fresh round of cease-fire talks. The delegation was to discuss a cease-fire proposal handed by the group to negotiators from Qatar and Egypt, including Israel's response, Reuters reported.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said in a statement on Sunday that they will not accept any agreement with Israel that does not include a cessation of hostilities in Gaza, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Hamas said on Saturday that they received Israel's response to their own position on the Gaza cease-fire — submitted to mediators Egypt and Qatar on April 13 — and were studying it.

US news site Axios reported that a new Israeli proposal for a possible hostage deal with Hamas included a willingness to discuss the "restoration of sustainable calm" in Gaza after an initial release of hostages on humanitarian grounds, citing two Israeli officials.

It also noted that this was the first time since the Oct 7 attack on Israel by Hamas that Israeli leaders

were open to discussing an end to the conflict in Gaza as part of a hostage deal.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas warned on Sunday that a possible Israeli attack on Rafah would be "the biggest catastrophe in the history of the Palestinian people", adding that he also feared the post-conflict displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank to Jordan.

Also on the same day, United States President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to review ongoing talks to secure the release of hostages together with an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and to increase the delivery of humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

Both leaders discussed Rafah and Biden reiterated his "clear position": Biden told Netanyahu in March that a major assault on Rafah would be a "mistake".

'One last chance'

On Friday, Israeli officials had warned their Egyptian counterparts that they were ready to give hostage negotiations "one last chance" to reach a deal with Hamas before its long-planned assault on Rafah, The Times of Israel reported.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Riyadh on Monday. He also was set to meet regional partners Qatar, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan.

It is Blinken's seventh visit to the region since the conflict broke out.

On Sunday, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah chaired the meeting of the Ministerial Committee assigned by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit on Developments in Gaza.

The meeting discussed the mechanisms of intensifying joint Arab and Islamic efforts to reach an immediate cessation of the military assault on Gaza and ensure the protection of civilians by international humanitarian law.

It also discussed work on taking the necessary steps to implement a two-state solution.

The meeting stressed that Gaza "is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory" and the categorical rejection "of any attempts to displace the Palestinian people outside their land, and any military operation in the Palestinian city of Rafah".

The ministers expressed their concern about measures taken against peaceful demonstrators in Western countries demanding "an end to the war in Gaza".

More than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israel-Hamas conflict. In Hamas' Oct 7 attack in Israel, about 1,200 people were killed and more than 200 were taken hostage.

Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes on Rafah have killed at least 22 people, including six women and five children, Palestinian health officials said. One of the children killed in the strikes overnight into Monday was just 5 days old. More than a million Palestinians have sought refuge in the city on the Egyptian border.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Japan's LDP suffers setback in vote

By JIANG XUEQING
in Tokyo
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Japan's main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party secured wins in three crucial lower house by-elections on Sunday, notably in a district long held by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP.

The victories underscore public discontent with the recent political scandal involving slush funds and reveal a diminishing support base for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida among conservative voters aligned with the LDP.

Kenta Izumi, president of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, or CDP, told reporters that "this election strongly resonated with the voices of voters who feel that LDP politicians are only warming their own pockets", and that "the anger of the voters is widespread nationwide".

Numerous LDP lawmakers face accusations of tax evasion related to political fundraising activities, alongside allegations that several LDP factions redirected funds from ticket sales back to selected lawmakers, stashing them in illicit slush funds.

With no record of these payments in the financial statements of the factions or their members, the lawmakers may have evaded income tax on the funds.

Kishida hastily introduced the LDP's own political reform proposal, which, observers said, lacked

substance. Izumi said the LDP will not regain the trust of the people with such a proposal.

He emphasized the CDP's call for the early dissolution of the House of Representatives, the lower house of Japan's national legislature.

Public support for Kishida's cabinet dropped to 16.6 percent in April, marking a new low since its inception in October 2021, according to a Jiji Press opinion poll released on April 11.

The approval rate dipped by 1.4 percentage points from the previous month, while the disapproval rate surged by 2 percentage points to 59.4 percent. Twenty-four percent of respondents expressed no viewpoint.

Support dwindles

Amid this decline, some LDP members may seek to replace Kishida to rejuvenate the party's appeal ahead of the upcoming lower house election, with Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa emerging as a potential successor, said a Kyodo News report on Monday.

