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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024

Xi: Spare no efforts in rescue work

Road collapse in Guangdong claims at least 48 lives

By CAO DESHENG in Beijing and ZHAO RUINAN in Nanchang

President Xi Jinping has urged all-out efforts in rescue operations and disaster relief work following an expressway collapse in Guangdong province on Wednesday, which has killed at least 48 people and injured another 30.

In an instruction on the fatal disaster, Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, demanded that every effort be carried out for on-site rescue, treatment of the injured, and properly handling the aftermath.

At about 2:10 am on Wednesday, a landslide occurred at the Chayang section of the Meizhou-Dabu Expressway in Meizhou, Guangdong province.

Local authorities confirmed that the collapsed section is almost 18 meters in length and has an area of around 184 square meters. Twenty three cars were found to have been trapped by the collapse.

The death toll rose to 48 as of 2 pm on Thursday. The DNA of another three people has yet to be identified, while 30 injured people are receiving hospital treatment and none of them are in life-threatening condition, according to the authorities in Meizhou.

Xi said that efforts should be made to repair the damaged roads and restore traffic order as soon as possible.

He urged all regions and relevant departments to bear in mind the worst-case scenario, strengthen monitoring and early warning, improve emergency plans, and promptly investigate and deal with potential risks in key areas, to ensure the safety of people's lives and property and overall social stability.

Premier Li Qiang has also given instructions to spare no effort in rescuing the injured, carrying out follow-up work, doing everything possible to search for and rescue



Above: Rescue efforts take place on Thursday after a landslide at the Chayang section of the Meizhou-Dabu Expressway in Meizhou, Guangdong province. Below: Rescuers search for survivors in the early hours of Thursday morning.

PHOTOS BY WANG RUIPING / XINHUA AND CAI JIAHONG / YANGCHENG EVENING NEWS

trapped persons, and strictly guarding against secondary risks.

Li emphasized that the ongoing May Day holiday is a peak tourism season, and noted that there is widespread rainfall in some areas. He called for all-out efforts to prevent accidents and disasters.

Acting on the instructions, Vice-Premier Zhang Guoqing led relevant officials to the scene to guide the rescue and disaster relief work.

Rescue efforts are continuing, despite facing challenges due to the continuous rainfall, local authorities said at a news briefing on Thursday afternoon.

Wang Hui, mayor of Meizhou, said at the briefing that 577 rescuers from the police, emergency services and other departments were deployed to the scene, and the rescue efforts are ongoing.

Rescue operations face significant challenges due to heavy rainfall and landslides, Wen Dengyong, head of the local emergency management bureau, said at the briefing.

One of the main difficulties is the large number of vehicles involved in the disaster, some of which were covered by soil or burned out, making it difficult to locate them immediately, Wen said, adding that the heavy rainfall has complicated rescue operations.

The rescuers have been divided into 10 small groups to address these challenges, utilizing search dogs and detection equipment to conduct a thorough search, Wen said.

Before the rescue personnel arrived, several drivers who were passing by immediately got out of their cars to help those in need following the collapse. Liu Yongjin, who was driving back to his hometown in Fujian province from Shenzhen in Guangdong, was one of them, Southern Plus reported.

When he spotted people climbing out of their cars, he rushed to their aid, carrying children and helping adults to safety. "In total, I managed to rescue six people, three adults and three children, the youngest being



just 3 years old," Liu said.

Since April, Meizhou has experienced multiple rounds of heavy precipitation, with the city's average accumulated rainfall reaching 621.7 millimeters, which is 2.49 times higher than the normal level for the same period. This has surpassed the historical record for April rainfall since meteorological records began

in 1980, which was 437.3 millimeters, according to the data released at the news briefing.

The Guangdong Meteorological Service forecast that the province would continue to experience rain on Thursday and Friday.

Contact the writers at caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

'Capacity' claims seen as attack on new sectors

By LIU ZHIHUA liuzhihua@chinadaily.com.cn

The hyping up of the false narrative about China's so-called "overcapacity" by the United States is merely another attempt by the latter to attack and contain China's emerging industries, which will harm the US itself while causing disruption to global industrial chains, Wei Jianguo, former vice-minister of commerce, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

The senior trade expert said that despite pressure from the US, China must be confident and "firmly" develop the "new three" industries targeted by the false narrative, as well as other high-tech sectors and the digital economy, to accelerate the fostering of the new quality productive forces.

He also forecast that China will roll out more policy measures in the coming months to better attract foreign investors, improve the business environment and expand high-level opening-up, leveraging the advantages of its huge domestic market.

The "new three" industries refer to new energy vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products. The "overcapacity" rhetoric claims that due to government subsidies, China has exported many new energy products at low prices, hurting other economies.

Rebutting the "overcapacity" false narrative, Wei said that Chinese enterprises operate in line with laws and regulations, and the pricing of new energy products from China also conforms with international rules.

"The baseless accusation that China is dumping electric vehicles, solar power panels and other clean energy goods in overseas markets is a mean method of trade protectionism by the US," Wei said.

"The world needs China's exports of new energy products, which are of high quality at affordable prices."

For instance, the surge in China's NEV output, sales and exports, and the increasing presence of China's NEVs in a growing number of countries including Spain, Mexico, Russia and African nations, all dismissed such "overcapacity" claims, Wei said.

Citing industry data, Wei pointed out that the world should applaud the contributions China has been making to meet the surging global demand for new energy products.

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SHARING DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Canton Fair's success shows China's trade is good for other countries' industrialization

By ZHONG NAN and WANG KEJU

On April 15, the first day of the 135th session of the China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, held in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Yuan Qinsan, chairman of Dayun Group, a

Yuncheng, Shanxi province-headquartered auto manufacturer, could not hide his joy.

"We secured export orders for hundreds of pickups and trucks, worth over 60 million yuan (\$8.29 million). Most of them will be shipped to the African market. This mega trade show has truly

exceeded our expectations," Yuan said.

Ningbo APG Appliance and Technology Co Ltd, a manufacturer based in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, also sealed deals worth nearly \$1 million during the first four days of the Canton Fair, with more than 70 percent of these agree-

ments involving new clients.

"Our recently developed fuel heaters garnered significant interest from buyers across various countries, including Lebanon, Norway, Romania and Russia," said Luo Guoding, the company's chairman.

The Canton Fair, which will close

on Sunday, attracted 125,440 overseas buyers from 212 countries and regions in its first phase from April 15 to 19, up 23 percent year-on-year, according to data released by the Guangzhou-based China Foreign Trade Center, one of the organizers.

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May Day holiday box office surges

By XU FAN xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Possessing the largest number of silver screens worldwide, China has again demonstrated its enthusiasm for movies with a soaring May Day holiday box office.

As of 4 pm on Tuesday, the holiday, lasting from Wednesday until May 5, has seen around 650 million yuan (\$89.8 million) in combined revenue from box office sales and presales, according to the major film data tracking platform Maoyan.

Formed Police Unit, the first movie of its kind to tell the story of Chinese police officers sent overseas to take part in United Nations peace-keeping missions, has topped the holiday box office charts by earning around 200 million yuan.

Following it is *The Last Frenzy*, a comedy about the transformation of

a stingy man after being diagnosed with a terminal illness and realizing he has only 10 days left to live. The film, starring comedian Jia Bing as the protagonist, has earned 133 million yuan.

As one of the top-earning films in Japan this year, the animated feature *Spy x Family Code: White* has closely followed, securing the third position with earnings of 127 million yuan. The movie marks the theatrical debut of the popular "Spy x Family Code" franchise, portraying a disguised family composed of a spy father, an assassin mother, and their adopted daughter with telepathic abilities.

Capturing the essence of Hong Kong cinema's golden era, the crime movie *Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In* gained fourth place. Following it is the iconic Japanese animating film *The Boy and the Heron*,

Howl's Moving Castle.

A total of eight new movies have been released to coincide with the lucrative May Day holiday, with six Chinese films debuting on the first day of the holiday and the two Japanese movies premiering on April 30, according to the China Film Distribution and Exhibition Association.

Zhi Feina, a film professor at the Chinese National Academy of Arts, said that the box office performance during the May Day holiday has surpassed industry expectations, highlighting the potential of the domestic film market.

She added that the success of the two Japanese films is attributed to both having amassed a large fan base in China due to the popularity of the "Spy x Family Code" franchise and the enduring influence of Miyazaki, exemplified by his Oscar-winning film *The Boy and the Heron*,



Cinagoers walk past posters for films that are screening at a movie theater in Shanghai on Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

which has earned around 780 million yuan since its Chinese mainland release on April 3.

Yin Tengyu, a senior analyst at Maoyan's research division, said the holiday selections span a broad spectrum of genres, from romance to action and suspense, demonstrating the capability of the local film

industry to craft more tailored narratives to cater to audiences with diverse preferences.

She predicted that the holiday season might conclude with earnings of around 1.5 billion yuan, slightly below the record of 1.673 billion yuan set during the same period in 2021.



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Brazilian surfing ace back on board for Paris
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CHINA

Diplomats appreciate China's model

Whole-process democracy a solid method to collect people's opinions

By CAO YIN
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A number of diplomats have appreciated China's extensive level of participation and diverse platforms to fulfill democracy, underscoring that every democratic model should be respected.

They made the remarks during a recent visit to a Legislative Outreach Office in Beijing's Chaoyang district, where they observed a fundamental step in lawmaking and met with deputies to people's congresses.

The district has established 43 such offices — which act as a bridge between the public and lawmakers — to more efficiently solicit opinions and suggestions on legislation from all walks of life.

During their visit in late April, the ambassadors and diplomats from 36 countries witnessed the collecting of opinions on the Law on Deputies to the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses, and discussed how the office works with legislators at national, provincial, city and county levels.

Anne Lafortune, the ambassador of the Seychelles to China, said she was impressed by China's diverse ways for people to express their opinions.

Regarding the visit as a good platform to learn firsthand about China's legislation process, she pointed out that the process shows the commitment of the Chinese government to meet the needs and aspiration of the grassroots people.

"Also, I was impressed by the different ways for people to be able to voice their opinions, such as through deputies, online platforms or calls, which reflects China is committed in making sure its people's voice can be heard," she added.

Michael Campbell, Nicaragua's ambassador to China, expressed his excitement to have an opportunity to see China's whole-process people's democracy at the grassroots level, saying that he was impressed by the diversity of participants in making laws.

On that day, those who exchanged opinions on the bill were not only officials from the standing committee of the district's people's congress

and NPC, China's top legislature, but also included deputies from universities, hospitals and law firms.

"Everybody was debating on the same bill that will eventually go to the upper level," he said. "By the time the bill reaches the national level, it already has the opinions and suggestions from all walks of life. So when it's finally approved, everybody is willing to implement it."

He highlighted the importance of diversity in promoting democracy, adding that greater participation of each sector, such as women and young people, makes decisions more creative in policies, regulations and norms.

In March, Campbell was invited to attend the annual full session of the NPC, where he read multiple work reports by China's central leadership.

"I can see that these reports actually came from the grassroots level."

He noted that the "Western model of democracy" is not the only definition of democracy, stressing "each country has to decide what is most appropriate for them based on their cultures, traditions and needs."

One of the most important things about China is that it respects the democratic models of other countries, he said, while Western democracy is promoting interventionism, warmongering and false narratives.

Lafortune from the Seychelles said that she was aware of China's whole-process people's democracy, but has never seen it up close as she did during the visit.

She emphasized that every country can see its own way to approach democracy, adding that "China is moving forward, and its democratic model, obviously, works for it."

Abu Bakarr Karim, the ambassador of Sierra Leone to China, said that what impressed him most was the level of expertise in China's legislation, adding that he would like to communicate with legislators in his country about his observations and discuss whether they can learn more from it.

China has people's congresses at the national, provincial, city, county and township levels, with about 2.77 million deputies elected to the five levels of legislative bodies in 2022, according to a release from the NPC Standing Committee.

Let the games begin



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic (center) reviews a project presentation during a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of Serbia's National Stadium in Belgrade, Serbia, on Wednesday. The construction of Serbia's National Stadium was undertaken by the Power Construction Corporation of China (PowerChina). WANG WEI / XINHUA

Satellite to measure Earth's precipitation

By ZHAO YIMENG
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The Fengyun-3G, a satellite measuring precipitation on Earth, officially began operational services on Wednesday after being launched last April, China Meteorological Administration said.

As China's first low-orbit precipitation measurement satellite, FY-3G can monitor hazardous weather and provide three-dimensional precipitation information.

