



'Nice' to meet Hangzhou
Rich cultural exchanges strengthen
relationship between twin cities
CITY DANCE, PAGES 8-9

Chinese burger
innovations boost
local brands
BUSINESS, PAGE 7



Setting up home in Wuxi
Former FIBA star from Serbia courting
permanent move to Jiangsu province
SPORTS, PAGE 14

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 MONDAY, MAY 6, 2024



President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan wave as they arrive on Sunday at Orly airport in Paris, France. MICHEL EULER / POOL VIA REUTERS

Xi's visit to solidify robust ties

Chinese, French leaders to meet in Paris
to discuss regional and global issues

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

President Xi Jinping arrived in Paris on Sunday in a significant diplomatic move to strengthen relations with China's key European partners, a trip widely expected to reaffirm and solidify robust ties while better managing differences.

Inside

• See more, pages 2-5
• Editorial, page 12

Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, were greeted by French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal upon their arrival at Paris Orly Airport, in a ceremony that included a guard of honor and a red carpet. The landmark visit, Xi's third after those in 2014 and 2019, came as the two nations celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year.

In written remarks delivered at the airport, Xi noted that ties between China and France have always stood at the forefront of China's diplomatic relations with Western countries, and

he hailed the two sides' setting an example for peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation between countries of different social systems.

He emphasized that he hopes the visit can present an opportunity for both nations to consolidate their traditional friendship, build up political mutual trust, forge strategic consensus and deepen exchanges and cooperation across various sectors.

The two nations should "light up the path ahead with the torch of history, work toward an even better future of China-France relations, and make new contributions to global peace, stability and development," he said.

Xi and his host, French President Emmanuel Macron, are set to exchange views on bilateral ties, China-European Union relations and major global and regional issues, and the two heads of state will meet outside Paris for further in-depth interactions.

The Chinese president's six-day trip to Europe — his first tour overseas this year — will also include key

engagements with the leaders of Serbia and Hungary.

Some analysts have underlined the important role of stronger collaboration on strategic issues between China and France in ensuring the stability of ties between China and the EU and solving global challenges going forward.

Feng Zhongping, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of European Studies, said that head-of-state diplomacy has been instrumental in leading the way for ties between Beijing and Paris, which have long stood at the forefront of China's relations with Western countries.

"The frequent personal interactions between Xi and Macron have charted the path forward for bilateral relations, and the strategic dialogue" between the two leaders during the trip will "pave the way for a higher level of mutual trust and cooperation," he said.

Meanwhile, a more solid and robust comprehensive strategic partnership between China and France will enable a better response to global challenges such as climate change, Feng said.

"This tour holds particular significance, as it comes at a time of complex international dynamics, where global and geopolitical challenges necessitate collaboration between China and Europe to uphold and practice genuine multilateralism," he added.

Jin Ling, a research fellow on European studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said that stronger certainty in the relationship between Beijing and Paris will add greater certainty to the ties between China and the EU.

"France has a long tradition of strategic autonomy in Europe, and this autonomy has been one of the key factors for deep-seated friendship with China," she said.

Despite differences between Beijing and Brussels, the headquarters of the EU, they both oppose decoupling and the severing of supply chains, while upholding multilateral resolution of global issues, she said.

Xi's trip to Serbia and Hungary, two of China's long-standing partners in Europe, has also been eagerly anticipated by leaders of both countries.

See *Visit*, page 3

French firms poised for more CIIE participation

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai
zhengzheng@chinadaily.com.cn

French companies are being encouraged to expand their participation in the 7th China International Import Expo, taking the opportunity to further cash in on the vast potential of the Chinese market.

"In recent years, with the continuous expansion of the Chinese middle-income consumer group and the improvement of consumer demand, the Chinese market has shown vigorous vitality, attracting more and more French goods into China," said Lu Shaye, Chinese ambassador to France, during a promotional event in Paris on April 16 for the CIIE.

French companies have participated in the expo since its inauguration in 2018. France was invited as the guest of honor country during the second CIIE, a role that saw French President Emmanuel Macron attend the opening ceremony. Five years later, France is invited to be the guest of honor for the second time at the seventh CIIE scheduled from Nov 5 to 10.

"The French government and enterprises have always been frequent guests of the CIIE. France was once again invited as the guest of honor, fully demonstrating China's importance and recognition of French enterprises and products. I hope more French companies can make good use of the CIIE platform,

seize opportunities, deeply cultivate in China, provide more high-quality products for Chinese consumers, and share China's vast consumer market," Lu said.

As highlighted by Sun Chenghai, deputy director-general of the CIIE Bureau, French participation has consistently ranked among the highest of all countries in terms of exhibitor numbers, exhibition area and intended transaction volume. France's exhibition space at the CIIE has expanded from over 10,000 square meters in the first year to 21,000 sq m last year.

The seventh CIIE will feature a "From French farms to Chinese tables" zone within the food and agricultural products exhibition area, thanks to a coordinated mechanism envisioned by the leaders of the two nations last year.

Lan Zhenzhen, president of public affairs at L'Oréal North Asia and China, said: "Over the past six years, the CIIE has been pivotal for open innovation efforts for L'Oréal. L'Oréal has debuted more than 20 new international brands and dozens of beauty cosmetic technologies at the CIIE, facilitating the transition from exhibitors to investors, and investors to partners."

L'Oréal has also co-hosted projects like the Big Bang beauty tech innovation challenge, opened research and development centers in Shanghai, and invested in local enterprises, all of which are seen by Lan, as ripple effects of CIIE participation.

Fleeing from floods



A man is rescued on Saturday by military personnel after massive flooding in Canoas, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil. Raging floods and mudslides have killed at least 56 people in southern Brazil so far and forced nearly 70,000 to flee their homes, the country's civil defense agency said on Saturday. RENAN MATTOS / REUTERS

The relevance of 60 years of Sino-French diplomacy

In 1958, the Fifth Republic was established in France. General Charles de Gaulle, back in office, pursued an independent foreign policy and attached greater importance to enhancing relations with China.

In 1963, former French prime minister Edgar Faure briefed President de Gaulle about his visit to China, describing how Chairman Mao welcomed him with the words: "You arrive on time".

Three months later, on 27 January 1964, China and France issued a joint communiqué, announcing the establishment of diplomatic relations. It also marked the first major Western country recognizing the People's Republic of China since 1950. It was an important step because of the significant light it shed not only on Sino-French relations but on the wider dynamics in Sino-European relations during the decisive period in the 1960s and early 1970s.

WORLD WATCH
By Fabien Paçory

France and China, while standing firm by their principles, showed flexibility in the negotiations to accommodate as much as they could the concerns of the other side. Both secured the diplomatic relations with a practical and forthcoming approach, setting a fine example of the art of negotiation in the history of diplomacy.

2024 marks the 60th anniversary of France's recognition of the People's Republic of China, making it an opportunity for the two countries to communicate their cooperation and friendship. It is also the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism.

As a student in 1999, I recall witnessing the then Chinese president Jiang Zemin walking down

the streets of Lyon city, through the old quarters of Saint-Jean, with then French president Jacques Chirac. France and China have a long record of understanding and consideration. We share a mutual respect that has grown over the years.

Last year, on his first visit to Guangzhou, I had the chance to visit Shamian island with French President Emmanuel Macron and Sylvain Fourriere, our consul general in South China. We talked about Lingnan culture, Guangdong province and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, and also about the crucial functions and missions being played by our civil institutions such as the French Chamber of Commerce in China, Business France and Alliance Française that are always trying to build bridges and relationship between the two cultures.

Today, in this post-pandemic era, we can see the first warning signs of

a new global order. So what is the status of the relationship and cooperation between France and China?

This anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties is taking place against the backdrop of an incredibly special and unstable context, but France has been continuously trying to have a comprehensive and consistent long-term vision about China. French-Chinese cooperation exists in many important fields where France excels. Other than in luxury goods and cosmetics, scientific and technological cooperation between France and China have been a cornerstone of the relationship. From aerospace and the nuclear civil industry to renewable energy, the two countries have made significant strides in joint research and development in fields such as education, academic research, pharmaceuticals, biotech and agriculture.

See *Links*, page 3

US CAMPUSES SPLINTERED BY PROTESTS OVER ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Demonstrators, school administrators, police are testing limits of safety, freedom of expression

By AI HEPING, MINGMEILI
in New York and YIFAN XU
in Washington



It has been more than 50 years since the United States saw college students launch anti-Vietnam War protests across the nation.

Now, students have again become the front line in a new conflict — this time as Israel fights Hamas in Gaza.

It was Columbia University in New York City that sparked the anti-war protests in 1968 when students seized five buildings, including Hamilton Hall. On April 18, pro-Palestinian demonstrators occupied the hall, just as their predecessors had done 56 years ago to protest the Vietnam War.

Columbia has again become the epicenter of demonstrations

that have spread nationwide to 46 other campuses and led to more than 2,400 arrests, The Associated Press reported.

"When you're going to Columbia, you know you're going to an institution which has an honored place in the history of American protest," said Mark Naison, professor of history and African and African American studies at Fordham University in New York and a participant in the 1968 demonstrations.

See *Campuses*, page 11

Inside

See more, page 10



INSIDE
China and EU remain
mainly cooperative
Global Views, page 13

www.chinadailyglobal.com
Member of ANN
China Daily Global
©2024 All Rights Reserved

Newsstand prices:
US \$1 Canada C\$1
UK 1.2 EU 1.6
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;
Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee



XI'S VISIT

Language crucial to China-France friendship

By WANG MINGJIE in Paris
wangmingjie@mail.chinadaily.com

With President Xi Jinping's state visit to France to commemorate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France, Nicolas Idier, inspector general for Chinese language teaching at the French Ministry of National Education, has highlighted the crucial role of Chinese language education in fostering robust bilateral ties.

"Every state visit has the potential to gain a historical echo, but needs symbols oriented toward the future," Idier said. "As our president was mentioning the importance of 'a patient path of mutual knowledge', President Xi will contribute to the promotion of cultural and educational exchanges.

"The best thing to do to enhance the desire to learn a foreign language is to keep the doors open and to facilitate academic exchanges between schools and students," he added.

Highlighting the significance of showcasing the creativity of the Chinese language, Idier emphasized the importance of involving writers and translators in Chinese language education.

He mentioned the Cite internationale de la langue française (International City of French Language), which will host the 19th Francophone Summit in October, as an excellent opportunity to celebrate the long-standing friendship between the French and Chinese languages, dating back to the 18th century and the first translations from Chinese to French.

During French President Emmanuel Macron's state visit to China in April 2023, he stressed the need for academic connections, understanding, exchanges and conversations of intelligence and learning.

In a world where judgments can fall abruptly, resuming the patient path of mutual knowledge becomes essential. To build this path to the future, Macron called for the development of language proficiency, with a focus on promoting the French language in China and the Chinese language in France.

According to the French Ministry of National Education, Chinese remains the fifth most-taught language, and the first non-European language behind English, Spanish, German and Italian, with more than 38,000 learners in secondary education, including private schools.

This year marks a significant milestone in language promotion with the introduction of the first session of the Bac Français International. The implementation of this program represents a turning point in the history of French education as it incorporates foreign certifications into the official framework of the French baccalaureate for the first time.

Idier said: "Requests to open international sections are growing in all languages and particularly in Chinese, with the opening of a complete course in Marseille, starting in September 2024. The course of study proposed by the international programs from the first grade to 10th grade is now open in more than 60 French schools. It is the best way to get access to perfect language ability in both French and Chinese."

Joel Bellassen, renowned French sinologist and a distinguished expert in Chinese language and culture, echoed the sentiment, saying there is a global surge in interest in learning the Chinese language, as evidenced by the growing popularity of Mandarin classes worldwide.

"The increasing popularity of Mandarin classes globally demonstrates the growing interest in learning the Chinese language," he said.

Bellassen's profound connection with the Chinese language dates back to his initial visit to Beijing in 1973 as an exchange student.

He emphasized the importance of continuous professional development to inspire future generations of Sino-French cultural ambassadors. "China and France will continue collaborating on Chinese language programs in France, expanding the number of Chinese language classes, training additional local Chinese teachers, and developing new teaching materials," he said.

Flying the flags



National flags of both China and France adorn a street in Paris on Saturday ahead of President Xi Jinping's state visit to France. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

China and Europe cooperate for water security in the future

By HOU LIQIANG
houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Europe after a sustained, pragmatic, and in-depth cooperation on water governance, have both made significant contributions to cope with the world's escalating water security challenges, an official with the Ministry of Water Resources said.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Xu Jing, deputy director general of the ministry's Department of International Cooperation, Science, and Technology, depicted a long history of close and friendly cooperation in water resources management between China and European countries.

"Since the launch of the China-EU River Basin Management Program in 2007, China and Europe have carried out in-depth research and extensive exchanges in river basin management, flood prevention and mitigation, groundwater management and measures responding to climate change.

"Aside from implementing extensive personnel exchanges and visits, they have also translated and published a series of policy documents and technical manuals," she said.

Xu noted the establishment of the China-Europe Water Platform in 2012 as an important event that marked the beginning of a significant leap forward for the two sides in promoting eco-friendly cooperation in the water resources governance sector.

Since then, the two sides have conducted rich pragmatic activities, with focuses on policy exchange, scientific research, and business exchanges, the official noted.

She said China and Europe have held nine ministerial-level dialogues and jointly issued five min-

isterial-level declarations, let alone numerous meetings of the platform's Joint Steering Committee and other exchange programs.

Moreover, the collaborative efforts of China and Europe have extended to major international platforms, as evidenced by their co-chairing of the interactive dialogue "Water for Sustainable Development" during the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, she said.

Additionally, the 18th World Water Congress in Beijing also served as a venue for profound exchanges and discussions on water management policy experience between the two sides, Xu continued.

Fruitful period

The past 12 years have been a fruitful period that saw China and Europe roll out more than a dozen joint studies in various fields such as basin management, ecological restoration, facilities for rural water resources management and food security, water and urbanization, water and energy, she said.

Under the China-EU Partnership Instrument Program from 2018 to last year, the two sides jointly carried out a batch of concrete projects, she said, citing a pilot venture for ecological restoration in the Nanxi River in Zhejiang province as an example.

Borrowing experiences in remediating the Rhine, Danube and Mondego rivers in Europe, experts from China and Europe jointly developed a plan for the conservation of rare migratory fish species in the river.

They also recommended the minimum value of discharge that needs to be maintained in the river to ensure optimum conditions for its ecosystem, among other specific proposals on ecological restoration.

Xu has especially highlighted productive outcomes from Sino-French cooperation.

After the two countries' water resources authorities signed a cooperation agreement in 2009, they then agreed to launch a pilot program in the Haihe River Basin in 2011, she noted.

She said France's concept and approaches in drafting integrated planning for river basin management were successively incorporated by experts from the two countries into three documents for water conservation in the Haihe basin.

Capacity building is also one of the key aspects of the pilot program. To promote work in this regard, the two sides have so far visited each other about 50 times, with 40 of them by France to China, she said, adding that about 700 Chinese personnel were trained.

China and France renewed the cooperation memorandum of understanding on water resources management in 2018.

Xu said China and Europe have reached consensus to embark on a new phase of cooperation with a three-year China-EU Cooperation on Water Project, and a draft overall work plan for the project has been prepared.

The two sides plan to further enhance joint research and technical exchanges in various fields, including basin management, information technology, groundwater recharge, and water recycling, and organize more study tours in these regards, she said.

"China and Europe will actively utilize the opportunities presented at important international conferences in 2024 to promote the achievements in China-Europe cooperation on water resources management as they make efforts to contribute their strength to global water governance," she said.

Xi's words published in French

Discourses on Chinese modernization aim to provide deeper understanding

A compilation of excerpts from discourses on Chinese modernization by Xi Jinping has been published in French by the Central Compilation and Translation Press.

Compiled by the Institute of Party History and Literature of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, the book collects a series of important discourses by Xi between November 2012 and October 2023 regarding Chinese modernization.

Both the book's French version and previously published English version will together help overseas readers better grasp the theoretical and practical context of Chinese modernization.

The book is also of great significance to enhancing the international community's understanding in joining hands on the path towards modernization.

On Saturday in Paris, a report released by Chinese think tanks also introduced the process of Chinese modernization and highlighted its global significance.

The report, titled "Chinese Modernization: The Way Forward," was coauthored by New China Research, the think tank of Xinhua News Agency, and the Institute of Party History and Literature of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, and is available in four languages including Chinese, English, French and Russian.

Under the leadership of the CPC, in just several decades, the Chinese people have completed the process of industrialization that took developed countries several centuries to complete, said the report.

China has scored widely recognized achievements in modernization and realized two miracles, namely the rapid economic growth and long-term social stability, the report said.

China's modernization drive aims not only to benefit the Chinese people, but also to promote the common development of the world, the report added.

The report said that China has always worked to safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, preserve international order, and provide public goods, and it will continue to provide the world with new opportunities through its new development.

The country has actively participated in, promoted, and joined hands with other countries to push forward reform and development of the global governance system in a bid to make the international order fairer and more equitable, it said.

Chinese modernization has expanded the channels for developing countries to achieve modernization by providing them with a brand-new option, and offered a Chinese proposal for humanity's search for a better social system, said the report.

China will also respect and support the independent choices of peoples around the world regarding their own development paths, in a concerted effort to draw a new vision of the future featuring harmonious coexistence of modernization in diverse forms, it said.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

Picture perfect



People visit a photo exhibition celebrating the 60th anniversary of China-France diplomatic relations in Paris on Saturday.

LIAN YI / XINHUA

Joint initiative drives down tuberculosis cases in Yunnan province

By WANG XIAOYU in Beijing
and LI YINGQING in Kunming

The hardest part of treating tuberculosis is widely regarded as getting patients to comply with the treatment regimen. In a mountainous region in Southwest China recording one of the highest TB incidence rates in the country, challenges in ensuring medicine adherence were further compounded by its remote location, lack of health awareness, and funding.

"To persuade patients to comply, we require rural doctors to pay in-person visits every 10 days in the beginning and at least once a month later," said Yang Long, an official at the disease control and prevention center in Yunnan province's Nujiang Lisu autonomous prefecture. "But a round-trip to a patient's home could take two to three hours, and when a doctor arrives, a patient might have already stopped taking medications for more than a couple of days."

A typical TB treatment usually involves taking pills every day for at least six months to as long as two years, and incorrect use of drugs could lead to drug-resistant strains that are even harder to cure. "But it was simply impossible for our health workers to see patients taking pills in front of them, and we were struggling to find a better way to increase adherence," he said.

The problem was noted during a TB control initiative jointly launched by the health commission of Yunnan province and the Merieux Foundation — an independent family foundation headquartered in Lyon, France — in 2019. The initiative pledged one million euros, or about 7.82 million yuan (\$1.08 million), into reinvesting in TB infections in impoverished regions with diverse ethnic groups in Nujiang.

Thanks to the funding from the program, Nujiang became the first region across Yunnan to promote the use of electronic medication monitors. "TB patients will be given

a smart pill box with one month's worth of medications. The device will send alerts like an alarm clock at correct times and log medication intake each time the patient opens the box," said Yang.

Information of patients who have failed to comply will also be uploaded to an online platform. "When doctors spot an irregular medication record, they will get in touch with the patient directly through the platform and remind patients or ask about their situation," he said.

According to local health officials, more than 2,000 TB patients have been equipped with the electronic medication monitor free of charge as of recently. "The smart system has played an important role in prodding patients to take pills on time and advancing treatment outcomes," he said.

Insufficient funding had stymied efforts to control TB in Nujiang for years. In 2018, the prefecture saw nearly four in 10 people living below the official poverty line and the inci-

dence rate for TB stood at about 263 per 100,000 population — the highest across Yunnan province.

In recent years, joint efforts from central government departments, developed provinces that offered consistent assistance, as well as domestic and foreign foundations have made a significant impact.

"When the Merieux Foundation stepped in, we strove to address the most outstanding barriers in tackling TB," he said.

In addition to deploying novel equipment to boost patient compliance, Yang said that the initiative has also introduced rapid diagnostic tests and testing tools for drug-resistant TB cases to five designated TB hospitals across the prefecture. As of recently, the program has funded the use of 3,000 rapid testing materials and two sets of testing equipment.