As support for the LDP dwindled due to the scandal, the party refrained from fielding candidates in the Tokyo No 15 and Nagasaki No 3 districts while prioritizing the defense of the seat in the Shimane No 1 constituency in Shimane Prefecture, a coastal area in the west of Japan's Honshu Island.

When asked about defeating the LDP candidate in Shimane, known

as the "conservative kingdom", CDP candidate Akiko Kamei pointed to anger over the LDP's secret fund issue as a motivating factor, highlighting voters' demand for tax compliance from politicians.

A 70-year-old male service industry worker who had consistently supported LDP candidates in local elections shifted allegiance to Kamei this time, disillusioned by the LDP's apparent lack of reform amid issues such as "politics and money".

Takakage Fujita, president of the Alliance to Stop the Impermissible Acts of Slush Fund and Tax Evasion by the LDP, said, "The public's outrage over the secret fund activities has reached unprecedented levels, leading to a significant erosion of trust in politics."

Fujita denounced the false reporting of political income and expenditure, and exploiting the absence of penalties for lawmakers. He warned of dire consequences if such malpractices persist, with ordinary citizens and small business owners burdened by severe taxes and stringent reporting requirements while politicians operate within an opaque system.

Shigeaki Koga, a policy analyst and former official at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, lamented the prolonged acceptance of slush funds by lawmakers, highlighting public frustration over the LDP's attempts to sweep the issue under the rug.

IMF chief targets improved growth

By WANG MINGJIE
in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
wangmingjie@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, pinpointed two significant challenges threatening global development during a meeting in Riyadh on Sunday: a growth rate she described as "really weak by historical standards", and a "significant divergence" in economic performance among nations.

Speaking at a panel during a two-day special meeting of the World

Economic Forum in the Saudi Arabian capital, Georgieva said: "Some countries (are) doing really well and others (are) falling behind. Unless we tackle these two problems, we may end up this decade, being remembered as the turbulent '20s or the tepid '20s, when what we really want is for it to be transformational."

The IMF forecasts that the world economy will continue to grow at a rate of 3.2 percent through 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Despite these modest projections, Georgieva remains optimistic about the resilience of the global economy,

which she attributes to stronger fundamental growth mechanisms developed during recent years.

She said that "the world has built overall stronger fundamentals for growth", acknowledging both its resilience and the significant challenges it faces.

The resilience, Georgieva explained, comes from prudent fiscal policies and responsible public finance management, particularly following major economic crises.

"Especially after the global financial crisis, and in Asia, after the Asian crisis, governments have

implemented sound fiscal policies and managed their public finances responsibly, creating conditions for private sector-led growth," she said, noting such groundwork is crucial for sustaining economic stability.

Looking ahead, the IMF chief called for a continuous commitment to sound economic management.

"What we do is continue to build the strength of our economies by being responsible in our public finances and monetary policies," she said. "There is no substitute for it."

After years of leveraging public finance to support households and businesses, she emphasized the need to rebuild fiscal buffers and strengthen economic foundations.

Georgieva also underscored the

importance of leveraging technology and enhancing human capital to propel economic growth.

"It is absolutely essential to unleash the power of technology and pair this with human capital capable of moving across different deployments and opportunities in a more agile manner," she said.

Pivotal elements

She also highlighted the importance of international cooperation and reinforced trade as pivotal elements for sustained economic progress.

Reflecting on past achievements and ongoing challenges, Georgieva offered a broader historical perspective, praising technological advan-

ces and capital deployment for their roles in improving life and increasing wealth over the decades. Yet, she also pointed out the failures in equitable growth distribution, noting, "We still have almost 800 million people who are hungry. We failed to more inclusively share the benefits of this growth."

Ending on an optimistic note, Georgieva expressed hope for the future, envisioning a century of prosperity that is more evenly distributed among all people.

The World Economic Forum Special Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development, which ran until Monday, had participation from 1,000 leaders from 92 countries.

WORLD US

Suspensions start at Columbia

Students protesting Israel-Hamas war defy deadline to vacate encampment

By AI HEPING and MINGMELLI in New York

Columbia University began suspending student protesters Monday who defied a deadline to vacate their encampment on the campus.