Chen Lin, deputy chief designer of the FY-3G ground system, said global observation of precipitation, particularly that of three-dimensional structures, has been a challenge in meteorological detection.

The launch of the FY-3G satellite signifies progress in the country's global precipitation observation and three-dimensional structure detection capabilities, he said.

Since October, the satellite has completed over six months of operational trial runs, with stable operation of the satellite-ground system. Functions such as the receiving, processing and archiving of data have met the standard level.

The satellite has provided strong support for meteorological services related to major events such as the Asian Games in Hangzhou last year. It also offered data to monitor floods in Pakistan and the recent heavy rainfall in Yemen, Chen said.

China has successfully launched 21 independently developed Fengyun meteorological satellites since 1988, with nine currently operational.

As the 20th satellite in the Fengyun system, FY-3G is the world's first satellite to deploy the combined detection of active precipitation measurement radar with passive microwave and optical remote sensing, marking a transition from passive observation to active probing.

This integration enhances China's comprehensive meteorological observation capabilities, according to the administration.

FY-3G can capture critical information such as the internal temperature and humidity of typhoons, typhoon intensity and affected areas, which enables the prediction of typhoon development and precise monitoring of related rainfall events.

The China Meteorological Administration, along with the Ministry of Emergency Management and other departments, said China may experience an increase of heavy rainfall in May, particularly in the southern and northwestern regions, elevating the risk of geological disasters.

The risk of forest fires is high in parts of northeastern and southwestern China, while Yunnan province may face continuing droughts. The central and western areas of

the Inner Mongolia autonomous region as well as Northwest China are at high risk of encountering dust storms.

Moreover, northeastern, southwestern and southern regions may face increasing risks of agricultural disasters, according to a notice released by the emergency management authority on Wednesday.

Analysis by a number of departments suggests that in May, regions including parts of Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi, Guangdong and Hunan provinces are forecast to see a 20 to 50 percent increase in precipitation.

This increased rainfall may lead to severe weather such as thunderstorms and strong winds, posing a higher risk of flooding and hail, the notice said.

Meanwhile, Yunnan, western Guizhou and southern Sichuan may experience temperatures 1 to 2 C higher than the same period in previous years, with precipitation levels 20 to 50 percent lower than normal, it said.

Prolonged drought conditions in Yunnan may worsen due to higher temperatures and continued low precipitation. Frequent cold air and strong wind activities are expected in northern regions.

The risks of forest fire are expected to be high in parts of Inner Mongolia and the provinces of Heilongjiang, Sichuan and Yunnan, it added.

Equipment renewals to boost new demand

China's action plan to promote large-scale equipment renewals is estimated to generate about 8 million tonnes in new market demand for medium and high-end steel products by the manufacturing industry, according to an industrial association.



Optimizing the variety and adjusting the structure of products are critical amid fierce market competition."

Jiang Wei, vice-president of the China Iron and Steel Association

The China Iron and Steel Association said that the action plan to boost equipment renewals and trade-ins of consumer goods, which was unveiled in March by the State Council, will lead to new demand for steel products, particularly by the manufacturing and energy industries.

Jiang Wei, vice-president of the association, said that the manufacturing industry's demand for steel has grown over the years, with the sector accounting for 48 percent of market demand in 2023, up from 42 percent in 2020.

With the optimization and upgrading of China's industrial structure, the demand structure for steel also has changed, demonstrated by falling demand in the construction industry and growing demand by sectors including automobiles, home appliances, shipbuilding and machinery as well as wind power and nuclear power, according to the association.

The structure of steel products in China also continued to improve, with value-added steel products accounting for 35 percent of all exported steel products in the first quarter of this year, the association said.

Jiang said that value-added products were becoming the core element affecting the profitability of enterprises.

"Optimizing the variety and adjusting the structure of products are critical amid fierce market competition," Jiang said.

XINHUA

Final haul



Fishermen unload the last batch of their catch from fishing boats before an annual summer fishing ban at a port in Hainan province on Wednesday. The fishing ban covers the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the waters north of 12 degrees north latitude in the South China Sea. LUO YUNFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

US slammed for encouraging Taiwan's WHA presence

By WANG QINGYUN
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China has slammed the United States for supporting "Taiwan independence" separatist moves, and urged the US to stop using the World Health Assembly to create confusion on Taiwan-related issues.

A spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry made the remark on Thursday, after US Secretary of State Anto-

ny Blinken said in a statement on Wednesday that the US "strongly encourages" the World Health Organization to invite the Taiwan region to participate as an observer at this year's WHA.

Voicing China's strong dissatisfaction and firm objection, the spokesperson said the US statement is misleading, as well as a serious violation of the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communi-

"There is but one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory," the spokesperson said.

The Taiwan region's participation in activities of the WHO and other international organizations must be handled under the one-China principle, a basic principle enshrined in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1, the spokesperson stressed.

The political foundation for the region to participate in the WHA, however, has ceased to exist, because its Democratic Progressive Party authorities have stubbornly stuck to the separatist position of "Taiwan independence," the spokesperson also said.

The spokesperson said the Taiwan question is "at the core of China's core interests and is the number one red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations."

The spokesperson also called on the US to follow the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, deliver on its leader's promise of not supporting "Taiwan independence," "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan," and avoid sending wrong signals to "Taiwan independence" separatists.

The one-China principle has gained extensive support in the international community, and is a trend that cannot be denied or stopped, the spokesperson said, adding that any attempt to use the Taiwan region to contain China "is doomed to failure."

NEVs: Global demand set to rocket

From page 1

In the first quarter of 2024, China's NEV output surged 28.2 percent year-on-year to nearly 2.12 million units, while its NEV sales climbed 31.8 percent from a year earlier to 2.09 million units. NEV exports reached 307,000 units in this period, up 23.8 percent year-on-year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

According to an estimate by the International Energy Agency, global demand for NEVs could reach 45 million units in 2030, more than triple the global sales volume in 2023 and 4.5 times that of 2022.

"The US is no longer an advocate of free trade. Instead, it is distorting the normal operations of the market as it tries to contain China through protectionist measures, bringing about an increasingly

negative impact not only to itself but also to other economies," Wei said.

"Trade protectionism is one of the factors driving up inflation in the US. The US should fully recognize the inevitable growth of green and digital economies worldwide and expand win-win cooperation with China in related sectors, including NEVs, rather than curb and attack China's emerging industries."

"That way, it will play a positive role in global industrial chains and benefit from its own comparative advantages."

He added that China should accelerate the fostering of new quality productive forces to drive its modernization, as it faces persistent suppression from the US.

"We must be aware that the US will likely adopt various means and tricks to try to contain us, but it

cannot change the development pathway and future of China. We must be more determined to achieve our development goals and better meet the market demand arising from economic globalization," the former official said.

In particular, he said that due to their strong innovation capability and flexibility, small and medium-sized tech enterprises will be a very important force for China to develop new quality productive forces, while further institutional opening-up will help those SMEs unleash their innovation potential.

"In the second quarter, I believe there will be clearer policy signals about further unleashing the potential of the pilot free-trade zones, reducing the number of items on negative lists for market entry, and strengthening protection of foreign investors and intellectual property rights," Wei said.

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

COVER



Trade: 'Decoupling from China isn't a viable option for the world'

From page 1

The fair exemplifies China's commitment to sharing developmental opportunities with the global community, said Zhao Ping, dean of the Beijing-based Academy of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Through this and similar platforms like the China International Supply Chain Expo, China provides a wide range of competitive, high-quality products to the global market, aiding in the industrialization of countries, particularly those in the developing world, said Zhao.

Moreover, these efforts strengthen the resilience and stability of both regional and global industrial and supply chains, she said.

China's foreign trade grew by 5 percent year-on-year to 10.17 trillion yuan in the first quarter, with exports rising 4.9 percent year-on-year to 5.74 trillion yuan, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Market watchers said that China's foreign trade is expected to continue its uptrend in the second quarter, maintaining a growth trajectory through the first half of the year.

They highlighted that the country's trade progress is underpinned by a robust industrial foundation, fast-growing technology, tech-intensive green product industries, improved innovation capabilities, numerous free trade agreements and tangible development spawned by the Belt and Road Initiative.

Chen Bin, deputy director of expert committee at the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation, said that China's export portfolio has shown robust performance in machinery and electronics, as well as labor-intensive products, underscoring their sustained international appeal.

Meanwhile, the steady increase in imports of bulk commodities and consumer goods reflects a vibrant and expanding domestic market demand, said Chen.

"The global demand for Chinese engineering machinery stems from their reliability, durability and performance, coupled with timely after-sales support," he said. "These machines are highly sought after globally and frequently used in major construction projects abroad."

For instance, Chinese manufacturers often design trucks that are well suited to the varied and often harsh road conditions in certain African countries. These vehicles are capable of handling rough terrain, which is common in many parts of Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America, said Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers in Beijing.

Zhang Xiaotao, dean of the School of International Trade and Economics at the Central University of Finance and Economics in Beijing, however, noted that China's foreign trade faces pressure due to the restructuring of the global value chain.

While exports to developed economies have declined, those to Japan and South Korea have remained relatively stable, and there has been an increase in exports to developing economies, including countries in Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and



Top: A container vessel busy loading in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province.

GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Center: China-made vehicles await loading for export in Yantai, Shandong province.

TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Above: Employees work on a production line of export-bound electronics in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province.

JIA MINJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

the member economies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, he said.

Arashi Vision Inc, a Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based consumer electronics manufacturer, said its virtual reality and spherical video cameras have been sold to over 200 countries and regions, covering more than 3,000 stores, and its global market share now exceeds 50 percent.

"At present, about 70 percent of our market share is derived from international sales, predominantly in regions and countries like Europe, North America, Japan and South Korea. Additionally, we have noticed our sales rising in several emerging Southeast Asian markets in recent years," said Chen Yongqiang, one of the company's co-founders.

China's trade with Latin America and the five Central Asian countries has achieved double-digit growth in the first quarter, while its trade with developed economies

such as the United States and Japan has shown a positive recovery, with the decline in the first-quarter imports and exports narrowing by 5.9 percentage points and 1.2 percentage points, respectively, compared to 2023, according to Customs data.

Accounting for 47.4 percent of China's total foreign trade value in the first quarter, the nation's trade with economies participating in the BRI rose 5.5 percent year-on-year to 4.82 trillion yuan.

While external demand recovery is still in progress, Zhang highlighted that China's foreign trade continues to show strength in certain sectors. For example, a surge in shipbuilding orders has boosted electromechanical exports, and the expansion of cross-border e-commerce has helped more brands to go global.

Amid significant changes in the global landscape and numerous formidable challenges to worldwide economic develop-

ment, Chinese companies are focusing on developing and exporting products that are technologically sophisticated, eco-friendly and have high added value, supporting the country's efforts to enhance its trade mix, said Lin Jiantian, director of department of enterprise management and audit-based control at the GAC.

Echoing that sentiment, Huo Lei, president of the international business unit at China Railway Engineering Equipment Group Co Ltd, a Zhengzhou, Henan province-headquartered tunnel boring machine or TBM manufacturer, said that in the first quarter, the company achieved a milestone by selling a TBM to Saudi Arabia for the first time. This follows the company's history of shipping TBMs to over 30 countries and regions since 2012.

The State-owned enterprise has scheduled production from January to December this year, with over 30 units already designated for export. This represents a notable rise in monthly export volumes compared to previous years.

TBMs are used to excavate tunnels, subway tubes and sewer lines. Compared with traditional tunnel-boring methods like rock drilling, blasting and hand mining in soil, the use of such equipment can minimize the impact on the surrounding ground and produce a smooth tunnel wall, helping certain tunnel projects run through unstable geological conditions.

"As a product widely used in construction, Chinese-made TBMs are continually enhanced through rigorous field use. Thanks to advances in the nation's industrial modernization, the quality of these machines has significantly improved," he said, adding Chinese TBMs command nearly 70 percent of the global market share now.

China is targeting around 5 percent GDP growth for 2024, a goal that officials and analysts believe is well within reach, considering the country's sound economic fundamentals and supportive macroeconomic policy mix.

Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's Economic Policy Committee, said that expanding intermediate goods trade can also be a priority for maintaining the stability of China's foreign trade.

By providing reliable and high-quality intermediate goods, China can support the development and expansion of manufacturing industries in countries like Vietnam, Thailand, Mexico, Hungary and Algeria, fostering their economic growth and ultimately contributing to global economic recovery, said Xu.

"Decoupling from China is not a viable option for the world, and China will not decouple from the global community. That is the reality," said Lin Meng, director of the Modern Supply Chain Research Institute at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Lin said that the US and the European Union need to recognize this instead of obstructing exchanges and development with unfair trade restrictions.