"New technologies have enabled us to return more sensitive and precise results, and helped us identify, detect and treat new TB infections

as early as possible and halt the disease's spread," said Yang.

In addition, about 400 volunteers have been enrolled to spread knowledge and awareness about TB, and experts from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention have held three training sessions in Nujiang and trained over 180 local professionals.

As of the end of last year, the incidence rate of TB in Nujiang had fallen by nearly 45 percent compared to the level seen in 2018.

After a recent visit to China in early April, Alain Merieux, president of the Merieux Foundation, said during an interview with Xinhua News Agency that China and France have maintained a special bond in the medical sector over past decades, and the competence of Chinese partners and their strong desire to promote cooperation have always touched him.

Contact the writers at wangxiaoyu@chinadaily.com.cn

XI'S VISIT

Shipbuilding culture helped friendship set sail

By ZHAO JIA in Beijing
and HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou

For the past three decades, Rene Vignet, 80, dedicated himself to studying and promoting what Chinese historians call the "Chuan-zheng culture", also known as the shipbuilding culture.

Vignet, a French scholar of modern Chinese history, studied the fascinating past of the Fuzhou Shipping Bureau and the Fuzhou Shipping School, which were both established in 1866. Prosper Giquel, a French naval officer, played a significant role in the building and growth of the bureau and the school. Vignet said he considers Giquel as a model for cooperation between China and France, and admires the naval officer's role in introducing new technologies to China and the promotion of French language teaching in China.

"Chinese and French people should be proud of Giquel's dedication and achievements — a model that can and should be developed," he said. "I have been collecting historical materials on Giquel since 1983, and I am grateful to his heir, Arnaud de Panafieu, for opening their rich family archives."

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France.

Vignet said he and de Panafieu have been invited to give lectures on Giquel at the Lyon public library and to display on-screen historical documents and photos related to Giquel at the Ecole Polytechnique alumni hall.

These events will help French people better understand Chinese history and Giquel's key role in China's progress, he said.

Giquel (1835-86), who came to China in 1857, asked for leave from the French Navy to learn the Chinese language, according to Vignet.

In 1866, Zuo Zongtang, an official of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), appointed Giquel as director of the shipping bureau and school, which were built in present-day Mawei district of Fuzhou, the capital of East China's Fujian province.

Giquel, who spoke fluent Chinese and loved China, devoted his



Rene Vignet shows old photos of the Fuzhou Shipping Bureau at a bookstore in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on Dec 23, 2023, during an event marking the bureau's 157th anniversary. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

heart and soul to the bureau and the school, Vignet said.

About 50 French engineers and teachers joined Giquel's team over a period of 10 years. Dozens of children in Fujian became fluent French speakers and many young people mastered European technologies, he said.

The shipyard was among the most modern in Asia, and by the end of 1873, as many as 15 modern vessels, complete with propellers and steam engines, had been built by 2,500 Chinese workers trained to use European machinery, according to Vignet.

"This was an incredible performance of swift and effective technology transfer. And for sure, the very first one in modern China," he said.

Giquel, together with his friend Lemaire, drafted and published the first French-Chinese dictionary, with the focus on technical shipbuilding vocabulary, Vignet said, adding that Giquel also made arrangements for his students at the Fuzhou Shipping School to pursue higher studies in France and the United Kingdom in 1875.

In 2014, to commemorate Giquel's pioneering efforts in developing the China-France friendship, then French minister of foreign

affairs Laurent Fabius presented to the Museum of Foochow Arsenal in Mawei a replica of Giquel's bronze statue, which was cast and given to his family after his funeral in 1886.

In 2006, for the 140th anniversary of the founding of the Fuzhou Shipping Bureau, Vignet and his friend, Du Liyan, brought rare photos, which were till then not seen in China, to Lin Yingyao, an official with Fujian Mawei Shipbuilding Co, which was preceded by the shipping bureau.

Lin received the photos with gratitude, and soon exhibited them in one of the surviving magnificent red-brick buildings that Giquel had helped build, Vignet said.

Lin also highly praised the photos, saying that they precisely depicted the shipbuilding technology of the time. Vignet was later invited to deliver several lectures in Fuzhou.

"Stimulated by my warm exchanges with friends in Mawei, I reached out to the heirs of Giquel in France, particularly Arnaud de Panafieu, who made available their family archives, a fantastic trove of historical documents," he said.

In 2016, for the 150th anniversary of the bureau, the French scholar was again invited to Mawei, where he presented a large collection of

rare photos, books and engravings from the Giquel family archives and his own collections.

By 2026, which will be the 160th anniversary, Vignet and de Panafieu will cooperate with the French national marine museum to organize an exhibition in Loriet Harbour, a port in northwestern France and the birthplace of Giquel.

Vignet expressed the hope that more French people will travel to Fujian and visit the Museum of Foochow Arsenal, to better understand the two countries' history and further boost their friendship.

"I am very happy to see that Fujian province is sparing no effort to explore its cultural resources and actively protect and make good use of its historical sites," he said.

A multidimensional experience play, *The Glory Belongs to Fuzhou Arsenal*, was officially performed in Mawei in December to revisit the spirit of shipbuilding.

Vignet also mentioned the possible screening of a documentary, displaying the historical photos and documents on Giquel related to the development of the Chuan-zheng Culture Theme Park.

Contact the writers at
zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

Cooperation points the way to green future

Joint efforts by China, France bringing about 'fruitful results' in major business areas

By ZHUANG QIANG
and ZHONG NAN

China and France, with diplomatic ties going back six decades, are pointing the way for the green transition, showing that in tackling the challenges facing all of humanity, cooperation is crucial.

Facing common threats such as global warming, which is causing extreme weather challenges worldwide, enterprises from both China and France are working together on green solutions and products.

As one move toward achieving carbon neutrality, France is building its northern industrial hub of Dunkirk into a "Battery Valley" to attract the participation of multinational battery enterprises, including those from China. In addition to the participation of battery companies, enterprises such as China State Construction Engineering Corp and BETOM Group, a prominent French engineering design firm, are contributing to the development of the future battery hub.

One hurdle to development of the hub was the fact that differences exist between the two countries in areas such as construction standards, environmental regulations and administrative procedures. This is where cooperation between China Mediterranean Holding SAS, an overseas unit of China State Construction Engineering Corp, and BETOM came in.

"Localization is a major hurdle confronting Chinese players extending their footprint in the 'Battery Valley'. We are keen to bridge this gap," said Lyu Taizhong, director of China Mediterranean Holding's European business department.

As an engineering design institute with nearly 60 years' experience, BETOM "plays a key role in supporting CSCEC's overseas business," Lyu said. A team well-versed in both Chinese and European construction standards has been formed as part of the cooperative efforts, with employees from both China and France.

Christophe Lac, general manager of BETOM, said that "such a 'mixture' brews fruitful results in our major business areas, including building, engineering and consulting. This engineering design institute is providing comprehensive engineering consulting services for numerous Chinese battery investment companies in the 'Battery Valley'."

"Thanks to knowledge about both the needs of Chinese clients and the regulation and operation rules in the French market, the team is clearing away the myriad obstacles for customers from both sides to facilitate project implementation," Lac said.

The cooperation is a reflection of the flourishing economic exchanges between the two countries as well as the commitments of companies from both sides in each other's market.

Contact the writers at
zhuangqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

and spirits group, said that after achieving 6 percent year-on-year growth in the Chinese market in its 2023 fiscal year, it will focus on premium and diversified products in the years ahead.

"China stands as Pernod Ricard's second-largest market, where we have established a presence for over 30 years," said Jerome Cottin-Bizonne, CEO of Pernod Ricard China. "We will respond promptly to ever-evolving market and consumer demands in the country."

Since China and France established diplomatic relations in 1964, their bilateral trade has increased more than 800-fold. Today, China is France's largest trading partner in Asia, while France is China's third-largest trading partner and the third-largest source of actual investment within the European Union, according to data from China's Ministry of Commerce.

Sino-French trade reached \$78.9 billion in 2023, with imports from France increasing 5.5 percent year-on-year, the ministry said.

France had established more than 6,000 companies in China by the end of 2021, with investment exceeding \$18 billion, and it has expanded innovative business models in China.

In addition to investing in innovative ecosystems through partnerships with Chinese companies, many French companies, such as Schneider Electric and Sanofi, have established research and development centers in China.

By the end of 2023, China had been the top Asian country in terms of investment and job creation in France for three consecutive years, with nearly \$4.9 billion in direct investment. Chinese companies have invested in over 900 French companies, employing more than 50,000 local employees in France, according to the Beijing-based China Chamber of International Commerce.

Despite some European politicians advocating of decoupling from China, French companies have consistently maintained a clear and objective stance, basing their actions on facts and upholding mutually beneficial and pragmatic cooperation with China, said Cai Tongjuan, a researcher at Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.

Cai said that China and France both possess strong capabilities and advantages, and through cooperation, they can achieve mutual benefits and win-win results, promoting the balance and stability of the global economy.

China's ongoing consumption and industrial upgrading boom will continue to attract French investment to China in many areas, such as high-end manufacturing and green development, in the years ahead, she added.

Contact the writers at
zhuangqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Visit: Immense potential seen in strengthening ties

From page 1

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic expressed high expectations for the trip during a recent interview. "Personally, I am very jubilant to see and to host President Xi. He is a great leader and a great friend of Serbia, and we consider ourselves as a great friend of China as well," he said.

"We have a lot of common denominators in our cooperation and collaboration, and we will carry on with that," Vucic added.

The ironclad ties between China and Serbia are underpinned by

robust economic and trade relations — bilateral trade volume between China and Serbia has increased eightfold over the past decade, and China has maintained its position as Serbia's second-largest trading partner for several years.

Feng, the Institute of European Studies director, said there is immense potential to build up people-to-people ties between China and Serbia, with both nations sharing a strong sense of cultural affinity toward each other.

Peter Szijjarto, Hungary's minister of foreign affairs and trade,

said in a recent interview with China Central Television that it is a "great honor" for his country to host the Chinese president on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Beijing and Budapest.

"Our expectation is that we (are) entering a new chapter in this relationship through this visit," he said, adding that the Hungarian government has already proposed joint infrastructure projects with China under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Hungary has become one of the

top destinations for Chinese electric vehicle makers and EV suppliers, with BYD, Nio, CATL and Eye Energy already making major investments in the country.

Feng said that for China, "building up ties with Hungary, an EU member, will help clear up misunderstandings of Brussels and strengthen mutual trust with other EU members."

For Hungary, the enhancing of cooperation with China has already proved rewarding and will help the nation continue to energize its economic growth and enhance job creation, he added.

Links: Both nations should pool resources

From page 1

The next step in France-China cooperation should be in new emerging technologies such as computational neurocognitive sciences, artificial intelligence, quantum mechanics and knowledge management. France is developing interesting "research laboratories of excellence", specializing in breakthrough innovation and exploring avenues such as adjacent innovation and radical innovation. France and China can pool their resources to tackle global challenges, deepen cooperation and open up the future.

They are engaged in the sectors of renewable energies, biodiversity cooperation and maritime conservation. Both countries are committed to pursuing a prominent level of dialogue about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, maintaining a genuine dialogue that differs from others.

China and France have this ability to inspire others, to communicate and spread new narratives, and new collaborative innovation can encourage the global community to aspire for a future marked by cohesiveness. Seizing the occasion presented by

the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between France and China, China is willing to reinforce dialogue, deepen and expand cooperation, and push bilateral economic and trade relations to a new level. France is also willing to boost communication with China to inject new momentum into France-China economic and trade cooperation. In an interview with Xinhua News two months ago, former French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius said that China and France are both committed to independence as well as multilateralism and peace. "We do not want a bloc policy, with the risks of conflicts that this entails," he said.

Recently, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed the same ideas, that China and France should strengthen strategic coordination and deepen cooperation to contribute to global peace and stability. He made the remarks during his meeting with Macron in Paris, saying that the two heads of state have established a strong mutual trust and a sincere friendship, and guided the development of bilateral strategic cooperation, exerting a profound and positive influence on the world.

President Macron and President Xi Jinping are meeting again in Par-

is to celebrate and to open up a new page of China-France friendly relations. In these complicated times and challenging periods, let us not focus on economic hostility, but rather on cooperation and common dialogue. China should better understand France's leading role in the European Union, its influence among emerging countries, and its positive role in advancing multilateralism and cultural diversity. As for France, it needs to be more inclusive toward China's development and path to modernization.

It is time for the whole world to adopt symbiotic cooperation and technological innovation rather than succumb to misguided isolationism and disruptive protectionism. Of late, the focus of global discussions reflects a multifaceted methodology that intertwines economic diplomacy, strategic alliances and a concerted push toward sustainable development. During this period of turbulence and transformation, China and France are pushing for the implementation of initiatives to benefit all.

Progress and advancements in technology have catalyzed a shift in the focus of strategic competition between major powers. New mechanisms are highly needed,

and France and China can be even more committed to building a more innovation-driven development architecture, a more inclusive international order, while striving for peace and development. Currently, there is a lack of universally accepted and binding international rules in emerging technologies, to build an innovative technology governance mechanism featuring more cooperation, stimulating the potential of targeted breakthrough innovation.

"The mutual openness of our two nations is indispensable," said the French president. The Xi-Macron meeting in Paris comes a year after the French president visited Beijing and Guangzhou. As the world undergoes profound historical changes, the French believe in engagement with China based on friendship and effective diplomacy. There is a need for interdependence based on mutually beneficial support built on the foundation of mutual trust. By joining hands, China and France will help prevent and avert new divisions in this shattered world, trying to instill hope that both countries will play a positive role in conflict resolutions.

The author is executive vice president of the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Street show



Giant puppets depicting characters from La Fontaine's Fables parade down a square near the Yellow Crane Tower Park in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Sunday. French performers put up the show that also featured aerial dances. ZHANG CHANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

XI'S VISIT

French visit
a summit of
celebrations

Ambassador: Trip to help Europe shape objective, friendly perception of China

By ZHANG YUNBI
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping's state visit to France "will be the climax of a series of events celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of China-France diplomatic relations", said Chinese Ambassador to France Lu Shaye.

During the visit starting on Sunday, Xi will embark on thorough, in-depth strategic communication with French President Emmanuel Macron on China-France and China-EU relations, Lu said.

The visit will help encourage France's commitment to strategic autonomy, openness and cooperation, and will also help Europe "shape a more independent, objective and friendly perception of China", he said.

“China and France will maintain close communication and collaboration in multilateral mechanisms.”

Lu Shaye, Chinese Ambassador to France



This is Xi's second visit to France and Europe in five years, and the first leg of the head of state's first trip abroad this year.

The ambassador stressed the need to "cope with the uncertainty of the world through the stability of China-France relations", and to make good use of the all-around and high-level communication channels between the two countries.

The goal is to "make sure ties are always at the forefront of relations between China and Western countries", he said.

In recent years, various departments of the two sides have carried forward the consensus reached by the two heads of state via three major dialogue mechanisms — strategic dialogue; high-level economic and financial dialogue; and high-level cultural exchanges.

France is China's third-largest trading partner and third-largest source of actual investment from the European Union. China is France's largest trading partner in Asia.

Last year, bilateral trade accounted for \$78.9 billion despite global trade headwinds, and China's imports from France grew by

5.5 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Wang Wentao, minister of commerce, said in Paris last month that the balance of bilateral trade "has been further improved".

"The two sides are actively exploring the potential for cooperation in emerging areas such as green industry and clean energy," Lu said.

It is important to "safeguard the health and stability of the international economic and trade system through the openness of China-France practical cooperation", and to jointly maintain the stability and resilience of the industrial supply chain, he said.

Beijing welcomes France as the guest country of honor at this year's China International Fair for Trade in Services and the seventh China International Import Expo, he noted.

"I believe there will be more French companies investing, thriving and winning in China," he added, expressing his desire to also see further exchanges in the cultural arena.

The Summer Olympic Games will be held this year in Paris, marking the second time the French capital has hosted the event in the past 100 years.

Lu stated his hope that China-France sports exchanges and cooperation can tap into the Games to go deeper and become more practical, and "drive the bilateral relations to achieve greater development".

Noting that France is a core and major member of the EU, Lu said China-France relations are "an important part of and a powerful engine for China-EU ties".

"China has always managed its EU relations from a strategic and long-term perspective, and it regards Europe as a comprehensive strategic partner and an important force in the multipolar world," he said.

It is imperative to reject negative ideas — such as those advocating "de-risking" and "reducing dependence" on China — and to ensure that China-France relations will continue to lead China-EU relations to a stable and far-reaching future, he said.

At the same time, Lu underlined the need to "promote fair and reasonable global governance through the effectiveness of China-France multilateral cooperation".

"China and France will maintain close communication and collaboration in multilateral mechanisms such as the United Nations, the Group of 20 and the World Trade Organization, and jointly practice true multilateralism," he said.



The French editions of eight titles on China's economics, politics, social governance, history and aesthetics are released during the seminar "Exchanges and Mutual Learning Between Chinese and French Civilizations: Review and Outlook" in Paris on Friday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Seminar underscores bilateral cultural exchanges

By FANG AIQING
fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn

The importance of cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections was highlighted at a seminar co-hosted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Paris-based National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations, in the French capital on Friday.

More than 100 experts and scholars from major think tanks, universities and research institutes in China and France attended the seminar titled "Exchanges and Mutual Learning Between Chinese and French Civilizations: Review and Outlook".

Topics such as the practice and testimony of civilizational exchanges, retrospections and reflection on mutual learning between civilizations, as well as the role scientific and technological innovation will play in the future of

human civilization, were discussed at the event.

Gao Xiang, president of the CASS, said at the opening ceremony that strengthening mutual learning and enriching cultural exchanges between the two countries are an inherent requirement for advancing people-to-people connectivity, consolidating the foundation of mutual trust and deepening partnership, especially as China and France commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic ties.

He stressed the importance of equality, inclusiveness and a consensus of cooperation in the process of exchanges and mutual learning between China and France, and expressed faith that deepening cooperation and exchanges between the two countries will create a strong impetus for the further implementation of the Global Civilization Initiative.

Jean-Francois Huchet, president of the French institute, reviewed the development of academic exchanges between China and France over the past few decades.

He said that his institute has been expanding the scale of Chinese language and culture education, with more China-related subjects in fields such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology and economics being taught, and increasingly more diverse topics being studied.

Huchet added that a younger generation of scholars has shown a strong, persistent interest in China and has been willing to conduct research and gain firsthand knowledge.

According to Nicolas Idier, inspector-general of Chinese language education at the French Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, Chinese is the most widely taught non-European language in France, and the fifth most

widely taught foreign language in the country.

Idier stressed the importance of foreign language education despite changes in the international situation and certain convenience brought by digital technologies, particularly the development of artificial intelligence.

He expressed hope that by learning foreign languages including Chinese, as well as the cultures embedded, students can have a better understanding of the world's major challenges and the true meaning of sustainable development.

During the seminar, the French editions of eight titles on China's economics, politics, social governance, history and aesthetics were released, as a joint effort of the China Social Sciences Press, attached to the CASS, and French publishing houses including Editions You Feng.

Report calls for environment, climate cooperation

China and the European Union should increase cooperation on the environment and climate, making it a new engine for a bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership, according to a report released on Friday.

The report, titled "China-EU Cooperation on Environment and Climate: Progress and Prospects", was jointly released by the Research Center for Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, the National Energy Conservation Center, the Xinhua Institute, and the Institutes of Science and Development of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The two sides should strengthen their green partnership, effectively leverage the important role of bilateral cooperation on environment and climate, making it a new engine for bilateral comprehensive strategic cooperation, a new highlight of bilateral economic and trade cooperation, a new bond for bilateral cultural cooperation, and a new model for global environment and climate

cooperation, said the report.

Adhering to a mechanism-led approach, the report noted that the China-EU High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue should become the leading mechanism to further cooperation mechanisms involving multiple entities, levels and areas.

Environment and climate topics can also be covered in other high-level mechanisms. For example, there could be dialogues and exchanges related to environmental products and services and green trade at the China-EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue.

Relevant parties should also be encouraged to establish bilateral exchange platforms for different entities, including local governments, think tanks, experts and enterprises. Local governments in China and EU member states should be encouraged to carry out environment and climate cooperation, establishing more sister provinces and sister cities, said the report.