The university had given students until 2 pm Monday to clear out of the encampment, warning that they would face immediate suspension "pending further investigation" and be barred from completing the spring semester if they didn't leave by then.

The university said it had identified some but not all the students in the encampment, and they were likely to be notified by email of their suspensions, which are expected to cut off their access to school buildings and amenities and potentially keep them from taking finals.

The activists had defied the deadline with chants, clapping and drumming, and hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators marched around the encampment.

Columbia University faculty members stood at the entry of the encampment on the Upper Manhattan campus, holding hands to protect students they said were exercising freedom of speech. Police were outside the encampment at the school gates as protesters there chanted.

By 4 pm most of the protesters had begun to disperse, leaving only what appeared to be several dozen students and about 80 tents inside the encampment, according to The New York Times.

The campus was thronged with media as the deadline approached, but there was no police presence near the encampment. The police were outside the school's gates, as were protesters chanting.

"Today, they are maligning us. It's short-sighted and it's unfair," said Sueda Polat, a 23-year-old graduate student and one of the student organizers, told China Daily. "Our only challenge is the threats that the university keeps making against us."

"Our demands remain the same, always the same — divestment, disclosure and amnesty," she said.

"They are really kind of fanning the flames," Jamil Mohamad, a 32-year-old Middle Eastern studies student, told China Daily.

He said that "university officials are



Students march on Columbia University campus in support of a protest encampment supporting Palestinians, despite a 2 pm deadline issued by university officials to disband or face suspension, during the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in New York City on Monday. CAITLIN OCHS / REUTERS

being extremely repressive, threatening them with harsh disciplinary measures while students are simply peacefully protesting against the genocide in Gaza."

"The university is just very much trying to intimidate the students into silence," he said. He said he has been supporting the encampment for days despite the threats of suspension.

The demonstrators are demanding that Columbia divest its \$13.6 billion endowment from any company linked to Israel. That includes companies like Microsoft and Airbnb that do business in Israel.

"Our primary demand is financial divestment, and that means calling for Columbia University to pull its investments away from companies that are supporting the Israeli apartheid system or companies that are directly profiting from the genocide of Gaza and the system of Israeli apartheid," Althea C., a member of the "Jews for ceasefire" organization at Columbia, told China Daily.

But the university said Monday that it wouldn't divest from Israel.

It offered to create an expedited timeline for a review of new proposals from students by the school's Advisory Committee for Socially Responsible Investing, which explores divestment, said Columbia President Minouche Shafik.

The number of protesters arrested on more than 20 campuses across at least 16 states has approached 1,000.

The nationwide campus protests began as a response by some students to Israel's offensive in Gaza after Hamas launched a deadly attack on southern Israel on Oct 7.

The protests started at Columbia on April 18. Police, at the request of school administrators, arrested more than 100 demonstrators. That sparked the building of similar encampments across US colleges.

Columbia officials have been under pressure to act.

More than two dozen Columbia alumni and donors on Monday criticized Shafik, saying she failed to control the campus protests and allowed antisemitism to proliferate.

In an open letter, the alumni requested that she "remove illegal encampments" on campus "and take swift and strong disciplinary action against students engaged in hate speech, threats, and criminal conduct," according to The Wall Street Journal.

"The current approach of placating the agents of disruption is demonstrably not working," the letter said. By Monday afternoon, it had drawn more than 100 signatures, the Journal reported.

The signees included Lisa Carnoy, a former Bank of America executive

and past chair of the Columbia board. She also led the search committee that hired Shafik.

On Monday, Shafik reiterated that protesters needed to leave or face consequences, but the alumni said that she wasn't acting strongly enough.

University administrators also received a letter on Monday from 21 members of the US Congress, expressing frustration that the encampment hadn't already been dismantled.

Students were urged Monday morning to clear out voluntarily to allow the school to prepare the lawn for graduation ceremonies on May 15. The school warned it could take action up to suspension or expulsion if they didn't leave the encampment.

Students won't be punished for their participation in the encampment if they sign a form promising not to break any university rules through the end of the next academic year, the notice said.

The notice also warned students that they might still be held accountable for discrimination and harassment charges stemming from their involvement in the encampment even if they did sign the form.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at aiheping@chinadailyusa.com.

Embassy gives safety tips to Chinese in US

By YIFAN XU in Washington yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng said that nearly 300 Chinese citizens in the United States have been subjected to unwarranted harassment and deportation over the past three years and that "McCarthyism" has interfered with normal US-China exchanges.

The ambassador spoke on Saturday at the "Safe Journey in the US" consular-protection event. The embassy released a brochure and animated video with that theme.

"In response to the US' selective, discriminatory and political enforcement of the law, we have emphasized with the US side, argued with reason, and lodged solemn representations with the US Department of State, the National Security Council in the White House, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection and other departments," Xie said.

The embassy has "made representations on every occasion, urging the US side to remove the 'stumbling blocks' that impede humanistic exchanges as soon as possible," said Xie.

Several hundred representatives of Chinese students, overseas Chinese and Chinese organizations in the US participated in the event.

The embassy's materials are geared toward helping Chinese people visiting or living in the US to pay attention to details and to stay alert so they can travel safely.

Xie said that the world has entered a period of turbulence and change, with wars, terrorist attacks and frequent gun violence, and that instability, uncertainty and unpredictability have become the norm.

He also said that China's relationship with the world has entered a period of deep integration, with the number of people entering and exiting the country increasing from more than 5.6 million before reform and opening-up to more than 420 million nowadays. Chinese tourists and international students also are traveling more around the globe.

"The demand for consular protection has also entered a period of rapid growth. Last year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies and consulates abroad handled more than 80,000 consular protection cases, with an average of one case every six minutes, and the 12308 hotline received more than 500,000 calls for help, with an average of one

call every minute."

Xie said that US-China relations are still facing serious challenges: racial discrimination against Asians has not yet been eradicated, "hysterical McCarthyism" and the resurgence of a "politically correct chilling effect continues to spread," interfering with the normal people-to-people exchanges between China and the US, and "poisoning the public opinion environment" of the relationship between the two countries.

"Being in a foreign country, we must always tighten the string of security and constantly improve security awareness and preventive capabilities," he said.

Xie noted that the US has put more than 1,500 Chinese companies on a sanctions, or entities list.

"The embassy has continued to urge the US side to stop its economic, trade, scientific and technological suppression of China. And we demand that President Biden's statement that he does not seek to suppress and curb China's development be put into practice."

The ambassador said that the embassy has always maintained the "true colors of people's diplomacy" and protected the safety and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens in the US with "care, effort and affection, conveying the warmth of the motherland to every compatriot in the US".

"We often ring the 'alarm bell' to effectively enhance risk-prevention awareness; we play the role of a 'nagging mom' to continuously strengthen preventive consular protection publicity; and we build a 'safety dam' to safeguard legitimate rights and interests resolutely."

Several Chinese students in the US said that the information provided by the embassy is a good guide for them to keep safe while living in the US, especially in an election year.

"The safety information, including the exchange of foreign currency, psychological issues and more was customized for us and made me feel very at ease. And today's event is making me feel at home," said Qiang Lingyi, a law student at Georgetown University.

Zhong Jiayu, a lawyer and head of the legal department of Chinese Alumni Associations of Greater Washington told China Daily that the differences in language, culture and legal systems between China and the US might expose Chinese people in the US to security incidents or threats.



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CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
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WASHINGTON
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108
529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO
335 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: 206-922-2866

HOUSTON
1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100
Houston, TX 77077
Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6B8
Tel: 416-481-5706

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Country makes solar affordable worldwide

By LIU YUKUN
liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

China's large-scale development of solar power, coupled with continuous innovation and a complete industrial chain, is driving down production costs and making new energy products more affordable worldwide, experts said.

This shift benefits the global community, whose current solar capacity still falls short of quantities needed to achieve decarbonization goals. Developing nations in particular require more advanced solar capacity to make electricity more accessible and cost-effective for both households and businesses, they said.

The remarks came after some Western politicians and media outlets recently claimed that China is creating excess capacity within the new energy sector and causing market distortions abroad by dumping products at low prices, thus damaging other economies.

"Concerns have been heightened in Western nations given the rapid growth of China's solar industry, which epitomizes the swift evolution of the country's new energy sectors. The advancement of China's solar industry plays a pivotal role in ensuring a stable supply of solar products to address climate change worldwide, making solar power one of the most economical power sources for the vast majority of countries and regions globally," said Liu Yiyang, deputy secretary-general of the China Photovoltaic Industry Association, a trade body.

Liu said that current solar capacity still falls short of global market



Employees check solar panel products at a tech company in Zhangye, Gansu province.
WANG JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

demand, particularly given the substantial demand for power in numerous developing nations.

At a warehouse in Uzbekistan, Chinese solar panels are set to energize and provide affordable clean energy for refugees across Asia, guided by the UN Refugee Agency and Chinese solar firm LONGi.

Raouf Mazou, the agency's assistant high commissioner for operations, said that Chinese energy firms empower the agency to expand its reach and impact in addressing climate issues and achieve energy equity for vulnerable populations globally.

"China's abundant resources, innovative technology and extensive global relationships could make significant contributions to our work. We look forward to more fruitful collaborations with Chinese authorities and companies in addressing challenges linked to displacements arising from climate change," Mazou said.

Over 100 countries reached agreements at the COP28 climate change conference late last year to ensure that global renewable energy capacity tri-

pled to over 11,000 gigawatts by 2030, with cumulative photovoltaic capacity rising to about 5,457 GW by then.

According to data compiler Statista, in 2022, cumulative global solar PV capacity stood at some 1,177 GW, falling short of the goal.

"Some politicians' criticism that China's excess solar capacity is leading to low costs and impacting global industrial competition is untenable. This rhetoric aims to curb China's industrial development, and will have adverse effects on global green transformation. China's scaled development, supply chain construction and technological iteration in the global PV industry have led to rapid cost reductions, allowing more countries — especially developing ones — to enjoy affordable electricity, promoting local economic development and bridging disparities among regions," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

"Chinese enterprises have also promoted global development of the PV industry through international cooperation and overseas fac-

ilities, facilitating other countries' green transformation of their energy structures. Whether it be the United States or elsewhere, without competitively priced products from China, it's hard to imagine whether the current international confidence in addressing climate change would remain as strong," Liu said.

Taking Europe as an example, a report by the International Energy Agency showed that, from 2021 to 2023, new installations of photovoltaic and wind power were estimated to have saved approximately 100 billion euros (\$107 billion) for electricity consumers in the European Union.

The CPIA estimates that without new wind and solar installations, the average wholesale electricity price in the EU would have been 8 percent higher in 2022.

"The rapid development of China's PV industry holds profound significance for many developing countries. It provides a means for developing countries to overcome energy shortages in a cost-effective manner and reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels," Liu said.

Economists see need for more stimulus

Policymakers should take targeted steps to reignite demand, say experts

By OUYANG SHIJIA,
CHENG YU and ZHONG NAN

Chinese industrial firms' smaller first-quarter profits have raised concerns over their uneven recovery and heightened the need for additional stimulus measures to reignite demand and address structural issues, economists said.

They said policymakers should take targeted measures aimed at bolstering consumer spending, incentivizing investment and addressing imbalances within the property market.

Looking ahead, the Chinese economy is likely to return to healthy growth by the end of this year, if pivotal problems in real estate, local government debt and consumption are well addressed, they said.

Their comments came after data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Saturday that industrial enterprises with an annual revenue of at least 20 million yuan (\$2.8 million) each saw their total profits increase 4.3 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, after a 10.2 percent rise in the first two months. Profits in March, however, fell 3.5 percent year-on-year.

Yu Weining, an NBS statistician, said the latest data show the recovery foundation is not yet solid.

More efforts will be made to encourage a new round of large-scale equipment renewal and trade-in deals for old consumer goods, expanding domestic demand and boosting market confidence, Yu said.

"The latest profit data indicate pressures from insufficient demand and weakening expectations," said Xiong Yuan, chief economist at Guosheng Securities.

Xiong noted that profits improved significantly in March in sectors related to exports and external demand such as chemical fibers, nonferrous metal smelting and telecommunication electronics.

At the same time, profits plummeted or reported smaller gains in sectors related to real estate and domestic demand, like ferrous metal smelting, nonmetallic mineral products, furniture manufacturing, textiles and apparel, and nonmetallic mining.

Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley, said while exports will remain a primary positive factor in China's growth story this year given the rebound in global demand, especially demand in the United States, the broader economy is still facing pressure from insufficient domestic demand, lackluster consumer sentiment and weakness in the property sector. "It is advisable for policymakers to increase fiscal spending in fields such as health-

care, education and the social security system, which will help restore consumer confidence and

further unleash their consumption potential."

Li Daokui, director of Tsinghua University's Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily the current situation in China can be traced to the economy "operating below its potential growth speed", thus leading to subdued market demand and subdued expectations from both companies and citizens.

"To relieve the problem, real estate problems must be alleviated. The authorities should work at a fast pace, just like they did during the (global) financial crisis (of 2008-09), to help developers deal with financial shortages, including by offering sufficient loans," said Li, who is also editor-in-chief of The Journal of Government and Economics.

Meanwhile, he advocated a "complete lifting" of house purchase restrictions across the country, barring only a few top-tier cities with limited housing supply, so as to unleash housing demand.

Li also said that many local governments have engaged in large-scale construction over the past decade or two and borrowed a significant amount of money. "The central government can extend debt repayments to 50, 60 or even 70 years and set a lower interest rate. If the burden on local governments cannot be lightened, our economic vitality will not recover."

The China Council for the Promotion of International Trade said it surveyed 600-odd foreign companies operating in China in the first quarter and found more than 70 percent of them were optimistic about development prospects in the Chinese market over the next five years, in spite of uncertainties and challenges ahead. The figure was up by 3.8 percentage points quarter-on-quarter, according to a survey report released on Sunday.

The study found more than half of the respondents believe that the attractiveness of the Chinese market is increasing, a rise of about 2.9 percentage points compared to the previous quarter.

Zhao Ping, spokeswoman of the Beijing-headquartered CCPIT, said the survey findings underscore the continued strong appeal of the Chinese market for foreign investors, highlighting its comprehensive advantages.

"Bolstered by a range of policies introduced in the first quarter to stabilize the economy, enhance openness and draw foreign investment, China's attractive investment climate and commitment to high-standard openness have reinforced foreign enterprises' confidence in investing in the country," Zhao said.

Contact the writers at
ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

Event shows Anhui an auto powerhouse

By CHEN MEILING
chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn

There is great potential for the development of the automobile industry in Anhui province as a complete industrial chain has been formed and the provincial government offers strong support as well, executives of major carmakers said during the ongoing Beijing International Automotive Exhibition.

In China, one in 10 new energy vehicles or NEVs, and one in four exported vehicles, are made in Anhui, provincial authorities said.

In the first quarter of this year, the province's automobile production reached 620,000 vehicles, accounting for 9.4 percent of the national total.

Among these, 207,000 were NEVs, or nearly 10 percent of the national total. Auto exports from the province reached 326,000 units, up 28 percent year-on-year and accounting for 24.6 percent of the national total.

Seven carmakers, including Chery, Nio, Volkswagen and BYD,

have invested heavily in Anhui province.

The province also has more than 2,800 auto parts makers and auto-related firms like makers of power batteries, motor control components, intelligent connectivity devices and lightweight materials, as well as providers of services like sales, maintenance and recycling.

"Anhui accords top priority to the automobile industry, and aspires to develop finished vehicles, core parts and the after-sales market. We are constructing a NEV industrial cluster with global competitiveness," said Han Jun, Party secretary of Anhui, at a conference during the exhibition on Sunday.

"I hope more resources will be invested, more high-quality projects will be launched and advanced technologies will be introduced in Anhui, where there is no dearth of good policies for good projects, no lack of good scenarios for good applications, and no shortage of talent for good ideas."

Wang Chuanfu, BYD's chairman

and president, said at the event that he was inspired by Han's speech, and will increase the company's investment in Anhui.

The company has set up its biggest global NEV production base in the provincial capital Hefei, and new power battery and key parts manufacturing bases in Wuhu, Bengbu, Chuzhou and Fuyang, as well as more than 140 sales service centers. BYD's investment in Anhui so far has reached about 70 billion yuan (\$9.6 billion).

BYD produced half of the province's NEVs from January to March, and hired 28,000 new employees there since the beginning of this year.

The company debuted its new Qin L and Seal 06 models, both produced in Hefei, during the exhibition. "Anhui is a place of charm, an emerging industrial powerhouse and the only province covered by both integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta and the national strategy for the development of Central China. It has substantial latent potential

and robust momentum, and is at a crucial stage of significant development," Wang said.

Chery Automobile Co, headquartered in Wuhu city, earned 300 billion yuan in sales revenue last year. In the first quarter of this year, it sold 530,000 automobiles, up 60 percent year-on-year. Sales of NEVs surged 124 percent year-on-year. The company exported 253,000 vehicles — the highest for any Chinese auto brand — to more than 80 countries and regions.

It signed an agreement with Spain's automaker Ebro-EV Motors on April 19 to develop NEVs through a joint venture in Barcelona. This will make Chery the first Chinese automaker to produce vehicles in Europe. On Thursday, the Chinese automaker signed a cooperation agreement with Nvidia in the field of autonomous driving.

"Deep involvement in globalization is the necessary path for Anhui to transform from a major automobile province to a strong automobile province," said Yin Tongyue, Chery's chairman of the board.

The company, he said, will focus on technological innovation to promote high-quality development of Anhui.

Specialists stress global AI governance body

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Heightened efforts are needed to give full play to the role of artificial intelligence to empower high-quality economic development and ensure the safe and reliable application of smart technology through global governance, said officials, experts and business leaders at the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum, which ended on Monday in Beijing.

Long Teng, vice-minister of science and technology, said the global AI sector has witnessed explosive growth, with major scientific and technological achievements continuing to emerge and spur social and economic development.

Long said China should firmly seize important opportunities to develop AI, strengthen AI security governance, expand international exchanges and cooperation in AI, and promote intelligent upgrading of industries and disruptive innovation to foster new

models and new growth drivers.

The Zhongguancun AI Industry Alliance — which consists of leading universities like Tsinghua University and Peking University, research institutes along with tech giants like Baidu Inc and Tencent Holdings Ltd — was established during the forum.

The alliance will make efforts to bolster breakthroughs in key tech frontiers such as algorithms, data and chips, promote the use of AI in a wider range of applications, and jointly build an AI innovative ecosystem.

Wang Haifeng, chief technology officer of Chinese tech heavyweight Baidu, said the AI agent is an important development direction for large language models and will bring about more industrial applications. An AI agent refers to a computer program or system that is designed to perceive its environment, make decisions and take actions to achieve a specific goal or sets of goals. It also uses the results to formulate the next

action that should be taken.

Wang said the company's LLM and ChatGPT-like chatbot Ernie Bot has amassed more than 200 million users since it received approval from authorities to open its LLM to the public in August.

The LLM's application programming interface is being used 200 million times each day. Furthermore, more than 85,000 enterprise clients have used its enterprise-level LLM platform to create 190,000 AI applications.

He Zhengyu, CTO of Chinese financial technology company Ant Group, said the deployment of LLMs not only faces challenges in terms of security and reliability, but also in computing power and operational costs. He emphasized the significance of leveraging LLMs to promote industrial upgrade and transformation.

There is surging demand for intelligent computing power amid the explosive development of generative AI technology, said He, adding

that issues related to low utilization rates for smart computing hardware and excessive energy consumption are also challenges.

Official data showed that the number of China's self-developed LLMs ranks second in the world, and over 100 LLMs with more than 1 billion parameters each have been launched in the country.

Although AI brings new development opportunities, challenges remain, experts said.

Zeng Yi, a researcher of the Institute of Automation, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the management and governance of risks brought by AI is becoming increasingly important.

The responsible and appropriate use of AI and driving its steady development will allow this technology to be beneficial to all humans, Zeng said.

He called for efforts to strengthen international cooperation in promoting sustainable development of AI, and establish a global AI development and governance institution under the framework of the United Nations.

Pillar of growth



A drone image shows pillar construction at Nanjing North Railway Station in Jiangsu province. Built by China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, the station will be linked with the Shanghai-Chongqing-Chengdu High-speed Railway, a major artery of the national HSR network. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY