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# CHINA DAILY

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President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, join French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte Macron, in watching folklore dancers at Col du Tourmalet in France on Tuesday. AURELIEN MORISSARD / AP

## Xi, Macron hold productive talks on key issues

Leaders continue in-depth exchanges, pledge to strengthen cooperation

By XU WEI in Belgrade xuwe@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron continued their in-depth engagement over key bilateral and multilateral issues on Tuesday as the two leaders met at Col du Tourmalet in southwestern France.

Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, were welcomed by Macron and his wife, Brigitte Macron, upon their arrival at the airport in Tarbes on Tuesday morning.

The two couples took separate cars to the Pyrenees mountains, which is dear to Macron as the birthplace of his maternal grandmother. They watched traditional dancers performing under the snowy peaks, took a group photo with them, before sitting down for lunch at a local restaurant.

Xi underlined China's readiness to strengthen people-to-people exchanges with France and Europe, continuously deepen economic and trade cooperation and enhance positive mutual recognition so as to carry forward the bond of friendship at the people level.

Although China and France belong to Eastern and Western civilizations and have different values and social systems, they both value the exchange and mutual learning between civilizations, Xi said.

The two sides can coexist in harmony despite their differences, and, through dialogue and cooperation, make new contributions to world peace, global development and human progress, he added.

Xi told his host that the beautiful scenery and distinctive cuisine at Col du Tourmalet have left a deep impression on him. He extended a welcoming message to have more high-quality French agricultural and food products in Chinese homes, while inviting more French people to visit China.

Meanwhile, the Chinese president said he looks forward to frequent interactions with Macron to lead the healthy and stable development of China-France and China-Europe

relations, and to inject more stability and positive energy into a world fraught with chaos and turbulence.

He invited the French president to visit China at his convenience.

Macron recalled fond memories of his last visit to China in April 2023, especially the informal meeting with Xi at the Pine Garden in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

He stressed that the in-depth exchanges with Xi allowed him to gain further insights into China's history, culture, philosophy and development journey, while deepening his understanding of China's positions on important issues.

Macron highlighted the imperative for Europe to maintain its strategic autonomy and unity in the face of a global landscape full of uncertainties, adding that developing good relations with China and strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation are essential.

Macron also held a departure ceremony for Xi and his wife at the airport on Tuesday night when they left France for a state visit to Serbia.

The engagement outside Paris came as Beijing and Paris reached key consensus on bolstering agricultural trade and cooperation during the Chinese president's three-day state visit.

According to a joint statement issued by the two nations during the visit, the two sides agree to explore ways to strengthen scientific and technological cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as crops, livestock, poultry, fruits and vegetables, smart agricultural equipment and climate change adaptation.

The two nations also reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their agri-food partnership, with the French side expressing appreciation to the "French Farm to Chinese Table" initiative.

China will greenlight imports of pig origin protein feed as well as pork offal from France effective immediately, according to the Chinese customs and the French farm ministry.



President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, are welcomed on Tuesday by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic (front, second from right) and his wife, Tamara Vucic (front, right), upon their arrival at Nikola Tesla Airport in Belgrade, capital of Serbia. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

## Chinese president starts state visit to Serbia

By MO JINGXI Mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping arrived in Belgrade, capital of Serbia, on Tuesday night, starting a state visit to the central European country. Upon his arrival, the Chinese president said he is confident that this visit will be a fruitful one and open up a new chapter in China-Serbia relations.

"On behalf of the Chinese government and people, I would like to extend heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the friendly government and people of Serbia," Xi said in a written speech upon his arrival at Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport.

The last time Xi was in Serbia was in 2016, when the two countries' heads of state upgraded bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership. Since then, the China-Serbia relationship has realized leapfrog development,

I look forward to taking this visit as an opportunity to have in-depth exchange of views with President Aleksandar Vucic on bilateral ties and other issues of mutual interest, renew friendship, plan for cooperation, explore development, and draw up a new blueprint for the development of bilateral relations."

President Xi Jinping

and achieved historic results, Xi said in the speech.

Standing at a new historical starting point, he said that China will work with Serbia to jointly stay committed to the original aspiration and forge ahead together to open up a new vista in China-Serbia cooperation, with stronger momentum, greater scope and higher quality.

"I look forward to taking this visit as an opportunity to have in-depth exchange of views with President Aleksandar Vucic on bilateral ties and other issues of mutual interest, renew friendship, plan for cooperation, explore development, and draw up a new blueprint for the development of bilateral relations," he said.

Xi is currently making a six-day visit to Europe, his first European tour in five years. The three-nation trip has already taken him to France, and later he will go to Hungary.

## BELJINGERS RELAX IN 'HUSH HOUR' AS COMMUNITY LIBRARIES SPREAD

Reading spots mushroom across capital as local government, residents both take action

By XIN WEN xinwen@chinadaily.com.cn

Amid the hustle and bustle of a big city like Beijing, sitting in the sunshine, sipping a cup of coffee and reading a relaxing book — even on the weekend — can seem like a luxury.

To address the challenge of finding "hush hour", more community libraries, some built with funding from local governments and the ingenuity and dedication of residents, are mushrooming across the country's capital.

### in-depth

By 2021, more than 90 percent of the city's population had easy access to community libraries at 6,830 locations, according to the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism. The bureau said its goal is to have complete coverage of the city by 2035.

Peng Yanshu, director of the Fangzhuang Art and Culture Center, is one local who took matters into her own hands. The 36-year-old helped set up a community reading center after moving from Beijing's northwestern Haidian district to southern Fengtai district in 2021. She was concerned the area near her new home lacked art and cultural facilities.

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# XI'S VISIT



President Xi Jinping delivers a speech at the closing ceremony of the sixth meeting of the China-France Business Council in Paris on Monday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

## French firms urged to seize opportunities

Xi says China is working to steadily expand institutional opening-up

By MO JINGXI  
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President Xi Jinping said on Monday that entrepreneurs in France are welcome to participate in China's modernization efforts, and to seize opportunities arising from China's development as the country mulls significant moves to further deepen reform across various sectors.

Xi made the remarks when attending the closing ceremony of the sixth meeting of the China-France Business Council together with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Theatre Marigny in Paris.

Xi told delegates to the meeting that China is working to steadily expand institutional opening-up, ease market access and shorten the negative list for foreign investment. This will help provide a broader market and more win-win cooperation opportunities for countries including France, he said.

Since China and France established diplomatic ties 60 years ago, the two countries have developed a closely intertwined relationship between their economies, with bilateral trade increasing 800-fold to reach \$78.9 billion last year.

Based on past and present experiences, Xi emphasized that there are no justifiable reasons for failures in maximizing the potential of the China-France relationship, and vowed to further enhance its productivity.

"China will continue to make full use of the 'French farm to Chinese dining table' whole-chain rapid coordination mechanism, and bring more cheese, ham, wine and other quality agricultural products from France to the dining tables of Chinese families," he said.

Xi also announced that China will extend visa exemption entry for citizens from France and another 11 countries on short-term visits to China until the end of 2025.

"Deeper friendship calls for frequent exchanges and closer cooperation. We always view France as a priority and trust-

worthy partner of cooperation," he said.

According to Xi, the China-France relationship has always been a pacesetter for relations between China and Western countries.

"It shows how countries with different cultures, systems and development levels can help each other succeed and make progress together," he said, adding that the China-France friendship is in the best interest of the Chinese and French peoples as well as in the interest of the whole world.

Noting that China and Europe are two major markets promoting globalization, Xi said China will work with France to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation between the two sides.

He called on the two sides to continue to enhance political mutual trust, remove various distractions, and jointly oppose attempts to turn business relations into political, ideological or security issues.

"We should turn China and Europe into each other's key partners for business cooperation, priority partners for cooperation in science and technology, and trustworthy partners for cooperation in industrial and supply chains," he said, adding that China will open its market wider to create more opportunities for companies from France, Europe and beyond.

Around 200 government officials and entrepreneurs from both countries participated in the meeting.

Antoine de Saint-Affrique, CEO of Danone, who attended the meeting on Monday, said that as China advances its high-quality development agenda and nurtures new quality productive forces, French enterprises like Danone have found fertile ground for growth.

"The high-level exchanges have painted a promising blueprint for the future development of China-France relations, which is truly inspiring," he said, adding that he expects the two countries' partnership to generate new opportunities in the future.



President Xi Jinping addresses the welcoming banquet hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Monday evening. YIN BOGU / XINHUA

## Xi toasts special China-France friendship

By ZHOU JIN  
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President Xi Jinping has said that Beijing and Paris are special friends, and the China-France relationship is a special one among the world's major countries.

Xi made the remark while toasting a welcoming banquet held by French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Monday evening.

The relationship is special in that both countries are committed to the spirit of independence, he said.

Six decades ago, General Charles de Gaulle made the decision to establish diplomatic relations with New China against the backdrop of the Cold War, Xi noted, with the president's three-day state visit to France coinciding with the 60th

anniversary of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations.

Former French president Georges Pompidou was the first Western head of state to visit New China, and France was the first Western country to host an official visit by a leader of New China.

These highlights in China-France interactions are all attributed to the spirit of independence, which should be cherished and carried forward, Xi said.

This year has been designated as the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism, and Xi emphasized mutual appreciation for the special relationship between Beijing and Paris.

Representing Eastern and Western civilizations, China and France have a fine tradition of mutual appreciation and mutual attraction, he said.

While the thinking of Confucius influenced people like the French writer and philosopher Voltaire and inspired the French Enlightenment, the Work-Study Movement of Chinese students in France early last century also helped cultivate a contingent of talent for the later revolution, development and reform in China, Xi said.

The two countries can use the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism as an opportunity to draw wisdom and nourishment from each other's culture, he said.

Xi pointed out that the China-France relationship is also special because both countries have a strong sense of responsibility.

History has proved time and again that China and France can work together for the betterment of the world, he said.

Amid global challenges and turbulence such as the Ukraine crisis, the Palestine-Israel conflict, economic recovery lacking momentum and climate change, China and France are duty-bound to shoulder greater responsibilities, he said.

Xi also said that he and Macron have agreed to deepen high-level mutual trust and cooperation, strengthen communication and coordination on major international issues to jointly inject hope into a confused world, and explore the way forward for human progress.

More interactions and more exchanges will build more consensus, he said, adding that with a fine tradition from the past, a good foundation of the present, and a blueprint for the future, the China-France relationship will embrace a spring of bloom and boom.

## Peng encourages investment in women's education

China is willing to work with UNESCO to encourage increased global investment in girls' and women's education and help more women obtain equal access to education rights, said Peng Liyuan, wife of President Xi Jinping.

Peng, who is also a UNESCO special envoy for the advancement of girls' and women's education, made the remark on Monday when meeting with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay as she visited the organization's headquarters in Paris, France.

She briefed Azoulay on China's latest progress in promoting girls' and women's education, especially the achievements of the Spring Bud Project, a nationwide campaign to help dropout girls return to school and improve teaching conditions in impoverished areas.

She also presented UNESCO with a tapestry titled *Blooming Spring Bud*, co-created by beneficiaries of the project.

Peng said that while serving as UNESCO's special envoy for the advancement of girls' and women's education in the past decade, she has visited many schools in various countries, and is delighted to see more and more women being able to live a better life thanks to education.



Peng Liyuan, wife of President Xi Jinping, visits the Orsay Museum with Brigitte Macron, wife of French President Emmanuel Macron, in Paris, France, on Monday afternoon. YUE YUEWEI / XINHUA

Promoting girls' and women's education is a great cause that is closely related to social progress and the shared future for humanity, she added.

Azoulay praised Peng's work and contributions as a special envoy, and presented her with a 10-year service honor certificate.

They visited an exhibition on the

10-year achievements of cooperation between China and UNESCO, at which Azoulay spoke highly of China's contribution to the development of girls' and women's education around the world.

She also expressed UNESCO's willingness to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with China to promote new develop-

ments in global girls' and women's education.

Also on Monday, Peng visited the Orsay Museum in Paris, together with Brigitte Macron, French President Emmanuel Macron's wife, to appreciate the *Paris 1874 Inventing Impressionism* exhibition and the museum's masterpiece oil paintings.

The paintings include classic works by impressionist and post-impressionist artists such as Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Vincent van Gogh.

Noting that both Chinese and French people love paintings, Peng expressed the hope that the two sides could carry out more exchanges to allow the two peoples to feel the charm of each other's culture and deepen mutual understanding.

In the hall of the museum, Peng and Brigitte Macron also had cordial exchanges with French students who were visiting and studying there.

Peng said she hopes that the students will become little envoys of China-France friendship and build a bridge of communication between the two peoples, so that China-France friendship will be passed on from generation to generation.

CHINA DAILY - XINHUA

### Highlights of the four joint statements released by China and France during President Xi's state visit

#### On the situation in the Middle East, the two heads of state:

- Stressed the urgency of an immediate and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, called for the immediate release of all hostages, and urged the immediate and effective implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions.
- Called for effective opening of all necessary passages and border crossings for the speedy, safe, sustainable and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip.
- Advocated the concrete implementation of the two-state solution.
- Emphasized the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation in the

Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and called for an immediate cessation of attacks on civilian vessels.

- Called for a global truce during the Olympic Games in Paris this summer.

#### On strengthening biodiversity and ocean cooperation, China and France:

- Plan to take actions in accordance with the international conventions already ratified by both countries.
- Are committed to contributing to the early implementation of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of

Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, and encourage all countries to take similar actions.

- Are willing to strengthen cooperation between their national institutions responsible for the conservation, protection and restoration of marine and coastal biodiversity.
- Are committed to combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and advocating for this approach in relevant international organizations.
- Pledged to prevent and reduce pollutants — chemical, plastic or others — and address the associated risks they pose to biodiversity.

#### On artificial intelligence and global governance, the two countries:

- Agreed on the importance of promoting the development and security of AI and promoting appropriate international governance.
- Agreed that global governance of AI should allow for flexibility to facilitate the development of a constantly and rapidly evolving technology.
- Are fully committed to promoting safe, reliable and trustworthy AI systems, adhering to the purpose of "AI for good", and exploring the potential of AI and reducing its risks.
- Recognized that the opportunities, risks and challenges associated with

AI are global in nature, underlining the importance of strengthening international cooperation to ensure international security, stability and respect for sovereignty and fundamental rights.

- Emphasized the importance of bridging the digital divide and improving the AI capabilities of developing countries.

#### On agricultural exchanges and cooperation, the two sides:

- Reaffirmed the crucial role of agriculture in China and France and in bilateral relations.
- Supported deepening cooperation in agriculture and agreed to explore

ways to enhance technological cooperation in areas of mutual concern, such as crops.

- Are willing to continue exploring the potential for cooperation in rural development and construction.
- Welcomed the strengthening of cooperation through the signing of the administrative agreement on grape planting and wine production. France supports China's accession to the International Organization of Vine and Wine in 2024.
- Are committed to actively exploring the complete lifting of the ban on bovine spongiform encephalopathy-free beef products.

ZHAO JIA

# XI'S VISIT

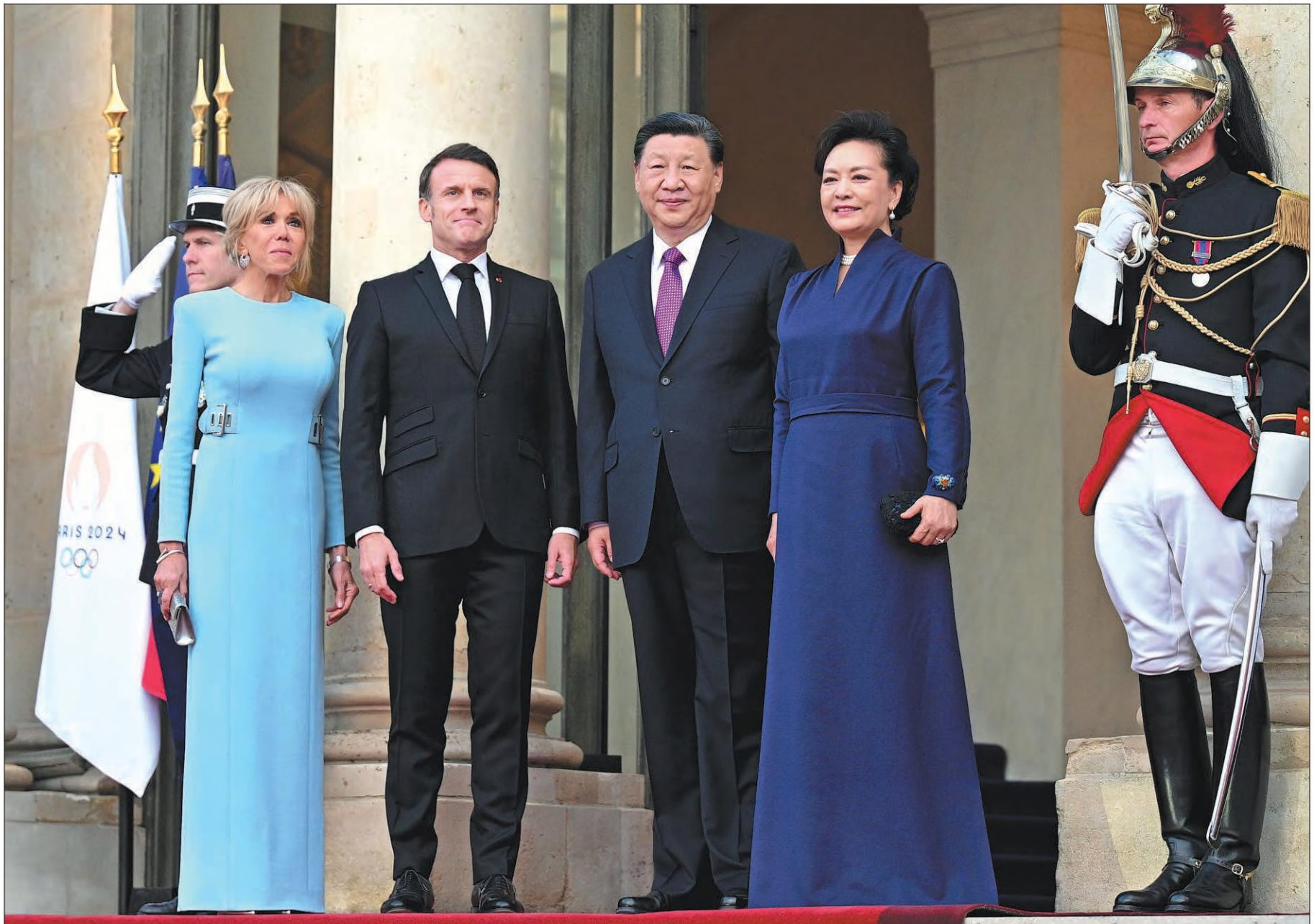


President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, are escorted by French guards as they head to the Elysee Palace after they attended a welcome ceremony in Paris on Monday. GAO JING / XINHUA

# Successful sojourn



Overseas Chinese hold up flags and cheer for President Xi's state visit to France in Paris on Sunday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY



President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, attend a welcome banquet held by French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte Macron, at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Monday. LI XUEREN / XINHUA



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with French President Emmanuel Macron during a joint news conference at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Monday. LI XUEREN / XINHUA



President Xi Jinping talks with French President Emmanuel Macron during a meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Monday. YIN BOGU / XINHUA



**Left:** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Director-General Audrey Azoulay presents Peng Liyuan, a UNESCO special envoy for the advancement of girls' and women's education, with a 10-year service honor certificate in Paris on Monday. YUE YUEWEI / XINHUA



**Right:** President Xi Jinping attends a China-France-EU trilateral meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Monday. LI XUEREN / XINHUA

## XI'S VISIT

## Xi vows to enhance Serbia friendship

President pledges to make efforts to deliver more benefits to both nations

By MO JINGXI  
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Before the start of his state visit to Serbia, the second leg of his current three-nation European tour, President Xi Jinping said he looks forward to meeting Serbian leaders and friends to renew the friendship between the two countries and explore ways of cooperation.

"This will be my second visit to your country, a land of beauty and legends, as President of the People's Republic of China. The sweet scenes that prevailed during my last visit eight years ago remain very much alive in my mind," Xi wrote in a signed article published in the Serbian newspaper Politika on Tuesday.

Xi said he will work with his Serbian friends during his visit to

"bring out the best in our ironclad friendship and take real efforts to deliver more benefits to our two peoples, advance world peace and development, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind."

He said the long-lasting friendship and win-win cooperation between China and Serbia make it clear that a stronger bilateral relationship conforms with the trend of history and serves the best interests of the two peoples.

Last year, China was Serbia's largest source of foreign investment and its second-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade volume registering at \$4.35 billion.

In 2016, a century-old Serbian steel mill that was about to slide into bankruptcy made a remarkable

comeback after receiving Chinese investment through the deepening high-quality Belt and Road cooperation between China and Serbia. The mill has now become one of the three biggest export companies in Serbia.

Xi said the thriving cooperation between the two countries in trade and economic relations, industrial chain and infrastructure development gives a great boost to their respective process of modernization.

"On the new journey of the new era, the China-Serbia comprehensive strategic partnership has more potential for further growth," he wrote, calling on the two countries to always be good friends and good partners.

The Chinese and Serbian peoples, though far apart geographically, have forged a strong friendship during the bitter Anti-Fascist War and their respective nation-building in the last century.

"Amid the ongoing transformations unseen in a century in the

world, our mutual support remains as strong as ever, our cooperation is closer, and our exchanges and mutual learning more substantive," Xi wrote.

Xi called on China and Serbia, which hold similar positions on many major international and regional issues, to play an exemplary role in promoting fairness and justice.

#### Multilateralism stressed

"Facing a fluid and turbulent world, ... we should practice true multilateralism, and endeavor to maintain world peace and stability and safeguard international fairness and justice," he wrote.

The Chinese president also stressed the need to promote multi-dimensional people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and diversify subnational cooperation between the two countries for their friendship to shine even brighter.

"We should create more oppor-

tunities for our youth so that the China-Serbia friendship will be carried forward from generation to generation," he wrote.

As this year marks the 25th anniversary of the NATO bombing of the former Chinese embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 which killed three Chinese journalists, Xi said Chinese people cherish peace, and will never allow such tragic history to repeat.

"The China-Serbia friendship, forged with the blood of our compatriots, will stay in the shared memory of the Chinese and Serbian peoples, and will inspire us to march forward with big strides," he wrote.

Just like flowers in spring will turn into fruit in autumn, Xi said the tree of the China-Serbia friendship will grow tall and sturdy and bear more fruit for the two peoples.

"This is what we expect and what we hope to witness together," he wrote.

## Visit marks 'pivotal moment' in relations

By WANG MINGJIE in Paris  
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Former French prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin has highlighted the profound significance of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to France, particularly amid the current turbulent geopolitical landscape and global uncertainties, saying it is not only timely but also essential for fostering deeper mutual understanding and strengthening collaborative efforts between the two nations.

"The visit of President Xi Jinping to France marks a pivotal moment, especially when the world faces such perilous challenges," Raffarin told China Daily in an interview. "We cannot envision the world's future without considering China, and, likewise, it is not in China's interest to disregard Europe."

He emphasized the necessity of continuous dialogue with China. "We need to have a very regular dialogue with China. I think that Emmanuel Macron is the leader of the West who best understands President Xi Jinping's thinking, having spent many hours discussing with the Chinese president," Raffarin said.

The discussions between Xi and Macron covered urgent global issues, including climate change and strategic geopolitical questions.

Raffarin expressed his satisfaction with the focus of the talks, recognizing their importance not just for France or China, but for the entire world. "These discussions are vital, as the world navigates through a dangerous period."

Raffarin, who served as prime minister from 2002 to 2005, asserted that France holds a unique position in Europe, having established a model for engaging in meaningful discussions with China, choosing cooperation over confrontation.

"France probably has the closest relationship with China within Europe, despite differing viewpoints. We share a vision of a multilateral world," he said. **Jean-Pierre Raffarin**

Raffarin laid out what he sees as key areas for enhancing cooperation between France and China, emphasizing cultural exchange, environmental preservation and the establishment of new multilateral regulations as foundational elements of the partnership. "We need to focus on cultural questions to understand the societies between France and China better. Furthermore, protecting our planet for future generations is now a priority, necessitating a global consensus, particularly among the young people."

He also touched upon the need for common regulations in emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, suggesting they could form the basis for the reform of global multilateralism.

Addressing strategic misalignments in global politics, particularly regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the 75-year-old emphasized that a strong and balanced Europe is beneficial for China.

Looking ahead, Raffarin voiced his concern about the current direction of global politics, advocating for cooperation over confrontation.

"In a world leaning toward confrontation, we need to steer back toward cooperation," he said. "This is the only way forward for a stable and prosperous global community."

He added that he views Xi's visit as a cornerstone for not only reinforcing the China-France relationship, but also setting a precedent for how major global powers should interact in an increasingly multipolar world.

As tensions continue to rise on various fronts, the collaboration between China and France could play a crucial role in navigating the complex web of international relations, he said.

Raffarin welcomed Xi's commitment to expanding access and welcoming French companies and investment into China, underscoring the need for reciprocal relations between China and Europe.

"What we seek is reciprocity," he said. "The rules that apply to Chinese companies in Europe should similarly apply to European companies in China."

## Agricultural collaboration yields rich dividends amid deepening ties

By WANG ZHUOQIONG and LI MENGHAN

China has seen a robust trend in imports of high-quality agricultural products from France, driven by growing consumer demand and deepening bilateral ties.

France is China's largest agricultural product import market and the second-largest agricultural product trading partner in the European Union.

The import value of agricultural products from France last year was 46.95 billion yuan (\$6.5 billion), marking a 50.5 percent increase compared to five years ago, said Lyu Daliang, spokesperson for the General Administration of Customs. In the first quarter of this year, China imported agricultural products worth close to 10 billion yuan from France.

The growth is fueled in part by successful collaborations between Chinese and French companies.

Florian Delmas, president of Andros Group, a century-old food and agricultural enterprise based in France, lauded the fruitful collaboration with Beijing Capital Agribusiness & Foods Group since the signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in 2019, witnessed by the heads of state of China and France.

Five years on, the joint venture has seen Andros China enjoy significant achievements, including the establishment of two processing factories in Linyi, Shandong province, and the expansion of its factory in Beijing, originally built in 1998.

It has produced a diverse range of high-quality fruit processing products in the fields of food service, industrial and retail sectors, cover-



A visitor selects a bottle of French wine at an import-export exhibition in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on April 28. DING GENHOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

ing more than 170 cities and three factories across China.

"Andros has become (the) benchmark for fruit ingredients and products in China," said Maxence Zeng, general manager of Andros China.

The company has capitalized on the growing trend that European-flavored fruit products are gaining momentum in China. Zeng added:

"An increasing number of Chinese consumers are showing a preference for fruit flavors in baked desserts, tea drinks, coffee and dairy

products, especially those with European characteristics and charm, such as raspberries and other berries."

He also revealed that their newly launched fruit sorbet has also been widely welcomed by consumers this year in the Chinese market.

#### Full-value chain strategy

The company emphasized its commitment to implementing a full-value chain strategy, spanning from orchard to spoon experience. It also aims to achieve rural revitali-

zation that benefits agriculture, rural areas, and farmers, said Zeng.

France's agricultural exports to China extend beyond fruit products. The country is a major supplier of aquatic products, dairy and meat to the Chinese market. This, combined with efficient logistics networks, benefits French restaurants in China.

Located in Beijing's Chaoyang district, La Maison Lyonnaise, a French restaurant, experiences a consistent influx of customers every day, necessitating reserva-

tions on weekends due to increased demand.

"Many of the key ingredients in our signature dishes are imported from France, such as oysters, snails, foie gras, and red wine," said Wei Shuxuan, a waiter who has been with the restaurant for two years.

This, combined with the French background of both the owner and head chef, plays a key role in the continual acclaim for the authenticity of the flavors and the exceptional quality of the dishes by customers from both China and France, Wei said.

He added that due to oysters being consumed raw, there is a high demand for their freshness, but thanks to the coordinated efforts of the entire "from French farms to Chinese tables" chain, endorsed by leaders from both nations, the oysters can be swiftly transported to the restaurant within a day.

Danone, a French food and beverage company, has also witnessed an increase in demand for high-end bottled water products in China.

According to Danone, the company is seeking to not only bring high-quality French products to China, but also closely cooperate with the Chinese government and business partners, and actively support regenerative agriculture projects and transformations in agricultural practices within the Danone supply chain.

"China is a market of opportunity. It's a huge market. It's a market that is extraordinarily sophisticated. It's a market where we innovate locally in China for China and the rest of the world," said Antoine de Saint-Affrique, CEO of Danone.

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## Potential seen for China-France cooperation on green transition

By HOU LIQIANG  
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China and France, with long, pragmatic and fruitful climate cooperation, have great potential for jointly improving climate governance and promoting green transition in other countries, experts said.

Wang Binbin, associate research professor at the Institute of Carbon Neutrality, Peking University, noted a solid foundation for Sino-French climate cooperation.

As early as November 2007, the two countries had issued a joint statement on addressing climate change, said Wang, a Yale World Fellow. The joint statement is the first of its kind issued between China and another country.

To strengthen climate cooperation, they decided to establish a partnership under the framework of the China-France comprehensive strategic partnership, taking a series of initiatives thereafter, she said.

Sino-French climate cooperation involves areas related to climate change, such as biodiversity conservation and desertification control, and they also make efforts to jointly promote technological development and innovative collaboration, she said.

It is evident they have designed their cooperative efforts within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Wang said, adding there is enormous

potential for expanding the scope of cooperation.

"China and France have always worked hand in hand, sending positive signals to the international community on climate governance, providing rare constants in a changing world, and encouraging the willingness and actions of other countries to actively respond," she stated.

Hu Bin, director of research on global climate governance at the Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development of Tsinghua University, said that as upholders of climate multilateralism and long-term partners in addressing climate change, China and France have played important roles in the establishment of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

During the crucial countdown period of the COP21 United Nations climate change conference in Paris, during which the treaty was adopted, China and France issued a joint presidential statement on climate change in November 2015.

In the statement, the two sides established a common ground on all major issues related to the negotiation of the treaty, including the principle of common responsibilities and the long-term goals, he said.

Hu highlighted the special contribution of the two countries in coming up with a mechanism for the long-term, sustainable implementation of the climate treaty,



A staff member works at an industrial park in the Sino-French Wuhan Ecological Demonstration City in Central China's Hubei province on March 19. WU ZHIZUN / XINHUA

which allows countries to set their contribution targets.

For over a year leading up to the Paris UN climate gathering, Xie Zhenhua, who then steered China's climate diplomacy, held more than 20 rounds of consultations with COP21 president Laurent Fabius, Hu said.

#### Close communication

During the Paris conference, they maintained close communication, he said. The duo met almost every day to discuss the differences that emerged during negotiations and strive to maximize convergence among countries.

"They played crucial roles in

landing consensus on the final negotiation text," he said.

Li Zheng, president of the Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development at Tsinghua University, said that through positive dialogue and cooperation, China and France made great contributions to addressing difficulties emerging in implementing the Paris Agreement.

Since 2018, China and France have issued "three joint declarations and one initiative", all of which have emphasized cooperation in addressing climate change, he said. These documents have provided guidance for the continuous advancement of Sino-French and Sino-European cli-

## XI'S VISIT

## BRI projects bring benefits to Serbia

Chinese investments, infrastructure boost economy, says ambassador

By WANG QINGYUN  
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Serbia's economy and people have enjoyed "multiple" outcomes from its cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative, Serbian Ambassador to China Maja Stefanovic said, expressing her confidence that her country will continue to benefit from these projects.

Serbia is one of the first countries to have joined the BRI, and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic has attended all three Belt and Road Forums for International Cooperation that have been held.

Following President Xi Jinping's meeting with Vucic, who traveled to China to attend the third BRF in October, the leaders of the two countries witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents, including a mid-term action plan for Belt and Road cooperation.

Stefanovic told China Daily the plan has "set a blueprint of our future cooperation within the BRI".

The plan covers various sectors, such as bilateral cooperation in transportation, infrastructure, trade, investment and education, Stefanovic said.

The objective of the plan, she said, is "realizing mutual benefit, win-win outcomes and common development" through the implementation of relevant cooperation projects.

One of the best-known Belt and Road cooperation projects in Serbia is the upgrade of the railway connecting Serbia and Hungary, which is being undertaken by Chinese companies.

The railway section connecting Belgrade and the Serbian city of Novi Sad opened in March 2022, shortening travel time between the cities from 90 minutes to about 30 minutes.

Stefanovic said the construction of the section has "more than fulfilled the expectations of our citizens".

"In the two years since the start of operation, there were almost 41,000 departures. And almost 7 million passengers traveled more than 3 million kilometers in both directions," she said.

Besides transport infrastructure, Chinese companies have been engaged in other fields in Serbia, including the steel, automobile and energy industries.



Maja Stefanovic

One of the examples is the Smederevo steel mill, which was purchased by HBIS Group, based in Hebei province, in 2016.

The mill had suffered losses for years, but managed to turn around shortly after the purchase.

In a meeting with Xi in Beijing in 2018, Vucic said the revival of the steel mill is a successful example showing that the BRI has boosted employment and economic growth in Serbia.

So far, the plant is one of the largest exporters in Serbia, and is "well known in Southeast Europe for its high quality products", Stefanovic said.

In recent years, some people in Western countries have expressed their skepticism of Chinese investments and trade with China. Over the past year, some have advocated "de-risking" from China, citing what they call "national security concerns". Stefanovic, however, said Serbia is "very satisfied" with investments from China.

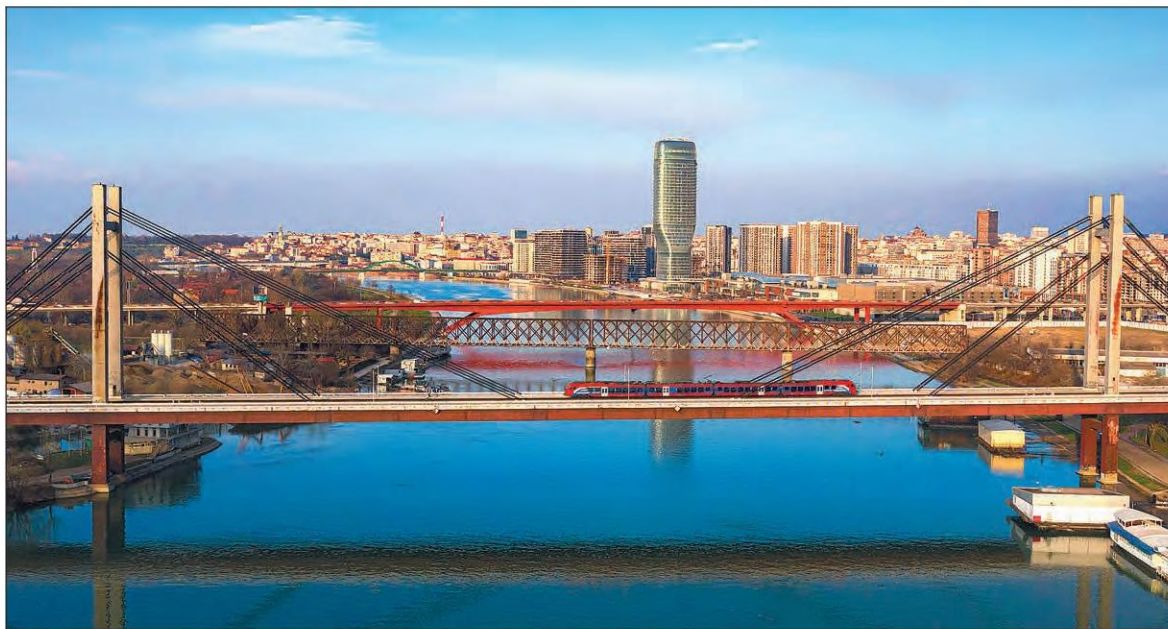
"The Government of Serbia does not see any risk or 'national security concerns' coming from its cooperation with China," she said. "On the contrary, cooperation with China... has given a strong boost to the development of Serbia."

The ambassador said that Chinese investments have created almost 30,000 job opportunities in Serbia.

Looking into the future, Stefanovic said her country is ready to explore cooperation with China in cutting-edge areas such as artificial intelligence, information technology and green development.

For the ambassador, the "strong ties of mutual understanding, respect and support" between China and Serbia underlie sound cooperation in various fields.

Both countries have chosen a path of peaceful development, Stefanovic said. Also, they "share the same values" when it comes to international relations. "This further strengthens our overall relations and makes our friendship sustainable and resilient to all changes on a global level," she said.



A passenger train travels on the Belgrade- Novi Sad section of the Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway on March 6. REN WEIYUN / XINHUA

## High-speed railway draws countries closer together

By ZHENG WANYIN in London  
zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

For Miroslav Milovanovic, a Serbian living in Belgrade, traveling from the capital to Novi Sad to meet his girlfriend had been a rather unromantic experience, the bus ride taking up to three hours.

Traveling by train could halve the time, but at 40 kilometers an hour, that trip was not exactly lightning-fast either.

That all changed two years ago when a high-speed train with a designed top speed of 200 km/h came into service, cutting the journey to just half an hour, making Milovanovic's long-distance relationship a lot sweeter, and saving thousands of commuters who live and work in the two cities a lot of heartache.

In the high-speed railway's two years of operation, nearly 7 million passenger trips have been made on the section, and an average of 62 passenger trains are operated every day, with peak daily passenger volume reaching 15,059, said China Railway International Group, the company that heads the Chinese consortium responsible for its construction.

The 80-km Belgrade- Novi Sad railway is part of the 342-km Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway linking Serbia and Hungary, a key Belt and Road Initiative project. Once brought into full operation, the railway will reduce travel time between the capitals from eight hours to just three.

Serbia was among the first supporters of the initiative, and the country has reinforced its ties with China since the inception of the BRI in 2013, underlining how it has paved the way for common prosperity.

Duan Wei, deputy chief engineer of the Chinese joint venture,



Workers lay tracks for the Novi Sad-Subotica section of the Belgrade-Budapest railway in Backa Topola, Serbia, in April. WANG WEI / XINHUA

who has been working on the Serbian section of the railway project since August 2017, has witnessed the changes.

"As the high-speed train has shortened travel time, it has facilitated the movement of people and cargo, driving the development of trade and tourism along the line," he said.

"The opening of the route has also created jobs because building and running the railway requires a lot of labor, including workers, technical personnel, station staff and train attendants."

Locals are extremely hospitable toward Chinese working on the project, he said.

"In fact, many people turn up at our construction sites with water and home-cooked food for the workers."

On April 25, the Belgrade-Budapest railway project reached a notable milestone, when track-laying for the Novi Sad-Subotica section, another Chinese-built section, was completed in the Serbian city of Backa Topola.

Addressing the event, Milos Vucevic, prime minister of Serbia,

said the project serves as a testament to the ironclad friendship between China and Serbia.

"When we pose such a question: What has the ironclad friendship between China and Serbia brought us? Or, what benefits have the China-Serbia comprehensive strategic partnership brought us? Then the railway project represents the best and the most detailed answer," he said.

"It is the proof in practice of the agreements between leaders of the two countries. It is also the manifestation that even the most seemingly unattainable dreams can be realized with determination," he added.

Duan said the completion of the track-laying signifies that the Novi Sad-Subotica section has completed most of its construction tasks and entered comprehensive testing, laying a solid foundation for the goal of opening the line to traffic by the end of the year.

Apart from the Serbian section of the railway, dubbed the first railway in collaboration between China and Serbia under the BRI, there is the "first bridge", the

Zemun-Borca Bridge, and the "first highway", the E-763 Expressway, all of which have helped Serbia improve its infrastructure and regional connectivity.

Chinese investment in Serbia goes far beyond transport infrastructure to take in a great deal of modern manufacturing and trade in services.

HBIS Group Serbia Iron and Steel, the first fully integrated steel company acquired by a Chinese company overseas, has emerged as a prominent producer of steel, hot and cold rolled products and tin plates in southeastern Europe. The company, with operations in Smederevo and Sabac, forecasts a production capacity of up to 2.2 million metric tons of finished products a year.

In more than a decade, trade between China and Serbia has quadrupled, while Chinese investment in Serbia has increased sixty-fold, according to Chinese Ambassador to Serbia Li Ming. China has held its position as the second-largest trading partner of Serbia for many years, Li added.

On Sunday, Chinese President Xi Jinping began his state visit to France, Serbia and Hungary. The trip also marks his second visit to Serbia in eight years.

Ivona Ladjevac, deputy director and a senior research fellow of the Institute of International Politics and Economics in Belgrade, highlighted the visit as highly significant.

"I consider the visit as the event of high significance which sends a powerful message to the rest of the world. Namely, it is not usual for a Chinese president to visit one country two times in eight years. So, one can realize how China values its cooperation with Serbia in all aspects: political, economic and cultural," Ladjevac said.

## Film director Emir Kusturica has long-standing connection to China

By XU FAN  
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When the Yugoslavian film *Walker Defends Sarajevo* was released across the Chinese mainland in the 1970s, it swiftly became a sensation, captivating millions of Chinese.

Interestingly, the renowned Serbian director Emir Kusturica, one of the few cinematic masters to have won awards at all of Europe's three top events — the Venice Film Festival, the Berlin International Film Festival and the Cannes Film Festival — made his acting debut by portraying a partisan in the movie when he was just 18 years old.

This intriguing backstory was recently brought up during the 14th Beijing International Film Festival, where Kusturica, now 69, served as the jury president for its most prestigious award, the Tiantan Award.

Within 12 days, Kusturica alongside the other six jury members viewed the 15 nominated films, with three produced by Chinese filmmakers.

He said he felt happy to see these interesting Chinese films and found that cinema in China is rapidly moving toward more differentiation and a variety of stories.

Over more than a decade, Kusturica has had a long-standing connection with China. As early as 2012,

he led No Smoking Orchestra, his punk band established in Sarajevo in 1980, to perform in Shanghai. Four years later, he was invited to take on the role of jury president at the 2016 Shanghai International Film Festival, and one year after that he attended the Beijing festival as a celebrated guest for the first time.

Born in Sarajevo in 1954, Kusturica showed his talent at an early age with his directorial debut, *Do You Remember Dolly Bell?*, a comedy romance that won a Silver Lion award at the 1981 Venice Film Festival. His second movie, *When Father Was Away on Business*, won the Palme d'Or at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Recalling his teenage years in his hometown of Sarajevo, Kusturica mentioned that he spent most of his time playing on the streets. Despite having a good family, most of the youngsters he played with came from troubled backgrounds, including families with criminals, single-parent households or facing poverty.

With these memories ingrained in his mind, Kusturica reflected on his understanding of survival and street life, and how these elements were intertwined with societal conditions.

"I must say one of the symptoms of this period can be seen on my shoes," the witty director remarked as he bent down to display his untied shoelaces.

He went on to explain that he intentionally kept them untied as a symbol of peace, suggesting that loose shoelaces could have symbolized a gesture of friendship during tumultuous times, indicating a readiness to build connections rather than engage in conflict. Despite the era being in the past, he has maintained this habit to this day.

Drawing inspiration from his personal experiences during a particularly historical period, Kusturica has developed his distinctive style, with most of his works utilizing surreal narrative techniques to present grand themes like nation and ethnicity, and convey deep patriotic sentiments.

Award-winning novelist Yu Hua, who attended the masterclass alongside veteran film producer Huang Jianxin, said he is a fan of Kusturica, revealing that he had traveled to the director's hometown out of a yearning to understand his upbringing and background.

Reflecting on a moment when he stood near a street watching the traffic, Yu thought about Kusturica's biography, which revealed that

most of the director's teenage friends ended up on troubled paths during that turbulent era.

"Nevertheless, art and cinema rescued Kusturica, molding him into a great artist who has bestowed the audience with a plethora of beautiful works. This is why we hold art in such high regard," Yu said, smiling.

Yu was also impressed by his initial encounter with Kusturica. The director had taken him to the location that inspired the creation of *Underground*, a 1995 comedy depicting two black marketeers who produce and sell weapons during World War II.

"Kusturica led me to a ruin-like place with a small door. In that moment, the light beamed downward, enveloping everything in darkness. It struck me how many passersby had overlooked the door, yet only Kusturica was captivated by it, turning it into an outstanding film. It felt as though history had chosen him," the Chinese writer added.

Emphasizing Kusturica's talent for extracting art from life, Yu said he perceives two distinct personas within the director. One soul resembles William Shakespeare, characterized by vivid imagination and openness, while the other mirrors Anton Chekhov, embodying



Serbian director Emir Kusturica (center) attends the 14th Beijing International Film Festival as a jury member last month. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

restraint and seriousness.

"Serbia used to be a great country like China in the medieval age," he said, adding that the process of its decline was influenced both externally and internally.

"If you could wish for an artist to be born in a certain period rich with changes, I think I was the one and I was very lucky," said the director.

"Art is very good when you take people to discover the secrets of the past or the secrets they don't see in everyday life. In my life, this was granted by the period known as the end of the century, when things

were extremely dramatic. However, I did take it always as romantic as it is," added Kusturica.

Filmmaker Huang, renowned for directing epics such as *The Founding of a Republic*, said that the incorporation of magical realism in the film *Underground* left a lasting impact on him.

This approach, a hallmark of Kusturica's works, effectively portrays shifts in history and eras, illustrating how a specific historical period can serve as a legacy influencing a filmmaker's artistic creations, he said.

# CHINA



From page 1

In the 1990s, Fangzhuang was known as a wealthy neighborhood and housed the city's largest and most upscale residential complexes. However, in recent decades it went into decline as the northern and eastern parts of Beijing underwent rapid development.

Peng's first impression of the neighborhood was of buildings with peeling plaster and outdated facilities, interspersed with restaurants and the occasional mom-and-pop shops.

However, in recent years, affordable house prices have attracted buyers who are willing to commute, while the original community is aging and demanding more cultural offerings.

Peng said the urgent need to build an art and culture center encouraged her to mobilize all possible resources to get the job done. "The site initially served as a vegetable market. It later fell into disrepair, became a desolate space, and had an unfinished building on it when I took over the project in July 2021," she said.

### DIY library

Peng, who has a doctorate in philosophy from the Renmin University of China in Beijing, said building the center had to overcome several major challenges such as one project manager quitting and the fluctuating cost of materials.

However, the Fengtai district government offered financial support, which included construction capital of 18.66 million yuan (\$2.58 million) and asking those who have a strong interest in culture to invest in the center.

The construction fund covered the cost of the center's completion and decoration, including payments to the contractor, construction company, and design firm.

"The potential risks involved included the budget exceeding the payment, which is why the building was previously unfinished," Peng said. "My primary goal was simply to complete the renovation and provide a pleasant reading place for the residents."

During the building phase, Peng discovered that the general contractor was considering raising his price, so she controlled costs by directly sourcing materials. This allowed her to invest the funds in other parts of the center, such as the art exhibition area and interior decoration materials.

"It's a complicated process, and I learned all the procedures by doing them," said Peng.

She also implemented innovative cooperation strategies with a well-known bookstore and an audio production company by giving them affordable rent for spaces in the center.

"The whole point is to create a cultural atmosphere in the area and have residents actively engage in cultural life," she said. "Books are one way to achieve this, and the added value the place offers can also benefit the neighborhood."

Covering more than 5,000 square meters, the Fangzhuang Art and Culture Center, with a white modern appearance, opened on Oct 15. Since then, it has been a beacon for local residents.

Upon entering the lobby on the first floor of the center, visitors are greeted by a sequence of tiered desks, book stacks, and inviting social spaces. On the west side, soft blankets and comfortable furniture are set up in a large, open, sunny area designated for children and teens. The area is separated by a large glass partition, which allows parents to keep an eye on their children.

A staircase leads to a cozy basement where coffee and desserts are served.

"It's an open space," said Peng. "During weekends and holidays, kids can take science courses in a separate meeting room on the basement floor, while upstairs, most areas are used for rental space."

The second floor houses a temporary art exhibition, while the third floor functions as a theater that can hold about 300 people. "This has triggered a positive ripple effect. Since October, over 5,000 residents from Fangzhuang have visited our center, and participated in more than 70 cultural events. This has led to increased interest, with many choosing to spend their free time reading books here," Peng said.

### Books that bind

About 30 kilometers north of Fangzhuang is Changping district, which is home to Huilongguan, one of Asia's largest residential communities that houses approximately 300,000 people.

The crowded neighborhood, well-known for its affordable housing, has long struggled with a lack of high-quality facilities. To address this, since 2018 the Beijing municipal government has invested heavily in the area to try and keep the community lively and diversified. This included 827 million yuan to build the Huilongguan Sports and Culture

Readers sit in a comfortable area on the first floor of the Fangzhuang Art and Culture Center in Fengtai district, Beijing in April. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## Libraries: A true bond with the community



Peng Yanshu (right), shows books to children at the Fangzhuang center in April. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



Above: Young readers enjoy the space at Sweet Town library in Chaoyang district, Beijing, in April. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY  
Below: The Huilongguan community library. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Park, which includes a community library that spans 6,300 sq m.

The library's curator, Cui Yaona, said it aims to serve residents by offering a wide range of books for people of all ages and a welcoming space for them to spend their free time.

"The library fosters a true bond with the community," Cui said. "Books connect us. Seeing the concentration, curiosity and peacefulness on people's faces sparked by words they've read is to know that the library is a powerful force for making a connection."

The Huilongguan community library, which has 55,000 books, also has a volunteer librarian program for local residents.

Sun Yi is one of the volunteers. A Beijing native who lived for 30 years near Wangfujing Street, which has some of the city's biggest bookstores, Sun and her parents relocated to Huilongguan in the 2000s.

"I've always loved reading," said the 52-year-old. "During my childhood and teenage years, I often went to the Xinhua bookstore in Wangfujing. So when I heard about the need for volunteers at the community library, I didn't hesitate to sign up."

"Being able to immerse myself in an ocean of books has given me a sense of self-satisfaction and spiritual value," said Sun, who recently retired from her accounting job.

"It's a joy to be part of the volunteer team, especially seeing young people in Beijing actively improve themselves during their spare time. When I help readers find a book they want and they say a word of thanks, I feel rewarded."

According to Cui, about 100 volunteers work at the library, and a large number of college students contribute their time during the winter and summer holidays.

"I hope our library becomes a place that you don't need a reason or invitation to visit," Cui said. "There's no need to reserve a spot or buy a coffee. You can simply drop in to read a book, find a quiet place to study or work, or explore anything from computer coding to romance novels."

### Culture vultures

A younger generation of readers — most of them born after the 1990s and many preparing for work exams — now occupies community libraries.

Sweet Town, a community library in Chaoyang district established in 2021, is popular with these young bookworms.

Designed in a modern style, it

has white spiral staircases that cascade between stepped tiers of bookshelves that line the walls. The study carrels have been organized into a round space decorated by soft pads while comfortable nooks are illuminated by ceiling lights.

In a sunny corner, next to a quiet coffee bar, armchairs beckon readers.

The library is part of an innovative business model that combines a library, bookstore and exhibition space, according to the Beijing municipal government website, and has a collection of over 40,000 books covering diverse genres.

This model not only meets the diverse needs of the public, but helps innovate the operations of brick-and-mortar bookstores, according to the website.

Pi Ruoyi, 26, a primary school teacher, has visited Sweet Town a dozen times in the past year and often sits in the windowless area downstairs.

A bookworm for 20 years, she has always sought a simple place that offers a reassuring hush so she can settle down to read and study.

Pi came to Beijing at the end of 2020 to look for work. Although she landed a job in 2021, she soon realized it wasn't quite what she had envisioned.

The young teacher is now pursuing a master's degree in economics.

Pi said the library's special environment helps her concentrate on her studies.

"Finding a library is easy," she said. "But for me, truly immersing myself in a dedicated study atmosphere for an entire day requires a certain kind of energy. A place with thoughtful design and good service definitely boosts my confidence and strengthens my resolve to focus."

At weekends, Sweet Town is visited by parents who bring their children to read books and look at illustrations. Visitors also show up to take photographs of the vibrant space.

Hao Wei, deputy director of Fengtai District Library, said the concept behind Beijing's network of community libraries is to allow residents to borrow books and read at their convenience.

Despite the convenient locations and digital services, some community libraries are still facing challenges such as limited and outdated book collections and maintaining cleanliness. These factors may deter potential visitors, Hao said.



A reader selects books at the Huilongguan community library. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Peng Yanshu, director of Fangzhuang Art and Culture Center



Residents read books at the Huilongguan community library. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## WORLDUS

## TikTok sues over forced sale/ban law in US

By HENG WEILI in New York  
and LIA ZHU in San Francisco

TikTok and ByteDance, in a lengthy lawsuit filed Tuesday in US federal court, stated, "For the first time in history, Congress has enacted a law that subjects a single, named speech platform to a permanent, nationwide ban."

With the suit, TikTok and ByteDance, its Beijing-based parent company, are seeking to block an act signed by President Joe Biden that would force the divestiture of the app used by 170 million Americans, or ban it.

The companies filed the 77-page petition titled, "TIKTOK INC., and BYTEDANCE LTD., V. Petitioners, MERRICK B. GARLAND, in his official capacity as Attorney General of the United States, Respondent."

The suit was filed in the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and it argues that the law violates the Constitution, including First Amendment free speech protections.

The law, called the "Protecting Americans From Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act", was signed by Biden on April 24 after it easily passed the House of Representatives and the Senate. It gives ByteDance until Jan 19 to sell TikTok or face a ban.

"Banning TikTok is so obviously unconstitutional, in fact, that even the Act's sponsors recognized that reality, and therefore have tried mightily to depict the law not as a ban at all, but merely a regulation of TikTok's ownership," the suit says.

The lawsuit said that divestiture "is simply not possible: not commercially, not technologically, not legally. ... There is no question: the



A TikTok content creator sits outside the US Capitol in Washington on April 23. MARIAM ZUHAIB / AP

Act (law) will force a shutdown of TikTok by January 19, 2025, silencing the 170 million Americans who use the platform to communicate in ways that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

"The Act does not articulate any threat posed by TikTok nor explain why TikTok should be excluded from evaluation under the standards Congress concurrently imposed on every other platform," the suit stated.

"Even the statements by individual Members of Congress and a congressional committee report merely indicate concern about the hypothetical possibility that TikTok

could be misused in the future, without citing specific evidence — even though the platform has operated prominently in the United States since it was first launched in 2017. Those speculative concerns fall far short of what is required when First Amendment rights are at stake."

The White House has said it wants to see Chinese-based ownership ended on national security grounds, but not a ban on TikTok.

The Biden administration declined to comment on the lawsuit.

"Anything that the US government does not like becomes a threat to national security. It's an overall

excuse to cover everything. Simply by calling it a 'national security' issue, they feel that they can justify taking any action whatsoever," George Koo, a retired international business adviser in Silicon Valley, California, told China Daily.

"For TikTok to take on the United States government at the US court system is very much the last measure and whether they will get a fair hearing and fair justice remains to be seen. But I wouldn't be surprised if TikTok fails in their lawsuit," he said.

"I think if TikTok is forced to divest the Chinese ownership, they

(will threaten) to just leave the US altogether. And I hope that they will do that because that will be a very unpopular move for the young people, for the 170 million fans of TikTok," Koo said.

The app is immensely popular with young people, many of whom make money through it.

TikTok has spent \$2 billion to implement measures to protect the data of US users and made additional commitments in a 90-page draft National Security Agreement developed through negotiations with the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), according to the lawsuit.

TikTok also has agreed to a "shutdown option" that would give the US government the authority to suspend TikTok in the US if it violates some obligations.

TikTok has denied that it has or ever would share Americans' user data, accusing US lawmakers of advancing "speculative" concerns. The act also prohibits app stores from offering TikTok and bars internet hosting services from supporting it unless ByteDance divests.

The suit said the Chinese government "has made clear that it would not permit a divestment of the recommendation engine that is a key to the success of TikTok in the United States".

Fifty-eight percent of ByteDance is owned by global institutional investors, including BlackRock, General Atlantic and Susquehanna International Group; 21 percent by the company's founder, and 21 percent by employees — including about 7,000 Americans, the suit stated.

In August 2022, CFIUS stopped engaging in meaningful discussions

about the agreement, and in March 2023, CFIUS "insisted that ByteDance would be required to divest the US TikTok business", the suit said.

CFIUS is an interagency committee, chaired by the US Treasury Department, which reviews foreign investments in American businesses and real estate on national security grounds.

In 2020, then-president Donald Trump was blocked in court in his bid to ban TikTok and China's WeChat in the US.

Trump, the Republican candidate challenging Biden in the Nov 5 US election, has since reversed course, saying he does not support a ban.

Biden could extend the Jan 19 deadline by three months if he determines ByteDance is making progress toward a sale. The lawsuit also mentioned that Biden's presidential campaign continues to use TikTok, which "undermines the claim that the platform poses an actual threat to Americans".

Jameel Jaffer, executive director of the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, expects TikTok's challenge to succeed.

"The First Amendment means the government can't restrict Americans' access to ideas, information, or media from abroad without a very good reason for it — and no such reason exists here," Jaffer said in a statement.

On Monday, TikTok CEO Shou Chew was the honorary chair of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute Benefit in New York.

Agencies contributed to this story. Contact the writers at hengweili@chinadailyusa.com.

## Chinese language connects interest, passion at consulate event

By MINGMEI LI in New York  
mingmeili@chinadailyusa.com

Language has served as a vital bridge, deepening understanding between China and the United States across generations of educators and students.

The Chinese Consulate General in New York on Monday morning hosted an open day event, "Discover China: A Journey Through Language & Culture," welcoming Generation Z American students from the consular districts and local communities.

Featured were traditional Chinese intangible arts from Fujian province, including musical ensembles, local folk dances and glove puppetry performances from the classic 14th century Chinese novel *Water Margin*. Cultural ambassadors shared their experiences with the language and culture in a panel discussion.

Students and representatives from four universities and 12 high schools expressed deep interest in learning Chinese and are eagerly anticipating visits to China in the near future.

"Learning Chinese is really hard, but it's very unique," Khader Motan, 16, a student at William Bodine High School in Philadelphia, told China Daily. He is going to China this summer. "I'm really excited to go, see it, travel, and experience China."

"Education is a really big thing in today's world, so having the chance to experience different educational systems internationally is a really nice and good opportunity," he added. He said that he is looking forward to participating in the cultural exchange program and is eager to travel to Jiangsu province this summer with his school.

"It was really fun and interesting to see all of the things," Myelle Rodgers, a 16-year-old student at Brooklyn Latin School, told China Daily. "It's an amazing opportunity to engage with and learn more about Chinese culture."

"As young people, a big role that we play is really just trying to be involved more into the discussion, for both the generations older than us and younger than us, about diplomatic discourse and talking about different cultures, the integration of cultures," she said. "Not only like learning about our own but also kind of like teaching the cultures of other nations and countries."

"When it comes to US and China's relationships, we are taught that



Students are trying the Fujian leaf blowing technique, an intangible cultural heritage of Fujian province, at an event held at the Consulate General of China in New York on Monday. MINGMEI LI / CHINA DAILY

they're kind of like polar opposites in a sense, where that's not really the case because we've seen that a lot of times the US and China have come together to work on amazing and comprehensive solutions and we kind of have to be more open to it and view it from a more collaborative perspective," she said.

Alexander Given, an international relations and Asian studies major at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, said his interest in China originated with his father, who traveled there regularly.

"Amongst my generation and some of the younger generations, there's definitely a consensus that you know, not only are things starting to get better, but that things need to get better," Given told China Daily.

He has been studying Chinese for seven years since high school with special interests in US-China relations and Chinese history and believes that language is an access point for interactions between people.

"I believe a lot of my generation is

kind of realizing that US-China relations are one of the most important relations for the world at large in the international community, and a basis of good relations is a basis with good understanding," he said.

"Being able to study abroad in another country is super important for a general understanding, not only of that country but of the world at large," he added. "Anything global can really be taken and used locally in our own lives."

"I'm so excited to see so many high school students here, excited and passionate about learning Chinese," said Lydia Simon, who graduated from The Ohio State University advanced Chinese language and culture program and studies abroad at Peking University, to China Daily. She started studying Chinese shortly after the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

"There was a lot of excitement internationally about China, and that was a moment for programs to be initiated and a lot of funding to be provided for students," she said. Simon still remembers the time

when she finished an 80-page-long thesis in Mandarin for completion of her master's degree, recalling that learning Chinese was "hard" but she could do other things better with the effort she put into learning Chinese.

She said she received a lot of support and scholarships to be able to study in China, and now is also a good time for student exchange programs, following the "50,000 student exchange program in five years" agreement reached by the presidents of China and the US in their November summit in California.

Simon, who currently works in the art industry, said the Chinese language has helped her to bridge her interest with the country.

"There's so much amazing contemporary art in Beijing and across China," she said, adding that "[language] is an incredible window into the culture of China, and you can really understand the feelings of a moment in time."

"Tension always comes from misunderstanding, and a lot of misunderstanding comes from not being

able to communicate," she said. "It's important that Americans are learning Chinese so that we can better understand each other and have more empathy."

"Combining learning with trying to use it, and then if you use it at the right time, and it works, you feel pleased," Galal Walker, former professor of Chinese in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at Ohio State, told China Daily. He said that is what he would teach students about Chinese-language learning, based on a saying from *The Analects of Confucius*.

"Encouragement does not come from outside, it comes from inside," he continued. "We have to find out how to put the learner in, and build everything around the learner."

Walker has more than 40 years of experience in Chinese-language teaching. He noted that students could learn Chinese to pursue something they want to do and use Chinese effectively.

He mentioned a student named Lydia, who specializes in art and

promotes art exchanges between China and the US, and another student, Kyle Obermann, who received the distinguished alumni award from Peking University and is interested in environmental and wildlife photography in China.

"We should have programs where young Americans go to China and work with people," he said. "It's more than just a visit; students get together to accomplish something. If you find it valuable, you share it, and it will stay with you for a long time."

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## BUSINESS

MORE NEWS WHENEVER YOU WANT IT · CHINADAILY.COM.CN/BUSINESS

## HIGHER GROUND

## Envision, Suez ink battery park partnership

By ZHENG XIN  
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Suez Group, a global environmental solutions provider based in France, announced a strategic partnership with China's Envision Energy to establish a Net-Zero Battery Industrial Park in France in order to create a sustainable electric vehicle and battery energy storage industry in the country while driving energy transition in Europe.

The industrial park, which will provide a wide range of components related to renewable energy supply, battery recycling and digital denationalization platforms, will help localize the battery sector and make France the central battery recycling hub for the continent, it said.

"The partnership underlines our strong commitment to supporting the ecological transition and the drive toward a circular economy in both countries," said Sabrina Soussan, chairwoman and CEO of Suez.

Lei Zhang, founder and CEO of Envision, said the strategic partnership will further extend the company's battery technology to recycling, leveraging its renewable energy system solutions and decarbonization platforms.

An analyst said Sino-French energy ties are to be further upgraded with China's ambitious targets for carbon neutrality and France's expertise in renewable energy.

Bilateral energy cooperation has gained momentum in recent years, spanning areas such as electric vehicle battery recycling and renewable energy investment, said Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute.

The ever-deepening cooperation underscores the shared commitment to address global energy challenges while paving the way for a low-carbon future, Luo said.

Suez inked the cooperation deal during a state visit by the Chinese President to France this week, in addition to two other partnerships with Chinese companies — Chongqing Sanfeng Environment and Dongguan Water Group that focus on transforming waste into local and sustainable energy and pioneering EV battery recycling — key steps in the energy transition of both China and France.

Soussan said Suez expects revenue from the Chinese market to continue growing during the 2023-27 period, as China's top policymakers have assured greater efforts to attract foreign capital, widen market access and promote further opening up of modern service sector industries.



A wind farm offers a picturesque backdrop to a tourist site in Penglai, Shandong province.

LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Economy poised for steady rebound

Consumption-led recovery, solid Q1 show, realty hopes mark growth story

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China's economy is poised for a steady rebound throughout this year, underpinned by consumption-led recovery, a robust foundation laid in the first quarter and the gradual stabilization of the property sector, experts said.

While the broader economy is still facing pressures from still-weak domestic demand and mounting uncertainties both at home and abroad, the country still enjoys favorable conditions and positive factors that will further consolidate the recovery trend, they said.

Gu Yan, director of Research Department I at the Xi Jinping Thought on Economy Study Center, said the "scarring effect" caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is gradually fading, as more Chinese are now willing, and have the potential, to spend more.

Gu made the remark at a meeting on China's economic situation held in Beijing on Monday. He said that consumption will continue to recover this year, given the implementation of the country's policies to encourage consumption and the strong resilience of the Chinese economy.

Data from media group Caixin showed that the Caixin China Gen-

eral Services Purchasing Managers' Index came in at 52.5 in April versus 52.7 in March, above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction.

Caixin's composite PMI, which includes both manufacturing and services activities, rose to 52.8 in April from 52.7 the previous month.

Wang Zhe, senior economist at Caixin Insight Group, said the Caixin PMI readings are consistent with the year's strong start, as China's economic performance in the first quarter surpassed market expectations, with steady growth in manufacturing and a gradual recovery in consumption.

Mao Kejun, director of Research Department III at the Xi Jinping Thought on Economy Study Center, highlighted the robust industrial production in the first quarter, expressing strong confidence about China's long-term development.

"China's economy still enjoys favorable conditions and positive factors, including its powerful industrial production capacity and a complete industrial system," Mao said.

So far, 31 provincial-level regions have released their local GDP numbers for the first quarter. Sixteen areas outperformed the national growth rate of 5.3 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, with Jilin, Jiangsu and Hubei provinces

expanding by 6.5 percent, 6.2 percent and 6.1 percent, respectively.

Hubei Governor Wang Zhonglin said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday that the province will make more efforts to consolidate its recovery trend, with focus on promoting the deep integration of technological and industrial innovation, further expanding opening-up and driving green transition.

He said efforts to build Hubei capital Wuhan into a nationally influential science and technology innovation center will be accelerated, and more efforts are needed to achieve breakthroughs in major advantageous industries such as optoelectronic information, strengthen and optimize the construction of modern industrial clusters in the province and foster new quality productive forces.

A recent meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee called for efforts to develop new quality productive forces according to local conditions, cultivate and strengthen emerging industries, proactively plan and build future industries, and make use of advanced technologies to empower the transformation and upgrade of traditional industries.

Xiong Yuan, chief economist at Guosheng Securities, said China's second-quarter GDP growth rate is likely to be around 6 percent, and the country needs to take more steps to better implement existing supportive policies and keep stimulus efforts persistent.

## Experts: China's green goods beneficial for world

By CHENG YU  
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China's supply of green products like new energy vehicles and lithium batteries would be "dynamically balanced" at the global level and help other countries to achieve their green transformation goal, provided there is no spillover of geopolitical tensions and protectionism, said renowned economists, political advisers and foreign investors.

"China's green industry, represented by new energy vehicles, solar panels and lithium batteries, now boasts the highest quality and the lowest production costs. Other countries across the world can benefit from these advantages and achieve their own green goals at the lowest cost possible," said Justin Yifu Lin, a former World Bank chief economist and a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee.

Lin, who is also dean of Peking University's Institute of New Structural Economics, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily that China hopes that the technological advancements the country has achieved can drive not only its development but also that of other economies.

Faced with global economic slowdown, if a country wants to be competitive in both domestic and international markets, it is essential to have new technologies and products with "high quality, and reasonable prices," Lin said.

"China, in this regard, has such advantages and by combining these industrial advantages together, the country is able to help drive high-quality economic development globally."

He made the remarks in the context of the world moving a step forward toward green energy revolution and sustainability. But some markets like the United States are trying to manufacture a controversy by harping on the so-called overcapacity issue in China's "new three" industries — new energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products.

Li Daokui, director of Tsinghua University's Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking, told China Daily that the row over overcapacity, fundamentally, is a

divergence from "globalization".

"China hopes to continue promoting globalization, drive new energy product exports and continue the large-scale circulation of advanced equipment or raw materials from abroad. However, many Western countries are reluctant to participate in this circular process," he said.

According to the International Energy Agency, global renewable energy capacity is expected to grow by two-and-a-half fold by 2030, but governments need to go further to triple it by then.

Over the past year, higher inflation and high interest rates have also increased equipment and financing costs of renewables projects — and policies have been slow to adjust to the new macroeconomic environment globally, the IEA said.

But, China's role is "crucial" in reaching the 2030 goal because it is expected to install more than half of the new capacity required globally by the end of the decade, it said.

Li said some Western countries are viewing China in a static way without considering that its "new three" industries, especially the NEV sector, is developing dynamically.

"They were like the amateur spectators watching a gymnast perform a complex routine. They fear the gymnast might fall midway through, yet fail to witness the smooth landing as the gymnast adjusts," he said.

"China's NEV sector, for instance, will go through a big round of adjustment this year, eliminating many less competitive companies in the sector. Both investors and local governments are fully prepared for such a production capacity adjustment."

Similar views were expressed by Alex Gemici, chairman, CEO and founder of Greenstone Equity Partners, one of the largest capital-raising firms in the Middle East. He said he did not see China overproducing, selling or dumping cars abroad to corner the market.

"Any oversupply issue is very temporary, and the market will correct itself. Either the demand will go up or supply will correct itself to keep balance. I'm not worried about that at all."

A veteran investor, Gemici said it is critically important for the world to switch over from fossil fuels to EVs amid climate change and many other reasons.

## Briefly

## Warehouse storage sector logs rebound

China's warehouse storage sector registered a strong rebound in March, boosted by the overall growth of the economy after the Chinese New Year holiday, industry data showed. The index tracking the sector's development came in at 52.6 percent, soaring 8.1 percentage points month-on-month, according to a survey jointly released by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing and CMST

Development Co Ltd.

## PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281.7 million) in seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Tuesday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's Bank of China said.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Shenzhen housing policy changes may spur demand

By WANG XU  
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The new policy package for the technology hub of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, to ease its homebuying rules will be a significant step toward a more flexible and responsive approach to high-quality development of the property sector in China, experts said amid policies primarily focused on inventory reductions and stimulating demand, but also incorporating elements of social support and market revitalization.

"Since the previous policy adjustment by the city in July 2021, a certain level of pent-up demand has accumulated and the new policy is expected to unleash some of this demand, including from multi-child families seeking larger homes, enterprises purchasing homes for employees, and nonlocal residents and singles seeking to enter the Shenzhen housing market," said Li

Yujia, chief researcher at the Guangdong Planning Institute's residential policy research center.

Li's remarks came a day after Shenzhen joined other major cities in China in easing homebuying rules to stimulate demand. The new package, which was issued on Monday by the Shenzhen Municipal Housing and Construction Bureau, highlighted several changes including reduced social security requirements for nonlocal residents, additional home purchase quotas for families with multiple children, relaxed purchase policies for enterprises and support for "trade-ins" and "old-for-new" deals.

Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution, praised Shenzhen's policy changes and their alignment with a recent meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, which demanded "research on policies to reduce housing inventory and improve the



A prospective homebuyer looks at a property model during an expo in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

quality of newly added housing."

"The release of this policy in Shenzhen aligns with expectations and indicates a wave of policy relaxations across various localities in May. The old-for-new program will

revitalize the secondary housing market and expand developers' business opportunities," said Yan.

While both Yan and Li recognized the innovative aspects of the policy changes and their alignment with

broader market trends, they differed in their assessment of the impact on nonlocal residents.

"The purchasing power of nonlocals is significantly lower than that of locals, so the overall impact of the policy should not be overestimated," Li said, adding that, "If the market continues to weaken, further adjustments may be implemented, such as complete removal of purchase restrictions on nonlocals and a reduction in the value-added tax exemption period from five years to two years. Ultimately, the key to a sustainable housing market lies in boosting purchasing power through improved income, employment and consumption."

To this, Bai Wenxi, vice-chairman of the China Enterprise Capital Union, provided a more nuanced perspective, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges associated with the new measures.

"The package will undoubtedly increase market confidence, boost transaction activity and expand opportunities for capital operations, but it's also important to note that the impact of policies is uncertain especially on the capital market," Bai said.

According to China Daily's research, approximately 35 cities across China have relaxed purchase restrictions since last year, with 22 cities — including Hefei, Anhui province; Kunming, Yunnan province; Suzhou, Jiangsu province; and Changsha, Hunan province, completely removing purchase restrictions.

However, core cities, including the four first-tier cities and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province (for new homes); Tianjin, and Xi'an, Shaanxi province (core area), still maintain purchase restrictions.

The recent policy changes in Shenzhen, along with comprehensive policy packages announced by Beijing and Chengdu, Sichuan province, suggest a growing focus on easing restrictions and promoting a stable and healthy housing market in major Chinese cities.

As a result, data from the Shenzhen Zhongyuan Research Center showed that last week 615 new homes were sold in Shenzhen, which was 6.8 percent more than the previous week. The total area of these sales was 62,665 square meters. In addition, during the same period, 1,040 pre-owned homes were sold in the city.

## BUSINESS

# Airbnb bullish on China's summer travel

Buoyed by rising demand from young consumers, outbound tourism to surge

By FAN FEIFEI  
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China's outbound tourism sector is expected to witness robust growth during this summer, fueled by the recovery of international flights, with Asia and Europe gaining popularity among Chinese leisure travelers, according to US-based lodging and short-term vacation rental provider Airbnb.

Data from Airbnb showed that the number of Chinese users searching for outbound stays with check-in dates between July 1 and July 15 registered a nearly twofold increase year-on-year.

The most popular overseas destinations for Chinese travelers for the fast-approaching summer season are Japan, France, Thailand, the United States, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, New Zealand, Australia, Italy and Switzerland.

Search volumes for France with check-in dates between July 20 and Aug 13 surged nearly eightfold year-on-year, while searches for Paris skyrocketed eleven-fold from a year earlier due in large part to the upcoming Paris Olympic Games, which makes this city the most popular European urban destination for Chinese tourists this summer, Airbnb said.

Most of the room searches originated from Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, Chengdu in Sichuan province and Guangzhou in Guangdong province, it added.

Moreover, searches for group tours consisting of three people and above between July and August have grown rapidly, accounting for about 80 percent of total outbound travel, said Airbnb.

Kong Zhiqiu, head of Airbnb China, said the country's outbound tourism market has witnessed a steady recovery since the beginning of the year, adding that he is bullish on growth prospects for the sector, which has been an important growth engine in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is noteworthy that Generation Z travelers — those born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s — prioritize cost-effective outbound travel experiences, and prefer diversified and personalized tours.

"They may choose some overseas destinations just to see a concert or a show," Kong said.

Kong added that the company will step up its localization push to promote the innovation of products so as to cater to the needs of Chinese tourists, and introduce localized innovative products and features to more overseas markets, such as Japan and South Korea, Kong added.

Airbnb also expects China's outbound travel numbers to be above 2019 levels by the end of the year. It has recently announced "icons" — a new category of extraordinary experiences hosted by the greatest names in music, film, television, arts and sports.

China saw outbound passenger trips exceed 87 million last year, and this is projected to reach 130 million in 2024, according to a report published by the China Tourism Academy.

Long-distance tours have been increasingly preferred by Chinese travelers, and the resumption of China's outbound tourism will bolster the global tourism industry and the economic recovery of countries that depend heavily on tourism, industry experts said.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, said that along with the addition of international flights and more convenient exit and entry policies, China's outbound tourism is poised to see a steady recovery this year, which will inject strong impetus into the prosperity of the country's tourism sector.

The country's outbound travel saw a strong rebound during the just-concluded May Day holiday, which lasted from May 1 to Sunday, mainly driven by expanded visa exemption policies and increased international flight capacity.

With the accelerated recovery of outbound tourism, tourists are showing an increasing demand for short-term home rentals and homestay services, which are now wide-ranging to satisfy the needs of various types of tourists, said Lai Zhen, an analyst at market research company iResearch.

"Typically, travelers hire such services for get-togethers, reunions, team building activities and for improving parent-child bonding and communication," Lai said, adding that demand for leisure tourism is on the rise as more and more people are inclined to get close to nature and stay away from the hustle and bustle of cities.



Consumers browse products at a convenience store in Qingzhou, Shandong province, in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## FMCG sales at convenience stores solid in 2023

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Sales of fast-moving consumer goods at convenience stores on the Chinese mainland last year grew 8.2 percent, 1.3 times the average growth rate in the Asia-Pacific region, according to NielsenIQ monitoring data.

However, in 2024, sales growth of convenience stores on the mainland will slow down, impacting both store expansion and individual store sales growth, the data showed.

A comparison of year-on-year growth between January to February 2023 and the same period this year reveals a decline in overall store sales from 8.2 percent to 5.4 percent, a decrease in store numbers growth from 7.4 percent to 5.2 percent, and a drop in single store sales growth from 0.8 percent to 0.2 percent.

Expanding scales and improving efficiency in operations are important for the development of convenience stores this year, said Ni Yi, vice-president of NielsenIQ China.

The sales proportion of convenience stores in the top 20 cities stands at 56 percent.

The report found significant dis-

parities in consumer and product structure among different provinces. Taking the beverages category as an example, convenience store consumers in Guangdong province, Shanghai and Fujian province prefer this category, with category sales accounting for 11.9 percent, 11.8 percent and 10.8 percent, respectively.

This category accounts for less than 7 percent in provinces such as Jiangxi, Guizhou, Hunan and Sichuan.

Therefore, tailoring policies to individual cities, and refining store cluster operations are key to winning the market, said Ni.

Meanwhile, the Chinese retail landscape is gradually shifting from a consumption upgrading model to a new era focusing on cost-effectiveness, with convenience stores positioned favorably in this evolving market, according to the 2024 China Retail Report released by NielsenIQ.

This trend signals the coexistence of consumption upgrading and downgrading, diversified consumer needs and structural growth opportunities, according to the report.

Overall sales revenue of the omni-channel in China's fast-

moving consumer goods retail market in 2023 edged down 0.04 percent compared to 2022. Online and offline channel sales accounted for 42 percent and 58 percent, respectively.

In online channels, sales revenue of content e-commerce platforms increased by 55.9 percent year-on-year.

In the first two months of 2024, thanks to the Spring Festival consumption peak, online sales of the FMCG market grew 20.7 percent, of which the growth rate of Douyin e-commerce exceeded 70 percent. The growth rate of other e-commerce platforms reached 4.4 percent, and that of the offline market fell 6.4 percent.

Driven by strong online sales, the omni-channel growth rate was 1.2 percent, returning to a positive growth track, said the report.

In offline channels, snack discount stores have attracted young consumers with their rapid store expansion and low-pricing strategy.

In 2023, the sector's growth rate reached 75.8 percent, and its penetration rate is currently only 8 percent, which is expected to have significant room for growth.

At the same time, warehouse stores — or membership stores — are entering a period of development by providing unique quality and price ratios that are not available through other channels. In 2023, the number of member stores increased by 37.8 percent.

Li Quncai, deputy director of analysis and insights for the Chinese Retail Industry at NielsenIQ, said that under the concept of rational consumption, the growth rate of the omni-channel FMCG market has slowed down, and the sales scale has remained basically stable due to the lack of significant new players.

Enterprises need to more accurately grasp consumer demand and needs, seek business models based on competitive pricing and value positioning in the omni-channel perspective, and find new growth drivers, said Li.

"How to accurately understand the trade-offs between consumer demand and performance and price, and develop differentiated product assortment and price strategies for different categories, has become key for retailers to seize the current structural growth opportunities," said Li.

## Shanghai's new railway hub



A drone image shows the construction site of the service center of Songjiang Railway Station in Shanghai. According to China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, a State builder participating in the project, the station will be another major transportation hub in Shanghai and link the metropolis with more major rail lines. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By LIU ZIZHENG  
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Over the past few years, farmers in Laiwu district of Jinan, East China's Shandong province, have stepped up efforts to promote smart agriculture in all respects, which has significantly lowered their production costs and contributed to local rural vitalization.

At a smart agricultural park in Yangzhuang town, Xie Bin, an agronomist, was recently seen adjusting the parameters of the intelligent control systems at his greenhouses, so as to foster a better environment for fruit farming.

"This is a critical time in the process of growing wax apples ... I'll increase the frequency of water supply and fertilizer to once every six to seven days," said Xie.

Xie also said the agricultural

park is equipped with 30,000 square meters of such intelligent glass greenhouses, as well as a big data center. The wireless monitoring, transmission and control technologies have been widely utilized in the greenhouses to manage all the stages of growing a crop.

With a series of smart agricultural devices in place, there has inevitably been a surge in demand for electricity and the agricultural park's electricity consumption has surpassed 200 kilowatt-hours per day. Thanks to the local power supplier, however, the farmers have no worries on the power front.

Wei Xuebin, director of State Grid's power supply station in Yangzhuang, said the grid has strived to ensure stable power supply for the agricultural park ever since it was put into operation.

The station regularly sends

staff members to collect information on local farmers' requirements and guides the latter to use electricity smartly, based on the different characteristics of their crops. Efforts have also been made to carry out safety inspections on the greenhouses and promptly eliminate electrical hazards, said Wei.

Xie said the main crops in the agricultural park are tropical fruits such as wax apples, lemons and papayas. The smart agricultural devices allow local farmers to foster a favorable growing environment for them even during the cold months.

Besides, developing smart agriculture has significantly lowered the farmers' production costs by saving 50 percent of the water and electricity costs related to irrigation. Plant diseases and pests have been reduced as well. The use of pesticides has been reduced by

more than 80 percent, Xie said.

Such moves followed the launch of an action plan by China in January to further empower agriculture through digitalization and smart technologies. The country urged agricultural entities and relevant service enterprises to develop precision farming based on key data concerning weather, soil and pests, thereby continuously improving the agricultural production efficiency.

Zhao Chunjiang, director of the National Engineering Research Center for Information Technology in Agriculture, said smart agriculture has turned into a major driving force for the development of modern agriculture. China should continue to promote the use of biotechnology, information technology and intelligent equipment in agricultural production and nurture more high-quality talent, he said.

## Vistra sees Chinese firms facing challenges in global expansion

By WANG KEJU  
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Zhang Haijiang

na. Vistra is a provider of business services headquartered in Hong Kong.

In recent years, several emerging industries, including consumer goods retail, cross-border e-commerce and overseas warehousing, have embarked on international expansion, exploring new markets and opportunities, Zhang said.

The popular online fast-fashion retailer Shein, for instance, has achieved success by sourcing products from Chinese manufacturers and leveraging local suppliers, which created a lightning-fast supply chain.

Shein made its debut in the United States market in 2015, and its sales experienced an unprecedented surge, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The company had a revenue of about \$22.7 billion in 2022.

Additionally, technology-driven innovations such as telemedicine and big data, as well as new energy and environmental protection, are also making their mark on the global stage, Zhang said, adding that

China's manufacturing sector has demonstrated its ability to adapt, evolve and enhance its position in the global marketplace, steadily ascending the value chain.

In particular, the Chinese government recognizes the importance of nurturing competitive, globally oriented enterprises and has implemented various policies to facilitate and encourage companies to venture beyond national borders, Zhang said.

China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment, as shown by data from the Ministry of Commerce, increased 16.7 percent year-on-year to 916.99 billion yuan (\$127.05 billion) in 2023.

That said, in an ever-evolving landscape shaped by geopolitics, trade policies and global economic conditions, Chinese enterprises face the challenge of formulating and adjusting their global expansion strategies, Zhang said, emphasizing the need to address such operational and administrative frustrations related to taxes, legal entity management and regulatory compliance, among others.

With over 9,000 experts in more than 50 markets, Vistra has witnessed a growing number of Chinese firms looking for assistance in addressing the complexity of expanding their global business, Zhang said.

Going forward, as more Chinese companies gear up for overseas expansion, they need to be mindful of the intricacies involved. Factors like cultural differences, regulatory frameworks, legal requirements and market competition demand careful planning, market research and a deep understanding of the target countries' business environment.

Service providers like Vistra can help domestic firms to develop a clear and well-defined expansion strategy that takes into account the specific markets, target customers and business objectives, and identify potential challenges, Zhang said.

This not only mitigates risks and lowers their costs, but also establishes a solid foundation for sustainable growth and success in the global marketplace, he said.

## BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Stinky tofu tycoon a Changsha success story

Aromatic snack loved by most; prepackaged diversification key to firm's fame

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha  
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For most, it smells somewhat odd, yet tastes delicious.

If every city had its own unique dish or snack, the one defining Changsha, capital of Central China's Hunan province, should be its "fragrant" stinky tofu.

The popular offering is made after soybeans undergo various processes such as sifting, soaking, grinding, filtering, boiling and fermenting. Raw bean curd is soaked in brine, emitting a pungent smell that can be a turnoff for the uninitiated.

In fact, frankly put, people either love it or hate it.

Stinky tofu is what has helped the business venture of Lu Lucheng, CEO of Hey Hey Black, transform from a street stall in 2009 into a food chain with more than 1,800 locations nationwide.

Every day, more than 800,000 squares of stinky tofu are sold by the company, making it a representative for local food in Changsha.

The company's sales revenue reached more than 500 million yuan (\$69 million) last year, which means it has basically recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, Lu said.

Changsha stinky tofu dates back to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) when a woman began frying discarded tofu in tea oil and stumbled upon a dish that would become a pillar of Hunan's thriving street food culture.

The black tofu cubes with a funky odor possess unique qualities for seasoned local chefs. By examining the color, shape, scent and texture, they select the best bean curds and deep-fry them with oil. This is how a bowl of crispy stinky tofu is made.

There are numerous stinky tofu stores in the city, but what makes Lu's shops special is that his products are poked with holes and filled with broth and local chili sauce, before being garnished with coriander and diced radish.

"We also stick to the traditional way of making stinky tofu and adhere to it to the extreme," he said.

The tofu is super crispy on the surface, just like crackers, and tender on the inside, maintaining the original softness of tofu, he said.

"When you go to the extreme, the iconic Changsha stinky tofu becomes delightful for visitors, who find the dish lives up to its reputation."

At Huangxing South Road pedestrian street, a bustling commercial section of Changsha's Tianxin district, 19-year-old Luo Cuiti bought a bowl of stinky tofu from a Hey Hey Black shop recently.

Tourists holding bowls of stinky tofu were seen everywhere, with many lining up to buy freshly made servings at the company's stores along the street.

The company also owns dozens of stores in Wuyi business center where the street is located, a must-visit for tourists.

Luo traveled to Changsha from Guangdong province and could not



Employees prepare stinky tofu snacks at a Hey Hey Black store in Changsha, Hunan province, in May 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Crowds through a Hey Hey Black stinky tofu store on Huangxing South Road in Changsha, Hunan province, in May 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

wait to try the famous stinky tofu after arriving in the city.

"It tastes very good and spicy, perfect for someone like me who prefers food with a strong taste," she said.

Luo said she had seen posts of the stinky tofu pictures on social media platforms and had been longing to try some for a long time, and it did not let her down.

Liu Rong, a Hunan native, also bought the stinky tofu from Hey Hey Black, which she said tastes better than other brands she has tried before.

The 32-year-old also bought other prepackaged foods from the store, which she intended to give to her col-

leagues in Guangzhou, Guangdong.

"Many of my colleagues know about the brand as it has really become very popular, and they have asked me to buy some for them," she said.

The prepackaged food has been a key business for the company, which now accounts for around 60 percent of its sales revenue, Lu said.

The company sells more than 130 types of prepackaged local foods at its stores and it wants to bring Hunan's local food nationwide and even to the whole world, he said.

It conducted much research and product searches across the province to select the most repre-

sentative food items to be sold in its stores, he said.

The company first started to sell prepackaged foods because just selling stinky tofu, which usually is sold at around 10 yuan a serving, could not cover rent and overhead.

The rent for their first store, which is only 8 square meters along Huangxing South Road, was 6,000 yuan per month, and it could only make 300 to 500 yuan a day, barely covering costs, he said.

There are large numbers of people on the street who want to buy stinky tofu, but it has always been a cheap snack, meaning that even if the chefs work really hard to fry the tofu, sales revenue can not be very

high, so it started to sell other local foods at higher prices, Lu said.

Therefore, stinky tofu became the perfect item to attract customers to its stores, which are also filled with other more expensive local prepackaged foods, thus successfully increasing sales volume at its stores, he said.

Meanwhile, another key to the company's success is standardization. "We want standardized stinky tofu so that customers can taste the same standard product every time they buy our product. We also made efforts to standardize our packaging, store design and the taste of other prepackaged foods," he said.

Looking back to his journey of entrepreneurship which started as a college student start-up, Lu said it is very difficult for college students to start a successful business alone and luckily, he had done so with a team of friends.

He would not recommend college students who do not have clear plans and grit to try entrepreneurship and they need to be fully prepared in resources, connections, intelligence and interpersonal skills.

They should also conduct field research in targeted industries before venturing into a business, and closely follow government policies, he said.

The local government in Changsha has given his business venture subsidies of 80,000 yuan and the local Communist Youth League of China also offered a grant of 60,000 yuan during the early stages of starting the business, which has helped greatly, he said.

Meanwhile, as Changsha wants to build itself into a popular tourist

city, it has offered great support to brick-and-mortar consumer-based stores, and has been very supportive of companies that think outside the box in terms of store decor, he said.

Since the early stages of its entrepreneurship, the company has benefited from the popularity of Changsha as it attracts a large number of visitors, Lu said.

"People come to the city to relax and enjoy delicious food, beautiful scenery and a cozy environment. It is one of the most vibrant and relaxing cities in the country. You do not need to prepare much before coming to Changsha for a couple of days and can never be dull in a city that never sleeps."

"The company utilizes livestreaming sessions, e-commerce, online stores and offline sales as its popularity is still limited to Changsha," he said.

It wants to pursue a more stable development this year and a major focus for the company is to enter overseas markets as it has tried all kinds of ways to expand domestic market sales.

"We want to bring Hunan's tofu products and chili sauce to overseas markets. The first target market is Southeast Asia where there is a large population of people with Chinese origins," he said.

"We are still exploring and might come up with a more detailed plan in the next half of this year, but we are certain about venturing into overseas markets."

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## Ningji beverage stores 'tea-ing' off in Hunan

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha

The first Ningji store, a lemon tea brand, was opened in Tianxin district of Changsha, Hunan province, in February 2021. Three years later, the company operates more than 2,600 stores nationwide, and aims to expand its stores to more than 4,000 by the end of this year.

The company sells hand-mashed lemon tea in different flavors for less than 20 yuan (\$2.77) per serving.

It has received two rounds of several hundred million yuan in investment from Bytedance, Shunwei Capital and Tencent.

Wang Jie, co-founder of Ningji, said at the early stage of entrepreneurship she found there were more than 6,000 lemon tea shops in

Guangdong province, showing great market potential for the refreshing beverage.

However, lemon tea in Guangdong tends to be quite bitter. To cater to the markets in other regions, Wang and her team made lemon tea products that taste lighter and are wine free.

Young people also find the tea to be healthier than bubble milk tea, which has a high caloric content, she said.

The company chose to open its first store in Changsha because there are lots of young people in the city who are willing to spend money on food and drinks, she said.

The first store, which was only three square meters, was opened in the Nanmenkou area of Changsha,

with a monthly rent of just 2,000 yuan.

It was opened in winter, which is not a peak season for lemon tea, as they wanted to test which of their products would be popular during slacker times, she said.

They sold 300 yuan worth of lemon tea on the first day and in less than two months, daily sales revenue reached 15,000 yuan.

Meanwhile, the company only has eight direct sales stores, with most of its stores being franchised outlets.

Wang believes the relationship between brand and franchised stores should be similar to that of schools and students. The schools make policies and help supervise students to achieve better results, she said.

The company has built more than 3,000 mu (200 hectares) of land to grow lemon trees in Guangdong province and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, supplying the key ingredients for its products.

Meanwhile, the average time for its franchised stores to turn a profit is about 12 months, as its stores are small and only need three to four employees with only pick-up orders.

Wang also spends lots of time hiring suitable talent for management positions, and she values candidates' ability to learn new things and cooperate with others.

She wants to hire more staff in different industries so the company can further expand to other sectors, she said.

Huang Cui, 21, an undergraduate



Consumers line up for Ningji beverages at a shopping center in Beijing in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

student at Changsha University of Science & Technology, said she believes lemon tea is a perfect match for Changsha's dining habits, whose food is spicy and heavy.

The tea is very refreshing, so it's

perfect during the hot summers, she said.

Moreover, you can see salespeople energetically making drinks by hand, adding new excitement to the buying experience, she added.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## China and Europe can help build a better world by cooperating and upholding strategic autonomy

President Xi Jinping's ongoing visit to Europe represents the latest example of China's major-country diplomacy, which seeks to stabilize relations between major countries amid the increasing global volatility and promote world peace and common development.

President Xi's extensive talks with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and trilateral meeting with the French leader and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Paris on Monday attest to the vitality of Sino-French ties, as well as the positive influence of China-EU relations if they promote cooperation where their interests align and responsibly manage the issues on which they have common concerns.

The China-EU trade volume is already around 2.3 billion euros (\$2.48 billion) a day, but there is still great potential for China and the European Union to tap, not least in advancing their green transition, in which collaboration in high-tech research and development and key raw materials and equipment supplies are becoming increasingly important.

There is also great scope for them to work together to promote peace and stability in Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific. The EU is in a better position than many other parties to know which country is responsible for the security issues in the aforementioned three regions, as well as which country, if not the same one, should be blamed for manufacturing the concerns Von der Leyen highlighted, of China's supposed "State-in-

duced overcapacity, unequal market access" and the EU's overdependency on China.

In that regard, the healthy development of Sino-French ties can serve as a compass for the joint efforts of Beijing and Brussels to keep China-EU ties on the right track. So long as the EU upholds its strategic autonomy and focuses on the common interests it has with China, not only can they work together to set straight their "problems", but they can also pool their endeavors to realize just and lasting peace in Europe and beyond.

The joint call of Beijing and Paris for a global truce during the Olympic Games in Paris this summer represents the common aspiration of all peace-loving nations, and also sets an example for other major countries.

That pro-peace call will continue to ring during President Xi's next stop, Serbia, and then Hungary, which is the last leg of his trip.

The fruitful and flourishing high-quality Belt and Road cooperation between China and Serbia serves the fundamental and long-term interests of both nations and peoples, and the two countries are also closely coordinating with each other in the multilateral arena to uphold international justice and fairness.

The second visit of Xi to Serbia in eight years is set to further cement the iron-clad friendship between the two countries, deepen political mutual trust and expand practical cooperation so the two friendly nations can make greater contributions to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

## Asia-Pacific risks being anvil under US hammer

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has used her just concluded one-week trip to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji to hype up warnings against countries becoming too reliant on China.

According to Australian media reports, Baerbock said her country has overhauled its strategic approach to China to avoid a repeat of its past mistake when the NATO member failed to realize the extent of its energy dependence on Russia.

The top German diplomat apparently wants to dissuade countries from developing stronger trade ties with China. Yet such warnings, which are nothing but echoes of Washington's scaremongering about China, may not fall on receptive ears. Australia, for instance, has worked hard to improve relations with China after experiencing hard times when its trade with China nosedived thanks to the "decoupling" efforts of the previous Scott Morrison government. With the incumbent Anthony Albanese government taking a more objective view of bilateral ties, the economic and trade ties between the two countries have been rapidly improving.

Baerbock may also want to send a message that is different from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's advocacy of pragmatic cooperation with China, since she is a member of the German Green Party, which is part of the coalition government. Her scaremongering on

China has, to some extent, undercut the efforts made by the German leader in his recent trip to China.

Judging by the current political atmosphere in the West which deems anti-China sentiments to be political correctness, China not only needs to evaluate the impact of such internal political divisions but also guard against the US' maneuvers in piecing together new anti-China small cliques.

Last week, the defense chiefs of the US, Australia, Japan and the Philippines gathered in Hawaii for a second joint meeting. Given the tensions between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea, it is no surprise that this regional grouping should be dubbed the "Squad" by Pentagon officials.

Like its template, the Quad, which was also assembled by the US, the new quadrilateral group has been formed with the obvious intention of making waves in the South China Sea, posing a tangible and immediate threat to China's security outlook.

Thanks to its outdated Cold War mentality, the US has been tirelessly trying to create tensions and frictions in the Asia-Pacific so as to destabilize the development environment in China's neighborhood. Washington's selfish antics are turning the region into a new venue for bloc confrontation.

Countries in the region must remain vigilant against the risk-laden antics of the US, say "no" to interference from outside forces and join hands to build a peaceful and prosperous Asia-Pacific for all.

## Nations' cooperation would benefit all

In international diplomacy, moments emerge when leaders are tasked with not only dealing with complex relationships but also helping shape the future course of global cooperation. President Xi Jinping's visit marking the 60th anniversary of Sino-French diplomatic relations presents just such an occasion for President Emmanuel Macron to showcase not only his personal statesmanship but France's rich tradition of an independent foreign policy — one that champions both national interests and the aspirations of the European Union.

In 1964, President Charles de Gaulle made history when he boldly led France to become the first major Western country to establish official diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. De Gaulle's idea of French independent foreign policy emphasized the need for France to assert its sovereignty and pursue its interests on the world stage.

He believed France should maintain strategic autonomy, free from excessive influence from other major powers, and be able to act independently on national security, diplomacy and economic policy.

At the heart of this pivotal moment of Xi's visit lies the potential for France to again assume a position of global leadership, particularly in the realm of economic diplomacy. Instead of protectionism and other disruptive moves, diplomacy can lead to positive results and a balancing of trade.

The relationship between China and France is imbued with histori-



cal significance and cultural resonance. This shared history forms a strong foundation upon which to build better cooperation.

Moreover, the parallels between the proud tradition of French independence and China's own historical quest for sovereignty and self-determination provide a fertile ground for forging a new era of diplomatic collaboration.

As Macron welcomed Xi, the opportunity for strategic collaboration on pressing global issues loomed large. From peace efforts in regions plagued by conflict to addressing the urgent threat of climate change, there are many areas where China and France can lead by example.

In the realm of technology and innovation, the convergence of Chinese and French interests holds immense promise. Collaboration on renewable energy and clean technology, artificial intelligence and robotics, aerospace and aviation, biotechnology and healthcare, smart cities and urban development, and other cutting-edge fields would not only benefit both nations but overall human advancement. By leveraging their respective technological and industrial strengths, China and France can drive forward progress.

Just as Voltaire and French intellectuals once looked to Confucius and the ancient Chinese civil service exams for inspira-

tion, France and China can now cooperate for a better, more stable world.

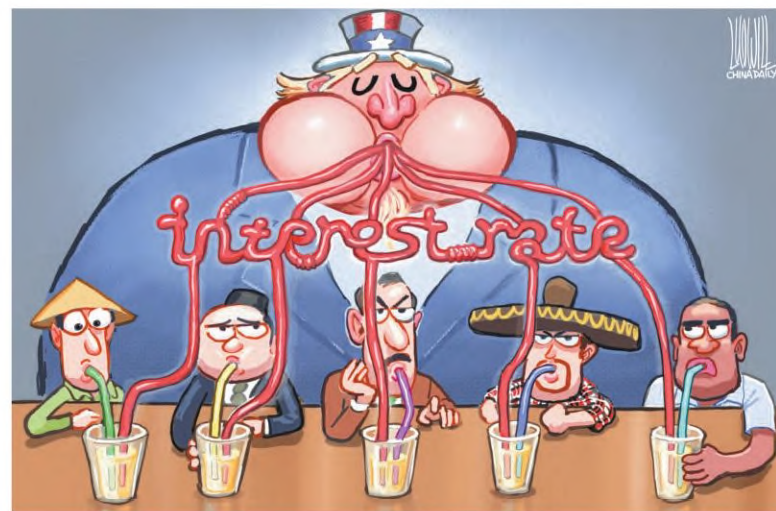
In conclusion, Xi's visit presents a unique opportunity for Macron and France to redefine global leadership by embracing principles of mutual respect, cooperation, strategic autonomy and shared prosperity. France can play a pivotal role in fostering a more dynamic and constructive partnership between the EU and China, rooted in trust and respect. Rather than squandering opportunities and energy on destabilizing distrust and useless ideological polemics, France can lead the way for the EU toward constructive engagement and fruitful collaboration with China that would bring economic benefits to both sides.

By championing a vision of diplomacy rooted in pragmatism and goodwill, France can promote global stability, hope and progress.

As the French poet Victor Hugo once wrote: "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come." French and Chinese leaders can seize this moment and realize the full potential of Franco-Chinese cooperation for the benefit of humanity.

Wilson Lee Flores is moderator of Pandesal Forum, multi-awarded writer, columnist of "Philippine Star" and "Abante" newspapers, economics and politics analyst, poet, college teacher and real estate entrepreneur. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## 'Overcapacity' just an excuse to undermine fair market practices

The BMW Group recently announced an additional investment of 20 billion yuan (\$2.78 billion) at its Shenyang production base in China's Liaoning province, with a view to achieving localized production of new-generation BMW models by 2026.

The move reflects BMW's expectations of China's electric vehicle market, and its refuting of allegations of the "excess production capacity" in China's EV sector. Some politicians in the United States and the media have in recent days hyped up "overcapacity" in China's EV sector, claiming that such overcapacity is putting pressure on industrial development, enterprise survival and people's jobs in other countries.

The groundless accusation is, in essence, an excuse for imposing more economic and trade

restrictions on China.

In the context of economic globalization, whether or not there is excess production in relevant sectors depends on a country's domestic market demand and industrial operation, as well as on global market demand, industrial development trends and potential. From a global perspective, the current production capacity of EVs is far from meeting market demand, especially as the potential demand for EVs in many developing countries is huge. According to the International Energy Agency, global demand for EVs will reach 45 million in 2030, more than three times that of 2023.

Some in the US claim that the development of China's EVs is highly dependent on government subsidies, which creates "unfair competition" for other EV producers. This

accusation is groundless and absurd.

The vigorous development of China's new energy sector relies on the continuous independent innovation of enterprises, a stable and secure supply chain, a higher degree of industrial agglomeration, full-fledged competition and the strong support provided by China's large market to rapid technological iteration. These factors have helped China's EVs lead the world in terms of production and marketing scale, technological innovation, and industry chain cultivation.

Be it the "China threat" or "China shock" or "China's overcapacity", these are all different narratives created by some in the US to smear China in order to undermine the fair market principle and defend their unpopular protectionist economic policies.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## E-governance should not become a new burden

For some weeks now, a number of local government new media accounts have announced the cessation of services, with their responsibilities being taken over by local government websites.

The move has found the support of many, who believe it is a good way to raise the efficiency of local governments instead of wasting energy on meaningless jobs. Some local government new media accounts were established hastily and were failing to play their expected roles well.

There is no point creating additional entities if unnecessary. After opening an account, it is important to regularly evaluate its actual effects, balance operating costs with the benefits of serving the people and allocate limited resources to carry out practical tasks effectively.

That's why the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission issued a guiding document in December pointing out that government applications with low usage frequency and weak practicality

should be promptly shut down.

By shutting down such accounts they mean to optimize services. While retaining certain accounts related to major livelihood issues and service categories, the information and service functions carried by other accounts should be transferred to a unified integrated platform such as the official website. This can better leverage the role of government new media in serving the public.

— PEOPLE'S DAILY

## What They Say

## EU's anti-subsidy EV probe politically motivated

The European Commission has warned three Chinese electric vehicle makers — BYD, SAIC and Geely — that they have not supplied sufficient information for its anti-subsidy probe complete sounds more like a threat, exposing the nature of the investigation as a political manipulation that gives a dog a bad name to hang it.

SAIC said it had "fully cooperated" with the commission and provided all necessary information in accordance with World Trade Organization and EU rules. "It is worth pointing out that commercially sensitive information — such as battery formulation — should not belong to this category."

SAIC's response clearly shows that some information requested by the commission has gone far beyond what the probe entails but directly concerns the company's core technology secrets. That's why the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU said the reported allegations of noncooperation were unfounded and that the companies had participated in multiple rounds of questionnaires and facilitated on-site inspections.

The competitiveness of Chinese EVs originates from Chinese manufacturers mastering advanced technologies in battery and other core parts of the products. That comes from their long-term inputs and fierce competition at home. The

will use "facts available" to fill in certain gaps if the Chinese companies fail to provide relevant information to make their anti-subsidy probe complete sounds more like a threat, exposing the nature of the investigation as a political manipulation that gives a dog a bad name to hang it.

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The competitiveness of Chinese EVs originates from Chinese manufacturers mastering advanced technologies in battery and other core parts of the products. That comes from their long-term inputs and fierce competition at home. The

Chinese EV sector, along with its solar panel, wind turbine and other green technology and equipment manufacturing industries, which are also being targeted by the EU and the US, on the unwarranted grounds of subsidy or national security concerns, actually contributes to the global green transition.

In a trilateral talk with visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on Monday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that the EU commends China for its efforts and progress made in green transition and development, acknowledges China's legitimate right to develop, and wishes to continue candid dialogue with China and strengthen their cooperation.

Yet the EU seems to be following the US' lead in saying one thing and doing another in dealing with China. How can it continue candid dialogue with China or strengthen cooperation? If the EU is really what it claims to be, a steadfast supporter of free trade, fair competition, market economy and economic globalization, it should stop taking a leaf from the US' protectionist operations manual, especially since that also contains a chapter targeting EU green-tech enterprises.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

Ivona Ladjevac

## China and Serbia embracing shared future

In today's interconnected world, the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind goes hand in hand with the principle of multilateralism. Multilateralism, defined as cooperation among multiple countries to address common challenges, is crucial for realizing the vision of a harmonious and inclusive global community. To enhance the China-Serbia partnership and build a community with a shared future, it is essential to embrace multilateralism.

Multilateralism is the foundation of global governance, facilitating dialogue, cooperation and collective decision-making on issues of global significance. By engaging in multilateral platforms such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and regional forums, countries such as China and Serbia contribute to the development of the rules-based international order, and promote peace, stability and prosperity.

The challenges facing humanity today, from climate change and environmental degradation to global health crises and economic inequality, are inherently complex and interconnected. Multilateralism provides a framework for coordinated action, pooling resources, expertise and best practices from diverse stakeholders to effectively tackle these challenges. Through initiatives such as the Paris Agreement, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and collaborative research programs, countries can work together toward shared solutions.

A key tenet of multilateralism is inclusivity, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of all countries, regardless of their size and status, are heard and valued in global decision-making processes. This inclusivity fosters diversity of ideas, promotes cultural exchanges and strengthens mutual understanding among nations. In the context of the China-Serbia partnership, embracing diversity and inclusivity enriches bilateral cooperation and paves the way for innovative collaborations across various sectors.

Multilateralism fosters resilient partnerships built on trust, transparency and mutual respect. By engaging in diplomatic dialogues, trade agreements and joint initiatives, countries such as China and Serbia can navigate geopolitical complexities and build enduring relationships based on shared interests and common goals. These partnerships contribute to regional stability, economic growth and social progress, benefiting not only the participating countries but also the broader international community.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

As we look toward the future, embracing multilateralism remains essential in realizing the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind. By upholding the principles of cooperation, solidarity and multilateral engagement, countries can overcome barriers, bridge differences and create a more interconnected and prosperous world for the present and future generations.

In other words, multilateralism serves as a cornerstone of a community of shared future, enabling countries to collectively address global challenges, promote inclu-

sivity and diversity, build resilient partnerships, and pave the way for a more harmonious and sustainable world. By making multilateralism an integral part of the China-Serbia partnership, we can strengthen our commitment to the shared vision of peace, development and prosperity for all.

In an era defined by globalization and interconnectedness, the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind has gained significant traction. This vision encompasses the idea of nations working together to achieve common goals, promote mutual understanding and togeth-

er address global challenges. One of the prime examples of this collaborative approach can be seen in the growing partnership between China and Serbia, which has steadily evolved into the comprehensive strategic partnership.

The relationship between China and Serbia has deep historical roots, marked by mutual respect and cooperation. Over the years, both countries have recognized the potential for strategic collaboration across various sectors, including trade, infrastructure development, cultural exchanges and scientific research.

Economic cooperation is a cornerstone of the China-Serbia partnership. The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative has provided a framework for enhancing connectivity and promoting economic development in Serbia and the wider Central and Eastern European region. Through investments in infrastructure projects such as the Belgrade-Budapest Railway and the China-Serbia Industrial Park, the two countries have laid the groundwork for enhanced trade and prosperity.

Cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in strengthening bilateral ties. China and Serbia have been promoting cultural exchanges, while fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's heritage. Initiatives such as scholarships, art exhibitions and cultural performances serve as bridges between the two societies, nurturing a long-lasting friendship and partnership.

As advocates for multilateralism and global governance, China and Serbia share a common vision of addressing pressing global challenges, including climate change, sustainable development and public health. By collaborating in international forums and initiatives, such as the United Nations and the Paris Agreement, the two countries have demonstrated their commitment to positively contributing to the international community.

But while the China-Serbia partnership holds immense potential, it also faces certain challenges. Balancing economic cooperation with environmental sustainability, ensuring equitable development and addressing geopolitical complexities are among the key considerations moving forward. However, by maintaining open dialogue, mutual respect and a shared commitment to common goals, China and Serbia can navigate these challenges and forge a resilient and enduring partnership.

In conclusion, the evolution of the China-Serbia comprehensive strategic partnership exemplifies the possibilities that arise when countries embrace a shared future and work together toward common prosperity and well-being. As global citizens, the journey toward a community with a shared future for mankind requires collaborative efforts, visionary leadership, and a commitment to building bridges of understanding and cooperation across borders.

*The author is deputy director of the Institute of International Politics and Economics in Belgrade, Serbia. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Eric Reinhart

## Gaza reshaping life and imagination beyond Palestine

"I live out by O'Hare. Every time a plane flies overhead at night, my hands shake. I'm looking for a place to hide. And then the sirens, the police and ambulance sirens. I know they're not there, but it feels like soldiers are just outside the window. We used to watch them walk up and down the road by my grandparents' house, and we weren't to say anything. They'd harass everyone, beat people up, including my grandpa. We were supposed to stay inside. My cousin was killed."

This is what a patient told me last November in Chicago, home to the largest number of Palestinian people in the United States.

"I haven't felt like this, had nightmares like this, since I was a kid," he added.

## Global South in Solidarity

Since the Israeli bombing and other military operations in Gaza began following the Hamas attacks on Oct 7, a global movement has emerged, particularly from the Global South, in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Tens of millions of people have marched through the streets of cities across the world, protesting against Israeli atrocities in the Gaza Strip.

In the US, the ruling class and closely linked media have typically portrayed such expressions of solidarity, if acknowledged at all, as simply a matter of vague ideological kinship or abstract anti-US or anti-Israel sentiment, often taking recourse to misleading accusations of anti-Semitism to explain it all away.

But by doing so, they ignore its historical roots and the ongoing truth to which this movement testifies: There is a deep psychic and visceral connection that binds countless people from diverse backgrounds to the gruesome oppression of Palestinians and to the enabling indifference to it shown by so many North American and European observers.

"I'm trying not to watch it, to look at the videos and the pictures of little kids trying to wake up their dead siblings, but it's impossible to avoid — and I don't want to

avoid it. It's the truth. It's their truth, but it's also mine and my family's. But I just can't deal with it," another patient said.

Yet another said: "You leave, thinking it'll be better. But it doesn't stop. It just changes. Now you get to watch and pay for it rather than be stuck underneath it. I don't know which feels worse."

## Shared experiences of intergenerational ordeal

When viewed through the psychiatric and psychoanalytic clinic, it's clear that, for many, behind their solidarity with the Palestinian people today lies shared experiences of intergenerational suffering stemming from the legacy of ongoing US and European imperialism overseas and racism within.

With social media allowing for an unprecedented level of worldwide proximity to an unfolding genocide after more than four centuries of colonial violence has generated a compounding reservoir of trauma passed from generation to generation on every continent, the images and cries of devastation in Gaza evoke much more than sympathy.

They are triggering a profound sense of personal resonance. Many Pakistani, Iraqi, Afghan, Yemeni, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Irish, Haitian, Somali, Rwandan, Black and Indigenous American, Filipino, Puerto Rican, South African, Colombian and other nationals are now, like my patient, experiencing planes above or feeling cops walking outside their windows as if they're part of one big murderous machine that they know very intimately.

From my vantage both as a clinician and political anthropologist, the protests against US-backed incessant assault on Gaza reflects an emerging revolutionary subjectivity born of massive trauma now coalescing around a singular stage of cruelty. This isn't about individual empathy, an imagined identification with the other as if you are the same as them — a sentimental virtue so often celebrated by white liberalism to validate its sense of its own righteousness while conveniently erasing both history and the otherness of the other and evading any responsibility for stopping violence.

The voices rising and feet marching each weekend in solidarity with Gaza more than half a year into the slaughter of its communities are not only protesting the specific injustices perpetrated against Palestinians.

It is instead about a collectivization of otherness in a rejection of the Euro-American "rules-based international order" that has always depended upon the creation and subordination of supposedly threatening racial, ethnic and sexual others to justify itself.

## Identifying with the paradigmatic other

The identification at play in this collectivity is not with Palestinians nor with Palestinian culture, per se, but rather with the position of the paradigmatic other that the Palestinian people have for so long been forced by Euro-American hegemony, and the Israeli state the latter created and whose military it props up, to occupy. Consider, for instance, how the label "terrorist" has so frequently been indiscriminately thrown at Palestinians, from small children to poets, such that US commentators and Israeli officials can unabashedly dismiss, by using these terms, the entire population of Gaza as deserving of death. For migrants vilified as rapists and drug smugglers or Black people called thugs in order to rationalize xenophobic violence and racist policing, for example, such practices are very familiar.

It is in this context that queer, trans, Indigenous and Black communities in the US have joined diverse Arab, Muslim, Asian and Jewish communities around the world, including within Israel, to protest Israeli violence and the US administration's shameless support for it.

What unites these individuals and groups is not a shared religion or ethnicity

nor a cultural worldview but an embodied knowledge of what it feels like to have one's loved ones — present and past — ostracized, demonized and violated simply because they have been marked as a threat to Euro-American power and associated white-supremacist norms. This deep knowledge that derives more from the truth of feeling than from any explicit ideology or identity is now fostering a shared ethical refusal to accept the perpetuation of such violence against others.

## Otherness and its history demand grief

As the writer Viet Thanh Nguyen observed, otherness and its history demand grief. Our ethical challenge in the face of colonial violence and its legacies is to expand grief, "to make it ever more capacious, rather than reducing it to a singular sorrow. Capacious grief acknowledges that the trauma of the other is neither singular nor unique — that there are other others out there with whom we can share the burden. Perhaps only by expanding our grief will we be able to leave our trauma behind. In sharing our burden ... of otherness, we might also transform that burden into a gift."

In accounts shared by my patients, students, colleagues, and friends, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, I see this revolutionary subjectivity and the solidarity it fuels taking shape and gaining force.

It's not just about acting on moral principles or historical knowledge of Israeli occupation and Euro-American complicity in a project of ethnic cleansing; it's also about reclaiming power over oneself, taking in one's own family and communal history as confluent with the present, and reasserting the felt truth of one's being and that of one's ancestors in the face of radically dehumanizing violence. It is a refusal to be passively swept along by the systems of oppression that surround us and to which the US government, in particular, continues to display a bipartisan commitment.

The burgeoning internationalist movement to free Palestine from violent oppression is not a trendy, transient polit-

ical cause, as many cynical observers have claimed. It is a collective ethical awakening and formation of an affective community derived from a growing postcolonial consciousness — a transnational reckoning with the still-reverberating legacy of colonial violence and neocolonial manipulations. It is a rekindling recognition that struggles for justice and freedom are necessarily interconnected in both space and time, spanning continents and generations.

The voices rising and feet marching each weekend in solidarity with Gaza more than half a year into the slaughter of its communities are not only protesting the specific injustices perpetrated against Palestinians. They are challenging the very foundations of a global economic and associated moral order built on exploitation and the systematic devaluation of some lives to prop up the plainly false image of postcolonial Europe and North America as emblems of benevolence and freedom.

The task of freeing Palestine is simultaneously a task of freeing ourselves, of making a world characterized by — in the words of the families of Israeli hostages beseeching Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to end his violent campaign against Gaza — an ethics of "everyone for everyone."

Despite the slogans, we are not all Palestinians. We are instead all radically different from one another, with unique life histories, places in the world, and ways of desiring and living. And it is because of the differences that constitute each one of us and how important it is to protect them that the struggle for Palestinian liberation has become the defining ethical and political matter of our era.

Its consequences are already reverberating far beyond any single territory or people, and they will demarcate the lines of global ethical-political struggle for the coming generation — one that will not remember our present political leaders kindly.

*The author is a US psychoanalytic clinician and political anthropologist of law, psychiatry and public health. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## GLOBAL VIEWS

DARYL GUPPY

## Blast from the past

US inability to compete does not equate to Chinese overcapacity

During US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to China, his weapon of choice was the allegation of "overcapacity", particularly in areas where the United States lags behind China's advances and ability to produce competitive products.

This includes many aspects of the green economy, so necessary if the US' 2050 global climate targets are to be achieved.

The Joe Biden administration claims about Chinese overcapacity are being made amid

certed US efforts to deny China access to advanced chips. This so-called overcapacity comes at a time when US inflation has picked up and China's economy has entered a stage of high-quality development.

The overcapacity claim is a difficult assertion to uphold given the utilization rate of manufacturing capacity in the US was 77.24 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023, while the utilization rate in China during the same period was similar at 76 percent.

The false assertion reflects a deeper and selfish US policy of refusing to accept that China's pre-eminence in these areas provides a starting point for genuine cooperation in achieving climate objectives.

Rather than build on the progress China has made, and use this as a basis for further and faster advances, the US has chosen to restrict China's advances.

China installs more green energy resource in a year than the rest of the world combined, but the US chooses not to learn from this experience. It makes no sense to restrict this output by fallaciously labeling it as overcapacity as it will slow down progress toward the global climate goals. Yet this is the very foundation of the US' demands on China.

This is a continuation of the entrenched US approach to China. The Biden administration seems to think that compliance with US demands is the same as cooperation.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the US is taking "endless measures to suppress Chi-

na's economy. This is not fair competition, but containment — and it is not removing risks, but creating risks."

The alleged overcapacity helps to meet US and European consumer demand for safe, efficient and advanced electric vehicles. It's a demand that the US cannot meet because for a decade or more it chose not to effectively develop these sectors.

It is an irony that many of China's EVs are produced as part of US-China and Europe-China joint ventures.

Warren Buffett's investment in BYD profits from the company's advantage in batteries that is the result of the accumulation of the competitive strengths the Chinese company has built up over two decades with sustained investment in R&D and in manufacturing economies of scale.

For the Biden administration and others, this potential to cooperate is discarded in favor of trade protectionist policies such as the CHIPS Act that are designed to hamper China's economic development.

The West's claims of Chinese overcapacity suggest that EVs are exported below the cost of manufacture. In reality decades of Chinese investment in research, and the refinement of the production process, mean that EVs, solar panels and wind turbines can be produced more efficiently and at a more cost-effective price. Rather than trying to develop competitive industries in the US, the Biden administration prefers to manufacture an illusion of overcapacity and use this as a tool to propel the China

threat theory to downplay China's significance for global economy.

In the 1980s, similar accusations were leveled at Japan's car exports at a time when consumer advocate Ralph Nader described US cars as "unsafe at any speed". The US imposed punitive tariffs on Japanese vehicles. The Japanese added even more technological value to their vehicles so that even at higher prices, they were more attractive to US consumers. In a short time the consumers came to prefer the high quality of Japanese vehicles. The US car industry was slow to adapt and meet consumer needs.

We are seeing a repeat of this political approach to Chinese products across a range of industry areas. It includes attacks on Huawei, TikTok, EVs, solar panels and a broad range of efficient and cost competitive Chinese products.

In China, by far the biggest auto market, BYD's low-cost pure battery and plug-in hybrids account for about one-third of all new electric vehicles sold in China. The company has positioned itself as a manufacturing powerhouse with its flagship lithium batteries, solar modules, electric-powered buses, trucks and trains, as well as the complex artificial intelligence and software used to control and connect transport and power systems.

The Biden administration's demand that China reduces its production capacity ignores global consumer demand and is part of the broader US policy designed to suppress China's economic development. It is unfortunate that Blinken did not come to China with proposals to build on the advances that China has made in green energy developments so that the world could more rapidly move toward achieving the global climate targets by taking advantage of, and building on, China's advanced technologies.

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



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

LI QIANG

## Withstanding northern headwinds

Global South countries should jointly push for the building of a more reasonable and fair global climate governance system

The Global South, a grouping of the world's emerging markets and developing countries, has become an important force in pushing the transformation of the global governance system. In the climate arena, Global South countries, which are ecologically fragile, have a pressing need to develop the economy and eradicate poverty, while being confronted with acute challenges from climate change.



First, Global South countries need to increase their say and influence in global climate governance.

Although the rise of the Global South has given developing countries more say in the global arena, international climate governance is largely dominated by the West. Thanks to their technological strengths, developed countries enjoy an upper hand in fields such as emissions reduction calculation, adaptation capacity building, green technology application, and climate financing, thereby seeking climate deals that best suit their interests. In contrast, most members from the Global South have not yet established a climate science system, and have not received substantial help from developed countries in the transfer of green technologies.

Second, the Global South risks being divided in global climate governance. Since global climate governance was initiated in the 1990s, the theme of the climate arena had long been the "Global North versus Global South". However, the rapid rise of emerging economies and the consequential surge in their greenhouse gas emissions have divided the Global South. After the Paris Agreement was inked at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris 2015, the North-South divide in climate governance has evolved into a more complicated landscape comprising three blocs — developed countries, emerging economies and underdeveloped countries.

In recent years, the United States-led developed world has sought to create divisions among Global South countries by iso-

lating emerging economies, including China, from other developing countries. The strategy is designed to undermine the collective strength of the Global South, preserve the so-called rules-based international order, and impede China's growth. In response, Global South countries should jointly push for the building of a more reasonable and fair global climate governance system by upholding the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in climate actions. Bearing in mind the principle of extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefits, the Global South ought to create a global climate governance system that meets the interests of the whole of humanity.

First, the Global South must uphold true multilateralism in global climate governance. It is crucial for the Global South to firmly safeguard the global climate governance system with the UN at the core, and build up consensus and pool strength by preserving the status of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change as the major platform for global climate cooperation, thus building a more reasonable and fair global governance system. The Global South should be vigilant against the false multilateralism being peddled by developed countries led by the US, which have resorted to mini lateral groupings and climate alliances to pressure emerging economies including China on climate issues.

Second, the Global South should achieve consensus in the global climate arena. The Global South comprises of over 150 countries, which account for 80 percent of the global population and 42 percent of the world's economic output. In recent years, Global South countries have gained increasing clout in the global arena, and become a key force driving the evolution of the international order. In climate negotiations, Global South countries have also earned a larger say. As a natural member of the Global South, China should lead other developing countries in upholding the global climate governance architecture with the UN at its core based on the G77+China cooperation model, and to

speak with a unified voice, pushing for the creation of a more just and reasonable global climate governance system.

Third, the Global South needs to strengthen South-South cooperation in global climate governance. Global South countries share the same pursuit for independent and autonomous development, and call for greater justice and fairness in international affairs. Having similar historical experiences and facing similar development tasks, Global South countries also share the same aspiration for a more just

and equal global climate governance system, which lays the foundation for South-South cooperation in climate actions. The Global South should enhance climate cooperation under mechanisms such as the G77+China, BASIC countries and BRICS, and better align these mechanisms with the UN-centered global climate governance system.

Last, the Global South should give better play to the role of the Green Belt and Road Initiative in leading the global climate governance, and balance economic develop-

ment and environmental protection in countries involved in the initiative. It is also important for China and other developing countries to enhance policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity.

The author is dean of the School of International Relations at Tianjin Foreign Studies University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

# LIFE

All about Gen Z

# Z WEEKLY

## Social Media Digest

### Recreating history

Recently, a distinctive type of video transition has gained traction across Chinese social media platforms. In these videos, vloggers replicate the poses, gestures, and settings of movie scenes or images, followed by the original clip or photo.

Initially prevalent in travel vlogs and costume change videos, this transition style has now evolved, with many Gen Zers reenacting significant moments from Chinese history portrayed in movies and documented graphics.

One such vlogger is "Zhangyiheng". His most acclaimed video, which recreates a scene from the 2017 Chinese movie *The Founding of an Army*, featuring the famous line "A single spark can start a prairie fire", has received more than 6.1 million likes on Chinese video platform Douyin.

Another popular video of his involves the recreation of the iconic image "Qiao's Laugh". This photo, taken in 1971, marked a significant milestone in Chinese diplomacy when Qiao Guanhua, then Vice Foreign Minister, laughed heartily as the People's Republic of China made its debut at the United Nations Assembly Hall.

"Zhangyiheng" wrote in one of his videos that their intention in creating these videos is to present these important moments in a fresh and engaging manner.

"This is a unique romance and patriotic sentiment among the Chinese people, serving as a way for our generation to express love for our country," a netizen commented.



The photo "Qiao's Laugh", taken in 1971, depicts the moment when Chinese delegates were welcomed to their new seats at the UN. vcg

### Trash therapy

Have you ever wished you could simply discard negative emotions as easily as throwing away trash? Well, a study conducted in Japan suggests that this might be possible.

In this research, which was published earlier this month in the journal *Scientific Reports*, a team asked 100 college students to express their opinions on social issues, such as whether public smoking should be banned. Afterward, the students faced harsh criticism and were asked to write down their feelings on paper.

These infuriated students were then divided into two groups of 50: the "disposal group", who either shredded or threw away the paper, and the "retention group", who kept the paper in a clear folder or transparent box. The results showed that the anger of the disposal group practically vanished, while that of the retention group only slightly improved.

"We expected that our method would suppress anger to some extent. However, we were amazed that anger was eliminated almost entirely," Nobuyuki Kawai, a cognitive science professor at Nagoya University and lead author of the study, told *The Times*.

The research team believes that their findings could offer a unique approach to anger management.

So, the next time you're seething with anger, try writing down your feelings and then tossing them away.

LI XINRAN



Japanese scientists find that we can literally "throw away" negative emotions. TUCHONG



From left to right, top to bottom: Chloe Bohn (US), Sun Panpan (China), Eric Omorogieva (US), Kylie Aronson (US), students at The Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies; Dylan Walker (US), a reporter for China Daily; Han Shuyuan (China), a student at Tsinghua University; Li Xinran (China), a reporter for China Daily; Brand Munson (US), Ge Jing (China), students at Harvard University; Clifford Larsen (US), a teacher at Springfield Central High School, Massachusetts, US. PHOTOS BY DONG MING AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Lesson of the giraffe: US-China exchanges

Personal stories showcase the transformative power of US-China educational exchanges, fostering mutual understanding and bridging cultural gaps.

By CHEN XUE  
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Brand Munson once heard someone mention that his favorite animal was a giraffe, and the reason he gave was quite surprising to Munson at the time: giraffes' long necks enable them to view the world from a unique perspective unlike anyone else.

This insight was eye-opening for Munson and made him think: growing up on a farm in South Dakota in the middle of the United States, with a population of only 1,700 in his hometown, where should he go to broaden his horizons?

So, in 2014, he decided to come to China and spent a year here as an English teacher.

"There were so many things so uniquely different in China that created a lot of curiosity in my mind," said Munson in the latest episode of China Daily's *Not Only About Us*, recalling his choice to come to China.

This episode focuses on how educational exchanges between China and the US contribute to a deeper mutual understanding between the two peoples.

Having returned to the US, Munson is currently a graduate student at Harvard University. He reflected that the year he spent in China has transformed him, shaping the person he is today, because the cultural immersion he experienced in China opened his eyes to the diversity of the world and helped him develop an appreciation for different perspectives.

"Not everything is like where I came from, and there are a lot of other beautiful things out there in the world than just my little home that I was raised

in," he said. "That's such a powerful thing to do, especially when you're young."

Sun Panpan from China and Kylie Aronson from the US are roommates at The Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies (HNC). Established in 1986, the center features professors from both China and the US. Chinese students are taught by US professors, while international students receive instruction from Chinese professors.

Sun and Aronson often assist each other with assignments and take the time to explain the things they don't understand about each other's culture.

"We're best friends, and we travel and work out together," said Aronson, who explained that their biggest clash is their different perceptions of temperature: while Sun loves the warmth of indoors, she prefers to open the window and embrace the chilly air outside.

Chloe Bohn, also a student at the HNC, hails from Wisconsin in the US. She recalled that when she was in high school, her family hosted a Chinese student for a year.

"I was a year older than him, so I liked to tease him that I was his older American sister," Bohn said. "That was my first experience having a person-to-person cultural exchange so consistently."

This hosting experience quickly evolved into a lasting bond between two families: when Bohn first arrived in Nanjing, the father of her "Chinese brother" picked her up from the airport, helped her settle down, and even traveled all the way from Tianjin in North China to Nanjing, which is in East China, to ensure she didn't spend

her first Christmas in China alone. Her "Chinese brother" is still studying in the US and joined Bohn's family for Thanksgiving dinner last year.

Although this relationship may seem limited to just two families, Bohn believes that person-to-person exchanges play a vital role in the US-China dynamic because such interactions can help dispel cultural stereotypes that both peoples might hold toward each other.

"Now when I go back to the US, if I don't agree with, I can disagree not just based on opinion, but because I've really been here," she said.

Li Xinran, a reporter for China Daily, shared her teenage experience of staying with a family in South Carolina, US, when she was 16. She affectionately called her host parents "Patricia Ma" and "Bill Ba", adding the Chinese terms for "mother" and "father" to their first names.

"That helped us get really close," said Li. "And I didn't feel like I was living in someone else's home. It was like they took me in as one of their family members."

While attending high school in the US, Li was surprised by how little the local people knew about China. Being the first Chinese person many of her peers had ever met, Li was bombarded by questions such as whether there are really a lot of people in China and what Chinese people typically eat.

"It made me realize that even with technology and the internet, people still have a lot to learn about my home country," said Li. "I suddenly felt this burden, like I was a civil ambassador for China."

Li brought her *erhu*, a traditional

Chinese two-stringed bowed instrument, with her to the US. She would play for her classmates, using the opportunity to introduce them to this aspect of Chinese culture. By doing this, she felt she was fulfilling her role in bridging the cultural gap and sharing her country's heritage with peers on the other side of the world.

Clifford Larsen is a teacher at Springfield Central High School in Massachusetts. Having previously taught English in China, he now teaches Chinese in the US.

To make his students more engaged, Larsen goes beyond language instruction. One example was introducing them to Chinese cultural activities like Chinese chess and planning to launch classes on mahjong and ping-pong. He also arranges field trips, including visits to Chinese restaurants, where he teaches students how to place orders in Chinese.

"If I can be a small part of educating people in a different language and expanding their horizons in that way, that's my mission in life," he said, envisioning a future where his students will travel to China, return with excitement, and share their experiences with him. "That would be a dream come true."

As one of the hosts, Dylan Walker noted in the program that with so many foreigners learning Chinese now, it's no longer considered an "encrypted language."

"The only way to really understand a country or a place you're living in is by learning the language," he said. "And through that, you'll be able to understand the traditions, the customs, the history, the food, everything."

## LIFE



Dong Shujun (far right), a 22-year-old K-pop enthusiast, performs at the Sohu Blogger Festival on April 21. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# K-pop takes center stage at blogger festival

Sohu's Blogger Festival highlights K-pop enthusiasts' passion, friendships, and growth through dance covers, emphasizing dedication and the joy of live performances.

By LI XINRAN  
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In the colorful world of K-pop, where music and dance reign supreme, there's a hidden story of friendship and personal growth.

On April 21, Sohu, a prominent Chinese internet company, held its second Blogger Festival, bringing together bloggers from its various channels including K-pop, *hanfu* (traditional Chinese clothing), photography, and health.

Among these, the K-pop channel stood out, attracting the most attention both online and at the event.

During the festival, 15 groups showcased their dance skills on stage. One particularly impressive performance came from Song Jingyi, a 27-year-old enthusiast who, along with her teammates, performed *Deja Vu* by Tomorrow X Together.

Song, deeply passionate about K-pop since her elementary school days, has been captivated by the diverse charisma of both solo artists and groups. She started dancing at home, joined a dance club in college, took urban and jazz lessons, auditioned, and became a part of dance crews.

"I've explored every possible way in pursuing my love for dancing," she said.

Typically, K-pop fans organize themselves either through friends or K-pop group chats, often creating new lineups and coming up with fresh "group names" for each dance session. But Song belongs to a semi-permanent crew with a fixed name — 119 Rescue Crew — and the core members of the group stay the same.

Song believes that dancing with a more consistent crew improves their teamwork and chemistry.

"Not only are we more synchronized, but our dance styles and energy become more aligned. We start to adapt to each other," she noted.

To perfect their formations and syn-



“For a leader, it's crucial to follow through from selecting team members to producing the final product. Yes, we're doing it for enjoyment, but it's also a commitment.”

Qian Huiyun, a K-pop enthusiast

chronization, Song and her teammates usually rehearse three to four times a week, with each session lasting about three hours. She also takes the time to study the focus cam of the idol she's covering to capture details and their unique style. "If we're going to do it, we need to do it right," she said, noting that all the practice has truly honed their willpower and stamina.

"We often cover intense and demanding boy group dances, so we jokingly refer to ourselves as requiring a '119 emergency rescue,'" she chuckled.

Dong Shujun, 22, delved into the world of K-pop dance covers in 2020. Similar to Song, it was also a fascination



“More importantly, unlike filming a cover, performing live is a one-take affair. It pushes you to give your best and be fully present in the moment.”

Song Jingyi, a K-pop enthusiast

with idol culture that sparked her love for dancing. But now, her main motivation for continuing this hobby is her friends. However, this also presents a challenge because she finds it difficult to turn down her friends.

"Most of the dance covers I participate in are through invitations from friends. Sometimes, it's for songs I'm not familiar with or haven't heard before, and the other crew members might be total strangers," Dong said. "There are occasions when I end up performing the same dance multiple times to support different friends."

Qian Huiyun, 23, has been a K-pop enthusiast for over a decade. "I've

always enjoyed performing in front of people since I was young. Idols like Miss A portrayed an ideal image of who I aspire to be: a confident, charismatic woman who dresses up for herself rather than to please others," she said.

It wasn't until two years ago that Qian, through an invitation from a high school friend, joined the cover dance community.

She was dedicated, investing both money and effort into the endeavor. However, she soon discovered that not everyone has the same level of dedication as she does.

"I would feel a bit disappointed if others weren't fully prepared or arrived late for practice, but then I realized that most people are here to have fun and complete a dance cover together. That's when I began to relax and truly enjoy the process with them," she said.

However, commitment is still important for dance cover teams to maintain their tight-knit cohesion. To do that, they typically designate a "leader" who coordinates the group and ensures the smooth execution of the dance cover.

Song believes that an effective leader should be accountable for the team and capable of managing all organizational aspects: from scheduling practices and booking rehearsal spaces to leading practices, making final decisions, and registering for events.

Qian recalled an experience when she joined a team, and only four out of eight members showed up for the first practice because the leader failed to coordinate and communicate effectively. It also became apparent that the leader wasn't familiar with the choreography and couldn't lead the dance. As a result, despite enduring three practices and facing various issues, they never succeeded in filming the cover.

"For a leader, it's crucial to follow through from selecting team members to producing the final product. Yes, we're doing it for enjoyment, but it's also a commitment," Qian stressed.

In the K-pop community, fans frequently share their dance cover videos online, while offline meetups often feature performances and random play dances. The former showcases complete dance covers, while the latter involves impromptu flash mobs during choruses.

Song appreciates the satisfaction of creating a well-filmed and edited video but also finds live performances to have a unique charm.

"For starters, there's the live audience cheering and applauding. More importantly, unlike filming a cover, performing live is a one-take affair. It pushes you to give your best and be fully present in the moment," she said.

Qian once entertained the idea of becoming an idol herself, although she hasn't had the chance to pursue that dream yet.

"I see every performance as an opportunity to gain more experience and refine my skills. If the right time comes one day, I'll definitely seize it."

For Song, this was her third time attending a Sohu event. Last November, she and her team received an award at the Sohu Dance Festival. "It was a great honor to see our hard work and video being recognized and praised by so many people," she reminisced.

Recognition and personal growth are indeed significant rewards for these K-pop enthusiasts, but so is friendship.

For instance, Song became roommates with one of her crew members, while Dong formed 90 percent of her friendships through dancing. Qian also celebrated her last birthday with friends she often dances with.

For most cover dancers, this hobby has become an integral part of their lives, and they approach it with great dedication.

"Dancing combines the idol culture I adore, my fitness routine, self-improvement, and social interactions. I can't imagine replacing it with anything else," Dong affirmed.

## LIFE

# International youth discover the Xinjiang surprise

Beijing Foreign Studies University students and faculty explore Xinjiang's diverse culture, modernization, and warm hospitality, sparking newfound appreciation and understanding.



Vlasovskiy Artem (right), a 28-year-old Russian student at BFSU, dances with a local man at the Xinjiang International Grand Bazaar in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on April 27. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By MENG WENJIE  
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Between April 26 to 30, a group of students and faculty from Beijing Foreign Studies University embarked on a cultural journey to the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region in Northwest China.

The group consisted of 12 international students from various countries such as Russia, Nigeria, Thailand, and Poland, accompanied by eight Chinese teachers representing diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Han, Manchu, Mongolian, and Xibe.

During the five-day trip, the group explored museums and ecological centers showcasing Xinjiang's rich history and natural beauty, attended exhibitions to learn about the region's recent development projects and future urban plans, and interacted with local young people at Xinjiang University in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang.

"This trip aims to help international students understand both traditional Chinese culture and gain insights into contemporary China," said Yao Jinju, co-organizer and deputy division director of the personnel division at BFSU.

Vlasovskiy Artem, a 28-year-old from Russia, had previously visited Xinjiang in 2019. During his university years, he made friends with several Xinjiang students who were part of exchange programs at his school. They talked about languages, culture, and culinary traditions from their respective homelands.

It was these friends who took him to Xinjiang for the first time. "That journey left me with countless beautiful memories," Artem recalled.

While his first trip focused on appreciating the landscapes, cuisine, and culture of the region alongside his friends, returning for this visit, Artem was amazed by the rapid changes and progress taking place here.

He was particularly impressed by the Urumqi cultural center, which featured six major venues surrounding a central tower, resembling the petals of a blooming snow lotus, a unique flower native to Xinjiang.

Inside these venues, exhibitions were presented digitally, providing visitors



“After returning, I want to recommend to my family and friends that when they come to China, they should visit Xinjiang first.”

**Anantachote Natthanya,**  
a Thai student at BFSU

with an immersive experience.

"During this visit, I noticed more skyscrapers and digitized museums in Xinjiang, indicating its modernization and technological advancement," Artem said.

Uzodinma Chinenye Gerlof, from Nigeria, shared a similar experience with Artem. He came to China in 2018 to study in East China's Shandong province and later pursued a doctoral program at BFSU, where he developed friendships with several Xinjiang natives.

"We often play soccer together, and they would frequently invite me to dine at Xinjiang restaurants," he said. "In Beijing, I eat Xinjiang-style big plate chicken three to four times a week."

This journey marked Gerlof's first actual visit to the region. Before his trip, the 28-year-old had only seen traditional Xin-



“Initially, I thought there were several ethnic groups, but I was surprised to learn that there are actually 56 ethnic groups living here!”

**Uzodinma Chinenye Gerlof,**  
a Nigerian student at BFSU

jiang buildings in Beijing and assumed the entire region followed that architectural style. However, upon arrival, he was surprised by the sight of towering skyscrapers.

"I kept asking our tour guide, 'Are we really in Xinjiang?' because I felt like it was no different from Beijing or Tianjin," he said.

Exploring the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum provided Gerlof with a deeper insight into the region's rich historical background and the harmonious coexistence of its ethnic groups and cultures.

"I knew Xinjiang had a diverse ethnic population, but I had underestimated the extent of this diversity," he said. "Initially, I thought there were several ethnic groups, but I was surprised to learn that



“This is my second visit to Xinjiang, and I've noticed significant changes, yet the enduring warmth of the locals remains.”

**Vlasovskiy Artem,**  
a Russian student at BFSU

there are actually 56 ethnic groups living here!"

For Anantachote Natthanya, a 35-year-old Chinese language teacher from Thailand pursuing a doctoral degree at BFSU, this was also her first visit to Xinjiang. Throughout the trip, she immersed herself in the region's rich scenery and cultural attractions.

"Every day, I posted my experiences on Instagram, eager to keep my family and friends in Thailand updated," she said.

Natthanya discovered that despite their notable differences, Xinjiang and Thailand share a major commonality in their multiculturalism, both being globally renowned as hubs for cultural tourism.

According to her, for many Thai people, Xinjiang isn't typically a top destination when considering travel to China. "After

returning, I want to recommend to my family and friends that when they come to China, they should visit Xinjiang first. Here, they can experience completely different landscapes and cultures compared to cities like Beijing and Shanghai."

In addition to exploring the history, culture, cuisine, and modernization of Xinjiang, the group also engaged in interactions with the locals.

At the Xinjiang International Grand Bazaar, for example, local dancers enthusiastically welcomed the international visitors into the festivities. "This is my second visit to Xinjiang, and I've noticed significant changes, yet the enduring warmth of the locals remains," said Artem.

Since he first arrived in China in 2015, Artem has observed that many Chinese people tend to be reserved and shy, but he found a stark contrast in Xinjiang. "Everyone here made direct eye contact with me, displaying confidence in their culture and a genuine eagerness to share that energy with me," he said.

In his interactions with local university students, Artem was impressed by their optimism and their belief in Xinjiang's future development.

"Although Xinjiang may not be as developed as some eastern Chinese cities, these young people firmly believe in the region's potential for progress through their efforts," he said. "Their enthusiasm has inspired me to contribute to the development of my own hometown."

Gerlof connected deeply with the local youth's dedication to preserving and passing on their traditional culture, reflecting the cultural pride he also witnessed among young Nigerians.

"We both embrace our cultures with confidence and are keen to showcase them to the world," he said.

"For many international friends, their perception of Xinjiang is fragmented and incomplete," said Zhai Zheng, co-organizer of the tour and associate professor at BFSU. "However, this trip offers students an opportunity to view Xinjiang's landscapes firsthand, savor its cuisine, and immerse themselves in the rich culture woven by its diverse ethnic groups, providing a comprehensive and panoramic understanding of this region."