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Foreign firms ride nation's big changes

By ZHONG NAN
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Stephane Nassau, a French national and president for global sales at the Climate Solutions division of the Danish technology and engineering conglomerate Danfoss Group, thinks that China's visa-free policy for many European countries, including France and Germany, has been a significant factor in encouraging more European business executives to travel to China in recent months.

Expressing optimism about China's economic outlook for 2024 and beyond, Nassau said many opportunities will be unleashed by the ongoing green transition and industrial upgrade under China's "dual-carbon" goals.

With China entering a new era of green and innovation-led growth, he said the country has transitioned from a primarily vast consumer market and low-cost manufacturing hub to a critical regional export base, innovation center and an integral component of the global supply chain.

In addition to building a semiconductor power module plant in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, with an investment of 100 million euros (\$107 million), Danfoss started construction of the second phase of its largest manufacturing and innovation base in Haiyan, Zhejiang province, in late April. Upon completion, the expanded base will bolster Danfoss' operations not only in China but also globally.

Following China's announcement that it has lifted all restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector and implemented measures to ensure equal treatment for foreign-funded companies, the actual foreign direct investment in China came in at 301.67 billion yuan (\$42.46 billion) in the first quarter, remaining at a high level, according to information released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The country's high-tech manufacturing sector attracted 12.5 percent of the FDI inflows in the first quarter, up 2.2 percentage points year-on-year.

\$42.46 billion

the actual foreign direct investment in China in the first quarter

Danfoss is by no means the sole beneficiary among foreign companies operating in China. Driven by an automobile production boom in China, Nipsea Group, the Singapore-headquartered paints and coatings manufacturer, will start a new plant, built with an investment of 960 million yuan, in Tianjin in June.

This factory will focus on producing industrial coatings to meet the surging demand from China's automotive industry.

"We are currently strong in the automotive segment, which is undergoing significant changes. For instance, electric vehicles currently constitute a fraction of total car sales, but this is expected to increase dramatically between 2030 and 2040 as gasoline-powered vehicles decline," said Wee Siew Kim, CEO of Nipsea.

Moreover, hybrid vehicles are also gaining in popularity. Currently, China is the largest EV market globally and is home to some of the world's leading EV makers, he said.

The latest data showed that local and international automakers in China made a record 30.16 million vehicles in 2023. They also delivered 30.09 million units, another record. Both figures were up around 12 percent year-on-year, data from the Beijing-based China Association of Automobile Manufacturers showed.

Data like that enthrall Maxilian Foerst, president and CEO of the China unit of Zeiss Group, a German multinational company operating in the optical and optoelectronic industries. "We see China as a significant contributor to the global wealth growth in the next five years. That's why Zeiss is confident in the Chinese market in terms of business and investment."

The German company launched a new quality excellence center in Dongguan, a manufacturing hub in Guangdong province, in late March.

The new facility, which received the largest investment among such centers in China, accomplishes multiple functions, including demonstration, measurement, training, certification and computer programming service.

Thanks to its substantial investment in research and development, and supportive industrial policies, China is a leading contributor to many trends in technology and innovation that are shaping the future, including digital transformation, new energy vehicles, green energy, artificial intelligence, healthcare, myopia management and other areas, said Foerst.

The number of newly established foreign-invested firms in China reached 12,000 between January and March, up nearly 21 percent year-on-year, statistics from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

WORLD

Biden: Right to protest, but not chaos

President says 'order must prevail', and 'no place' for violence, antisemitism

By AI HEPING in New York
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As pro-Palestinian protest encampments remain at dozens of US colleges and universities, and more than 2,000 protesters have been arrested, US President Joe Biden said Thursday that "order must prevail", as "Americans have the right to protest but not the right to cause chaos".

"There should be no place on any campus, no place in America, for antisemitism or threats of violence against Jewish students," Biden said.

It marked the first time that Biden directly addressed the campus protests since his brief comments to reporters on April 22, before the escalation of suspensions and arrests at several campuses. At the time, he said he condemned both antisemitic actions and those who didn't understand the plight of Palestinians in Gaza.

Biden's remarks came as Republicans are portraying themselves as staunch supporters of Israel and as former president Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, said on the campaign trail Wednesday that what was unfolding on college campuses was a "shame and Biden should speak out because nobody knows where he is".

"In moments like this, there are always those who rush in to score political points. But this isn't a moment for politics. It's a moment for clarity," Biden said.

Later Thursday, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre responded to a reporter's question on the timing of Biden's remarks and whether he was feeling pressure to speak out after Trump's comments.

"It has nothing to do with anybody following anyone's lead," she told reporters on Air Force One. "The president, if anything, has been a leader on this."

Asked if the demonstrations had caused him to reassess American policy in the Middle East, Biden said "No." He also said that the National Guard should not intervene on campuses.

Biden delivered his brief remarks from the White House before leaving for North Carolina



Police officers scuffle with protesters trying to block vehicles taking detained students, who had been occupying the Portland State University Library building, during the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Portland, Oregon, on Thursday. JAN SONNENMAIR / REUTERS

Demonstrations are continuing at dozens of universities across the US. At least 2,000 arrests have been made over the last two weeks.

and spoke hours after a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) was cleared by police in a pre-dawn raid.

On Tuesday night, a masked pro-Israeli group attacked a pro-Palestinian student camp before police were called to the campus.

Hundreds of protesters were arrested. Officers scuffled with some protesters who defied warnings to either leave or face arrest, NBC News reported.

By Thursday morning, most protesters had left after being told to move or face arrest.

Demonstrations are continuing at dozens of universities across the US. At least 2,000 arrests have been made over the last two weeks, according to The Associated Press.

While the demands among protesters vary at each university, the majority of demonstrations have called for colleges to divest from companies that support Israel and the war in Gaza.

About 200 people were arrested after law enforcement raided the encampment, said Nicole Nishida, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The majority, she said, were charged with misdemeanors such as unlawful assembly and released.

After a dayslong occupation by protesters at the Portland State University library, police cleared people from inside and outside of

the building Thursday morning.

Most protesters left the library before the Portland Police Bureau could arrest those who remained behind barricades. Police said 12 people were arrested, including four students.

Portland police said they found tools, improvised weapons, ball bearings, paint balloons and improvised armor, but said it wasn't used against them, News Channel 21 in Oregon reported.

Activists opposed to Israel's role in the ongoing war in Gaza took over the library Monday night. They called for Portland State to cut ties from companies connected to Israel, among other demands.

Of 282 people arrested at both Columbia University and the City College of New York on Tuesday, 134 individuals were not affiliated with either school, according to a New York Police Department (NYPD) official who shared

the breakdown with CNN. The remaining 148 individuals did have an affiliation with one of the two universities.

The NYPD said it was able to determine the data by cross-checking records with the universities.

It wasn't clear whether the arrested protesters with no connection to the school were outside agitators or if they played any part in organizing or intensifying the demonstration.

New York Mayor Eric Adams suggested that the takeover of Hamilton Hall at Columbia was "about a change in tactics", adding: "There is a movement to radicalize young people, and I'm not going to wait until it's done and all of a sudden acknowledge the existence of it."

Agencies contributed to this story.

Pakistan aims for economic recovery

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
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Pakistan is navigating the challenging process of economic recovery, with the new government making some progress in pushing structural reforms, experts say.

While recent developments were positive, the country still faces an uphill battle as it confronts several challenges, they said.

Mustafa Hyder Sayed, executive director of Pakistan-China Institute in Islamabad, said the economy of Pakistan has been going through a volatile period because of a dip in foreign exchange reserves, circular debt and low exports and high inflation.

"But the new government is undertaking structural economic reform and we have also just finalized an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, which will give us more breathing space," Sayed said.

In addition, the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a mega infrastructure project under the Belt and Road Initiative, "will bring significant investment into Pakistan", he said.

Pakistan just received about \$1.1 billion in final tranche from the IMF as part of a total loan of about \$3 billion agreed to last year under an economic stabilization program.

In a statement on Monday, the IMF said with the latest disbursement, it has provided a policy anchor to address Pakistan's domestic and external imbalances as well as a framework for financial support from multilateral and bilateral partners.

Earlier, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said his government is diligently pursuing economic reforms to overcome current challenges in the financial sector.

In a meeting of the federal cabinet last week, Sharif said with the collective efforts of all government departments, the country's economy is on the path of recovery.

The government is also committed to doubling the country's export volume over the next five years, he said.

Tahir Farooq, editor-in-chief at Daily Ittehad Media Group and Pakistan Economic Net, said: "The government is focusing on several fronts to rejuvenate the economy. Measures such as increasing exports and remittances, combating power theft and advancing privatization are pivotal."

Promising growth

The IT sector and inward remittances have shown promising growth, suggesting early signs of positive effect from the policies, Farooq said.

Sharif's approach is "holistic and inclusive, urging the opposition to collaborate rather than confront, emphasizing the importance of national unity in economic reform", he said.

Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development in Islamabad, mentioned the risks of stagnant growth, higher inflation and further economic troubles.

To resolve the issue, Pakistan has to take immediate steps, Ahmad said, such as prioritizing production enhancement. He also suggested accelerating the implementation of the second phase of the CPEC, unleashing opportunities that could help reverse the economic crisis.

Meanwhile, Pakistan must resist undue pressures from the West and unreasonable demands from the IMF, he said, citing suspicions that "the IMF is following the United States' agenda" and that the US wants Pakistan to shelve some CPEC projects.

"It is good that the IMF is satisfied with Pakistan's performance, but the satisfaction has been achieved at the cost of the poor and middle-class Pakistan," he said.

Of the 250 million people of Pakistan, 60 percent are youth under 35, Sayed said. "It is a huge opportunity for Pakistan as a market for consumer goods, and as a country that has a demographic dividend. The opportunities to grow economically are significant."

Syed Shujaat Ahmed, an independent economist, said opportunities are there, but realizing them hinges on stability and consistency of the policies in the pipeline and those that have already been drafted.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Revving up for adventure

Hundreds of motorcycle enthusiasts from across Germany set off in Erfurt Cathedral Square on Wednesday on a joint ride through the central state of Thuringia, with the Gotha-Boxberg racecourse as their destination. About 1,000 bikers are expected to take part in the event, according to the Erfurt city council.

MARTIN SCHUTT VIA AP



Yen slips after rallying on suspected intervention

TOKYO/NEW YORK — The yen edged back on Thursday following another surge against the dollar that fueled speculation Japanese authorities had intervened for a second time this week, after US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell warned interest rates would stay higher for longer.

The dollar fell sharply to precisely 153 yen from about 157.55 yen for reasons that were not immediately clear, but traders and analysts were quick to say it was dollar selling ordered by Japan's Ministry of Finance to support a currency languishing at 34-year lows.

The latest move came in a quiet period for the currency pair, after the US stock market had closed and with the Federal Reserve's monetary policy meeting ending hours earlier.

On Wednesday, the Fed left interest rates unchanged at a 22-year high of 5.25 percent to 5.5 percent, a decision that came after the Com-

merce Department reported on Friday that the US personal consumption expenditure price index, the Fed's preferred inflation measure, ticked up to 2.7 percent in March.

Amid stubborn inflation that shows no signs of abating, US GDP growth slowed significantly to an annual rate of 1.6 percent in the first quarter, marking a sharp drop from the 3.4 percent in the fourth quarter, according to data released last week.

"We are taking signal (that) it's likely to take longer for us to gain confidence that we're on a sustainable path to 2 percent inflation," Powell told reporters after the two-day policy meeting.

The yen has been under pressure as US interest rates have climbed and Japan's have stayed near zero, driving cash out of yen and into higher-yielding assets.

The pressure has intensified since March as expectations for Fed rate

cuts receded, reinforcing the yen's status as a cheap funding currency.

The difficulty in arresting the yen's slide has been made clear by the speed at which the currency has reversed direction after its spike.

As of 1000 GMT, the yen was 0.5 percent lower at 155.23 per dollar, giving up some of the ground it gained overnight.

And it remains down about 10 percent against the dollar this year amid receding bets for near-term Fed rate cuts, while the Bank of Japan has signaled it will go slow with further policy tightening after its first rate hike since 2007 in March.

The gap between long-term government bond yields in the two countries is a yawning 376 basis points, which pushed the yen to the weakest since April 1990 at 160.245 per dollar on Monday.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Briefly

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Jeremiah Manele elected new PM

Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele was elected the new prime minister of the Solomon Islands by members of parliament on Thursday, Governor General of the Solomon Islands David Vunagi said. Manele defeated opposition leader Matthew Wale in a 31-to-18 vote in the newly elected 50-seat parliament, Vunagi said following a secret ballot. "I will discharge my duties diligently and with integrity," Manele told journalists.



SOUTH KOREA

Probe into crowd crush gets parliament nod

South Korea's National Assembly voted on Thursday to approve a bill backed by the ruling and opposition parties to launch a fresh probe into the crowd crush in Seoul's Itaewon district in 2022 that killed nearly 160 people. An earlier bill was vetoed by President Yoon Suk-yeol in January. The latest bill is a compromise that removes granting full investigative power to the panel, to which Yoon had objected, his office said. The passage of the bill came after Yoon met opposition leader Lee Jae-myung of the Democratic Party for talks on Monday.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Whale of a time



A standup paddleboarder caresses a beluga whale in the Sea of Japan (called the East Sea by South Korea) on Wednesday. Ninety beluga whales were released from the "whale jail" in Srednyaya Bay near the Arctic Ocean in 2019. Some of them settled in the Sea of Japan and are friendly toward people in water. YURI SMITYUK / TASS

PEOPLE

The improvised life of Xia Jia

Jazz pianist and co-founder of Beijing quintet Redhand talks music, life and the sweetness of reunions, **Chen Nan** reports.



Above and below: The Jan 13 concert of jazz pianist Xia Jia, who performed at the Aranya North Coast Chapel, a popular scenic spot in the Aranya resort in Qinhuangdao, the coastal city in Hebei province, which was turned into a live recording released in March. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The piano stood in the center of the Aranya North Coast Chapel, a popular scenic spot in the Aranya resort in Qinhuangdao, the coastal city in Hebei province.

It was a cold winter night that Jan 13, and as people gathered inside, jazz pianist Xia Jia prepared to perform.

"It was an unforgettable evening. The audience included parents and children, as well as elderly people. They sat in circles, very close to me. Though I was performing alone, we shared the night in the small chapel as music flowed around us," says Xia.

A few days later, he listened to the recording of the concert and was surprised. He hadn't expected that the sound would be so unique. A friend also listening to the recording commented that "the sounds breathed".

"Maybe it was the building, which has a high-pitched roof and is an intimate space. It made me want to turn the live recording into an album, to make the performance permanent," says Xia.

To support the album's release, the pianist played a series of concerts, including at Beijing's Tsinghua University on March 30 and at Harbin's Old Synagogue Concert Hall on April 13.

The album opens with an improvisation, which Xia says "invites people in" with music he felt was suited to that particular moment in the seashore chapel. He also played songs like

Lament, which he wrote to commemorate legendary jazz player Kenny Kirkland (1955-1998), one of his favorite musicians, and *Echo*, which he composed while studying at the Eastman School of Music in New York, and which he dedicated to the Eastman Jazz Ensemble and his teacher, Harold Danko.

New Autumn, composed by Danko, and *Warm Winter*, a piece by Xia, rounded off that night in Aranya.

Xia says that he wrote *Warm Winter* a few days before the performance at the seashore chapel, shortly after visiting his mother in Beijing.

"Though the winter was very cold, I felt warm. And the piece came out naturally," he says.

"His improvisations are impressive, reeling off piano improvisations that are soulful, harmonically forward and marked by painterly restraint. In my note book, I scribble a snap judgment: 'any scene would be lucky to have him!'" New York Times jazz critic Nate Chinen once wrote about Xia.

"Xia Jia's playing was in a way restrained but nonetheless sophisticated. There was clearly thoughtfulness in his playing and the way he built his improvisations," says Eugene Marlow, a jazz musician and author, who produced a feature-length documentary in 2022, based on his acclaimed 2018 book *Jazz in China*, which traces the genre's history in China since the 1920s.



"Xia Jia's playing was in a way restrained but nonetheless sophisticated. There was clearly thoughtfulness in his playing and the way he built his improvisations."

Eugene Marlow, jazz musician and author

Born and raised in Yinchuan in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, 50-year-old Xia was introduced to music by his parents — his mother is a pianist and his father plays French horn.

He was first taught to play piano by his mother as a child and in 1986, began attending the primary school affiliated to Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music, receiving classical music training and

studying classical piano and conducting.

He first realized that he enjoyed playing freestyle piano after an encounter with one of the other children at the school.

"I remember that I enjoyed improvising with a student who was a year older than me. We met in the piano room and after he played a phrase, which was totally spontaneous, I followed up with another musical phrase. I really enjoyed the free playing, although I had no idea what improvisation was back then," Xia says.

An album given to him by his primary school piano teacher also encouraged him to pursue a career as a jazz pianist.

"It was an album by a piano trio, featuring interpretations of Bach's music in jazz style. I cannot remember the trio's name. It was probably the first jazz recording I heard," he says.

Between 1999 and 2004, Xia studied jazz piano at the Eastman School of Music.

In 2001, he and his classmates performed in the 18th New York JVC Jazz Festival, which marked his debut on the international stage.

Since the 1990s, jazz has taken root in Beijing with a number of homegrown musicians performing at clubs and bars, resulting in a vibrant and fast developing scene. After returning to China, Xia frequently played at well-known venues, like East Shore Live Jazz Cafe, which was founded by veter-

an jazz saxophonist, Liu Yuan.

He also formed Beijing's first large jazz band, the Beijing City Jazz Orchestra.

"Back then, we jammed with musicians from all over the world. It was a time that inspired me and expanded my vision as a jazz musician," says Xia.

In 2005, along with Chinese-American saxophonist Nathaniel Gao, trumpet player Wen Zhiyong, double bass player Wang Chenhui and drummer Liu Xingyu, Xia formed a quintet called Redhand. They played at live venues, concert halls, and jazz bars around Beijing, gaining a fan base with their compositions.

As the members of Redhand pursued their studies abroad — Xia moved to Netherlands where he earned a master's degree at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam — the quintet was put on pause.

In the summer of 2023, Redhand reunited with a performance in Beijing.

"I once had a dream about the members all going abroad to study, which became reality. Now, we have come back and performed together again. We are still the same Redhand playing our own music, but our skill and perspective of music has changed," Xia says.

In 2025, Redhand will celebrate their 20th anniversary with a new album and a tour.

Contact the writer at chenan@chinadaily.com.cn



Max Yollando (Yanming) practices at the Shaolin Temple in Henan province. XINHUA

Kung fu dreams in the Cote d'Ivoire

ABIDJAN — "When I was young, I told my mother that I would go to China to learn Kung Fu one day. She didn't believe it at the time. When I got there, I immediately called her and said, 'Mom, guess where I am, I'm at the Shaolin Temple!'" says Max Yollando, a young man from the Cote d'Ivoire, sharing his affection for Chinese culture.

Yollando is also known as Yanming, the Chinese name he was given by his teacher at the Shaolin Temple, the Buddhist monastery where the "Shaolin kung fu" was born, and which today is a magnet for fans from all over the world.

At the time, Yollando was a student at the Felix Houphouet-Boigny University in Abidjan. Motivated by

his passion for Chinese culture, he enrolled at the Confucius Institute to study Chinese. In late 2016, he had the opportunity to visit the temple in Henan province on a three-month exchange.

This experience defined his engagement with traditional Chinese culture.

"The spirit of martial arts displayed by my fellow disciples deeply impressed me. I truly fell in love and felt sure that this was the place I had dreamed of since childhood," he says.

After returning to the Cote d'Ivoire, Yanming continued to practice Chinese and study traditional culture.

In July 2017, he returned to Shao-

lin and remained there for six years.

His years at the temple reading, exercising, practicing martial arts, and meditation greatly changed him, and allowed him to better understand and appreciate traditional Chinese culture.

He says the most impressive things he noticed that rooted in Chinese culture are the love of work, respect, and recognition.

"Coming to China to study made me more disciplined and hardworking. Before, I was a little lazy, but the Shaolin Temple taught me to be punctual, respectful and grateful."

At the end of 2022, when he completed his studies at the temple, he began working at a Shaolin cultural center in Zambia. The first of its

kind in Africa, the center is home to 30 orphans, who are taught Chinese language and traditional Chinese culture, including kung fu, as part of the curriculum.

For Yollando, the purpose of studying Chinese culture was to be able to return to Africa to introduce Chinese values to his compatriots.

"The culture fascinated me because in China, people make an effort to work better, and they are very respectful and grateful to their family and country," he says.

"When I make connections between Chinese and African culture, it seems to me that they have a lot in common," he says.



Yanming (left) poses with a fellow disciple. XINHUA

READ

In search of fulfillment

More university graduates are choosing to work at the grassroots level with govt support, encouragement

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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Yang Mingren has worked at a remote freight train station in Anshun, Guizhou province, since graduating from Beijing Jiaotong University in 2021 with a bachelor's degree in transportation.

His grandparents live in Guizhou and he wanted to work near them, as they raised him after his parents died when he was little.

He works different shifts for four days and then is off for the next four days, so he can have more time to spend with his family.

As the station is in a remote place, he does not have many people to talk to other than his colleagues.

Luckily, one of his colleagues became his wife. They got married earlier this year, and his wife is now pregnant.

Yang is one of many university graduates choosing to work at the grassroots level.

To encourage this practice, the General Office of the State Council issued a notice in April last year asking for recruitment quotas for grassroots positions to remain stable this year. The notice also required a special program to be launched to hire college graduates to work as village doctors and teachers.

According to a recent report issued by Beijing-based education consultancy MyCOS, the number of college graduates working in counties and lower levels accounted for 25 percent of the total in 2022, 5 percentage points higher than in 2018.

The average wage of college graduates working in counties and lower levels has risen to 5,377 yuan (\$742) per month in 2022 from 4,640 yuan per month in 2018, while their job satisfaction rate grew from 67 percent to 76 percent during that period.

The report also found that 23 percent of the students working in counties and lower levels have jobs in the education sector and 15 percent work for government institutions.

The report said working in counties is deemed to be attractive by many graduates as they can live near their hometown and enjoy a stable job with less pressure.

"Compared with some of my classmates who work in Beijing and have to take a crowded subway and share an apartment with strangers, I am satisfied with my life in this small place," Yang said.

"I have thought about working in Beijing, but it would be very difficult for me to afford an apartment."

Some of the young people in big cities are reluctant to get married or have children because of the heavy financial burden imposed by the high housing prices and living costs, which do not seem to be a problem in counties, he said.

He is excited about becoming a father and has already started to read books on raising babies.

"I am more than happy about my life now. I do not have high expectations. I just want a simple life," he said.

County 'doctor'

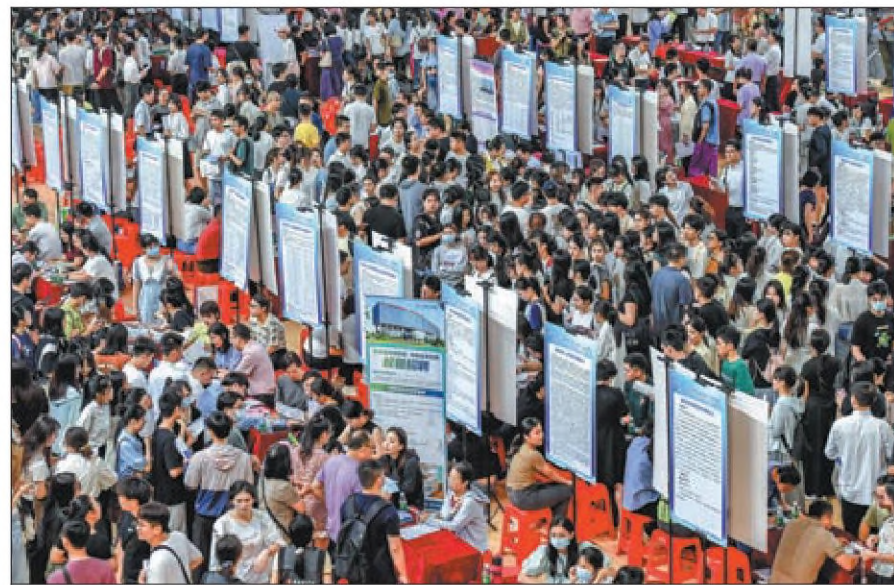
At the invitation of old high school classmates, Li Mingqi, 38, who was studying in Beijing, went back to Liling, Hunan province, last year.

He serves as the assistant to one of his classmates, who is the general manager of Liling Huaxin Insulator Technology Co.

He is about to graduate with a doctoral degree in social management at the Party School of the Central



Village officials who recently graduated from universities participate in a livestreaming program to promote locally produced strawberries in Guangling county, Shanxi province, in March. HUO FEIFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Graduates attend a job fair at Hainan Medical University in Haikou, Hainan province, in April. SUN SHIJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Committee of the Communist Party of China this year. He worked for the local government in Chenzhou, Hunan province, from 2012 to 2015 and for a university in Changsha from 2015 to 2019 before pursuing a doctoral degree in Beijing.

"The electric porcelain industry is developing rapidly in Liling, which is close to Changsha where my wife and son live, so I decided to go back to my hometown in Hunan," he said.

"There are many people with

doctoral degrees in Beijing, but only a few in Liling, so I am referred to as 'doctor' in the company, a somewhat fancy term," he said.

Meanwhile, working at a private company in a senior position means he has to deal with all kinds of challenges every day, which is rather different from working for the government or at the university, both considered stable jobs for many Chinese people, he said.

Working in Liling also means he can visit his wife and children about

three times a week as he can drive to Changsha in about an hour.

His salary is considered a high salary for a small county, he said, and is more than he earned in his previous jobs. The local government also offered him a 100-square-meter apartment free of rent, an incentive reserved for special talent.

"There is much to learn and the job is very challenging, which I enjoy, as I am tired of cozy jobs," he said.

He is also very motivated as the company has set its annual sales revenue from 650 million yuan (\$89.7 million) last year to 1 billion this year.

"My job is very fulfilling, as there are different challenging tasks waiting for me every day, which energizes me to be more proactive and innovative," he said.

High-altitude builder

Wan Pengjun, 32, has worked in different places in the Xizang autonomous region since 2016. He graduated from Changsha University of Science and Technology in 2014 and started working at the No 2 Engineering Co of the CCCC First Highway Engineering Group Co. He was sent by the company to work in Xizang two years later.

He has worked on different projects in the region from building roads to bridges and public facilities.

"I have thought about working in a big city and having a routine day-to-day job, but I have worked in Xizang for about eight years, and find my job very satisfying," he said.

He has been promoted to be the chief engineer of the company's subsidiary in Xizang and he can make more than 20,000 yuan a month, more than he could make in Hunan.

Getting used to the high altitude has not been easy, and every time he returns to Xizang from his hometown in Changde, Hunan province, he still suffers the discomfort of altitude sickness.

Due to the long distance from Xizang to Hunan, he usually only returns home once a year.

"Everyone makes different choices about which kind of job they want and where they want to work. I have not regretted coming to Xizang, and the company has rewarded me for my hard work, so I am more than satisfied," he said.

Free-spirited official

Yang Yang, 26, plans to work as a government official in a village in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, after she graduates in June.

Yang, who is a third-year post-graduate student at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said she has not considered working at an internet company in Beijing, a popular choice for many of the capital's college graduates, as it does not suit her carefree character.

Yang was born and raised in Chengdu, Sichuan. She misses the beautiful grassland and snow-capped mountains of western Sichuan, so she did not hesitate to seize the chance to work there.

Beijing is a very vibrant city for students to study, but as a working adult, the high housing prices can be formidable for many people from other regions, she said.

"If I work at a company in Beijing, I will feel like I am trapped in my small cubicle. The fast-paced life in the city also means I need to constantly run toward the next target," she said.

She says she wants a more free-spirited life so she can enjoy the beautiful mountains and grasslands with friends during weekends and holidays.

Village life is simpler but never dull, says official who worked as volunteer teacher

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha

When Liu Qiwei graduated from Hunan Normal University in 2019, she signed up to teach as a volunteer for a year at a middle school in Jishou, Hunan province.

Raised in Xining, the capital of Qinghai province, the experience enriched her understanding of how people live in the countryside.

"One year was not a long time, but it is definitely a memory worth

remembering for my whole life," she said. "There was a spark in my students' eyes and their yearning for knowledge made them look like shining diamonds, waiting to be discovered."

Her students' grades improved over the year and she also developed, she said.

The happiness and fulfillment she got from teaching at a county school is also why she chose to work as a government official at a village

in Jiahe county, Hunan province, when she finished a master's degree in Marxism at the university last year.

She had lengthy discussions with her parents about her choice as they wanted her to work near her hometown in Xining or in a big city, but they finally supported her decision.

Although she is not from Hunan, her time studying in the province has made it her second home.

As she majored in Marxism for her postgraduate studies, she feels working in a village is the perfect way to put what's in the textbooks into practice.

Every day, she deals with the real problems of villagers, such as electricity being cut off by a falling tree, issues with their farmland, funerals, weddings, and the development of the local rice industry.

"I feel I have rapidly learned how the basic unit of Chinese society

functions. It is a living example of what I have learned from the textbooks," she said.

She also learned to speak the local dialect so she could better explain government policies to villagers. There are many elderly people living in the village whose children work in cities, so it is important to talk with them like family members so they can better support the government's work, she said.

"Life in the villages is not dull as you face new challenges every day, but it is also not as busy as living in a city where you need to race to catch the subway," she said.

"You can learn a lot about how to live a simple life from the villagers. They do not want big houses, fancy cars or designer bags. They just want their crops to grow healthy and lives to be stable. That's happiness for them and from them I have seen what true happiness is like."

IMAGE



Zhou Hao looks at the mask for the character of Zhang Fei. PHOTOS BY ZI YU, ZHAI JIAN AND GAO WEI/FOR CHINA DAILY

KEEPING A TRADITION ALIVE

Guansuo Opera is a type of ancient Nuo play that is popular in the Chengjiang county of Yunnan province. The opera showcases the character of Shu during the Three Kingdoms period. Zhou Ruwen has played the part of this character for more than 30 years now. Over the past decades, Zhou and his family, including his grandson Zhou Hao, are doing their most to keep this ancient tradition alive, taking part in the opera at different places. Zhou feels it is his responsibility to keep the intangible cultural heritage of Guansuo Opera alive.

-CHINA DAILY



Clockwise from upper left: Zhou Ruwen and his grandson Zhou Hao rehearse for the opera in the open. Zhou Hao rehearses for the opera in the open. Guansuo Opera troupe members from Xiaotun village rehearse on the Lingfeng temple grounds. Zhou Hao picks up the nuances of martial arts from his grandfather Zhou Ruwen at the Lingfeng temple grounds. Zhou Hao puts on his mask, as he gets into the character of Zhang Fei.



From left to right: Zhou Ruwen and Zhou Hao practice their lines from the opera. Zhou Hao looks at a mask on the Lingfeng temple grounds. Guansuo Opera performers relax after the performance.

TREND

Pay-per-service model makes comeback

Customers are increasingly realizing how buying a prepaid card can end up as paying money for nothing

By YANG ZEKUN

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Just before the start of this year, 33-year-old Luo Jing finally used up the balance on his over 5,000-yuan (\$690) hair salon prepaid card and decided never to recharge the card again.

These prepaid cards often cost several thousand yuan, but the hairstylists' skills are often just about average, nowhere near the tall claims they make while selling the cards.

There are enough reasons now to regulate the prepaid card market, as these cards are often sold after making tall claims with no corresponding increase in service quality, coupled with the constant risk of such establishments shutting down even before all the customers who were sold the cards have made use of what they paid for, or customers going elsewhere for the service with money left on the card.

Many young people such as Luo are now tired of salespersons trying to sell them prepaid cards for hair and beauty salons and/or gyms. They are abandoning such prepaid cards in favor of a more direct pay-per-service model.

Luo, who is from Jiangsu province, has been living in Beijing since graduating from university about 10 years ago.

He works for an internet company in Beijing and earns a decent monthly income.

In May 2022, he once went for a haircut to a branded salon near his apartment in Chaoyang district.

On entering the newly decorated salon, the staff members immediately stood up to welcome him.

They then began selling him the prepaid service packages they had, offering 30 percent off all services if he bought a 3,000-yuan card and 50 percent off for a 5,000-yuan card.

Luo ignored their offers, stating he just wanted the cheapest service they offered — a 68-yuan hair wash and haircut.

However, he was told that the stylist providing the 68-yuan service was on leave, leaving only the 108-yuan and higher price options, which he accepted reluctantly.

While he was getting his haircut, Luo asked the stylist what was different about the three differently-priced haircuts.

He was told that the differences were merely nominal. It was all about who cuts the hair, the "store director", "chief hairstylist", or the "store manager".

He ultimately found out that the quality of service was similar across the board.

When it was time to pay, after a persistent sales pitch and assurances that his card would be valid across all city branches of the brand and he would receive priority service and discount as a cardholder, he bought himself a 5,000-yuan prepaid card.

Reasons for abandoning it

Luo has visited a few hair salons by now and is familiar with the pattern: salespersons greeting you, staff communicating over walkie-talkie headsets and looking for opportunities to push prepaid cards or expensive services.

Another feature common to these, often "flashy", salons is the absence of the lowest-tier hairstylist. Once Luo visited another branch of the branded salon he had bought the prepaid card from and asked for the cheapest haircut. He was once again told that the lowest-tier hairstylist was not available that day and was referred to a higher-priced hairstylist.

Frustrated, he argued that at least one hairstylist for each tier listed should be available.

Otherwise, customers were unnecessarily being forced to upgrade or waste a trip. After his complaint, the store manager apologized and he was provided the service at the lowest price.

On the second day of the second lunar month, known as Dragon Raising Head Day in China — a day in which people have haircuts in the belief that it brings good luck — Luo went early to a salon, expecting priority service as a cardholder.



A man gets a haircut from a street barber in Beijing on April 24. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY



From left: Residents work out in a public gym at a community in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, on Jan 16, last year. ZHU JIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY. Hairstylists serve customers at a hair salon in Beijing on Feb 21, 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



To his dismay, he had to queue up like everyone else. He argued multiple times with the staff members, but all they could say was that everyone had to wait because they were all registered members.

He spent the entire morning at the salon, realizing that the so-called membership was a joke, and all supposed member benefits nonexistent.

Later that day he heard from his colleague, whose haircut at a street-corner barber shop cost him just 15 yuan.

The decent haircut his colleague got, and the fact that several branches of the branded salon he went to shut shop over the year, further cemented his decision to switch to these more affordable establishments once he had exhausted his prepaid card balance.

Over time he tried haircuts, perms and dyeing at various branches of the salon, only to find out that the costs remained high even after the "discount" and his balance was getting depleted quickly.

He also noticed some strange aspects, such as the hairstylists were being hired randomly and quitting or being asked to leave

suddenly, the hairstylists' fees were unilaterally determined with there being no way for customers to check if they were indeed "store directors", "chief hairstylists", or "store managers".

Almost every time he got his hair done, while checking out, he would be told of an ongoing promotion or celebration — everything said with the intention of making him recharge his prepaid card.

One time a staff member, after scrutinizing his receipt, told him, "You don't have much balance left on your card — how about topping it up?"

"These imperfect services and the poor attitude of the staff are one of the main reasons I stopped using such prepaid card services. Moreover, after several visits to affordable hair salons and convenient barber spots in the parks, I found myself enjoying this style where everyone queues up conscientiously and casually chats with each other, and the price is also very affordable," he said.

"I think this shift in consumption habit is largely because of a change in my own mindset, and I really like this change."

Risks identified

Zhai Yisen, 30, works for a public relations firm in Beijing's Chaoyang district and is a fitness freak. When he was 26, he spent 4,500 yuan on the annual membership card of a multi-branch gym.

In the following years, he switched between different branches, purchasing annual or monthly memberships.

However, soon his job required him to travel between cities or work overtime, because of which his visits to the gym decreased. After his membership expired earlier this year, Zhai decided not to renew it.

"There was a period when I was away on business trips for nearly four months a year. The card was hardly used during that period. I felt like I was wasting money. I didn't recharge it this year, as two of the gyms I used to go to have shut down. Friends who also used the gym are complaining about not being able to use up the money on their cards or get a refund," he said.

According to the "2022 China Fitness Industry Report" published by GymSquare, "pay-per-

visit" has risen to become the second largest payment method in the fitness industry at 36 percent, just behind long-term payment models of over a year.

The higher an individual's monthly income, the more likely they are to prefer pay-per-visit options.

Besides, in February last year, the China Consumers Association released the analysis of complaints handled by national consumers associations in 2022, showing that "shutdown" disputes caused significant consumer losses.

Closures or deliberate scams by fitness centers, cinemas, and educational institutions led to strong consumer dissatisfaction.

Such membership cards are essentially a form of prepaid consumption, Zhai said.

Businesses attract consumers to park their money with them by offering them discounts.

This allows businesses to alleviate cash flow pressures. However, while consumers receive discounts, they also face risks.

interests remain unprotected, as problems arise and they are left with no recourse.

When buying such prepaid packages, the establishments often offer significant discounts to lure them into buying longer duration membership.

Sometimes, when selling memberships, the cost of an annual membership is only slightly more than a six-month membership, enticing consumers with this "cost-effectiveness" while overlooking potential risks, he said.

Zhai said fitness freaks like him have become smarter now, not falling for glib-talking salespersons who try to lure them into buying any package.

"I think most young people are now careful, choosing products that offer better value for money. Once the content promoted in advertisements is found to be unrealistic, it tends to be quickly abandoned," he said.

"These changes have become quite apparent nowadays. After all, finding a job and earning money is not easy these days. Besides meeting basic needs, other upgraded consumption is just an optional choice."

BIZ LIFE

By MASI
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Chinese technology companies are foraging into the new energy vehicle industry, believing that the smart driving functions of electric vehicles will be key to winning market competitions over the next decade.

From supplying autonomous driving systems to developing cars, tech companies such as Huawei Technologies Co and Xiaomi Corp are emerging as competitive auto players. They bank on China's complete and highly efficient supply chain, its huge research and development talent and the enthusiasm shown by local consumers for cutting-edge technologies, according to company executives and experts.

About 40 percent of new vehicles sold in China this year will be NEVs, and they will have smart features that help NEV makers stand out amid increasingly fierce competition, they forecast.

"The upward spiral is expected to continue, with about 50 percent of new vehicles sold in China being NEVs in 2025. This is expected to hit 70 percent in 2030, with annual deliveries reaching around 20 million units a year," Ouyang Minggao, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said.

Smart functions, with autonomous driving features at their core, are proving to be more important as automakers try to differentiate their products from others, Ouyang said.

"It is possible to introduce some basic driving-assist functions into gasoline vehicles, but electric vehicles have natural advantages in terms of precision control," he added.

Eyeing the big opportunities ahead, Huawei is expanding its presence in the NEV sector.

Yu Chengdong, head of Huawei's smart vehicle business unit, said: "We are expanding collaboration with partners in the Chinese automotive industry to usher in a new era of smart EVs, leading the comprehensive transformation of intelligent automobiles."

Huawei has highlighted that it will not make the car itself.

It has so far adopted two strategies to be a part of the auto supply chain. One is to supply components and technologies to automakers, like its cooperation with Changan Auto, said Zhong Shi, an independent auto analyst.

"The other is the intelligent car selection mode. Huawei not only participates in product modeling, interior design and intelligent solutions, but is also responsible for the marketing and sale of cars. A typical example is its cooperation with traditional car brands which has proved to be highly successful," Zhong said.

A recent case in point is how Huawei unveiled in April upgraded versions of its Luxeed S7 electric sedan in partnership with Chery Auto, as the tech company aims to expand its presence in the burgeoning but increasingly crowded NEV market.

The move came after Huawei's SUV Aito series, developed in collaboration with Chinese carmaker Seres, was widely accepted by consumers. Aito M7, which has been on the market for seven months, has accumulated over 174,000 orders, and Aito M9, launched three months ago, has accumulated over 70,000 preorders, with a monthly delivery capacity reaching 25,000 units.

Available at a starting price of about 250,000 yuan (\$35,000) in China, the latest S7 has received a major upgrade in intelligent safety with the inclusion of Huawei's vision intelligent driving solution, which enhances the driving experi-



Tech firms eye big footprint in vrooming NEV sector

Efficient supply chain, talent and rising demand attracting more players



Top: Employees work at the assembly line of Xiaomi SU7 electric sedans in Beijing in March. HE GUANXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Left: Luxeed S7, an electric sedan developed by Huawei, is on display at the company's flagship store in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in December. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Left: Visitors check out an electric sedan in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in December. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ence on highways and in urban areas, and simplifies intelligent parking, Yu said.

"Huawei's intelligent driving service is available now, not in the future," Yu said.

Its advanced intelligent driving system, which Huawei calls "navigation-based connected autonomous driving for urban areas", has received a full-scale upgrade, with immediate delivery upon purchase.

The function covers over 40,000 urban and rural areas nationwide, offering seamless driving experiences wherever there are roads, and improving with every mile driven.

With industry-leading parking capabilities, it enables intelligent parking scenarios such as valet parking, remote parking and maneuvering in narrow and mechanical parking spaces, Huawei added.

In terms of intelligent electric cars, the issue of electrification has already been addressed over the past decade, and the next decade will be characterized by intelligence."

Lei Jun, chairman and CEO of Xiaomi

Chery said it has established an independent business unit for its cooperation with Huawei, backed by dedicated manufacturing facilities and resources.

Huawei's technology and standards empower intelligent manufacturing processes, ensuring that each S7 undergoes nearly 10,000 quality inspections before leaving the factory.

“

In terms of intelligent electric cars, the issue of electrification has already been addressed over the past decade, and the next decade will be characterized by intelligence."

Lei Jun, chairman and CEO of Xiaomi

Donghai Securities said in a research note that autonomous driving technologies are entering a phase of rapid growth in China, as tech companies such as Huawei bring in more advanced driving assistance systems to cars.

Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association, said there is enough room for the development of smart cars in the

5G era. Huawei can offer a slew of technological solutions and services covering both hardware and software.

Similar to Huawei's emphasis on smart driving, Xiaomi also sees "intelligence as the soul of automobiles."

Lei Jun, chairman and CEO of Xiaomi, said: "In terms of intelligent electric cars, the issue of electrification has already been addressed over the past decade, and the next decade will be characterized by intelligence. Intelligence will become the decisive factor of this era."

According to him, Xiaomi has made significant investments in intelligent driving, with its dedicated research and development team currently exceeding 1,000 people and expected to surpass 1,500 by the end of the year. The company's test

vehicles have accumulated road test mileage exceeding 10 million kilometers for intelligent driving.

The company's much-anticipated first electric vehicle SU7, unveiled in March, was well received by consumers, reaffirming Xiaomi's ambition to build cars comparable to those of global automakers Porsche and Tesla and to become one of the top five auto manufacturers in the world in the future, Lei said.

According to him, Xiaomi, as a technology company and one of the top three global smartphone companies, has key advantages in intelligent technology. Xiaomi has strong capabilities in consumer electronics, operating systems, chips, AI, and other areas, significantly outpacing traditional automakers. It will be very difficult for traditional automakers to catch up with Xiaomi, he added.

Roy Lu, a Shanghai-based automotive analyst, said Xiaomi's entry is expected to intensify competition in China's NEV market where established automakers, startups and tech companies are all vying to expand their presence.

A price war is already underway in China's EV market, which is the world's largest.

Xiaomi's edge lies in its AI-enabled internet of things, or IoT, ecosystem, which might give it an upper hand amid competition, Lu said.

The Beijing-based company hopes that the SU7's shared operating system with its phones, laptops and other devices will appeal to existing customers.

Lei said Xiaomi plans to invest 24 billion yuan in R&D this year, demonstrating a serious commitment to manufacturing cars.

The Xiaomi SU7 underwent comprehensive testing in 300 cities, covering a total road distance of 5.4 million kilometers, with 576 test vehicles deployed.

Lei said that over the past three years of manufacturing cars, his biggest realization was just how difficult it is, noting that even large companies like Apple Inc have given up on it.

Zhang Yongwei, vice-president and secretary-general of China EV 100, a major auto industry think tank, said the competition in the EV industry will heat up this year, with a more differentiated market landscape.

The next one or two years will be very crucial, Zhang said, as companies that may not have the necessary competence will likely exit the market after a shakeout.

"The production volume and sales of new energy vehicles in China are expected to reach 13 million units in 2024, with a year-on-year growth rate of about 40 percent," Zhang said.

Chinese tech companies' rapid involvement in the car industry also banks on the country's efficient and sound auto supply chain.

Wang Jun, president of Changan Auto, said China has explored a successful path for the global NEV industry, with mature technologies and comprehensive industrial chains. "China has cultivated numerous high-quality component enterprises, including over 1,000 battery companies, and over 350 electric control companies."

Such a sound industrial foundation makes it easier for tech companies to make cars themselves, but it remains to be seen whether or not they can really afford the capital and time needed for the cash-intensive smart car business, given that several Chinese companies that had entered the segment faced severe financial difficulties. Some of them have even gone bankrupt, experts added.

Perils of ignoring ICT developments in auto industry

REPORTER'S LOG

By Ma Si

As a reporter who had been focusing on the information, communication and technology, or ICT, sector for about nine years, I never expected that one day I would write stories on the automobile industry.

However, strange are the ways in which convergence, synergy, and interconnectedness work. ICT and automobiles are more closely connected today than ever before, thanks to technological strides in artificial intelligence,

chips, the internet of things, 5G and so on.

So, although combustion engines and car designs are not my cup of tea, I can't ignore such aspects of the automobile industry anymore. Around five years ago, ICT reporters began interviewing executives of carmakers. Among the topics they discussed were electric vehicles and driverless automobiles.

Roads and highways full of vehicles but minus emissions, traffic snarls and stressed-out drivers — this futuristic vision is materializing in China slowly but surely, as the country's autonomous driving industry sits on the cusp of a golden period of development.

Policies are becoming increasingly clear and open; technologies such as AI and their applications like

algorithms are becoming more powerful; and, what's more, costs of crucial components are falling.

All these augur well for the healthy and robust development of the industry and commercialization of its products and technologies.

According to a report issued by BloombergNEF, China will operate the world's largest robotaxi fleet with about 12 million units by 2040, followed by the United States, which is expected to have around 7 million autonomous vehicles.

China has the potential to become the world's largest market for autonomous vehicles, according to consultancy McKinsey & Company, which estimates that such vehicles will make up for more than 40 percent of new vehicle sales in China by 2040.

Eyeing this trend, a growing number of Chinese ICT and internet-based companies are partnering with automobile makers, in the hope of reshaping consumers' in-car experiences.

They want consumers to have access to all their smartphone apps via the panel or screen in their cars. Stated differently, once inside a car, you no longer need to use your smartphone. Tech-savvy, app-happy Chinese consumers couldn't have asked for more.

What's even more interesting, car companies such as Nio and Geely have also started developing their own smartphones for the same reasons as above. They hope consumers can use phones to remote-control their cars, such as turning on air conditioners in cars 30 minutes

before they step out during the summer, so that the in-car temperature is cool in advance.

Such an interaction and competition between carmakers and ICT companies are far closer and more intense in China than in the rest of the world, as the country pioneers the electrification and intelligence trends of cars.

Andreas Urschitz, a member of the management board and chief marketing officer of Infineon, the world's largest auto semiconductor company, told me: "China has become a very fast mover and even the first mover, in particular, in the area of electrification, but also automated driving."

ICT and automobiles are increasingly intertwined these days. However, it does not mean companies in the two sectors can randomly expand their presence in each other's territories, as some have failed in their ambitions in the past, such

as EV startup Byton and internet company LeTV.

They had underestimated the complexity of manufacturing smart electric cars. Building an automobile production line entails high costs. Meeting the strict safety standards is not a piece of cake.

So, the lesson to be learned is this: irrespective of the close connection between ICT and automobiles, companies need to respect the complexity of an industry they know little about, especially in this age of cross-sector cooperation. For any failure in doing proper homework could lead them to overstretch themselves.

That lesson applies to me and fellow reporters as well.

We need to pull up our socks. Before venturing out to write on automobiles, an ICT beat reporter needs to broaden his or her ken. Full disclosure: I consult many experts before writing reports and features on smart cars.

TRAVEL



Historic Jeddah had a symbolic role as a gate to Makkah for Muslim pilgrims reaching Saudi Arabia by boat in old times, according to UNESCO, and continues to attract visitors from all walks of life for its ancient charm and entertainment. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Saudi Arabia eyes tourism transformation

Arab state highlights charming heritage sites through sustainable development

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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Saudi Arabia is teeming with unique experiences, from its charming heritage sites and sandy beaches, to its resort destinations, attracting solo travelers and families alike, not to mention its renowned holy sites for Muslim pilgrims and the vastness of its desert landscapes.

After welcoming a record 100 million tourists last year, thus surpassing its goals for Vision 2030, a grand economic diversification plan introduced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud in 2016, Chinese visitors and talents are poised to continue playing a significant role in the country's tourism development.

There were 140,000 Chinese visitors who came to Saudi Arabia last year, surpassing 2019 figures, which were at an estimated 111,000, according to Gloria Guevara Manzo, chief special adviser at the Ministry of Tourism Saudi Arabia, in an interview with China Daily in March.

When it launched its "Rethink Summer" campaign last year, the Saudi Tourism Authority invited Chinese holidaymakers to experience glamping in a Bedouin camp in AlUla and budget holidays in Jeddah, a major port in the central Hejaz region in western Saudi Arabia.

According to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre's website, Jeddah was, for centuries, "the most important, largest and richest among these settlements".

Today, it said, historic Jeddah "is the last surviving urban site along the Red Sea coast" that still preserves the ensemble of the attributes of this culture: commercial-based economy, multi-cultural environment, isolated outward-oriented houses, coral masonry construction, precious woodwork decorating the facades, and specific technical devices to aid internal ventilation.

Desert image

And contrary to its desert image, Saudi Arabia also has islands and beaches you can visit. About 40 kilometers, or about an hour's boat ride, from Jazan, one will find the Farasan Islands. According to the Visit Saudi website, more than 80 islands make up the archipelago.

Furthermore, since the first millennium BC, Jazan Province has been a draw for people from Arab states, Africa and Europe. The islands were once known as Portus Ferresanus, and a Latin inscription dating from 144 AD has been found on the island, indicating the existence of a Roman garrison.

Another growing popular destination is Umluj, famous for its shining blue waters and pristine white shores.

Umluj was once famous for the pro-

duction of top-tier boats and fishing was a predominant indigenous activity, and a major source of income. It is often referred to as being "the Saudi Maldives".

"Saudi Arabia tourism has huge potential, which is even larger than what digital economy or finance can bring to it," said Jerry Li, founder and managing partner of eWTP Arabia Capital.

Li said the nation's tourism "has a unique charm, with all its cultures, museums and historical heritage places", as he found that the local places may be ordinary looking on the outside, but inside it "can be fabulous with all the luxuries including splendid halls and swimming pools".

Pan Xin, a tourist guide in the Middle East from Hong Kong, said there had been an increasing trend for Chinese tourists to go to Saudi Arabia after the China-Saudi Arabia Summit in late 2022.

Manzo, from Saudi Arabia and former president and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council, credits the leaders' vision, leadership and resources for developing the sector, which she said a lot of countries lacked.

"That's very important. The second fact is that the massive investment that we see is a little bit over \$1 trillion when you combine infrastructure and tourism, but only half of that is going to NEOM, the rest is going to projects, is going to airport infrastructure, is going to the development of the sector," said Manzo.

"We have prioritized the sector ... so that we can share with the world that we are open for business," she added.

She noted that sports and culture are helping them create products for tourism with their different activities and that she expected it was going to give "more than one percent to the GDP of the country".

In the years to come, there are a couple of new attractions that are expected to rise, making Saudi Arabia's revised target of 150 million tourists by 2030 possible to reach.

Diriyah Company is set to introduce its new visionary and lifestyle destination, Diriyah Square, which is located on the outskirts of the Saudi capital, Riyadh. The new retail hub will host over 400 new retail outlets and more than 100 restaurants and cafes at the heart of the historic Diriyah development area incorporating 300-year-old traditional architectural concepts and design.

Group CEO of Diriyah Company Jerry Inzerillo said Diriyah Square is more than just a shopping destination. It is a symbol of Saudi Arabia's commitment to driving economic growth and fostering creativity and innovation.

Another one is the mega luxury mountain tourism destination Soudah Peaks, which is in the first phase of develop-



Foreign visitors take pictures in the Saed desert area, about 110 kilometers east of the capital city Riyadh. FAYEZ NURELDINE / AFP



The Soudah Peaks will be transformed into a mega luxury mountain tourism destination. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ment this year and is hoping for specialized Chinese firms to participate in the process, according to a senior executive.

Mountainous region

In September last year, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, who is also chairman of Soudah Development, unveiled a master plan that would transform the mountainous region of Soudah and parts of Rijal Almaa into Soudah Peaks. It is situated in the Aseer region in the southwest of Saudi Arabia.

Saleh Aloraini, chief executive officer at Soudah Development, told China Daily that the master plan will be developed over three phases. The first phase will have more than 900 hotel keys, 396 residential units, and 32,000 square meters of retail space.

"The development of the destination is expected to begin in 2024 with Phase 1 scheduled for completion in line with our timeline, which is when tourists can visit Soudah Peaks," Aloraini said.

Situated 3,015 meters above sea level, on the highest peak in Saudi Arabia, Soudah Peaks will offer an array of opportunities for potential investors and brands with a focus on various sectors such as ecotourism, entertainment, sports, wellness, and hospitality.

"Soudah Peaks presents a fertile ground for local and international brands to establish partnerships. The project will allocate over SAR 1 billion (\$266.7 million) toward infrastructure development, ensuring a solid foundation for growth and success," Aloraini told China Daily.

Aloraini said that these ambitious plans "open up immense opportunities for potential investors and brands to be

part of this visionary project".

"We also look forward to the prospect of collaborating with specialized Chinese companies as we continue to develop Soudah Peaks," said Aloraini.

"This demonstrates the strengthening of ties between Saudi Arabia and China, opening up opportunities for partnerships and mutual growth," he added.

In line with the goals of the Saudi Green Initiative, Soudah Development has undertaken initiatives to restore ecological balance with tree planting to facilitate the release of endangered wildlife, and rehabilitate local parks.

"We aim to contribute to creating a green and sustainable future that will benefit generations to come," said Aloraini.

Launched in 2021, the SGI is an ambitious national initiative for Saudi Arabia that aims to combat climate change, improve quality of life and protect the planet for future generations.

Under the SGI, Saudi Arabia has committed to growing 10 billion trees across the kingdom and rehabilitating 74.8 million hectares of land to restore Saudi Arabia's natural greenery.

"Recognizing the rich biodiversity and unique natural resources of the land, including over 200 documented heritage sites, Soudah Development is fully aware of the need to preserve and nurture these invaluable assets," he added.

Additionally, he said a substantial portion of the land is protected and enhanced through ecosystem restoration and rewilding efforts. Importantly, approximately one percent of the land area will be occupied by building work, ensuring minimal impact on the natural environment.

Xu Weiwei in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

NEOM presents vision of future

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
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Saudi Arabia's futuristic city of NEOM will redefine the concepts of living, education, healthcare, and sports through its three pillars of nature conservation, human livability, and economic prosperity, according to Tarek Qaddumi, executive director of urban planning of NEOM.

"It is a valuable proposition that looks to the imagination first, looks to the future, and looks to science and technology," Qaddumi said while recently promoting the project in Hong Kong.

The under-construction \$500 billion megacity is located in northwest Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea. The project is being built from the ground up as a living laboratory and a place where entrepreneurship will chart the course for the future.

NEOM was launched in 2017 by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, as part of the nation's campaign to diversify the country's economy, which is heavily reliant on fossil fuel revenues.

The project has become a core part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, a transformative and ambitious blueprint to unlock the potential of its people and create a diversified, innovative, and world-leading nation.

NEOM is an accelerator of human progress and a vision of what a new future might look like, according to NEOM's leadership delegation to China.

Its vision is to become "the land of the future, where the greatest minds and best talents are empowered to embody pioneering ideas and exceed boundaries in a world inspired by imagination," the delegation said.

"NEOM aims to redefine business, livability, and conservation, creating a future where people and the planet can thrive together," it added.

About 95 percent of NEOM's land is preserved for nature and the project is powered entirely by renewable, clean energies such as solar, wind, and hydrogen.

"This is very particular because we're very lucky to have some of the best wind on the planet, right there by the Red Sea," Qaddumi said.

According to Qaddumi, food in NEOM will be sustainable, whether that is through sustainable agriculture, sustainable fisheries, or sustainable trade.

NEOM describes itself as a destination and a home for people "who want to be part of building a new model for exceptional livability, creating thriving businesses, and reinventing environmental conservation".

The project is designed to include hyperconnected, cognitive cities, ports, enterprise zones, research centers, sports and entertainment venues, and tourist destinations.

Culture of exploration

At the same time, the projected residents of NEOM will embody an international ethos and embrace a culture of exploration, risk-taking, and diversity.

The "Discover NEOM" China tour ended recently with an event held at the M+ art museum in the West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong. This followed visits to Beijing and Shanghai.

The Hong Kong event was organized in partnership with the Belt and Road Office under the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

During the China tour, NEOM's leadership delegation made numerous presentations to illustrate the progress and benchmarks of NEOM so far.

Qaddumi highlighted NEOM's flagship regions, including THE LINE — a 170-kilometer-long, 200-meter-wide, 500-meter-tall linear city currently being built in NEOM, set to house 9 million people.

Other regions include Sindalah, its luxury island; Trojena, its year-round mountain destination and the first outdoor ski experience in the Gulf; and Oxagon, the reimagined industrial city and home to advanced and clean industries.

During their China tour, NEOM's delegation also held conversations with local businesspeople to explore the broad range of investment opportunities available.

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of the Government of the HKSAR Algeron Yau welcomed the NEOM leadership team to Hong Kong.

Saudi Arabia is one of the key players in the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, he said.

"As an open economy and one of the world's top financial, investment, and innovation hubs, Hong Kong stands ready to support Saudi Arabia in achieving its vision, while bringing growth opportunities for Hong Kong," he said.

"With our internationally benchmarked professional services and talent pool, Hong Kong can provide support for projects, such as NEOM, along the countries involved in the Belt and Road initiative," Yau added.



Tarek Qaddumi, executive director of NEOM urban planning, explains NEOM to the media in Hong Kong on April 19. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

SPORTS

OLYMPICS

Toledo back on board for Paris

After stepping away from the pro circuit for mental health reasons, the Brazilian is ready to ride the Olympic wave



Filipe Toledo of Brazil surfs in Heat 4 of the opening round at the SHISEIDO Tahiti Pro on Aug 11, 2023 at Teahupo'o, Tahiti, French Polynesia. After withdrawing from the professional tour to take a one-year mental health break, Toledo is feeling recharged and ready to win a gold medal at the Olympics this summer. OSPO RTS

Two months after double world champion Filipe Toledo shocked the surfing world by withdrawing from the professional tour to take a one-year mental health break, the Brazilian is in a happy place as he looks forward to the Paris Olympics.

Walking in Madrid's Retiro Park on a sunny spring day, the 29-year-old said he has no regrets, and that taking a sabbatical from the World Surf League was the best thing he's ever done.

Toledo points out that his one-year break means stepping away from the pressure of being on the tour month after month, and that he will have a go at winning a gold medal in the Olympics — the surfing event of which is to be held in Tahiti, French Polynesia.

He said that his break is the best preparation for the Games.

"I haven't been this happy and relaxed in a long time," Toledo said in an interview ahead of the recent Laureus Awards, where he was a nominee for action sportsperson of the year.

Toledo is a long way from home in California, and from Tahiti, where his rivals will be

slugging it out later this month at the sixth event of a professional tour where he made his name as the fastest surfer in the world.

He dominated the past two seasons with his unmatched repertoire of searing carves and aerials.

"I'm in a great place right now," he said. "I'm enjoying my family, enjoying my kids being home, being a normal parent — a human being. It just feels great."

Son of former double Brazilian champion Ricardo Toledo, Filipe entered the circuit as a teenager in 2013, carrying the pressure of being a wunderkind, which he said led to struggles with depression in 2019 and 2020.

Those were "dark times" when surfing "became an obligation", he added.

He bounced back in 2021, finishing runner-up in the title race behind compatriot Gabriel Medina, before winning back-to-back titles in 2022 and 2023.

Mental breakdown

However, when he got to Hawaii for the 2024 season opener in February, he suffered a mental breakdown, he said.

"Right before my heat, I had one of the



Reigning two-time surfing world champion, Filipe Toledo, attends an interview on April 18 as he prepares to compete at the Olympics. REUTERS

biggest crashes of my life. I was like, 'I can't do this anymore. It's just too much,'" Toledo said. "Getting back on tour, to the routine, training, trips and obligations, I was like, 'man, this is overwhelming right now. It feels too much'."

He finished in last place after catching two poor waves, earning a combined total of 1.77 points out of a possible 20. He withdrew from the contest, citing food poisoning.

He decided he needed a break and dropped the bombshell on his family, sponsors and the World Surf League.

"My heart had become like a big ice rock, I had no feelings," Toledo said. "I feel like I have to take care of my mental health."

Taking a year off will allow him to come back stronger and could mean he can prolong his career for another seven years, he reckons.

"I've been doing this for 11 years and since I got back home and started just living life as a normal person, I feel like, right now, I'm in the best place I've ever been in my career," he said.

Now he enjoys his home life in California and surfing purely for fun. He recently went

on a recreational surfing trip to Mexico with his brother and a friend, and enjoyed being on the waves more than he has in a long time.

Olympic challenge

He is still training hard for the Paris Olympics, which will take place between July 26 and Aug 11, where surfing is on the program for the second time after its Tokyo debut, but without the pressure of traveling and competing on a regular basis.

The tournament will be held at Tahiti's Teahupo'o, a powerful tubing wave site where Toledo has struggled.

However, the Brazilian beamed with confidence ahead of one of the biggest challenges of his career.

"I'm going to win. I believe in it," Toledo said. "We all know who the best surfers are in barrels. John John Florence, Gabriel Medina, Jack Robinson ... but, I am good, too. I can prove it to myself that I am good."

"I've been working so hard, and I feel I can prove myself and, hopefully, bring that medal back home. So it's going to be fun."

REUTERS



Norway's Karsten Warholm (left) and his friend Kristian Mork pose for a picture during a local running competition. AFP



Warholm poses with his medals after a competition in Trondheim, Norway, on March 13, 2011. AFP



Warholm celebrates winning the men's 400m hurdles final during the World Athletics Championships on Aug 23, 2023. AFP

Winning in the jeans for Norwegian record-breaking hurdler

ULSTEINVIK, Norway — At the age of just seven, wearing jeans in a local street race in his hometown of Ulsteinvik in Norway, Karsten Warholm won his first medal.

More followed and, today, a hundred or so adorn the childhood bedroom of the reigning European, world and Olympic 400m hurdles champion.

It is the brightest corner of a small shippyard town on the edge of the North Sea.

Warholm merits just a one-line mention on the town's Wikipedia page and, yet, his exploits on the track are perhaps how future generations will remember Ulsteinvik.

The 28-year-old has genuinely won it all: three world championships, two European championships and an Olympic title in 2021 with a stunning world record time. It all began one day in the sum-

mer of 2003.

Seven-year-old Karsten was convinced by a friend to take part in a race that the local athletics club was organizing around the town hall.

"He turned up in jeans, without any sportswear, and crushed everyone. After that, he took up athletics," his faithful friend Kristian Mork said.

"I also did athletics for years, but because I lined up against Karsten, my list of achievements consists mainly of silver medals," he laughs.

Treasure trove

In the family home, just outside Ulsteinvik, the bedroom where seven-year-old Warholm hung his first medal has been transformed into a trophy room.

The Olympic gold from Tokyo, however, as well as one of the shoes he was wearing when he ran 45.94 seconds in the final to smash his

own world record, are usually kept elsewhere.

That run in Tokyo, which saw him become the first person to run under 46 seconds, is one of the more astonishing in the history of the Games, as he sliced 0.76 seconds off his previous world record, a stunning 1.63 percent improvement.

But, there is still room for more gold from the Paris Olympics.

"We always try to leave a little space. Just in case," smiles Kristine Golin Haddal, Karsten's mother and agent.

She and Warholm's father Mikal have been front and center of his development as an athlete.

Kristine was a keen athlete in her youth, while Mikal played soccer. The result was that young Karsten kicked a ball one day and worked on his athletics the next.

Warholm made his breakthrough

on the track when he was 15 at an unofficial national youth indoor championships in 2011.

In one weekend, he won five gold medals: long jump, high jump, 60m, 60m hurdles and 200m.

In the photos, he poses proudly, smiling behind his braces.

"He liked to try out different disciplines, to challenge himself, to see if he could handle different events," recalls his mother.

He was a jack-of-all-trades, had an iron will and put in an enormous amount of training, both at school and in his spare time.

It was on an open-air track in the town, on the playground or along the beach that he clocked up the kilometers, in summer and winter alike.

"He trained all year round, often outside," says his former high school sports teacher, Svein Ove Fylsvik.

"I'm not sure he always found it particularly fun, but he did everything we agreed, come rain or shine."

Warholm effect

Hard work pays off. In 2013, in Donetsk, Warholm won the world junior championships in the octathlon, the youth equivalent of the decathlon, a discipline he concentrated on for a long time.

"He wasn't a big fan of the 400m. It was too tiring," says Arve Hatloy, his youth coach.

"He continued to be versatile and dabbled in everything until he was 18 or 19."

But, there was a drawback with the octathlon, and, in particular, the decathlon, as he looked to step up.

"He struggled to really excel in the combined events, because he wasn't very good at the javelin," said a matter-of-fact Hatloy.

It was not until he moved to Oslo in 2015 that the future world record holder really concentrated on the 400m hurdles, under the guidance of his current coach, Leif Olav Alnes.

The rest will go down in athletics history.

Meanwhile, closer to home, among the 9,000 or so inhabitants of Ulsteinvik and the surrounding area, the Warholm effect is evident.

The town track that he has pounded up and down thousands of times is due to be renovated, after which it will bear the name of their most illustrious citizen.

The local club, which once had a few dozen members, now has over 200. Among them is 20-year-old hurdles specialist Lovise Skarbovik Andresen, for whom Warholm is an inspiration.

AFP

SPORTS

SOCCER



Dortmund's forward Niclas Fuellkrug celebrates scoring his goal during a 1-0 Champions League semifinal first-leg victory against Paris Saint-Germain in Dortmund, western Germany on Wednesday. AFP

Dortmund's Fuellkrug makes a point, outshining Mbappe

Journeyman striker fires German side to victory as PSG falters in front of goal

DORTMUND, Germany — Niclas Fuellkrug gave Borussia Dortmund a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain in their Champions League semifinal first leg on Wednesday as the journeyman striker outshone superstar Kylian Mbappe.

Seeking a return to the final for the first time since 2013, the 1997 winner was dogged and determined, outmuscling its heavily favored opponent in front of more than 80,000 fans.

Fuellkrug, playing in his first Champions League season at the age of 31, collected a lofted pass from centerback Nico Schlotterbeck in the 36th minute and blasted a low shot into the left corner of the net.

PSG, led by Mbappe, hit the post twice in quick succession early in the second-half but could not break through.

"I think we today showed a classic team performance. Each helped the other to win the game. We needed a bit of luck a couple of times, but we can be very satisfied with our performance," said long-serving center-back Mats Hummels.

"It was a very satisfying, very grown-up performance from us."

Dortmund, who had already lost

and drawn against PSG this season in the group stage, can continue to dream of a return to Wembley 11 years after its last Champions League final.

Despite the setback, however, PSG will remain confident of overturning the deficit at home next week against a side it thoroughly outclassed in Paris in September.

"The Parc (PSG's stadium) and our supporters give us hope for the second leg, and we know we can do much better," PSG captain Marquinhos told Canal Plus.

Dortmund manager Edin Terzic said before the match that PSG was "built to win the Champions League" since its Qatari takeover a decade ago.

Nowhere was the contrast between the two clubs greater than PSG's global superstar Mbappe, playing in his last season for his hometown club, and journeyman Dortmund striker Fuellkrug, who was playing second-division soccer this time two years ago.

PSG coach Luis Enrique is hopeful his side will still reach the final.

"It's football. Very often it is marvelous, and other times it is like this. We would have preferred to be in a

different situation, but I think when you look at it, it was a very even game," the Spaniard told broadcaster Canal Plus.

"Nobody ever said it was going to be easy in the semifinals of the Champions League. The boys in the dressing room are a bit down. We had one chance where we hit both posts," Enrique added.

"You have to say this is an exceptional stadium, but I am sure we will be very strong in Paris and we have nothing to lose."

First past the post

Spurred on by a passionate home crowd, which booed and whistled every Mbappe touch, Dortmund had the best of the opening stages, Jadon Sancho shining down the right flank.

Marcel Sabitzer had Dortmund's best chance for an opener after 14 minutes, blasting straight at Gianluigi Donnarumma from a tight angle.

The breakthrough came after 36 minutes thanks to some superb old-school forward play from Fuellkrug.

Centerback Schlotterbeck had the ball well in his own half and thought about a safe pass back to the keeper, but instead punted it forward, with only Fuellkrug showing awareness to the possibility.

The striker controlled the ball

with a deft touch and drilled a low shot past a helpless Donnarumma.

Fresh from wrapping up the Ligue 1 title at the weekend, PSG had few chances in the opening half, despite its attacking riches, registering zero shots on target.

The visitors, however, sprung to life after halftime, Mbappe rattling the inside of one post seconds before former Dortmund wingback Achraf Hakimi rattled the inside of the other.

PSG should have equalized after 56 minutes, Marquinhos curled a beautiful pass through a crowded Dortmund box, but Fabian Ruiz's diving header went wide.

Another former Dortmund player Ousmane Dembele blasted over right in front of goal with 10 minutes remaining.

With moments left, the impressive Sancho laid on an excellent pass for Julian Brandt, but Dortmund's hopes of a second were snuffed out by some desperate PSG defending.

The victory, along with Tuesday's 2-2 draw between Bayern Munich and Real Madrid in the other semifinal, guarantees Germany, rather than England or France, an extra Champions League place for next season, securing Dortmund's participation again next year.

BASKETBALL

Celtics cruise coolly into semis as Heat fizzles out

BOSTON — If this playoff run is about redemption for the Boston Celtics, it had to start with exacting some revenge against the Miami Heat.

A year ago, Miami embarrassed Boston in a Game 7 showdown at TD Garden.

This time, the Celtics returned the favor.

Jaylen Brown and Derrick White each scored 25 points and the Celtics advanced to the Eastern Conference semifinals, beating the short-handed Heat 118-84 in Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Boston will face the winner of the Cleveland-Orlando series. The Cavaliers lead 3-2, with Game 6 in Orlando on Friday night.

Brown said the Celtics went into the game with a business-like approach.

"It is a lot of history, back and forth, but it didn't matter who it was," Brown said. "We just had to get the job done."

That was echoed by teammate Jayson Tatum.

"I think this is my fourth time playing them in playoffs," Tatum said. "They all count the same. We did our job. We took care of business."

Brown also had six assists, and White hit five 3-pointers. Sam Hauser added 17 points and Tatum had 16 points and 12 rebounds. The top-seeded Celtics never trailed and led by 37 points at one stage.

Bam Adebayo scored 23 points and Tyler Herro had 15 for Miami, which made its first exit from the playoffs prior to the conference finals since 2021. The Heat struggled throughout, going 3 for 29 from 3-point range.

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said it was clear early on that the Celtics were playing with some extra energy from the opening tap.

"They probably had something to motivate them even more against us," he said.

Despite the lopsided loss and the way their season ended, Adebayo said he is taking lessons into the offseason.

"We've gained a lot of mental toughness," he said. "Going through that as a captain, it helped me understand that the ship's going rock sometimes."

Boston played for the first time this postseason without center Kristaps Porzingis after he strained his right calf in the Celtics' Game 4 victory.

Boston exploited a Heat team heavily hit by injury, with the most players out than at any other time in the series. Jaime Jaquez Jr sat out after suffering a hip injury in Game 4. He was replaced in the lineup by



Jaylen Brown of the Boston Celtics takes a shot over Tyler Herro of the Miami Heat during Game 5 of the NBA Eastern Conference first-round playoffs on Wednesday in Boston. The Celtics advanced to the Eastern Conference semifinals, beating the Heat 118-84. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

Delon Wright, marking the 37th starting five the Heat has used this season. Jaquez joined Jimmy Butler (knee) and Terry Rozier (neck), who had both been sidelined since the start of the series.

It made for some unique rotations for Miami, which included veteran Patty Mills logging minutes for just the third time in the series.

Boston seized on the vulnerabilities in the Heat's defense, spreading them out and knocking down eight 3-pointers in the opening period. It helped the Celtics carry an 18-point lead into the second quarter.

The highlight of the opening 12 minutes came courtesy of White, who pulverized Miami from long distance with eight 3s in Game 4. He stayed on the attack early Wednesday, faking a 3-point attempt and then driving in for an uncontested one-handed dunk.

White played to the home crowd afterward, holding his hand in front of his face as he backpedaled up the court. After the Heat called a timeout, a courtside spectator near the Celtics' bench could be seen pretending to fan White in pantomime fashion on the sideline.

"I think that's when I'm at my best, when I'm having fun out there," White said. "But, at the same time realizing this is the best moment and that we're all locked into it."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA




AD



东北虎
Amur tiger

**Between heaven and earth,
together with other sentient beings, I live.**

—Zhuangzi, philosopher, late fourth century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一

—《庄子·齐物论》