Universities of the two sides can explore ways to establish China-EU environment and climate institutes, while the China-EU Environmental Policy Research Center could fully play its role and build platforms for dialogue and cooperation between Chinese and European environment think tanks.

To increase cooperation, the report urged efforts to strengthen dialogue and exchanges in fields such as clean energy, advanced energy-saving and carbon-reducing technology, green transportation, green buildings, methane, marine litter, key areas of pollution reduction and carbon reduction, circular economy, environmental technology and environmental trade.

The China-EU Green Action should be launched to strengthen coordination and connection in fields including digital economy and artificial intelligence, thereby stimulating new momentum for bilateral green cooperation. The report also stressed further

expansion of the coverage of cooperation, noting that triangular cooperation, such as "EU-China+Southeast Asia" or "EU-China+Africa" cooperation, should be enhanced.

In conjunction with South-South cooperation on climate change, the green Belt and Road Initiative and other programs, new forms of China-EU cooperation can be explored, bringing in other parties from within the framework of South-South cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative, said the report.

Considering that developing countries face the dual tasks of pollution control and carbon reduction, the report also called for designing cooperation projects able to address both environmental and climate issues.

XINHUA



Online
See more
by scanning
the code.

People-to-people communication to foster deeper trust

PARIS — A forum on the development of people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and France was held on Saturday, in a bid to boost cooperation and mutual learning.

The participants agreed that strengthening cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and France will help broaden consensus and deepen mutual trust with fresh vitality in the new era.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, and is also the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism.

In his opening speech, President of Xinhua News Agency Fu Hua said the forum, held on the eve of Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to France, is of great significance in boosting cooperation between the media, think tanks and enterprises from the two countries, and in facilitating cultural exchange and mutual learning.

Fu said that Xinhua has been dedicated to telling stories about the friendship between the two countries and promoting the Chinese and French cultures.

"We are willing to work with Chinese and French media outlets, think tanks and other organizations to uphold the principle of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and promote the common values of all humanity," he said.

Xinhua is ready to jointly showcase the fruits of China-France cooperation, demonstrate the charms of the two countries' traditional cultures and the unique highlights of their modern civilizations, and broaden the bridge of people-to-people exchange and cultural cooperation, Fu noted.

Xinhua also stands ready to seize such opportunities as the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism and the Paris Olympic Games to try to hold more cultural exchange

activities to push bilateral relations to a new high.

China's Ambassador to France Lu Shaye said people-to-people and cultural exchanges are an important foundation and inexhaustible driving force for China-France relations.

The two countries are set to launch dozens of cultural and tourism events this year, bringing important opportunities for people-to-people and cultural exchanges, the ambassador said.

Lu also expressed his belief that under the strategic guidance of President Xi and President Macron, bilateral ties are bound to show vigors and vitality in the future, and the booming cultural exchanges and cooperation will also lay a more solid public opinion foundation for the sound and stable development of bilateral ties.

"Culture constitutes the strongest cement between our civilizations," Eric Alauzet, president of the France-China Friendship Group of

the French National Assembly, said at the forum.

The common history of the two countries after the establishment of diplomatic ties has nourished fruitful cultural and people-to-people exchanges, which have in turn driven cooperation and development in other areas, he said.

Bilateral cooperation has achieved many outcomes in economy and trade, and in joint efforts against climate change, Alauzet added, noting that the two countries have held various cultural exchange activities this year, which will further push forward bilateral relations.

Saturday's forum was co-sponsored by Xinhua News Agency, the Chinese Embassy in France, and Publicis Groupe, a French multinational advertising and public relations company.

Themed "Reinforcing People-to-people and Cultural Exchanges, Promoting the China-France Spirit", the



A forum on the development of people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and France is held in Paris, France, on Saturday. REN PENGFEI / XINHUA

forum drew around 250 representatives from the Chinese and French governments, the United Nations and other international organizations, mainstream global media outlets, think tanks as well as people from cultural and business circles of

the two countries.

Prior to the opening of the forum, Xinhua News Agency signed a memorandum of understanding with Publicis Groupe.

XINHUA

XI'S VISIT



China and the World Roundtable | China-France Relations

Editor's note: This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of China-France diplomatic ties. Over the past decades, China and France have enjoyed close cooperation in a wide range of areas including trade, and have made a series of pioneering achievements. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Benoit Vermander

Sino-French exchanges have a robust future

The first Western translation of *The Analects of Confucius*, and two other Confucian classics, appeared in Paris in 1687. Dedicated to King Louis XIV of France, the Latin-language volume spread throughout Europe. One of its editors, the Jesuit Philippe Couplet, was impressed by the philosophy of Confucius, as evidenced in his remark: "We can say that the ethical system of the philosopher Confucius is sublime. It is at the same time simple, sensible, and derived from the best sources of natural reason."

During the same period, several French Jesuits, later described as "Mathematicians of the King" arrived in Beijing, and became the mathematics teachers of Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Their success in curing Kangxi of fever by administering quinine earned them the gift of a plot of land on which were later built an astronomical observatory and other buildings. Within 15 years of the five Jesuits' arrival, 40 other French Jesuits would travel to China.

The end of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century were indeed a golden age of interaction between China and France, a heritage on which both nations can continue to build up.

One of the "Mathematicians of the King", Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730), corresponded with German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), suggesting to him the connection between the binary system of arithmetic and the Yi Jing Hexagrams.

Jean-François Gerbillon (1654-1707) was one of two Jesuits sent to assist Chinese ambassadors at the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, and he proved to be an eminent cartographer. His work was continued by Joseph-Anne Mailla (1669-1748), who labored 18 years to produce maps of the empire upon the request of Emperor Kangxi, who in turn made him a "mandarin".

Joseph de Premare (1666-1736) was remarkably well versed in the Chinese language, and, once the manuscript was rediscovered, his language textbook became the basis of all the Chinese grammars published afterwards in Europe. Antoine Gaubil (1689-1759) was an excellent astronomer and historian. One of his pupils, Joseph-Marie Amiot (1718-93), became the pioneer of ethno-musicology and provided very detailed information on Chinese ritual music and dances.

The tradition of French Sinology was to continue and flourish. Today, the Belles Lettres publishing house hosts a book series of annotated, bilingual Chinese classics, in which one can find the works as diverse as the *Classic of Tea* by Lu Yu (about 733-804), the *1895 Mani-*



The author is a professor and doctoral advisor at the School of Philosophy, Fudan University, Shanghai.

festo of Kang Youwei (1858-1927), and a treatise on painting techniques authored by Shen Zongqian (about 1721-1803).

The popularity of this book series is made even more remarkable by the fact that the same publishing house was known first for the unparalleled critical editions of Latin and Greek classics that it had started more than 100 years ago. Through a renewed emphasis on the reading of classics, ages and civilizations are meeting at a deeper level.

On the Chinese side, from the middle of the 19th century onward, the Chinese intellectuals, artists, scientists and political leaders who received

higher education or training in France are too numerous to be listed. Their posterity is thriving: several Chinese universities maintain joint programs with leading French academic institutions so their best students can prepare for research and write their doctoral theses in France.

The richness and length of the Chinese-French cultural interaction have allowed (and will continue to allow) both countries to overcome the frictions and misunderstandings that usually happen in any long-term relationship. When observing history from some distance, the alternation between "warmer" and "frostier" relations among societies and cultures appears with a clarity that makes the phenomenon much less preoccupying. A sense of distance helps to maintain normalcy, so as to ensure that continued dialogue and mutual learning prevail over emotional ups and downs.

At the same time, the past can never be repeated. Inventiveness brings about changes in relationships and helps them grow. What will make Chinese-French exchanges even more lively and meaningful today is a focus on common, global challenges.

When it comes to the reinvention of our educational models, to articulate the relationship between humankind and nature, to build a peace culture and to find ethical answers that the emergence of biotechnology and artificial intelligence calls for, both China and France are endowed with cultural resources harnessed by a cross-reading of their classics and traditions. From one culture to another, answers to such challenges will differ, but, in all cases, they will be fostered by a dialogue with the other. Such a dialogue leads each of us to appreciate one's specificities anew in the light of the interpretation delivered from another perspective.

Almost 350 years after it started, Chinese-French cultural exchanges not only remain alive but also are providing remarkable resources for the endeavor through which different societies and cultures can find interconnected solutions to common challenges and seize the shared opportunities.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Christine Bierre

Deep bonds of the past offer hope for better future

Over the years, France-China relations have been steadily improving. That the Chinese leader is paying a state visit to France amid one of the worst strategic crises since the end of World War II is a sign of trust that France and China can, as in other crises in the past, work together to promote global peace.

Despite the United States' hostility toward China in recent years, France has upheld its freedom to cooperate with China and called for "European strategic autonomy", which would allow the European Union to avoid being drawn into a US war over the Taiwan question.

Negotiations to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict will be high on the agenda of the French and Chinese leaders following the talks held by Li Hui, China's special envoy on Eurasian affairs. No doubt, following German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's successful visit to China, Beijing will try to boost ties with those EU countries that want to boost trade with China.

The France-China relationship goes back centuries, especially the scientific and cultural collaboration between Louis XIV of France and Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in the 17th century, via Jean-Baptiste Colbert, controller-general of finances during Louis XIV's reign, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, German poly-



The author is editor-in-chief of *Nouvelle Solidarité*, the organ of the *Solidarity and Progress Party*.

math and logician, and has steadily grown since.

What reinforced that cooperation is the consensus between former French prime minister Pierre Mendes France and former Chinese premier Zhou Enlai in 1954 to bring the "Indochina war" to an end.

However, it was former French leader Charles De Gaulle's decision in 1964 to establish diplomatic relations with China that opened the way to high-level collaboration between both countries. De Gaulle justified his decision, saying: "China is gigantic... To live as if it didn't exist, would be to be blind, especially since it exists more and more."

Moreover, De Gaulle, made this decision knowing full well where it could lead: "It is not excluded that China could become during the next century, what it was throughout past centuries, the greatest power of the universe."

What a difference from the Joe Biden and the Antony Blinkens of today! And how right De Gaulle was!

In the 60 years since then, China has become a great power, and the largest economy in the world, if GDP is calculated in terms of purchasing power parity.

As for the changes that have occurred in the past 60 years, bilateral trade increased from \$100 million in 1964 to \$78.9 billion in 2023, France has become the third-largest trade partner of China in the EU, and China the largest trade partner of France in Asia. And while cooperation has been fruitful in the nuclear field, China has developed its own reactor, Hualong, advanced research into the main types of 4th generation nuclear reactors and promoted cooperation with France on fusion.

Sino-French cooperation in aerospace has also been fruitful — Airbus now accounts for 54 percent of the market in China and has established an assembly line in Tianjin to manufacture aircraft for Chinese airlines.

French-Chinese collaboration in space, too, has been mutually beneficial, with a French-Chinese satellite being assembled in Shanghai which will enable us to study gamma-ray bursts, the most powerful explosions of stars in our universe.

The fact that 7,000 French companies are operating in China shows that Sino-French trade and economic ties have not been affected by external factors. Besides, cooperation between the

two sides on the ecology and digital technology is deepening.

Cultural centers have started a high-level of people-to-people dialogue through local institutions on education and tourism, promoting the enrichment of both civilizations. For example, France and China have 111 pairs of sister cities and provinces, and there are 14 Alliances Française centers in China and 18 Confucius Institutes in France.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Sino-French diplomatic relations, China and France will offer to their respective nationals the chance to discover the great works of French and Chinese artists, architects, theater personalities, dancers, musicians and filmmakers. Large festivities are also being organized by French-Chinese associations in cities such as Aubervilliers, where several hundred people participated in the events, or in Coutances in Normandy, where about 2,000 people watched the show.

Given the Sino-French history of independence, we can only hope the meeting between the two countries' leaders contributes to world peace. Therefore, this is the right time for other countries to join China in calling for regional and global peace.

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

Yan Shaohua

Stronger ties a boost for China-EU relations

Following German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's visit to China in April, President Xi Jinping's state visit to France in May will be another defining moment for China-European Union relations in 2024.

But unlike Scholz's visit to China which was focused on trade and investment, and unlike Sino-German economic relations which have been flourishing despite a de-risking agenda pushed forward by the European Commission, China-France relations are more of a strategic nature.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries 60 years ago, Sino-French relations have been driven by a strategic consensus that both countries are major countries in a multipolar world and they occupy an important position in each other's foreign policy.

Based on this consensus, leaders of both countries have made great efforts to navigate the bilateral relationship from the top level, which provides the political impetus and strategic guidance needed in times of difficulties.

This is the spirit in which French President Emmanuel Macron visited China in April 2023 amid strained China-EU ties due to the Ukraine crisis. The Chinese leader will visit France in the same spirit, aiming to not only deepen Sino-French ties on the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, but also stabilize China-EU relations in these turbulent times.

With the Russia-Ukraine conflict having entered its third year and the Middle East crisis deepening, the world is sailing into uncharted waters where global stability and prosperity are being threatened. It is time therefore for China and France to tap the potential of their strategic partnership and translate it into more fruitful cooperation.

At the political level, the concept of strategic autonomy championed by Macron will provide room for China and France to enhance dialogue on regional and global issues. Strategic autonomy essentially means the EU having the ability to act independently in an interdependent world.

Although the EU's strategic autonomy remains a controversial issue in Europe, China has continuously voiced its support for its strategic autonomy in high-level meetings with European leaders. However, China's support for the EU's strategic autonomy should not be misunderstood as an attempt to drive a wedge between the EU and the United States, as some in Europe have argued.

For China, the EU's strategic autonomy will allow the bloc to play a mediating role in China-US competition rather than rallying behind the US in the latter's geopolitical game to contain China. That's why when Macron called for the EU to pursue strategic autonomy and avoid following the US into a conflict with China over the Taiwan question, his credibility as a mediator increased in the eyes of the Chinese people.

In a speech at the Sorbonne University on April 25, Macron reiterated that Europe should not become a "vassal" of the US and should be able to talk to everyone. In an interesting coincidence, the People's Liberation Army's Southern Theater Command signed a framework agreement on dialogue and cooperation with the Pacific marines of the French military on the same day with the aim of building trust between the two militaries in the Asia-Pacific.

The Ukraine crisis continues, with the looming threat of escalating into nuclear conflict.

As nuclear powers and members of the United Nations Security Council, China and France shoulder the common responsibility of avoiding the risks of a devastating nuclear conflict. On nuclear risks, China has made it clear in its position paper on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis that nuclear weapons must not be used and nuclear wars must not be fought.

On the economic front, China and France should make more efforts to back the strategic partnership with more solid economic cooperation. During their recent summit in April, EU leaders' discussions were focused on boosting the bloc's competitiveness to reverse the EU's decline. And when it comes to competitiveness, it is important that both sides should avoid zero-sum thinking.

Since China's launch of reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, European companies have been playing an important role in enhancing the competitiveness of the Chinese economy. The same could be said about Chinese companies in Europe. The story of Huawei in Europe is an apt example.

"In Europe, for Europe," Jim Lu, Huawei's regional president in Europe has made such remarks. Working with EU partners, Huawei has been helping Europe build the digital infrastructure, nurture local talents and achieve the EU's digitalization goals.

The green industry is another example. By exporting green products such as electric vehicles (EVs) to and investing in the EU, Chinese companies will not only contribute to the EU's green transition but also boost its competitiveness in green industry. It is therefore better that the EU and China pursue competitiveness with each other rather than competitiveness over each other.

Such a spirit should help resolve the China-EU dispute over the alleged subsidies to EV-makers in China — a dispute in which France is believed to be a key player.

In a world that is increasingly divided by geopolitical and ideological fault lines, it is important to keep building bridges across different levels of societies. The 2024 Summer Olympic Games Paris is scheduled to host offers France a precious opportunity to bridge the gap in a contested world, showing that humankind and countries could compete, but in the spirit of peace and friendship.

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



The author is an associate professor of European Studies at Fudan University.

CHINA

Tougher line urged toward juvenile crime

Head of top procuratorate calls for establishment of correctional schools

By CAO YIN
caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

The fight against juvenile crime must be strengthened, with improved supervision of emerging issues, so that children can grow up in a healthier environment, Ying Yong, the procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, said recently.

He also urged the bolstering of graded intervention and correction of juveniles' wrongful behaviors, adding that the establishment of special correctional schools needs to be promoted across the country.

The remarks were made by Ying in an article published on Wednesday in Qishi Journal, a flagship magazine of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

"Juveniles should face prosecution or be held criminally liable in line with the law if they commit severe offenses, such as intentional homicide or intentional injury that leads to death," he said.

"The regulation and supervision of new businesses such as esports hotels, blind boxes, escape rooms and murder mystery games must also be intensified."

Such businesses are popular with teenagers, but the venues where they operate have often become the scenes of disputes. Data released last month by the Supreme People's Court, China's top court, showed that Chinese courts heard 1,205 cases of disruption of public order involving minors last year, more than five times the number in 2020.

While clarifying the need for greater efforts to combat juvenile crimes, Ying also urged prosecutors nationwide to adopt a zero tolerance approach and harshly punish those who sexually assault, abuse or harm children, with more help for victims who are minors.

In addition, it is essential to optimize procuratorial services and fully perform procuratorial duties, joining hands with families, schools, internet platforms and government departments to build a sound rule of law environment for children to

grow up in, he said.

Juvenile delinquency has increased and is concentrated in offenses such as theft, rape, robbery, affray and disturbance, the top procuratorate revealed in late February.

It said that various factors lead to juvenile delinquency, including insufficient intervention measures and a lack of parental care, adding that inadequate protective and educational measures exacerbate the issue.

To correct the misbehavior of children in a timely manner and enhance their self-protection awareness, Chinese judicial authorities have taken a number of actions over the past few years. The Supreme People's Procuratorate has, for example, guided the building of 2,120 legal education practice bases for juveniles around the country, and mobilized 43,000 prosecutors to serve as vice-principals in charge of legal training in 77,000 primary and secondary schools.

Last week, the top court confirmed the rapid growth of juvenile crimes in the first three months of this year. It said about 12,000 juvenile criminals were punished from January to March, up 77.67 percent year-on-year.

While emphasizing that juvenile offenders with deep subjective malice who cause serious harm to others must be penalized to serve as a warning and to ensure fairness for victims, the top court also required judges to attach more importance to addressing the underlying issues of juvenile crimes when handling such cases.

It ordered courts at all levels to work with educational institutions, social organizations, families and government agencies to establish a comprehensive system to solve school bullying at an early stage, suggesting police conduct tighter inspections of entertainment venues and focus more on regulating emerging businesses.

"Punishment without addressing the root causes of juveniles' wrong behaviors is not an effective way to combat juvenile crimes," it said. "Prevention at the source is the key."



A man wades across a flooded road after heavy rain in the Xiangzhou district of Zhuhai, Guangdong province, on Saturday. ZHONG FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Travel precautions in place following last week's deadly highway collapse

By ZHENG CAIXIONG
zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Following a highway collapse in the city of Meizhou on Wednesday that killed 48 people and injured 30 others, Guangdong province has launched a multipronged response to ensure the safety of residents and travelers during the May Day holiday's peak return travel period.

A special task force headed by Governor Wang Weizhong was established on Saturday to investigate the cause of the collapse and provide support to the injured.

Meanwhile, torrential rain that battered the southern province over the weekend has begun to ease, but concerns remain due to the potential for secondary disasters caused by saturated soil.

The Department of Natural Resources warned of a heightened risk of landslides and flooding as a result of the sustained downpours. A province-wide inspection focusing on areas with high geological risk factors, such as mountains, slopes and cliffs, was

“Heavy rainfall can make roads slippery, increasing vehicle braking distance and the risk of losing control.”

Feng Lei, senior engineer from the Public Meteorological Service Center

launched on Saturday.

The Department of Transport has undertaken a similar inspection of highways, railways and waterways since Thursday. Seven working groups from the provincial transport authority were deployed to guide and supervise the inspection process.

As regions across China experience peak traffic flows during the holiday return period, authorities are urging travelers to prioritize safety, particularly on rainy days.

"Heavy rainfall can make roads slippery, increasing vehicle brak-

ing distance and the risk of losing control," cautioned Feng Lei, a senior engineer from the Public Meteorological Service Center.

She advised people to pay close attention to the potential impact of secondary disasters like landslides and highway collapses on driving safety, especially in areas previously hit by heavy rain.

Torrential rain lashed multiple cities in Guangdong over the weekend, with Zhongshan and Zhuhai hit the hardest.

In Zhuhai, traffic police closed off a section of highway linking the city to Jiangmen after detecting a landslide safety risk.

Multiple towns in Zhongshan have reported flooding since Saturday. By Saturday night, 42 fire trucks and 19 boats had been sent to help and evacuate 462 residents.

One resident, Lin Liting, said the downpour was so heavy that many people did not dare go out to shop for groceries on Saturday.

"My cousin, who drove to Zhongshan for sightseeing the previous day, had to start his journey back one day earlier due to the downpour," she said.

1.07 billion people in basic pension scheme

By ZHANG YI
zhangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

China has been improving its social insurance system to better support development, with the number of participants in the basic pension reaching 1.07 billion by the end of March, a year-on-year increase of 14 million, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said.

There were 240 million participants in the unemployment insurance scheme, up 4.49 million, and 290 million participants in the employment injury insurance scheme, up 5.58 million.

From January to March, the total income of the basic pension, unemployment and employment injury insurance schemes was 2.2 trillion yuan (\$303.9 billion), while total expenditure was 1.8 trillion yuan. The cumulative surplus by the end of March was 8.6 trillion yuan.

In the first quarter, local authorities implementing basic pension insurance assistance policies for urban and rural residents paid premiums for 8.21 million low-income residents, including those at risk of slipping back into poverty, the severely disabled and other disadvantaged groups, the ministry said.

Unemployment insurance benefits, including unemployment insurance and payment of basic medical insurance premiums, amounted to 28.2 billion yuan in the first three months of the year, it said.

By the end of March, the number of people insured in the pilot program for occupational injury protection for the flexibly employed, including delivery workers, had reached 8 million.

In 2022, the ministry and other departments launched pilot programs for occupational injury protection for the flexibly employed in seven provincial-level regions — including Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu province — that covered seven large platform enterprises.

Li Xinwang, director of the ministry's Labor Relations Department, told a recent news conference that the ministry will expand the scope of the pilot program to incorporate more flexibly employed people.

At the same time, it will actively facilitate channels for the flexibly employed to participate in pension insurance in their place of employment and make it more convenient for them to participate in insurance schemes.

By 2025, China's basic pension insurance coverage is expected to reach 95 percent, according to a five-year plan released earlier.

The ministry said it will further improve policies supporting the pension system and prepare for their comprehensive implementation.

Parents of Tsinghua student poisoned in 1994 call for fresh investigation

By WANG XIAOYU
wangxiaoyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese prosecutors recently accepted an application to examine irregularities in the police investigation of an unsolved poisoning case that has attracted public attention for nearly three decades.

Zhu Ling, a chemistry student at Tsinghua University in Beijing, began experiencing symptoms of poisoning from the heavy metal thallium in late 1994. She was left paralyzed with brain damage, and required 24-hour care from her parents.

Nobody has ever been charged in the case, but public speculation over one of Zhu's college roommates — who was investigated by police and eventually released due to a lack of evidence — remains intense. Zhu's death at the age of 50 in December last year sparked a wave of condolence and calls for the investigation of the case to be reopened.

Zhu's parents handed an inves-

tigation supervision application to the Supreme People's Procuratorate on April 15, requesting oversight of possible malpractice by authorities involved in the case and urging them to launch a new probe, according to a statement released by an independent foundation that has assisted Zhu's parents for years. The application claims that investigators unlawfully handled and closed the case.

They did not ascertain that the suspect was uninvolved in the case, failed to apply overseas travel restrictions and allowed her to change her personal identity information.

On Wednesday, the foundation said that Zhu's parents received a text message from the top procuratorate saying their application had been forwarded to the Beijing People's Procuratorate.

The Beijing procuratorate notified them that their application had been received and would be

handled according to law.

Wu Chengzhi, Zhu's 84-year-old father, told Southern Metropolis Daily last month that his late daughter's case should not be forgotten because she was poisoned and justice has not been meted out. He felt a responsibility to appeal on her behalf and get to the bottom of the case.

The Beijing Public Security Bureau, which led the initial investigation of the case, made its most recent statement about it in 2013, saying that the six months between the appearance of Zhu's first symptoms and the filing of a police report had impeded the investigation.

Without surveillance footage and physical evidence of the crime, police were unable to obtain direct proof to convict a suspect and therefore could not solve the case, it said. It denied any political tampering in the investigation and asked the public to adopt a rational attitude toward it.

Wheelie high



A child performs bike stunts at the 32nd China International Bicycle Fair in Shanghai on Sunday. CAI YANG / XINHUA

Positive omens for A-share market's reopening after holiday

By ZHOU LANXU
zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

A series of positive updates, ranging from a top-level meeting signaling more housing sector support to rising hopes of improving global liquidity conditions, may have set a strong foundation for Chinese equities to register a sustained rally, experts said.

The rebound of Chinese shares listed overseas during the May Day holiday bodes well for the A-share market's reopening on Monday and indicates global investors' growing interest in Chinese companies, particularly advanced manufacturers, they added.

Chris Liu, a senior portfolio manager at Invesco, a global investment management company, said he is upbeat about Chinese equities' performance for the rest of the second quarter as policy efforts to support economic recovery continue, while expectations of US rate cuts would help bring in more global liquidity to Chinese shares.

"China's economic data has shown signs of stabilization, significantly boosting the confidence of both domestic and foreign investors," Liu said.

Following China's better-than-expected first-quarter economic growth, the country's economic recovery continued in April, with

the official manufacturing purchasing managers index standing at 50.4, down from 50.8 in March but still in expansionary territory.

The country's top leadership has vowed to further reinforce the recovery with continued policy support. At a meeting on April 30, the Communist Party of China Central Committee Political Bureau called for research on policies and measures to reduce housing inventory and the flexible use of policy tools such as interest rates and the reserve requirement ratio.

The meeting also decided to hold the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee in July, which analysts have viewed as an

encouraging sign that reform and opening-up will be deepened.

Among the investment opportunities offered by Chinese equities, Liu said that Invesco is particularly bullish on the copper, pharmaceuticals and robotics sectors.

"China's robotics industry is globally competitive, particularly in industrial robotics where China has (probably) nearly half the market share," he said.

Invesco is not the only foreign institutional investor that is upbeat about China's advanced manufacturers. According to market tracker Wind Info, 94.19 billion yuan (\$13 billion) of foreign capital flowed into A shares in the past three

months via northbound trading in the stock connect program that links the Shanghai and Shenzhen markets with the market in Hong Kong. Contemporary Amperex Technology, China's leading vehicle battery maker, attracted a net foreign purchase of 8.94 billion yuan.

Experts said the data shows that, despite arguments that China's green manufacturing industries could be experiencing "overcapacity" and hurting the global economy, international capital is benefiting from the industries' growing competitiveness.

Channel Yeung, a market analyst at financial trading platform FXTM, said the push for Chinese listed

firms to increase dividend payouts and share buybacks is poised to attract patient foreign capital into the A-share market. If it is implemented effectively, Yeung said, "we can expect robust long-term performance from the A-share market."

Rising expectations of US Federal Reserve interest rate cuts have also bolstered investor confidence. After United States job data cooled on Friday, traders predicted on Sunday a 67.4 percent likelihood of a Fed rate cut in September, up from 57.4 percent a week ago, according to the CME FedWatch Tool.

During the holiday closure of the A-share market, the Hang Seng China Enterprises Index, which tracks the performance of major mainland-based issuers in Hong Kong, rose by 2.6 percent on Thursday and 1.71 percent on Friday.

BUSINESS

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

Chinese burger innovations bolster local brands

But, in spite of initial investor enthusiasm, biz growth stutters

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Every Tuesday, Lu Jin, 22, who is pursuing his bachelor's degree at the Beijing University of Chemical Technology, visits 'Tastien' (also known as 'Tasting') restaurant located in the capital's North Third Ring area, within the campus neighborhood. The restaurant's member card entitles him to a buy-one-get-one-free deal.

"The buns here are handmade, still hot when served. They are not your typical bread," said Lu.

He and his friend ordered two sets of fried chicken burgers for 41 yuan (\$5.6). Thousands of Chinese consumers such as Lu find Tastien's deals and fast food irresistible. Positioning itself as the "Chinese burger" brand, Tastien has developed its own "hand-rolled burger buns" as a speciality. The buns incorporate Chinese culinary elements like braised pork belly, Peking duck and shredded pork with garlic sauce.

These are burger innovations, Chinese-style, which have helped Tastien to distinguish itself from Western fast-food burger brands such as McDonald's, KFC and Wallace.

Tastien primarily targets third- and fourth-tier cities and even smaller places. It has rapidly expanded its presence in rural areas and now has a network of more than 7,000 stores, the largest Chinese-style burger maker in the country.

According to Chenzhi Data, in the second quarter of 2023, hamburger outlets of all brands across China reached a historic high, surpassing 120,000 outlets.

Cultural elements associated with Chinese cuisine inform the Western fast-food model adopted by the Fujian province-based Tastien. In July 2023, the brand underwent an upgrade, complete with a tagline: "For the Chinese taste, love Chinese burgers". This move proved effective as it established a strong association between burgers and the varieties of Chinese cuisine, which resonated with certain groups of local consumers.

But not everyone is attracted by the domestic flavors alone. "For us, the chief attraction is the promotional price. Of course, the food tastes good, but, it's still fast food," said Lu.

The runaway success of Western fast-food brands such as KFC and McDonald's in China, which are known for their standardized hamburgers, and low entry barriers in this segment of the food and beverage sector have attracted numerous investors in recent years.

In addition to Tastien, 10 "Chinese-style burger" brands, including Chuzheng and Linbaobao, received funding in 2023 alone, according to Chenzhi Data.

According to Zhaimen Restaurant data, among Chinese hamburger brands, Panda Now Chinese Burger has 38 stores, Generous Chinese Burger has 33, Linbaobao has 20 and Chu Zheng Chinese Burger 11.

To be sure, not everyone is thriving. Expansion has proved to be a



A diner buys Chinese burgers at a restaurant in Chongqing. TAO LIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: A view of a Tastien outlet in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. Right: Diners savor Chinese burgers at a Tastien outlet in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



struggle for most of them. At the end of the first quarter, the Chinese burger segment appeared to have lost steam with investors steering clear of it, market insiders said.

Jia Guolong, founder of Xibei, a prominent catering group, knows all about the ups and downs in the market. In March 2023, Xibei launched its first store of Jia Guolong Chinese Burger. The plan was to open 50 burger stores in the first half of 2023.

The plan did not pan out. Xibei closed all of its Jia Guolong Chinese Burger stores. Some of them shuttered outright; others were renamed Jia Guolong Small Pot Beef. Xibei said the Jia Guolong Chinese Burger chain has long been completely rebranded as Longbao and will be repositioned in the fast-food

market. Pilot stores debuted in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, to explore the lower-tier market.

Xibei said the decision whether or not to retain a subsidiary brand hinges on its potential for global expansion. "The Chinese bun is actually derived from *roujiamo*, a local snack from Shaanxi province," said Song Xuan, a marketing executive at Xibei. "With its convenient hand-held format and savory filling, it was supposed to have the potential for worldwide appeal."

But theory and practice proved to be divergent. The intricacies involved in crafting Chinese foods, coupled with supply chain management issues related to Chinese cuisine, meant Chinese burgers presented challenges not typically

encountered in making Western fast food.

"Scaling up the intangible artistry of Chinese culinary traditions is quite daunting," Song said. As a result, Xibei opted to halt Jia Guolong's expansion into first-tier cities.

But, in China's fast-food landscape, there is still potential to develop a Chinese cuisine-based fast-food product, said Song.

"We foresee the catering industry embracing increasing diversity, moving beyond rigid distinctions between fast food and formal dining."

"While the Chinese burger may not represent the ultimate future, it undeniably reflects a current trend. However, the true future lies in the emerging influence of lower-tier cities on the F&B sector."

After the initial surge in popularity, businesses specializing in Chinese-style burgers began to reveal some underlying issues, like the high homogeneity among signature dishes.

Most Chinese burger joints still adhere to the approach of Western fast-food labels, incorporating Chinese elements into design, product packaging and burger flavors. It remains unclear, however, whether such innovations are genuinely "Chinese" or merely gimmicks.

In some Tastien stores, the best-selling burger is still the "Spicy Fried Chicken Burger", indicating that consumers may purchase Chinese-style burgers merely for novelty or promotional prices.

Second, the advantage of cost-effectiveness is not always apparent.

Despite positioning themselves as low-cost options and targeting the lower-tier market primarily through franchising, brands such as Tastien have been dubbed the "McDonald's of Chinese burgers".

Following KFC and McDonald's promotional campaigns, Tastien introduced its own "Member Tuesday" promotions and developed "Tastien Literature" on platforms like Douyin, Xiaohongshu and Bilibili to attract young consumers such as Lu.

According to Chenzhi Data, a consumer on average spends about 19.6 yuan at Tastien, which is 2 yuan more than what is spent at Wallace but way lower than the 33.8 yuan spent at KFC and the 27.6 yuan spent at McDonald's.

However, compared to the promotional campaigns of KFC and McDonald's, Tastien's pricing advantage does not seem like an advantage at all.

The well-known Spicy Chicken Burger is priced at 16 yuan at Tastien but retails at 19.5 yuan at KFC and 10.9 yuan at McDonald's (in-store prices are compiled from their mini programs).

The expansion rate of Western fast-food players in China has been rapid, piling greater pressure on Tastien.

In December, KFC opened its 10,000th store in China, becoming the first overseas brand to reach that milestone. KFC promptly announced plans to accelerate store openings in the next three years, aiming for a net addition of over 1,200 stores annually, hoping to expand its membership base from 400 million to 700 million.

Culinary traditions ride fast-food lane in China

REPORTER'S LOG

By Wang Zhuoqiong

In the bustling landscape of fast-food chains in China, Tastien, a Chinese burger chain hailing from Fujian province in East China, often goes unnoticed by many.

With just 22 stores in Beijing, Tastien pales in comparison to the wide presence of quick-service restaurant, or QSR, giants, such as McDonald's and KFC.

Nestled in remote corners of the city, Tastien's locations remain elusive to most of my friends and colleagues. They are yet to savor its delectable Chinese buns.

My attempts to describe the unique flavor of Tastien burgers as compared to their Western counterparts proved inadequate.

On a recent Tuesday afternoon, when Tastien runs its weekly promotional offers, I counted four customers at one of its QSRs in Beijing. I ordered a set of its popular Chinese-style burgers with duck meat filling. They were supposed to taste different from Western-style burgers. My taste buds, however, struggled to discern nuanced differences. A part of my mind went 'Is innovation in taste then just a marketing gimmick?'

The rise of Tastien, nevertheless, represents a growing appetite among young consumers for fast food that celebrates Chinese culinary traditions and ingredients. Tastien's buns and minced meat have their origins in *roujiamo*, a local snack from Shaanxi province in Northwest China.

Tastien infuses its menu, branding, products and store design with Chinese cultural elements. While Tastien may still be relatively unknown in major cities, its name resonates strongly in second- and third-tier cities, even reaching rural regions, where it faces less competition from global fast-food labels.

With a network of 7,254 stores spanning 342 cities in 22 provincial-level regions, Tastien ranks as the third-largest QSR brand that serves Chinese-style burgers in China, trailing Wallace that boasts 19,976 stores and KFC with 10,749 stores.

Among the big names, only McDonald's has fewer (less than 7,000) restaurants in China than Tastien. What sets Tastien apart is its significant presence in small cities, where nearly half of its stores are located. In contrast, only about 37 percent of KFC restaurants were in these cities by the end of last year.

As Tastien continues to expand its footprint, its official website displays a prominent banner ad for franchising opportunities. Tastien's franchisees are said to be aged between 23 and 40, operating stores with a usable area of over 65 square meters each.

The total cost of establishing a store, including franchise fee, deposit, brand usage fee, design and decoration fee, equipment fee and material fee, reportedly adds up to

about 450,000 yuan (\$62,100), according to Blue Whale Finance.

Rent and transfer fee can swell the total investment for a store to the range of 750,000 yuan to 800,000 yuan, according to media reports.

While franchise eligibility has been enhanced, the profit threshold for entry remains decreased. One report said Tastien stores typically achieve a gross profit margin of 55 percent to 65 percent, with takeout services yielding margins of 45 percent to 55 percent.

With an average order price of around 20 yuan and a daily sales volume of 250 orders, stores generate daily turnover exceeding 6,000 yuan each, barely breaking even.

The payback period for a store typically ranges from one-and-a-half to two years. Tastien, however, has been facing challenges in operations and innovations.

Despite being dubbed the mak-

er of "Chinese hamburgers", Tastien's business model involves on-site production by employees, different from the standardized procedures found in Western fast-food chains.

While handcrafted burgers enhance taste, they also impact meal delivery speed and incur higher labor and kitchen area costs.

A high repurchase rate is crucial for sustained success in the QSR space. While many restaurants highlight affordability, Tastien stands out with Chinese burgers that whet the curiosity of visitors. But on the delivery and takeout platforms, the top-selling Tastien food is its fried chicken burger, not the bun with Chinese fillings.

The ability to retain users ultimately depends on taste. Only when users remember the flavor will they repurchase a food. Yet, sooner or later, Tastien will find its place in the market, I think.



Editor's note: Amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. China Daily will come out with a series of stories highlighting Chinese cities' special connections with sister cities, mutual understanding, trust and friendship between peoples of different countries and cultural backgrounds, and shining light on "city diplomacy".

'NICE' TO MEET YOU, HANGZHOU

Rich cultural exchanges strengthen links between Sino-French twin cities



Sisterhood relationship applauded as 'perfect match'

By CHEN WEIHUA in Nice, France
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

To Rudy Salles, deputy chairman of the Nice Cote d'Azur Metropolitan Tourist Office, the sister-city relationship between Nice on the French Riviera and Hangzhou in East China is a perfect match.

Spanning about 9,300 kilometers, the two vibrant cities have been fostering a unique bond since their official declaration as sister cities in 1998. Having visited Hangzhou several times, Salles describes it as a "beautiful city", a metropolis boasting a population of 12 million.

The two cities have actively nurtured their connection through numerous initiatives, including extending invitations to each other's major events, he said.

Salles was fascinated by the "incredible" shows on the West Lake that he has watched several times, and the dinners he has had by the lake.

"I remember all that and I hope I will go back as soon as possible," said the 69-year-old, who was a member of the French National Assembly from 1988 to 2017, including serving as its vice-president.

Salles also recalled a Nice food festival at the Dragon Hotel Hangzhou, where traditional food, such as saladie nicoise — made from tomatoes, hard-boiled eggs, olives and anchovies or tuna and dressed with olive oil, and pan bagnat, a sandwich made from whole wheat bread enclosing the classic saladie nicoise, was served.

Hangzhou had received an invitation to attend the annual carnival in Nice, one of the largest in the world, which concluded in March.

In 2017, ahead of the 20th anniversary of the sister-city ties, Hangzhou Opera and Dance Drama Theater staged the show *To Meet the Grand Canal* in Nice, at the invitation of the Nice government.

Prestigious positions

Both Hangzhou's Grand Canal and West Lake, along with the city of Nice itself, hold prestigious positions on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

"We have many exchanges like this, cultural exchanges between our two cities, and we are proud of it," Salles said.

Nice has developed links with many other Chinese cities, he said, such as Hong Kong, Macao, Ningbo, Xiamen and Zhuhai.

Nice had become the second-most popular destination after Paris for Chinese tourists in France, Salles said. During his term as the city's deputy mayor, he had called for efforts to attract Chinese tourists.

Emphasizing the importance of exchanges between China and France, Salles said people in France should know more about China, and Chinese should know more about France.

Having visited several Chinese cities, he said, "It's important for French people to discover China, because it's not just three or four cities, but many new and beautiful cities.

"It's a modern country, very well-organized, welcoming to foreigners.

"I just want to tell the people who don't know China — that the progress in China in the last 50 years has been enormous."

By SHAO XINYING in Hangzhou and CHEN WEIHUA in Nice, France

Olivier Ruelle starts his day with a steaming cup of tea, a ritual he cherishes both at his office and in his cozy Hangzhou home.

"A good cup of tea sets the tone for a good day. Hangzhou has really good tea," he said.

Although Ruelle introduces himself as "a French who loves to drink tea" on video-sharing platforms, the 55-year-old readily admits he has limited knowledge of the subject.

Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, hailed as China's tea capital, is renowned for its verdant tea plantations, particularly the revered Longjing variety.

In one of his videos, Ruelle promotes a local Hangzhou tea to Europeans, including in his hometown of Nice, the jewel on Cote d'Azur, or the French Riviera.

"They truly appreciate the authenticity of the tea leaves, unlike the accustomed tea bags," he said.

He found love in Hangzhou, where he met his wife. "I chose to stay here, all because of her," said Ruelle, who obtained permanent residency in 2022.

Now a vlogger with more than 1 million followers, he captures a diverse array of content, from tea stalls on Hangzhou's streets to the sun-drenched beaches of Nice.

"Nice holds a position somewhat akin to that of Hangzhou in China. The Nice metropolitan area stands as the second-most vital economic and cultural region in France, trailing only Paris," he said.

"These days, I spend much

more time here in Hangzhou than in Nice," he said, while sipping tea.

"Rather, I'd say Hangzhou is my first hometown and Nice the second."

Ruelle said he admires the locals' way of life, as they "savor the taste of life and indulge themselves in refined delicacies".

In this aspect, he noted a similarity between his two beloved cities — people enjoy life.

Hangzhou and Nice forged sister-city ties in 1998, bridging the gap between two vibrant cultures separated by thousands of kilometers.

"We were very impressed by Hangzhou," said Rudy Salles, deputy chairman of the Nice Cote d'Azur Metropolitan Tourist Office.

"Chinese people say Hangzhou is a paradise on Earth. And here (in Nice), we have the Angels Bay.

"The Angels Bay and the paradise, of course, they had to be married."

Salles has visited Hangzhou many times, along with several other Chinese cities.

He speaks highly of the special bond between Hangzhou and Nice, now in its 26th year.

"West Lake is gorgeous. I'm in love with this city," he said.

The sister cities have been involved in many cultural events, such as the *Hangzhou-Nice Twin Cities Photography Exhibition* and the Nice-Hangzhou Film Week.

"We've been making many things together because it is necessary to develop links," Salles said.

"We are the second city welcoming Chinese tourists in France after Paris."

Nice has established itself as one of the pillars of tourism

and diplomatic relations between China and France.

In 2019, the visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Nice marked the first stop of his French tour.

On March 24 that year, French President Emmanuel Macron traveled to the Villa Kerylos, an ancient Greek Revival-style house, to welcome his "dear old friends" — President Xi and his wife.

Their warm exchange of greetings culminated in Macron presenting Xi with a rare 1688 French edition of *An Introduction to The Analects of Confucius*, one of only two remaining copies in the world.

Xi said the gift was precious, and it would take the pride of place in the National Library of China.

"President Xi has been coming here. He knows our city very well," Salles said. "We are very proud."

New heights

The cultural exchange between the two cities reached new heights in 2017 when the Chinese stage show *To Meet the Grand Canal* premiered in Nice, at the invitation of the French city.

Reflecting on the show's success, Cui Wei, director of the dance drama show and president of Hangzhou Opera and Dance Drama Theater, recalled the warm reception in Nice.

"We performed at the century-old Nice Opera House. Our performance was so well-received that some people in the audience were reluctant to leave," Cui said.

"In addition to the formal show, we organized flash events on the streets of Nice to engage more people."

The Grand Canal was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014, reinforcing its historical and cultural significance.



Dancers of Hangzhou Opera and Dance Drama Theater collaborate with a local street artist for a flash mob performance at the Massena Square in Nice, France.

as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014, reinforcing its historical and cultural significance.

"After learning that our Grand Canal had just been listed, the director of the cultural heritage office in Nice approached us, keen to learn from Hangzhou's experience, as Nice was seeking a similar status," Cui said.

In 2021, UNESCO added the city of Nice to its World Heritage List.

"Our candidacy for UNESCO was supported by China," said Salles, also former deputy mayor of Nice.

The canal represents cultur-

al exchanges between the two countries, Cui said. "I think the most important thing is that it has built a bridge of friendship and cultural communications between the peoples."

France has witnessed a surge in interest toward Chinese culture and language. Organizations such as the Confucius Institute Cote d'Azur in Nice are welcoming people of all ages to explore all things Chinese.

Meanwhile, a parallel trend has emerged in China, where the study of French is gaining

traction. Alliance Francaise, which promotes the French language, is a popular choice among learners.

Many students in Hangzhou, like Sun Yunong, are learning French in preparation for their future careers.

"I was reaching out to French clients to promote our shopping site," said Sun, who has worked for Alibaba's fast-fashion experimental program.

"I can feel the entrepreneurial atmosphere in the air in Hangzhou."

For Franck Dubarry,

founder and chairman of the first Sino-French business aviation joint venture company in China, Silkings Jet, Hangzhou stands out as "a really innovative city."

"Technology is the engine of development of the city," Dubarry said.

Dubarry, representative of the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Hangzhou, has set up two companies in the city, which he said is "the perfect place" for his business.

"All my colleagues and friends asked, why you did it

in Hangzhou? The answer is: I feel very well in Hangzhou," he said. "Hangzhou is a place where my business takes off."

Having retired from the French Navy, Dubarry said he flies quite often in Nice, a city witnessing a huge influx of Chinese tourists.

Nice, boasting the second-largest airport in France and home to more than 800 foreign companies, is at the forefront of smart city development, according to Invest in Cote d'Azur, an agency dedicated to promoting investment in the region.

In 2010, Nice launched its Cityzi program, which allows contactless mobile transactions, becoming the first city in France to provide such services.

"As someone who grew up in Nice but resides in Hangzhou, I feel the urgency to contribute more to cultural exchanges," Ruelle said.

Zhou Lin, a representative of the Hangzhou Foreign Affairs Office responsible for Hangzhou-Nice relations, said: "We hope to see more fruits with our two cities' stronger bonds."

Dong Guangli, Chinese consul-general in Marseille, France, emphasized the pivotal role of sister-city pairings in facilitating cross-border exchanges and international cooperation.

"The hope of the Sino-French relationship lies in the two societies, and its vitality comes from exchanges at sub-national levels," Dong said.

"We are ready to support both sides in carrying out more solid, practical and friendly exchanges at the grassroots level to contribute to the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and France."

With this year's Paris Olympics approaching, Ruelle said he is gearing up for a trip to Nice, one of the hosts of the soccer events.

"I shot videos during the Asian Games in Hangzhou last year. This summer, I'll definitely take my dear followers on a 'cloud visit' to Olympic venues," Ruelle said.

With this year's Paris Olympics approaching, Ruelle said he is gearing up for a trip to Nice, one of the hosts of the soccer events.

"I shot videos during the Asian Games in Hangzhou last year. This summer, I'll definitely take my dear followers on a 'cloud visit' to Olympic venues," Ruelle said.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and France, and is the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism.

"English tea is nothing special and there is no ceremony," he said. As educational and cultural exchanges continue to evolve, China is witnessing a surge in people's desire to learn French.

Language learning can further enhance exchanges, said Chen Jianwei, Chinese director of Alliance Francaise of Hangzhou, an organization that aims to promote the French language.

The growing enthusiasm for

French is evident in events such as the French Corner, held weekly in Hangzhou, Chen said. "In class, we teach students everything about France. The students are very interested in Cote d'Azur, a region with a perfect mix of nature and culture."

Fabien Gouss, a French teacher in Hangzhou, said he has seen an evolution in cooperation between French and Chinese universities with the opening of more Sino-French institutions across Zhejiang province.

Hangzhou native Shen Jiaqi, who studied French at Alliance Francaise and is now pursuing studies at the National School of Fine Arts at the Villa Arson in Nice, said: "French culture is fascinating. And I want to learn art here in Nice, a place from which many artists like Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso have drawn inspiration."

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Greek-style Belle Epoque gem

Villa Kerylos, a house in the ancient Greek Revival-style overlooking the Mediterranean, was little known among the Chinese until French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte greeted Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan there on March 24, 2019, during Xi's state visit to France.

A 20-minute drive from Nice, the villa was built between 1902 and 1908 by architect Emmanuel Pontrenoli for archaeologist Theodore Reinach, based on the model of the noble houses of the Greek island of Delos in the 2nd century BC. Kerylos means "sea swallow", a bird considered a good omen in Greek mythology.

Reinach spent his holidays there with his family. After his death in 1928, he bequeathed the property to the Institut de France, of which he was a member. The villa was listed as a historical monument by the French Ministry of Culture in 1966, and is now a museum that is open to the public.

Reinach commissioned the exact copy.

Butterfly lovers' timeless tale

When one evokes a city steeped in romantic allure in China, none can rival Hangzhou and the tragic yet eternal tale of "butterfly lovers".

The enchanting city is known for a love legend that has endured the passage of time, weaving its way into the very fabric of Hangzhou's identity.

For centuries, Hangzhou has been renowned for its picturesque landscapes and timeless charm. At the heart of the romantic glamor lies the story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, considered the Chinese equivalent of Romeo and Juliet. Their romantic yet tragic story has long touched the hearts of generations and has been transformed into

The *Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, blending Chinese opera elements with Western classical techniques.

Listeners are transported to the serene settings of Hangzhou, where the story of Liang and Zhu unfolds amid the tranquil West Lake. The lyrical yet strong rhythm captures their ardent love and heartbreaking separation that ultimately leads to their demise and transformation into a pair of butterflies.

The concerto stands as one of the most famous Chinese orchestral works, transcending cultural boundaries and resonating with listeners worldwide.

From the scenic banks of the Grand Canal to the serene trails of the Xai National Wetland Park, Hangzhou is never short of romantic allure, with the placid waters of West Lake having inspired countless works of art and poems.

SHAO XINYING

Desire grows for more educational interactions, closer bonds as dialogue rekindled

By CHEN WEIHUA in Nice, France and SHAO XINYING in Hangzhou

As this year marks the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism, there is a growing interest in furthering educational and cultural exchanges between the two countries, exemplified by the sister-city relationship between Hangzhou and Nice.

Cecile Claris, head of the Institution Saint-Joseph de Roquebrune, about 20 kilometers east of Nice, said her school

is looking forward to having more exchanges with Chinese counterparts, especially resuming cooperation with Hangzhou Foreign Languages School, a bond forged in 2009.

Fruitful exchanges had flourished between the two schools until the interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I hope it will become more convenient for our students to renew cooperation with China, including traveling there and having exchanges," Claris said. She said she was happy to learn

that China is offering 15-day visa-free entry to French nationals until Nov 30.

Yan Yu, a Chinese language teacher instrumental in building bridges between the Institution Saint-Joseph de Roquebrune and Hangzhou Foreign Languages School, said, "The pandemic had seriously affected bilateral exchanges."

Having been living on the

French Riviera for more than 20 years, Yan, originally from Zhejiang province, fondly recalled her initial proposal for bilateral exchanges with Hangzhou Foreign Languages School during a trip in 2009. The response was immediate and positive, she said.

"They sent a delegation to visit our school right in 2010 and I then helped organize a delegation of teachers and stu-

dents to go to Hangzhou in 2012," she said. The two-week China trip included a week in Beijing and a week of exchange at the sister-city relations between Nice and Hangzhou.

While the pandemic affected educational exchanges with China, Claris said her school has received great support from the Confucius Institute Cote d'Azur. "I'm so grateful. In the last

three years, the Confucius Institute has come to our school to hold various Chinese cultural events and achieved great success. Students like them very much," she said, citing events such as Peking Opera facial makeup workshops and Chinese cultural contests.

Wang Yan, head of the Confucius Institute Cote d'Azur, said that in addition to language classes,

the institute has been organizing events at local schools to foster students' understanding and appreciation for Chinese culture. "The French are very interested in China," she said.

At a recent event in Nice, Paris-based Chinese tea culture expert Zhang Le captivated locals of all ages with her insights into this age-old tradition.

Yann Gravot, a laboratory

worker from the University of Cote d'Azur, said he learned a lot about the different types of tea.

"Sometimes I do the tea ceremony at home, (but) may not be as beautiful (as hers)," he said.

Malcom Dorman from the United Kingdom, who has lived in Nice for 35 years, said he also learned a lot, especially about Chinese green tea.

"English tea is nothing special and there is no ceremony," he said. As educational and cultural exchanges continue to evolve, China is witnessing a surge in people's desire to learn French.

Language learning can further enhance exchanges, said Chen Jianwei, Chinese director of Alliance Francaise of Hangzhou, an organization that aims to promote the French language.

The growing enthusiasm for

French is evident in events such as the French Corner, held weekly in Hangzhou, Chen said. "In class, we teach students everything about France. The students are very interested in Cote d'Azur, a region with a perfect mix of nature and culture."

Fabien Gouss, a French teacher in Hangzhou, said he has seen an evolution in cooperation between French and Chinese universities with the opening of more Sino-French institutions across Zhejiang province.

Hangzhou native Shen Jiaqi, who studied French at Alliance Francaise and is now pursuing studies at the National School of Fine Arts at the Villa Arson in Nice, said: "French culture is fascinating. And I want to learn art here in Nice, a place from which many artists like Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso have drawn inspiration."

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.

Shen said she hopes to see stronger links between her hometown and Nice. She also hopes the Villa Arson and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou can resume exchanges.



From left: Tai chi master Yang Eryue showcases movements at the Institution Saint-Joseph de Roquebrune during this year's Chinese Culture Day; Chinese opera masks painted by students of the institution are shown in March; Prizewinners of the institution's 2022 Chinese Culture Day pose for a photo; Students from the Institution Saint-Joseph de Roquebrune take part in a music class at Hangzhou Foreign Languages School in 2018; A teacher tells students how to paint facial makeup in Chinese operas at the Institution Saint-Joseph de Roquebrune during this year's Chinese Culture Day; Teachers and students from the Institution Saint-Joseph de Roquebrune take part in a Chinese calligraphy course at Hangzhou Foreign Languages School in 2018. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



WORLD

Russia puts Zelensky on wanted list

MOSCOW/KYIV — Russia has opened a criminal case against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and put him on a wanted list, the state news agency reported on Saturday, an announcement Ukraine has dismissed.

TASS reported that the Russian Interior Ministry database showed Zelensky was on a wanted list but gave no further details.

Ukraine's foreign ministry said the Russian announcement was "evidence of the desperation of the Russian state machine and propaganda".

Russia's wanted list also includes scores of officials and lawmakers from Ukraine and NATO countries. Among them is Kaja Kallas, the prime minister of Estonia.

Russian officials in February said that Kallas is wanted because of Tallinn's efforts to remove Soviet-era monuments to Red Army soldiers in the Baltic nation.

Meanwhile, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and scores of other worshippers in Moscow attended an Easter service on Sunday, led by the head of Russia's Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill.

Zelensky called on his fellow Ukrainians on Sunday to unite in prayer for each other and the soldiers on the front line.

Accusations dismissed

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Saturday that NATO's four-month-long military exercises near Russia's borders, known as Steadfast Defender, are proof the alliance is preparing for a potential conflict with Russia.

She dismissed accusations by NATO last week that Russia is engaged in hybrid attacks on its member states, saying this was "misinformation" aimed at distracting people from the alliance's activities.

On the battlefield, the Russian defense ministry said on Saturday its air defense forces shot down four US-produced long-range missiles over the Crimean Peninsula, weapons known as Army Tactical Missile Systems that Washington had shipped to Ukraine in recent weeks.



Palestinians carry United Nations Relief and Works Agency aid sacks at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. HATEM KHALED / REUTERS

Gaza truce chances slim as talks deadlocked

CAIRO/GAZA/JERUSALEM — Prospects for a Gaza cease-fire appeared slim on Sunday as Hamas reiterated its demand for an end to the conflict in exchange for the freeing of hostages, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flatly ruled it out.

The two sides blamed each other for the impasse. In their second day of truce talks in Cairo with Egyptian and Qatari mediators in Cairo, Hamas negotiators maintained their stance that any truce agreement must end the conflict, Palestinian officials said.

Israeli officials have not traveled to Cairo to take part in indirect diplomacy, but on Sunday Netanyahu reiterated Israel's aim since the start of the conflict nearly seven months ago: to disarm and dismantle the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas for good or else endanger Israel's future security.

Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh on Sunday said Netanyahu was sabotaging efforts by mediators involved in truce talks.

The Israeli cabinet approved the shutdown of the Al Jazeera channel and office in the country on Sunday. Under the decision, Al Jazeera Arabic and Al Jazeera English operations in Israel could be banned for an initial period of 45 days, with the possibility of indefinite renewal.

As the latest talks were underway, residents and health officials said Israeli planes and tanks continued to pound areas across the

Palestinian enclave overnight, killing and wounding several people.

The conflict began after Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel with a cross-border raid on Oct 7 in which 1,200 people were killed and 252 hostages taken, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's retaliatory offensive against Hamas has killed at least 34,683 people in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry on Sunday. The bombardment has devastated much of the coastal enclave and caused a humanitarian crisis.

Thousands of Israelis protested on Saturday, demanding Netanyahu accept a cease-fire agreement with Hamas that would see the remaining hostages brought home.

UN's famine warning

The United Nations has warned of a "full-blown famine" in northern Gaza. "There is famine, full-blown famine in the north and it's moving its way south," Cindy McCain, executive director of the World Food Programme, said in an interview whose excerpts were published on Friday.

The World Health Organization said on Friday that the availability of food in the Gaza Strip had slightly improved in the besieged Palestinian territory, which is home to 2.4 million people.

The United Nations says more than 70 percent of Gaza's residential buildings have been completely or partly destroyed, and rebuilding

will require an effort unseen since the aftermath of World War II.

US President Joe Biden has come under mounting domestic pressure to leverage more concessions from Netanyahu's government over its conduct in the conflict.

A letter signed by 88 members of Congress from Biden's Democratic Party expressed serious concern over Israel's "deliberate withholding" of aid for Palestinian civilians and urged Biden to consider halting arms sales unless Israel's conduct changes.

The prospect of an assault on Rafah has sparked deepening international concern.

The senior Hamas official on Saturday said Israel would bear "full responsibility for insisting on entering Rafah instead of ceasing the aggression".

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday warned that "a full-scale military operation in Rafah... could lead to a bloodbath". The conflict in Gaza has also triggered a surge in violence in the already restive occupied West Bank, where Israel said on Saturday its troops killed five Palestinian "terrorists" during a 12-hour siege near Tulkarem.

Meanwhile, student protests against the conflict have erupted in Europe and North America, with demonstrators gathering on at least 40 US university campuses since mid-April.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

US, China role emphasized in AI governance

Discussions on what shape controls should take at center stage, panel hears

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

Any international rules on generative artificial intelligence must involve the United States and China and those countries' companies, participants in a recent panel discussion said.

"In terms of scale and number of companies, a number of researchers, a number of STEM researchers, it's really the US and China," said Paul Triolo, an associate partner for China and Technology Policy Lead at the Albright Stonebridge Group, a global strategic advisory and commercial diplomacy firm. "So, the consensus is that China and Chinese companies need to be part of a global dialogue."

Triolo spoke in a panel discussion titled "The United States, China, and AI: What Does Cooperation Look Like?", hosted by the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington.

In San Francisco in November, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden agreed to establish a government-to-government mechanism to discuss AI.

In Bangkok in January, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan discussed holding a US-China AI dialogue this spring.

Panelists at the event said US AI companies have engaged in discussions with Chinese AI experts, and leading scientists from both countries have jointly put out calls for tighter controls on technology.

Triolo said that AI technology goes back "quite a ways", while ChatGPT came out in November 2022. ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is a chatbot that uses large language models, a type of AI that can, among other things, recognize and generate text.

"So now when we talk about AI, oftentimes people tend to mean generative AI and applications like ChatGPT," Triolo said.

AI, as embodied particularly in its next-generation form of generative AI, is a technology of immense transformative potential, and could produce significant harm, be it in the sphere of disinformation, cybersecurity, or military applications, he said.

"Given this is such an important emerging technology now, whoever leads in this arena is going to have a major economic advantage. And so whichever countries ... dominate, companies and countries dominate, will ... have this leading economic growth."

Although China and the US are willing to discuss or even work together on AI, the questions of what topics should be discussed and who should represent either side have yet to be decided.

Denis Simon, a distinguished fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies, said there are "more questions than answers" about US-China potential cooperation in AI. "And I think both sides are trying to figure out where they're going to end up."

"I think the US perspective is somewhat different about this working group and what's going to happen. I think they really want to discuss more about the management of AI and more about, in fact, to be very honest, the control over AI. America has a certain perspective on the potential nefarious uses of AI."

China is placing great importance on "new quality productive forces" and trying to get into "a whole new economic and technological posture by using this kind of model of AI-led transformation", Simon said.

However, the US seeks no cooperation or exchanges on the underlying technological hardware that drives frontier AI models, he said, as the Biden administration has placed "onerous" export-control restrictions on leading-edge graphics processing units, aimed at preventing China from training its frontier models.

Tesla clears hurdles in China's electric vehicle market

By MINLUZHANG

in New York
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

Chinese authorities have decided to remove restrictions on Tesla's cars after it passed the country's data security requirements, marking a significant milestone for the US company in the world's largest auto market.

The approval marks a significant step toward introducing Tesla's Full Self-Driving (FSD) technology in China. While Tesla has offered FSD upgrades to its Autopilot driver assistant in the country for years, data security and compliances have been why Tesla has been limited to features like automated lane-changing.

After Tesla CEO Elon Musk's surprise visit to China, the carmaker announced on April 28 that Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y vehicles were among the models subjected to testing and deemed compliant with China's data security standards.

Alongside Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y, several other new energy vehicles manufactured by BYD, Lotus, Neza, Li Auto and NIO also have met China's data security standards, but Texas-based Tesla became the only foreign company on the list.

For Tesla, "it's a good thing, because it's one more domino knocked down, in order for them to be able to potentially get the data from those cars out to America," Mark Rainford, an influencer in the automotive industry and host of the YouTube channel Inside China Auto told China Daily.

He said Tesla has "this supercomputer that is currently learning how to teach autonomous cars based on what it sees. So it's looking at how humans react to certain situations on the road. And obviously, China

is Tesla's second-largest market that has a lot of cars that they can get data from," Rainford said.

"But currently, they can't submit that data to the supercomputer to teach you how Chinese cars or Chinese drivers work and how Chinese roads work. So if they are able, at some point to get that data out to the US, then it will be a big benefit for them," he said.

Since 2021, Chinese officials have required Tesla to store all data collected by its cars in China, specifically in Shanghai, prohibiting the transfer of any such data back to the United States.

Improving Tesla's self-driving technology is important for the company with its current product range aging amid a rapid influx of new models from Chinese manufacturers, who are making brand new cars almost every week.

"All of those other brands, they are allowed to have the autonomous driving systems in China and Tesla can't, that started to impact Tesla sales," said Rainford.

Junheng Li, CEO and head of research at J.L. Warren Capital, said on X that the likelihood of Tesla rolling out a "supervised" version of FSD in China is "extremely unlikely".

There's "no strategic value" for Beijing to facilitate Tesla's FSD adoption in China when there are numerous high-quality local alternatives, such as Xpeng's driver-assist software, Li said.

Tesla shares have fallen significantly in recent months, plummeting by more than 33 percent this year as of April 4.

Despite growth in the global electric vehicle market, Tesla's sales growth has decreased. The company said last month that it delivered



It's a sign from China, not only to the authorities, but also to consumers who are going to buy Chinese cars abroad, that their cars have the strictest data security ..."

Mark Rainford, host of the YouTube channel Inside China Auto

387,000 cars worldwide, down 8.5 percent from the year before. Tesla also announced that it would lay off more than 10 percent of its global workforce to cut costs.

"While Tesla still remains very popular as a brand, they do have a challenge, which is that the local competition (that) is increasing is better," said Rainford.

Last year, China's BYD outpaced Tesla for the second year in a row, producing more than 3 million new energy vehicles and becoming the world's largest electric vehicle seller, while Tesla made 1.84 million cars.

Rainford said his audiences from Europe and the US "were very surprised" to see China's car industry. "Most people didn't believe or didn't know that China had this kind of car industry," he said.

"They were amazed at what they were seeing. So I would say probably 80 percent of people are like, 'Wow, this is incredible. I've never seen this before.' And then you get of course, 20 percent of people who are like,

'Yeah, but it's Chinese. It's all rubbish. It's not very good.'"

"I think people are surprised and excited to see these cars come to their countries, because they don't have so much choice. Certainly not affordable choices in Europe and America. And they want to see them, especially the Americans. A lot of Americans want Chinese cars to be able to go there. But obviously they can't right now," said Rainford.

Tesla, being one of the most popular vehicles in China, had been banned from Chinese military installations and some government-affiliated venues, including meeting halls and exhibition centers.

Currently, the main benefit to Tesla to pass the country's data security requirements is that some customers who were unable to go to some restricted locations, can now go to those restricted locations, said Rainford.

Tesla shares rose sharply on April 29 after the company received approval from Beijing to introduce its advanced service in China.

Tesla stock has gained about 39 percent over the past five days as investors reacted to news about Musk's visit to China. That's the best five-day run since July 2020, when shares rose 42.9 percent over the span that ended July 6.

"It's a sign from China, not only to the authorities, but also to consumers who are going to buy Chinese cars abroad, that their cars have the strictest data security, because of course, there is anti-China sentiment outside of China and people are concerned that the cars are going to be switched off by the governments and things like that," Rainford said.

"I think it's a good sign for consumers ... if they listen to this and

they trust that information," Rainford said.

The Biden administration earlier this year announced an investigation into whether imported cars from China pose national security risks due to their ability to potentially gather sensitive data about Americans driving them.

"I don't personally see the US giving any massive concessions to Chinese brands," said Rainford. "For them, their biggest concern is losing the status of the number one economic superpower in the world."

"I don't see them wanting to help out China in any way in that form. Because if they let all the Chinese brands into America, they're going to cause a lot of damage to the American brands," he said.

While Biden's action doesn't amount to a ban on Chinese imports, the investigation may prompt regulations to prevent China from using advanced technology in electric and connected vehicles that tracks drivers, and their personal data.

The US market may favor big engines and pickup trucks, but there's a growing demand among many Americans for small, affordable electric vehicles. And right now, they have no choice in that area, said Rainford.

"So the American people want it, the American government say that they want it. But as of yet, they're not currently seeming to be open to the Chinese car companies selling cars without tariffs," he said. "So I think it'll still take some time."

He said that he believed that with the public and government expressing interest in green alternatives, the shift toward electric cars is inevitable for a cleaner, more sustainable future.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8998

editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

twitter.com/chinadaily

facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

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

WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108

529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900, San

Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-3868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 - No.1325

WORLD



Students protest at an encampment in support of Palestinians at Columbia University in New York City on April 26. REUTERS

CAMPUSES: STUDENTS PROTEST ACROSS THE US



Police face off with pro-Palestinian students after dismantling part of a barricade on the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles, early on Thursday. ETIENNE LAURENT / AFP

From page 1

"Whenever there is a movement, you know Columbia is going to be right there," Naison told AP.

Sara M, who requested anonymity, is a freshman at Fordham's Bronx campus. On Wednesday, she went to Fordham's Lincoln Center campus in Manhattan and joined protesters.

"I went because we should protest any war," she told China Daily, but "especially against what is happening in Gaza."

She joined protesters in a building where they had erected tents, but left when the school announced demonstrators could be arrested. On Wednesday evening, police made 15 arrests after clearing the campus of demonstrators at the request of the university.

A doctoral student in the humanities program at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, who asked to remain anonymous, told China Daily: "I understand the concern and anger of these young students about the humanitarian disaster, but I don't think they will get anywhere by camping out like this in protest."

She said in a few years they might view their fervor and quest for justice as "ridiculous." As I get older and see more and more, including (President Joe) Biden saying he won't change his Israel policy, I find what I learn in textbooks and what I see in reality to be very misaligned," she added.

Quito Ziegler, a humanities professor at the School of Visual Art in New York, said: "I think it's atrocious that the administrations of these schools are calling the police on their own students, who are peacefully protesting issues that are profoundly important to them. This generation of students has inherited a world rife with problems, some of which are now leading to genocide."

A 21-year-old SVA student majoring in animation who asked to remain anonymous said: "It's just very brutal. Millions of people in Gaza are being displaced. It's very ironic for America to call out democratic or undemocratic practices in other countries when it itself exercises very undemocratic actions, such as arresting peaceful protesters and intimidating student protesters. They just arrest students. If colleges are institutions meant to educate, this is not the way to do it."

Protests spread

Pro-Palestinian demonstrations that started in the US have spread across the world to London, Paris, Toronto, Rome, Sydney, Tokyo and Beirut.

College officials' responses to the protests have occurred against a

global debate over the US' role in the conflict, while both major US political parties have been jockeying for the moral and political high ground.

After weeks of pro-Palestinian protests on campuses nationwide, threats of arrests and expulsions have caused many to shut down as schools end the academic year this month.

However, protests have lingered at some colleges including the University of Virginia, New York University and the New School in New York.

At the University of Virginia, a small group of protesters that included students, faculty and community members set up an encampment on the Charlottesville campus.

They sang songs, read poetry and painted signs to protest "Israel's war in Gaza." However, the peaceful protest ended on Saturday when state police stormed the encampment. Photos on social media showed police in tactical gear with riot shields using tear gas and force to disperse the protesters. At least 25 pro-Palestinian demonstrators were arrested on Saturday, The Washington Post reported.

After the encampment was cleared, police began to push against a growing crowd of protesters, some of whom had come out to support the original demonstrators, and others who were there to witness the scene unfold. Police indiscriminately sprayed tear gas into the crowd, according to the Daily Progress newspaper.

Meanwhile, early on Friday morning, police cleared two pro-Palestinian encampments and arrested student demonstrators at New York University. Student demonstrators had been sleeping in tents inside a New School building and on sidewalks outside NYU buildings in downtown New York.

New York Police Department officials said they acted after the two universities asked for assistance to disperse the illegal encampments. Police arrested 13 people at NYU and 43 at the New School.

NYU President Linda Mills defended the decision to ask for police help, saying that the university leadership "could not tolerate the risk of violence any longer."

In explaining her decision, Columbia President Minouche Shafik said she asked police to end the demonstrations as the protests had pushed the university to the brink.

Divestment demands

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators across the US have accused Israel of committing genocide against Palesti-

nians. However, Jewish students who support Israel and its right to defend itself against Hamas say the protests have made them afraid to walk freely on campus.

Some said denunciations of Zionism and calls for a Palestinian uprising are an attack on the Jewish people.

Many of the pro-Palestinian student demonstrators have called for their universities to make transparent all financial holdings and divest from companies and funds they believe are profiting from or supporting Israel and its policies.

They have also demanded an "amnesty" for students and faculty members who have been disciplined by their schools as a result of protest action.

However, experts have warned that divestment is virtually impossible. Universities probably have very few if any direct ties to companies

that are based in Israel or are weapons manufacturers, they said.

Nicholas Dirks, the former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, told CNN: "The economy is so global now that even if a university decided that they were going to instruct their dominant management groups to divest from Israel, it would be almost impossible to disentangle."

Many of the protests stopped short of physical confrontations, but clashes included a violent attack last week by pro-Israel protesters at the University of California, Los Angeles, while racist taunts and abuse were hurled by white students at protesters at the University of Mississippi.

New York police arrested 282 people on Tuesday night during crackdowns at Columbia University and the City College of New York. Of those, 74 faced misdemeanor or more serious charges and another 16 had

outstanding warrants, prosecutors said. About half of those arrested had no affiliation with either school.

Rights versus wrongs

During the demonstrations, schools have weighed up free expression, including the right to peaceful protest, against safety risks and ensuring that protests don't encroach upon the rights of students, faculty and staff members.

Now many schools are wrestling with how to handle possible student protests during graduation ceremonies. Some schools plan to set up designated areas for protests to allow ceremonies to go forward without quashing free speech. School administrators are also hiring extra security and screening attendees at venues, AP reported.

A graduation ceremony at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on Saturday was briefly interrupted by dozens of pro-Palestinian protesters. As the ceremony got underway, about 75 protesters — many in kaffiyeh, a headdress worn by Arabs, and graduation caps — unfurled Palestinian flags and posters as they marched toward the stage chanting: "Regents, regents, you can't hide! You are funding genocide!"

One demonstrator carried a banner reading, "No universities left in Gaza". Others held Palestinian flags while others waved Israeli flags.

Campus police prevented the protesters from reaching the stage. US Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro paused a few times during his remarks at the ceremony, saying at one point, "Ladies and gentlemen, if you can please draw your attention back to the podium."

A plane flew over the ceremony trailing a banner that said: "Divest from Israel now! Free Palestine". Another plane had a different message: "We stand with Israel. Jewish lives matter".

Officials said no one was arrested, and the protest did not seriously interrupt the nearly two-hour event, which was attended by tens of thousands of people.

Graduations rethink

At least two schools have altered their graduation ceremonies in light of the ongoing protests.

The University of Vermont announced on Friday that Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to the United Nations, would not deliver a commence-

ment address scheduled for later this month.

The University of Southern California canceled its valedictorian commencement speech and appearances by celebrity speakers and its "main stage" commencement ceremony, citing the possibility of disruptions. On Friday, the university announced a "Trojan Family Graduate Celebration" in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum for graduates to attend instead.

To head off possible disruptions of final exams and graduation ceremonies, a number of universities have struck deals with protesters, including Brown in Rhode Island, Northwestern in Illinois and Rutgers in New Jersey, CBS News reported on Saturday.

The deals included commitments by universities to review their investments in Israel, but with no promises about changing such investments.

"I think for some universities, it might be just a delaying tactic to defuse the protests," Ralph Young, a history professor who studies American dissent at Temple University in Philadelphia, told CBS News. "The end of the semester is happening now. And maybe by the time the next semester begins, there is a cease-fire in Gaza."

Columbia University is rethinking its commencement ceremony planned for May 15, according to a source at the university, NBC News reported.

Administrators indicated to student leaders at a meeting that they were unsure about the ceremony being held at the main campus in Manhattan because of security concerns.

A student representative said Columbia's administration was primarily concerned about outside protesters and was seeking an alternative venue.

The student leaders told the university that many students were concerned about school president Shafik speaking at the ceremony. "Her presence would be the cause of a lot of upset," one of them told NBC News.

In her message to the Columbia University community on why she requested police help to end the protests, Shafik said the students had paid a "high price", and missed out on the final days of the year in classrooms and residence halls.

"For those of you who are seniors, you're finishing college the same way you started: online," she said.

Xin Wen in Beijing contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at aiheping@chinanetusa.com

Right: Pro-Palestinian student protesters and activists rally on university campuses across the United States on Friday. PHOTOS BY AP AND AFP



University of Georgia pro-Palestinian protesters rally outside City Hall after marching through downtown in Athens, Georgia, on Friday. AP

COMMENT

Editorials

Strengthening of Sino-French friendship will also be a boon for rest of the world

The warm welcome President Xi Jinping received upon his arrival in Paris on Sunday, which marked the beginning of the first leg of his six-day back-to-back visits to France, Serbia and Hungary, is a telling sign that despite the great changes the world has seen since his last trip to Europe nearly five years ago, Sino-French relations retain their strong momentum.

The two countries have maintained effective strategic communication and fruitful practical cooperation over those years, deepening people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and engaging in sound communication and coordination in international and regional affairs under the guidance of Xi and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron.

The worldwide attention being paid to Xi's visit speaks volumes about the responsibilities the two countries shoulder as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the roles they are expected to play in stabilizing the global industry and supply chains, and safeguarding world peace and stability. As such the outcomes of the talks between the two leaders on China-France relations, China-EU relations and international and regional hotspot issues are highly anticipated.

The two sides have great potential and space to further strengthen their communication and coordination to uphold a fair and just world order centered on the United Nations and to strengthen their cooperation to address the common challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

The structural complementarity of the two economies means there is much scope for deepening their cooperation in clean energy, nuclear energy research and development, and forest carbon sinks, as well as artificial intelligence, aviation and aerospace, and agri-food products.

All peace-loving countries hope that candid and extensive talks between the two sides will be productive and serve the common good of the world, which for too long has been hijacked by shortsighted geopolitical scheming of some certain countries, which have opted for bloc confrontation, zero-sum practices and a Cold War mentality as the means to preserve their undue privileges.

The steady development of Sino-French ties can also help consolidate Sino-EU ties which can act as an effective counterbalance to the negative influence of these self-serving cliques, which is a risk creator rather than a risk reducer. Led by some armchair ideologues, the actions of these countries are sabotaging global efforts to address common challenges rather than contributing to efforts to find solutions.

It is to be hoped that through this visit, China and France can carry forward the good tradition of friendly relations, and further enhance political mutual trust, solidarity and cooperation, so that the two major players on the world stage can jointly elevate their comprehensive strategic partnership and in so doing help stabilize the China-EU relationship, and make new contributions to global peace, stability, and development.

Soliciting WHA for Taiwan exposes US duplicity

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a statement on Wednesday saying the United States strongly encourages the World Health Organization to reinstate an invitation to Taiwan to participate as an observer at this year's WHO annual assembly.

This is a violation of what Washington has promised on the Taiwan question in the three joint communiqués it has signed with Beijing.

It also constitutes a challenge to the principle, upheld by the United Nations, that there is but one China, of which the government in Beijing is the sole legitimate representative. This principle is enshrined in the UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1. As such, it is at Beijing's discretion whether to solicit an invitation for the island's participation in the activities of international organizations as an observer.

The island attended the World Health Assembly as an observer from 2009 to 2016, when the island's authorities recognized the 1992 Consensus acknowledging that the island is part of China.

But the island's current Democratic Progressive Party authorities have stubbornly refused to uphold the 1992 Consensus and instead stuck to their separatist position. They are trying to assert, by whatever means they can think of, the false notion that the island is an "independent country". Thus the political foundation for the island's participation in the WHA no longer exists, as upholding the one-China principle is mandated by Beijing.

In his statement, Blinken emphasized the island's expertise and experience in public health, from which he said the world might benefit. He said that Taiwan's exceptional capabilities and approaches would offer considerable value to inform the WHA's deliberations, adding that time and again, Taiwan has demonstrated a capability and willingness to help address global health crises and support the global health community. By saying this, Blinken not only sought to denigrate the Chinese mainland's contributions in these regards, he was also trying to misportray the issue as a technical decision only.

Having personally reaffirmed the one-China principle on the part of the US during his visit to China in April, he cannot pretend that he does not know that this is a political issue.

The statement by the top US diplomat is simply another iteration of the Joe Biden administration trying to stir up trouble and further proof that it glibly talks the good talk while having no intention of walking its words.

The Taiwan question is one of China's first and foremost core interests, and there is no way Beijing will compromise on this issue.

By signaling its support to the secessionist forces on the island in this way, the Biden administration has not only done a disservice to the improvement of relations between the US and China but also further damaged the US' credibility by again highlighting it will breezily give its word to do something while having every intention of renegeing on it.

Reneging on agreement inviting trouble to region

By repeatedly denying the existence of an agreement on managing the Ren'ai Reef issue with China, high-ranking Philippine officials are tarnishing the image of their own country. Their capriciousness only drives home the message that Manila is an unreliable, untrustworthy partner in negotiations.

The blatant denials from the Philippine side has prompted the Chinese embassy in the Philippines to talk at length about the "new model" agreement on Saturday and pose the questions: Why does the Philippine administration keep denying the agreement and why does the Philippines' Defense Ministry refuse to properly manage the maritime differences through dialogue and negotiations?

There is no need to rack one's brains to answer these questions as it is evident to all that managing the differences between the two countries and avoiding conflict does not suit the designs of Washington, which is muscling into the South China Sea by riding herd on Manila.

With Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr under the sway of the Joe Biden administration, there seems to be little hope of Manila acknowledging, never mind upholding, the "gentlemen's agreement" on Ren'ai Reef that the previous Philippine administration struck with Beijing.

The Marcos administration reaffirmed the "new model" agreement for the management of the situation early this year after multiple rounds

of discussions with Beijing.

But Manila now refuses to admit not only that it made such an agreement, but also that it reaffirmed its commitment to it. With Washington eager to call the shots, Manila seems to have concluded that it can take advantage of this to hammer in the stakes of its claim by building a permanent facility on the reef. To ensure Manila responds to the crack of its whip, the Biden administration is also piecing together an anti-China clique in the region to back Manila's unwarranted territorial claims.

But no matter how hard they try, neither Washington nor Manila can change the indisputable fact that China's sovereignty, rights and interests in the South China Sea were established over the long course of history and are solidly grounded in law.

By inviting external forces into the bilateral dispute between China and the Philippines, Manila is not only worsening its ties with Beijing but also undercutting the efforts of the other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to work with China to maintain peace and stability in the waters.

China and the ASEAN countries are actively advancing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. Needless to say, the Philippines' unilateral breach of trust and soliciting of external interference in the South China Sea is having a negative impact on the regional situation as a whole.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

China and Islamic countries consolidating cooperation

At the invitation of Gambian President Adama Barrow, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zheng Jianbang visited Gambia from Saturday to Sunday to attend the 15th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Banjul, capital of the Gambia, as a special representative of the top Chinese leader, who sent a congratulatory message to the opening of the summit on Saturday.

The message and visit show the strategic importance Beijing attaches to relations with the OIC, and Islamic countries as a whole.

The OIC is a manifestation of the unity and independence of Islamic countries. It has made important

contributions to strengthening cooperation among Islamic countries.

China and Islamic countries are good friends and partners with a long history of friendship. In recent years, China and Islamic countries have supported each other on issues concerning each other's core interests and major concerns, achieved fruitful results in practical cooperation, and the two sides have continuously upgraded their friendly relations, setting a good example of South-South cooperation.

China and Islamic countries should strengthen their strategic communication and cultivate new cooperation highlights. The two sides can strengthen communication and coordination to help inject

impetus into the realization of the

United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to promote the fair settlement of regional hotspot issues.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is the pressing issue at present. It cannot be marginalized, and the historical injustice endured by the Palestinian people cannot be allowed to continue. The two sides can work together to promote a cease-fire and the realization of the two-state solution as set out in United Nations' resolutions.

The two sides can also work together to strengthen the solidarity and coordination of developing countries, uphold true multilateralism and safeguard the common interests of developing countries.

— FMPRC.GOV.CN

Mission to shed light on dark side of the moon

China on Friday launched its Chang'e 6 spacecraft to collect and return samples from the moon's mysterious far side — the first endeavor of its kind.

The samples from the far side of the moon will give scientists a better understanding of the environment and material composition of the far side of the moon.

The Chang'e 6 spacecraft, like its predecessor Chang'e 5, comprises an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a returner. According to the mission plan, after it reaches the moon, it will make a soft landing on the far side. Within 48 hours of its touchdown on the lunar surface, a robotic arm will be extended to scoop rocks and soil from the lunar surface, and a drill will bore into the ground.

After the samples are sealed in a container, the ascender will take off

from the moon and dock with the orbiter in lunar orbit. The returner will then carry the samples back to Earth, landing in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

The entire flight is expected to last about 53 days, according to the China National Space Administration.

The Chang'e 6 mission has required new technological breakthroughs in such areas as lunar retrograde orbit design and control, rapid intelligent sampling, and take-off from the far side of the moon.

Notably, the Chang'e 6 mission is carrying four payloads developed through international cooperation, highlighting how China's space program is providing more opportunities for the world's scientists and promoting international cooperation in space exploration. Scientific instruments from France, Italy, the

European Space Agency and Sweden are aboard the Chang'e 6 lander, and a small satellite from Pakistan is aboard the orbiter.

More than 300 kilograms of lunar samples have been retrieved over the course of 10 lunar missions carried out by the United States, the former Soviet Union and China, and all were collected from the moon's near side.

Remote-sensing images show the moon's two sides are very different. The near side is relatively flat, while the far side is thickly dotted with asteroid impact craters of different sizes and has much fewer lunar maria than the near side. Scientists also suspect that the lunar crust on the far side is much thicker than that on the near side. But why that is so remains a mystery.

— XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

What They Say

Increasing people's income key to holiday economy

As expected, both the number of trips Chinese tourists made and the tourism revenue they generated during the five-day May Day holiday that ended on Sunday were higher than that of last year, as shown by data released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. But the growth of their personal spending on average is not that obvious.

That means although the people have demonstrated a high desire to travel, their spending power has not yet recovered due to the impacts of the slow-to-recover job market and the weak growth in personal disposable income.

To better tap into the potential of the nation's consumption, the government still needs to take more concrete actions to bail out private enterprises that are the largest job creators in the country. The focus should be on helping them increase their net profit so that the income of

workers can be raised. Private enterprises are being squeezed by rising prices of raw materials in the world market due to geopolitical tensions and the depreciation of the renminbi, and falling producer prices due to weak demand at home.

The government should also pay attention to improving the experience of tourists during the holidays, as more people now choose to stay at home to enjoy five days of slow life to avoid the crowds of holiday goers.

If this problem cannot be effectively addressed, the effects of the holiday economy the policymakers desire to tap will not be fully unleashed.

The swelling of the middle-income group and the fast development of infrastructure mean people's expectations of their holidays are drastically different from the late 1990s when the Golden Week holidays were launched. Although people are able to trav-

el farther in the comfort of their own cars, or by high-speed trains, they have to plan their trip meticulously to try and ensure a hassle-free journey there and back.

However, even if they are lucky enough to avoid any hitches along the way, they will still find what awaits them in the majority of popular tourist spots remain large throngs of people. Anyone having experienced waiting in long lines to enter a tourist attraction or to use a public toilet will know that becomes the most memorable part of the trip aside from pushing and shoving for hours.

That being said, a flexible holiday system can be introduced. As long as the people have enough money to spend, to grant them more freedom and space to plan their leisure trips will only better stimulate consumption and promote the development of the tourism industry.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huixin Dongjie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

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

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

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

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 20 242 9599 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

GLOBAL VIEWS

ERIC ALAUZET

Second sexagenary

This year marks the beginning of a new 60-year cycle of friendly relations between France and China

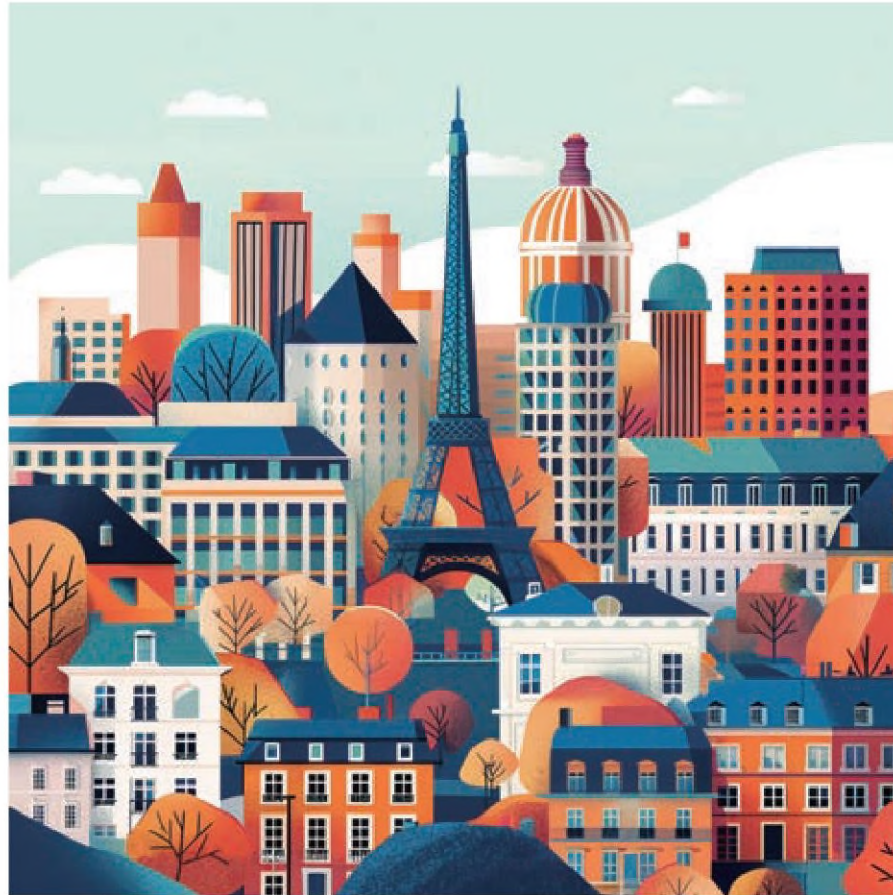
As I write these lines, my thoughts turn to a distinguished man who 60 years ago predicted a great destiny for China, ahead of all others. I am referring, of course, to General Charles de Gaulle, whom we must salute with great consideration for his visionary spirit. As



president of the France-China Friendship Group in the National Assembly, I am committed to perpetuating his legacy, his sinophilia and his profound interest in China.

For my part, my interest in China goes back a long way, although I only began to explore this vast country in recent years. In reality, it is a passion for Taoism that has spanned 40 years and led me, once I became a deputy, to join this friendship group, the most important in the National Assembly. Initially, I served as vice-president for two terms, and now, for the past year, as president. As a young doctor searching for a complementary approach to Western medicine, I discovered Taoism, acupuncture and Chinese medicine, which I have been practicing for 35 years.

But that is not the only reason for my interest in China. The second reason lies in the very nature of my original political commitment, in favor of ecology. Ecology naturally leads to global and international reflection that encompasses all five continents and the global population. In other words, I have always believed that ecological solutions for the planet could only come about if China and its 1.4 billion inhabitants became major players in this cause. I must say how greatly relieved I am to see China is committed to climate action, notably by joining the Paris Agreement, at a time when the United States was



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

moving away from it during the Donald Trump presidency.

The friendship group brings together parliamentarians who wish to develop friendly relations with their Chinese counterparts in the National People's Congress, to deepen mutual understanding within the framework of what is

known as "parliamentary diplomacy".

This year, we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and France and the end of a 60-year cycle, known as *jiazi* in Chinese, of friendship, and we know how significant and laden

with meaning this number is in Chinese and Taoist culture. Above all, we are opening a new promising cycle for our two nations — a cycle of friendship and affection, creativity and engagement for the international community.

Our two countries can boast of our great history and immense cul-

ture, which elicit mutual admiration. We share a constant desire to deepen our relations, mutual understanding, exchanges and friendship between our two peoples. Thanks to this mindset and our common history, as well as the unique role of each of our two countries in the concert of nations, China and France, two balancing powers, can play a moderating and appeasing role in a tumultuous world.

Our two countries can also engage the international community to address global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity, health, development and global finance. Finally, the reciprocal economic interests of our countries must be strengthened to bring progress to our respective peoples, while seeking the best balance that takes into account the need to better regionalize our economies for more resilience and resistance to contingencies. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis have taught us this.

Let us proudly conclude this *jiazi* together and declare the opening of a new *jiazi*, based on friendship between our two countries and peoples, and the common responsibility we share to ensure the well-being of our peoples and peace in the world.

Let us seize the opportunity of this 60th anniversary to consolidate our relations and make the year of cultural tourism give it fresh impetus. Long live the new *jiazi*, which begins under the sign of the wooden dragon, which the Phoenix will support to find balance and righteousness, fertility and success!

The author is president of the France-China Friendship Group in France's National Assembly. 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.

FENG ZHONGPING

Constancy amid changes

Despite competition, contradictions and conflicts, ties between the EU and China remain mainly cooperative

In recent years, China-Europe relations have become one of the most important bilateral ties in the world. Both China and European countries recognize this and value their relations. Meanwhile, China-Europe relations are more complex than before.

The rising significance of China-Europe relations can be firstly attributed to economic reasons.

After decades of economic globalization, especially since China launched its reform and opening-up policy, the industry, supply and value chains between China and Europe have become deeply intertwined. According to Eurostat, the bilateral trade was 737.9 billion euros (\$789.8 billion) in 2023.

Eurostat data also show that in 2023, China was the EU's largest partner for imports of goods, accounting for 20.5 percent of the EU's total imports, and the third-largest partner for exports of goods, accounting for 8.8 percent of the total. Data from China's Ministry of Commerce shows that the EU had previously been China's largest trading partner, and only became the second-largest after Brexit in 2020. Clearly, China and the EU are inseparable economically.

Both China and Europe recognize that their relationship is not just bilateral, but has an impact on the international order, as well as world peace, stability and prosperity.

China and Europe pose no threat to each other, nor have they any fundamental conflict of interest. A new Cold War will not happen as long as China and European countries support multilateralism and oppose bloc confrontation, advocating economic globalization and opposing

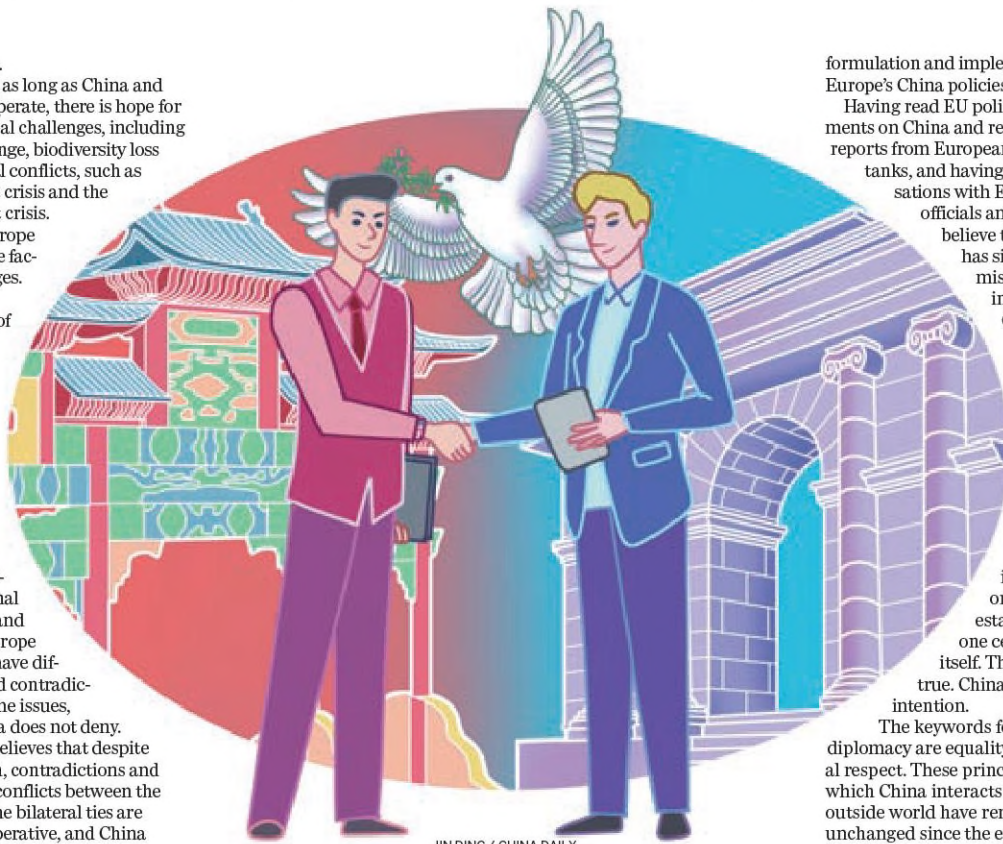
decoupling.

Similarly, as long as China and Europe cooperate, there is hope for solving global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss and regional conflicts, such as the Ukraine crisis and the Middle East crisis.

China-Europe relations are facing challenges. The most prominent of which is how Europe views its relationship with China and vice versa.

Due to different political systems, national conditions and cultures, Europe and China have differences and contradictions on some issues, which China does not deny. But China believes that despite competition, contradictions and even fierce conflicts between the two sides, the bilateral ties are mainly cooperative, and China views Europe as a partner.

Europe's attitude and views are somewhat different. While European countries and the EU understand that cooperation with China is indispensable on many issues, they still emphasize that China's development brings competition, not only economically and technologically, but also in terms of political systems and governance models. Therefore, Europe has identified China as a cooperation partner, an economic competitor, and a systemic rival since 2019. This has had a negative impact on the



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

China and the EU are among the world's largest economies. On the one hand, economic and trade relations are the most important link connecting China and Europe, the cornerstone of the bilateral relations. On the other hand, economic and trade disputes are inevitable. What matters is that both sides take each other's economic and trade concerns seriously and resolve their disputes through negotiations.

formulation and implementation of Europe's China policies.

Having read EU policy documents on China and research reports from European think tanks, and having had conversations with European officials and experts, I believe that Europe has significant misunderstandings about China.

For example, some Europeans believe that China wants to overturn the existing international order and establish a new one centered on itself. This is not true. China has no such intention.

The keywords for China's diplomacy are equality and mutual respect. These principles by which China interacts with the outside world have remained unchanged since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

China advocates for a multipolar world, where countries treat each other equally and cooperate on a win-win basis. China adheres to peaceful development and calls for the resolution of international disputes through peaceful means.

Even on issues such as the South China Sea, which concern China's sovereignty over territorial and maritime areas, China has consistently advocated for peaceful negotiations with relevant countries.

Some European countries believe that China is tough on the South China Sea issue, but every country is tough when it comes to sovereignty issues.

China-Europe relations are also subject to the influence from third parties. The Ukraine crisis and US policies toward China have had a negative impact on Europe's attitudes and policies toward China.

The Ukraine crisis is now a top agenda item for European leaders' China visits. In mid-April, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited China and discussed not just economic and trade relations, but also the Ukraine crisis with Chinese leaders.

China actively promotes a political solution to the Ukraine crisis, opposes escalation of the conflict, and the use of nuclear weapons or attacks on nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes. China and Europe can work together to push for a cease-fire between Russia and Ukraine. At the same time, there is nothing wrong with China maintaining normal economic and trade exchanges with both Ukraine and Russia.

China and the EU are among the world's largest economies. On the one hand, economic and trade relations are the most important link connecting China and Europe, the cornerstone of the bilateral relations. On the other hand, economic and trade disputes are inevitable. What matters is that both sides take each other's economic and trade concerns seriously and resolve their disputes through negotiations.

The author is director of the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. 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.

SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Serbian basketball player Stefan Stojacic (second from right) enjoys a moment with his family in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, on April 20. Stojacic, 35, formerly the world's No 1 player in FIBA 3x3 basketball, moved with his family to the city to join a local club in early 2023 and has been enjoying what life in China has to offer. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Serbian hoops to make a home in China

After the Olympics, former FIBA 3x3 world No 1, Stefan Stojacic, is courting a permanent move to Wuxi

By YAN WEIJUE in Wuxi, Jiangsu province
yanweijue@chinadaily.com.cn

For Stefan Stojacic, life is a matter of choices, and relocating to China was an easy one.

Stojacic, 35, formerly the world's No 1 player in FIBA 3x3 basketball, moved with his family to Wuxi in Jiangsu province to join a local club in early 2023 and has been enjoying what the city has to offer.

"I feel like I'm a 'domestic guy' here now. My kids are going to Chinese kindergartens, my wife also likes here. It could easily happen that I will live the rest of my life in Wuxi," said the Serbian father of two in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

He added that the family enjoys hanging out with its Chinese neighbors, taking leisurely tours to the magnificent Taihu Lake, studying Mandarin together and constantly trying the sweet local delicacies.

Their five-year-old daughter, Stasa Stojacic, has had a head start in learning Chinese, absorbing a plethora of phrases and expressions at kindergarten and, in turn, tutoring her parents at home.

"Sometimes when I start to speak Chinese, she will say to my wife 'father didn't say this right,'" he joked. "I think she's going to be our teacher really soon."

Stojacic's first visit to China was in 2008, when he came to play in the FIBA Stankovic Continental Champions Cup, an international basketball tournament for men's national teams.

Stojacic's affection for Wuxi, however, didn't develop until a decade later, in May 2018. He and the Serbian club he helped found, Liman, won a 3x3 tournament in the city, opening a hugely successful year that saw his side clinch nine titles over nearly 20 tournaments.



Stefan Stojacic, who plays for Wuxi Huishan and the Serbian national side, has taken part in a series of international and domestic 3x3 basketball tournaments. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"It was my first time coming to Wuxi, and it was the first tournament of the season. Great memories indeed," he recalled, with a beaming smile.

What made his Wuxi debut even more memorable was a driving dunk during competition. The Serbian hoopster later proudly shared the play twice on his Instagram account, once as a video and once as a photo.

In 2019, he and Liman agreed to base themselves in Shanghai for nearly a year to help with the country's 3x3 basketball development through a collaboration program, imparting his expertise to the younger generation.



Four years later, in 2023, in a one-year stint with the Wuxi Huishan club, Stojacic helped the team thrive at many international FIBA 3x3 tournaments, which paved the way for Team China eventually securing an early berth at this summer's Paris Olympics.

"Last year, as a member of the Wuxi team, he made a significant contribution to Chinese basketball, and proved to be an exceptional mentor for younger players," said Sun Xiujun, general manager of Wuxi Huishan Sports. "He has truly settled down in Wuxi, fostering great friendships."

Outside of his work, Stojacic has made sure to

devote a fair amount of time to exploring the country — a pursuit that has profoundly changed his life.

"I knew a lot about China before I came to Wuxi. I knew about its development. I've been to many Chinese cities, and I can see the huge difference (between then and now)," he said.

"I feel closer to the way Chinese people think than to the Western mindset. I feel really good in the Chinese environment!"

As someone who's been at the forefront of Chinese 3x3 basketball development over the last couple of years, Stojacic has noticed a significant improvement, fostering a capable generation that knows the game well.

"The level of the game is rising a lot. We have Zhang Ning, we have Zhao Jiaren, and we have some CBA players. They know how 3x3 should be played, and they can develop into really good players — maybe even getting on some foreign teams."

Yet Stojacic contends that Chinese players need to be more vocal on the court and learn how to become leaders.

"They're listening too much. It's good in life, but not perfect for sports," he said. "We need at least one player who is willing to be 'the guy' if things don't go well on the court."

Stojacic now plays alongside his younger brother, Strahinja Stojacic, for the Serbian 3x3 club UB, with a keen eye on competing at the Paris Olympics, which is a dream for all athletes.

But, he is excited about returning to Wuxi soon after what he described as "the big quest".

"I think in 2025, I'll just move here and be here all the time. Things are going to get even more interesting."



Online
See more
by scanning
the code.

OLYMPICS

Kiwi trampolinists are head over heels for each other

For New Zealand's trampoline gymnastics team, the Paris Olympics will be a labor of love.

Dylan Schmidt and Maddie Davidson were Olympic teammates in Tokyo, but return to the Games as a couple seeking medals and inspiration from each other.

In a career of ups and downs, former world champion Schmidt became New Zealand's first Olympic medalist in gymnastics when the 27-year-old nabbed a bronze at the Tokyo Games.

In the "City of Love", he will compete in a third Olympics and cheer on his 25-year-old partner Davidson, who became New Zealand's first gymnast to qualify for the women's event at Tokyo.

While Schmidt and Davidson can bounce ideas off each other, as elite trampolinists both are mindful of the need to keep a healthy split between their sport and private lives.

"It's not the first topic that comes up when we go out to dinner," Schmidt said of their athletic pursuits.

"We tend to leave the advice to our coaches."

Keeping a professional distance is not as hard as it sounds, given the



Trampoline gymnasts Dylan Schmidt and Maddie Davidson, pictured at the Tri Star Gymnastics Centre in Auckland, New Zealand, will fight for medals and seek inspiration from each other as a couple at the Paris Olympics this summer. REUTERS

pair train at opposite ends of New Zealand. Schmidt is based in the North Island metropolis of Auckland, while Davidson is based in Christchurch on New Zealand's South Island.

They try to catch up every couple of weeks.

Olympic flames

Romance between athletes is often forged in the cauldron of competition, and Paris will undoubtedly light the spark for a number of future relationships.

United States women's soccer icon Megan Rapinoe met her part-

ner Sue Bird, the former basketball player, at a team photo shoot for the 2016 Rio Olympics and both qualified for Tokyo as a couple.

Australian rugby sevens players Charlotte Caslick and Lewis Holland also competed as an item in Tokyo. COVID-19 stole much of the

romance from the Games in Japan, where athletes were largely unable to mix outside of their entourages due to strict social distancing protocols.

"It was such a different experience," said Davidson, who was among the few New Zealanders able to watch Schmidt's podium moment at the venue in Tokyo.

"The lead-up was also not ideal for training, due to all the travel restrictions."

No such impediments exist this time round for Paris, where the Kiwi couple will arrive well-prepared and with a proper complement of family and friends to cheer them on.

Davidson narrowly missed the final in Tokyo, but expects to leap to new heights at the Bercy Arena, after working with a sports psychologist on her mental game.

Like much of gymnastics, any slight mistake in trampoline can have devastating consequences for a routine's score, and possibly years of regret for an athlete between Olympic cycles.

An uncharacteristic flop for Hikaru Mori, the reigning women's world champion, at her home Olympics in Tokyo, put her out of qualifying and shocked the host nation.

"Your brain and body can become disconnected," said Davidson. "You



Your brain and body can become disconnected. You have to try to stop and appreciate the moment, not be like a deer in the headlights."

Maddie Davidson, New Zealand trampoline athlete

have to try to stop and appreciate the moment, not be like a deer in the headlights."

Away from the competition hall, Schmidt and Davidson have more practical concerns, including whether they room together in the Olympic village.

While they often travel to competitions as a couple, neither are married to the idea of sharing a flat at the village. The New Zealand Olympic Committee has yet to confirm arrangements for the team.

"We're not going to be kicking and screaming if we're not rooming together," said Schmidt.

"We're there for the performance, you know."

"We're not there for a holiday."

REUTERS

CULTURE

A piano prodigy's key insights

Classical musician Niu Niu is maturing beyond the talent of his youth as his mindset and skill set progress in tandem, **Chen Nan** reports.

He learned to play the piano at 3 years old. He gave his first recital at age 6. And by 9, he became the youngest pianist ever signed to the international label, EMI Classics. Since then, he has released nine albums. Zhang Shengliang, who's better known by his stage name, Niu Niu, is often described as a child prodigy. He was born into a musical family in Xiamen, Fujian province, 27 years ago.

"I can tell people that I have 20 years of experience of being a pianist," he says, laughing.

But he's still breaking new ground. On April 26, the pianist released his latest album, *Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No 1 and Symphony No 6*.

It was recorded in collaboration with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and its artistic director, conductor Jaap van Zweden. The recording was produced and engineered by Phil Rowlands and released by Decca Records under Universal Music Group.

It is Niu Niu's first live recording and features his performances with the Hong Kong orchestra on Dec 16 and 17, 2022.

"In my previous experience in making albums, I usually sat alone in the studio and recorded the pieces with the help of sound engineers and producers. For this live concert recording, I didn't know what to expect. I was nervous and excited," says Niu Niu, who trained at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and later on a full scholarship at the Juilliard School in New York, from which he graduated in 2018.

"There were about 2,000 audience members in the concert hall. Once I started playing the music piece, I forgot about the recording and fully immersed myself in the space," he says.

"After the first concert, I couldn't wait to listen to the recording. It was great because of the presence of the audience. I felt like I was talking with them through the musical interpretation rather than talking to the air when I did recordings alone in the studio."

Niu Niu played *Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1* when he was a child. Over 10 years ago, he played the music piece with the Shanghai

Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of conductor Tang Muhai. In 2015, he played the same piece during his first collaboration with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. This month, he will embark on a tour in Japan to promote this new album by performing in Osaka and Tokyo.

He loves the work and especially the sequence of pounding chords with which the pianist launches the piece's first movement. He also enjoys the charming flute solo that introduces a lush piano melody in the second movement, which allows the pianist to settle into deeper exchanges with the orchestra.

"The music piece is well-measured with all that melody, emotion and drama. It's a favorite piano concerto for many pianists, including me," says Niu Niu. "When I was younger, I concentrated on showing off dazzling skills, but now I want to go deeper and deliver more information about the music piece, like warmth and generosity."

Maestro Van Zweden, who worked with the pianist for the first time during the concerts in 2022, says: "I was impressed with his passion, music making and dedication. The way he interpreted Tchaikovsky's masterpiece truly captured the soul of the music. It was a wonderful opportunity to blend Niu Niu's talent with the orchestra's distinct sound in this masterpiece, creating an exceptional and memorable performance. The experience of working together with Niu Niu was fantastic, and I enjoyed every moment of it."

Niu Niu's latest album also features Tchaikovsky's sixth symphony, recorded live by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Van Zweden. The piece, which is also known as *Pathétique Symphony*, is the last of Tchaikovsky's six numbered symphonies. It's marked by diverse emotions and vitalized energy.

The conductor also says that, compared with studio recordings, live recordings can help convey the excitement of a live concert to the listeners.

"Live recordings capture the distinct acoustics of the concert hall. The organic, one-of-a-kind sound of a live performance adds to the magic of the experience," the conductor says.



Above: Pianist Niu Niu performs with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of conductor Jaap van Zweden at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall on Dec 16, 2022.

Right: He plays Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No 1* during the concert in Hong Kong.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



“When I was younger, I concentrated on showing off dazzling skills, but now I want to go deeper and deliver more information about the music piece, like warmth and generosity.”

Niu Niu, pianist

For the past decade, Niu Niu has maintained the habit of reviewing his performances by listening to recordings and watching videos. It's a way, he says, to be objective about his music and to consequently progress.

"I also meditate every night, which offers me moments of great solitude and helps me to slow down and concentrate on myself," Niu Niu adds.

Although classically trained, Niu Niu isn't satisfied to remain just a concert pianist. During the pandemic, he got to spend more time at home and go deeper into composition.

In 2021, he released the album, *Faith and Hope*, featuring the piece, *Hope*, that he'd composed

during the pandemic.

Soon after releasing *Faith and Hope*, he began work on the album, *Lifetime*. He chose 17 short pieces by 17 composers from around the world to express 17 feelings, such as joy, anger, hatred and sorrow. He included his own arrangement of the well-known Christian hymn, *Amazing Grace*. *Lifetime* also features Niu Niu's compositional piece, *Impromptu No 2 Miss*, which he dedicated to a friend who died during the pandemic.

"Composing my own works enables me to better understand the composers and to likewise better express the meaning of pieces by other composers," says Niu Niu.

Last year, the pianist had a small ceremony in his hometown, Xia-

men, to mark the 20th anniversary of his music career. Indeed, he's known no other calling than playing piano, he says.

The musician says he has experienced a period of time during his college years when he felt very nervous about performing onstage. Now, he says, he feels very determined and assured when he performs.

"I'm using the piano to make music. I use my hands and my 10 fingers to work with the 88 keys on the piano to share different feelings with people who listen to my music," he says.

"That's what being a musician means to me now."

Contact the writer at chenan@chinadaily.com.cn

By CHEN NAN

In 1937, Chinese playwright Cao Yu (1910-96), whose real name was Wan Jiabao, released his third play, *The Wilderness*. Unlike his first two plays — *Thunderstorm* in 1933 and *Sunrise* in 1935, which tell stories about urban life — *The Wilderness* presents a story of love and revenge that unfolds in the countryside.

Reflecting the influence of American playwright Eugene O'Neill on the writer, it revolves around a man named Qiu Hu, who escapes from prison and returns to his home village to kill a local tyrant, Jiao Yanwang, who ruined his family. There, he reunites with his ex-lover, Jinzi, and his former friend, Daxing — son of Jiao.

The Wilderness has been adapted into such performance genres as movies and plays.

In 1987, Cao Yu's daughter, dramatist Wan Fang, turned it into a Chinese opera by working with composer Jin Xiang (1935-2015), who was a professor of the China Conservatory of Music. On July 25 of that year, the Chinese opera premiered in Beijing, performed by the China National Opera and Dance Drama Theater. In January 1992, it was staged at the Eisenhower Theater of the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, making it one of the first Chinese operas



Left: Li Xincao (left), conductor and president of the China Conservatory of Music, and director Chen Wei (second from left) at the launch ceremony of the latest stage adaptation of the Chinese opera, *The Wilderness*, in Beijing on April 21. **Right:** China Conservatory of Music students He Haoyuan (left) and Yang Qi perform a song from the opera at the school during the launch. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

staged in the West.

Marking the 60th anniversary of the China Conservatory of Music, the school announced the restaging of the Chinese opera with Li Xincao, president of the school, serving as the artistic director and Chen Wei, a professor at the school's opera department, as the director.

On July 14 and 15, *The Wilderness*

will be staged at the China National Opera House in Beijing.

"*The Wilderness* has a large fan base. It has been staged for about four decades and is a milestone of China's opera scene," says Li, who's also a veteran conductor, adding that the China Conservatory of Music has staged the show many times as a classic piece of its

opera education.

Li watched the premiere in Beijing as a middle school student in 1987.

"The opera impressed me, from its music to its stage sets," says Li, who later began to study conducting at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 1989.

"In 1992, Chen let me study act-

ing at the opera department of the China Conservatory of Music, which allowed me to learn *The Wilderness*. It was the first time I got to know the opera as a music student. I also participated in the rehearsals and played a role when the conservatory's opera department staged *The Wilderness* as its graduation opera in 2002."

In 2007, Li also worked with the late composer Jin when the opera marked the 20th anniversary of its debut and was staged again in Beijing.

"(Jin) helped me to fully understand the music, and I challenged myself to conduct the whole opera without the score during the performance. That was an unforgettable experience," adds Li.

Chen, who has participated in the staging of the opera many times, says Wan Fang's script is true to her father's original play, which highlights the characters' desperate inner struggle and the intense conflicts.

"Cao Yu has been called China's foremost modern playwright. His works, such as *The Wilderness*, feature memorable characters with distinctive personalities. They reflect the writer's keen and vivid observations of society," says Chen.

Stage designer Wang Xingang, who was on the creative team of the 1987 premiere of *The Wilderness*, returns to again work as stage designer in this latest adaptation of the Chinese opera. Using such elements as stones and frames, Wang creates an oppressive atmosphere, to convey the characters' fates and struggles.

China Conservatory of Music students and teachers will stage the upcoming performances.

CULTURE

Rooted in sustainability

Ancient cultivation system lauded as global green model sows seeds of success, Alexis Hooi and Zhang Yu report in Kuancheng, Hebei province.



Main photo: A chestnut farmer works in the fields of Kuancheng county, Hebei province, during the September harvest. Right: Chestnuts are a specialty of Kuancheng county in Hebei province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Farmer Liu Jingyi would play at the family chestnut tree just outside their yard when he was a child, climbing up its branches and into the hollow of its trunk.

"It was a big tree, the trunk about a meter wide, probably more than 600 years old and very much a part of our lives," said Liu, now 79.

Liu is a fifth-generation cultivator of chestnut trees in Aiyukou village of the Kuancheng Manchu autonomous county in Chengde, North China's Hebei province.

The village is a center of chestnut cultivation. More than 400 Aiyukou households covering nearly 700 hectares of farmland yield about 1,000 tons of the nuts a year, with many of the trees hundreds of years old. About 50,000 hectares in Kuancheng are used to farm chestnuts, with an annual output value of 860 million yuan (\$119 million), according to the latest industry figures.

Local residents are justifiably proud of their sweet and plump chestnuts, grown with tried and tested farming practices stretching back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220). Two iconic Kuancheng chestnut trees, which forestry specialists said were planted in the year 1303, still bear fruit.

The county is now poised to tap the latest green development trends following a global nod to its model of sustainability. In November, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization included the Kuancheng Traditional Chestnut Eco-Planting System on its list of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, citing its rich cultural content that embodies "the ecological view of respecting nature and the social organization form that promotes agricultural production".

Long history

Since 2005, the organization has designated at least 86 systems in 26 countries as agricultural heritage sites under its program. China ranked first in the world in the number of the heritage systems by 2023, with its total of 22 entries.

"Kuancheng chestnut forests are distributed on the foothills and the lower parts of hillsides, existing in harmony with the local flora and fauna and setting an important example for the development of ecogriculture in a mountainous, semi-arid area with limited resources," said Shang Heli, economic crops director at Kuancheng's agriculture and rural affairs bureau.

"Evolved from ancient times, chestnut cultivation here encompasses rationally allocated soil terraces, customized irrigation pits and channels, natural fertilization and pest control, and complementary crops such as mushrooms and grain, as well as free-ranging poultry, grown and bred under the trees that altogether offer a closed-loop, comprehensive, efficient and ecological farming tradition passed down generations," he said.

"Behind this harmonious symbiosis between chestnut cultivation and the natural environment is a flexible smallholder farming and cooperatives network that constitutes a stable and highly adaptable social and economic operation mode," said Shang, who was closely involved in the county's application for inclusion on the UN heritage list.

Kuancheng's ecological view of respecting nature and the social organization that supports agricultural production in turn reflect its rich cultural connotations, according to the UN.

"A code of conduct for protecting the natural environment and promoting the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature has been gradually established by the local community, with aspects such as clothing, dwellings, festivals and ceremonies showing people's respect for and adaptation to their physical environment," it said.

A "cultural symbol value" of chestnuts has also been gradually formed in the area, shown in the food culture of the chestnut.

The crop "can be regarded not only as a staple food but also a fruit and a medicine. The chestnut is seen locally as the spiritual symbol of auspiciousness, and the determination and chestnut-related legends, stories and literary works, as well as ancient chestnut trees, serve as historical and cultural symbols," according to the UN heritage listing.

Heritage protected

In July 2022, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the World Conference on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, saying that it is the common responsibility of humankind to protect agricultural heritage.

China has actively responded to the program initiated by the FAO and the country has been protecting and inheriting agricultural heritage, Xi highlighted.

Local authorities, recognizing the pillar agricultural sector, will "improve policy mechanisms and give full play to the county's advantages, study and formulate chestnut industry development regulations and work plans, and comprehensively promote the protection and inheritance of Kuancheng's traditional chestnut cultivation system," said Wang Xin, deputy director at the county's agriculture and rural affairs bureau.

"We will also look at increasing capital investment, expanding and strengthening chestnut and fruit industry areas, and work toward a network that brings together leading enterprises, cooperatives, farmers and markets, under a comprehensive ecological industrial chain to increase local farmers' incomes," he said.

"The third step is to build on our branding, help

expand sales channels in multiple directions, and leverage our agricultural cultural heritage, to further promote our chestnuts and better serve the people of Kuancheng," Wang said.

Improving livelihoods

Helping to lead the charge in tapping Kuancheng's agricultural strengths for the next green stages of development is home-grown company Shen Li Food. The food processing group works with 200,000 local farmers to offer more than 70 chestnut and related products that are exported to more than 30 countries and regions, including the United States, Germany and Japan.

Business innovation measures include long-term R&D and technological tie-ups with academic institutions to ensure that nutrition and production levels meet the highest standards, according to the company.

"We work side by side with the farmers and local residents to grow our chestnut industry, bringing real benefits to the economy and improving livelihoods. The UN heritage listing will allow more people across the world to enjoy our produce," said Han Guodong, the company's deputy general manager.

Kuancheng residents like 40-year-old entrepreneur Liu Jianxia are also looking to their roots to ride the latest developments, promoting Kuancheng's chestnuts at home and abroad.

Her three shops, two in the city center and one in the county, selling chestnuts and other food products, help rake in more than 2 million yuan a year.

Other than focusing on e-commerce trends such as livestreaming, Liu's investments in innovative practices include modern food processing equipment and attractive product packaging to keep up to speed with evolving consumer tastes.

"I received a lot of local support, such as government financial aid, for my education all the way up to the tertiary level, where I majored in business management," she said.

"We've reaped a lot from our chestnuts, which are deeply embedded in our history, culture and way of life. It seems only natural to share the rich bounty of our home with everyone."

Contact the writers at alexishooi@chinadaily.com.cn

"We've reaped a lot from our chestnuts, which are deeply embedded in our history, culture and way of life."

Liu Jianxia, Kuancheng entrepreneur



From top: Workers check chestnuts at the Shen Li Food facility in Kuancheng county, Hebei province on March 26; Chestnuts await checking and packaging at the Shen Li Food facility; A worker monitors the production line at the food facility; Food entrepreneur Liu Jianxia holds a tray of oven-roasted chestnuts at her shop in Chengde, Hebei province on March 27. PHOTOS BY WANG HAORAN / CHINA DAILY



Plump chestnuts are gathered in a basket during the September harvest in Kuancheng county, Hebei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY