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# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2024

## Freak mishap



Rescuers search on Tuesday for people trapped under a huge billboard that collapsed on a fuel station on Monday evening during a severe storm in suburban Mumbai, India. Fourteen people were killed and dozens were injured in the accident. RAJANISH KAKADE / AP

# Xi and Putin to hold talks in Beijing

Leaders eye better cooperation as nations mark 75th anniversary of ties

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Russian President Vladimir Putin will pay a state visit to China from Thursday to Friday, the first foreign trip since he was sworn in for his fifth term as Russian president on May 7.

During the upcoming visit, President Xi Jinping will exchange views with Putin on bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields as well as on international and regional issues of common interest in the context of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and Russia, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Tuesday.

The Kremlin press service said in a statement on Tuesday that the two presidents will outline priorities for further practical cooperation between the two countries and have an in-depth exchange of views on the most pressing international and regional issues.

Following their talks, the two presidents are expected to sign a joint statement and several bilateral documents, the statement said.

Xi and Putin will attend a gala event marking 75 years of diplomatic relations and the opening of the 2024-25 Russia-China Years of Culture, it said.

The statement also said that the programme of Putin's visit includes a meeting with Premier Li Qiang, during which both sides will discuss bilateral cooperation in trade, the economy and humanitarian affairs.

Putin is also expected to visit Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province, where he will attend the opening of the 8th China-Russia Expo and the 4th China-Russia Forum on Interregional Cooperation, it said, adding that Putin will also meet with the students and faculty of Harbin Institute of Technology.

The visit comes as both China and Russia have committed to enhance bilateral ties, which have been guided by head-of-state diplomacy.

Zhang Hanhui, Chinese ambassador to Russia, said that head-of-state diplomacy is the fundamental guarantee for China-Russia relations to move forward smoothly and steadily. The leaders of the two countries

have agreed to continue to maintain close communication, engaging in in-depth exchanges on China-Russia relations and strategic issues of mutual concern, Zhang said in an interview with Russia's RT News.

He described Putin as "an old friend" of Xi and the Chinese people, saying that China welcomed the Russian president to pay a state visit to China after assuming office.

In March last year, Xi, after being elected as Chinese president at the first session of the 14th National People's Congress, chose Russia as his first visit to a foreign country, which the ambassador said fully demonstrated the high level and special nature of the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between China and Russia for the new era.

As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China and Russia closely coordinate on the international stage and jointly uphold true multilateralism, which is beneficial for safeguarding security in the Eurasian region and global strategic stability, Zhang said.

China-Russia economic and trade cooperation made a historic breakthrough in 2023 amid the slow global recovery. Bilateral trade reached a record \$240 billion in 2023, achieving the established trade target of \$200 billion ahead of schedule.

In the first quarter of this year, bilateral trade between China and Russia reached \$56.8 billion, a year-on-year increase of 5.2 percent, according to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce. The trade structure continues to improve, with strong cooperation trends in emerging areas such as service trade and cross-border e-commerce. Key projects, including the China-Russia crude oil pipeline, are making steady progress.

Speaking at a news conference on May 7, Liu Xuesong, director of the Department of Eurasia Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce, said that efforts will be made to further enhance China-Russia trade and investment cooperation, bolster the resilience of industrial and supply chains, and foster a favorable environment for expanding bilateral trade.

## Country urges immediate removal of new US tariffs

By ZHONG NAN zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China has urged the United States to immediately lift the additional tariffs imposed on Chinese products, warning that it will take resolute actions to protect the country's rights and interests, the Ministry of Commerce said on Tuesday.

The US government unveiled new tariffs on Tuesday on a variety of imports from China, including electric vehicles, lithium batteries, photovoltaic cells, critical minerals, semiconductors, steel and aluminum, port cranes and personal protective equipment.

“If tariffs are indeed imposed solely on electric vehicles made in China, it would notably impact automakers ... that have invested heavily in manufacturing facilities in China.”

Sun Lei, senior partner at Beijing Dacheng Law Offices

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The additional levies will lead to the tariffs on Chinese EV imports jumping from around 25 percent to 100 percent. And with an additional 2.5-percent tariff on all vehicles imported into the US market, the total levies on Chinese EVs will be 102.5 percent.

The US has, for domestic political reasons, abused the Section 301 tariff review process by further increasing tariffs on some Chinese products, politicizing and weaponizing trade issues, the Chinese ministry's spokesperson said in an online statement. "This is a clear example of political manipulation," the official said.

China has expressed strong dissatisfaction with this approach, said

the commerce official, who noted that the World Trade Organization has ruled that Section 301 tariffs violate its regulations. Instead of rectifying this, the US continues to act unilaterally, compounding its mistakes, the official added.

The US decision to increase Section 301 tariffs contradicts US President Joe Biden's commitments not to suppress or contain China's development and not to decouple or break ties with China, according to the statement.

The US action also deviates from the spirit of consensus reached between the top leaders of the two countries and will

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## China and Europe seek to jointly meet challenges

President Xi Jinping's trip to Europe concluded with fruitful results amid high international attention. This was the Chinese leader's first European visit in five years, during which a lot happened both in Europe and around the world.

The choice of destinations — France, Serbia and Hungary — says a lot about China's expectations on its relations with Europe. France, with a tradition of independence, was the first big country in the West to establish formal diplomatic relations

### WORLD WATCH

By Wu Hongbo

with China and to establish with it a comprehensive strategic partnership. The significance of China-France relationship goes beyond the bilateral context. Serbia is China's iron friend and its first comprehensive strategic partner in Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary is among the first countries to have estab-

lished diplomatic relations with China and is celebrating the 75th anniversary of its ties with China this year. Enhancing friendship, communication and cooperation with Europe is high on China's diplomatic agenda.

Chinese and international viewers must have been impressed by the extraordinary arrangements that the three countries made for President Xi and the outcomes of the visit. French President Emmanuel Macron had long, in-depth meetings with the Chinese president and invited him to the Pyren-

ees, a place that holds special significance for President Macron as he often visited the region to meet his grandmother in his childhood. The visit produced a long list of deliverables, including a joint appeal for a global truce during the Paris Olympic Games. In Serbia, President Xi was greeted by thousands of friendly Serbian people, and the two presidents decided to build a China-Serbia community with a shared future, the first of its kind in Europe.

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## REMOTE PREFECTURE EDUCATES ITSELF ON WAYS TO PROSPERITY

Vocational school in Gansu province broadens horizons for ethnic minority students

By SHEN WENDI, MA JINGNA in Jishishan county, Gansu, and XIAO XIANGYI

With its culture and history inexorably linked to the Silk Road, the Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture in Gansu province was an easy fit for Iranian schoolteacher Morteza Akbari and his family.

The 38-year-old is from Iran's Qom province, which was twinned

### In-depth

with the prefecture in 2011 and has been boosted by the Belt and Road Initiative. Morteza taught Persian at Mustafa International University in Qom before he was invited to take a position at Linxia Modern Vocational College.

After seven years at the school,

his bonds with the students are so strong that when a magnitude 6.2 earthquake struck the region just before midnight on Dec 18 last year, many phoned him for reassurance.

His phone began to buzz, and he was inundated with messages from his panicking students. "I'm so scared, Mr Morteza. Will I die?" one asked him.

See Education, page 2

## Cannes carnival begins



United States actress and director Greta Gerwig (left), who is president of the 77th Cannes Film Festival jury, poses for a selfie with a fan as she arrives on Monday for a dinner with fellow jury members at Hotel Martinez in Cannes, France. The festival will run from Tuesday to May 25. LOIC VENANCE / AFP

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# PAGE TWO



Left: A bird's-eye view of the rare Danxia land formation inside the Linxia UNESCO Global Geopark in Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture, Gansu province. SHI YOU DONG / XINHUA



Right: Students majoring in Persian receive training in interpretation at Linxia Modern Vocational College in Linxia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Education: Empowering minorities, industry

From page 1

Coming from Iran, a seismically active country, Morteza was convinced that the earthquake's most dangerous moments had passed. "You'll be fine. You have very sturdy buildings and an efficient government. You can trust them," he reassured the student.

### A different school

Few higher education institutes in China, including foreign language universities, offer Persian as part of their curriculum, let alone a vocational school in a remote and underdeveloped region of Northwestern China.

But, Linxia is a special prefecture that requires different solutions.

Home to 41 ethnic minority groups that account for the majority of the population, the prefecture shook off poverty at the end of 2020 during China's poverty-alleviation efforts. However, it has always tried to build connections with the global community, whether in ancient times as a crucial trade hub on the historic Silk Road, or in modern times as it explores outside opportunities in the education field.

Built in 2015, Linxia Modern Vocational College is the first and only vocational college in the prefecture.

Su Hua, deputy director of the college, said it has developed rapidly in recent years, with the number of students and faculty members expanding from 2,000 to 10,000. The college now offers 29 majors, including medical science, Persian and Arabic. "Boosted by strong policy support, vocational education is going through a golden period," she said.

As it forges its own education path, the prefecture has also found ways to help boost the prospects of students from ethnic groups, by addressing urgent social issues such as youth employment, sustainable economic growth, and cultural and environmental preservation.

Since 2020, with the support of the national Education Ministry, the province has striven to achieve a "skilled Gansu." Over the past three years, the provincial government has set out policy measures aimed at achieving a comprehensive and "world-class" vocational education system in the province.

"Our goal is to build a model vocational college for China's ethnic minority areas," Su said.

"Linxia prefecture has a built-in advantage for language cultivation," she said. "It used to be a stop on the ancient Silk Road, so people here are good at communication and business and are gifted in language learning."

### More life choices

Wang Mabin, one of Morteza's students, has benefited from the college's development over the years.

"The facilities and the campus environment have improved significantly since I came here," said the 19-year-old. "We have the most advanced translation and interpreting equipment in our class, as well as increasing overseas study opportunities."

Two years ago, he failed his high school entrance exam.

He then entered the "2+3 program" at the college, which allows him to study two years of secondary school then undertake three



Students of Xiguan Primary School in Linxia's Hezheng county visit Hezheng Paleozoological Museum for research study. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

years of vocational education. "Were it not for this school, I would have had to learn to make a living like many youngsters my age did in the past," he said.

Under the nation's nine-year compulsory education policy, poor performances in the high school entrance exam, or *gaokao*, take away the opportunity for some junior students to attend college.

"College entrance exams still carry a lot of weight for Chinese parents. But the path is so narrow and crowded. Many good kids deserve a better life. Vocational education offers an alternative option," Wang said.

Ma Jinxiao, 20, has studied Persian for five years in the same program, which he said has equipped him not only with language skills, but built his self-confidence.

"I used to be very shy, but I love studying. The vibrant school life helped me open up," he said.

Ma has often been the top student in the class and wants to study abroad. He is due to graduate in June, but the earthquake, which damaged the family home, has changed his plans.

"As the youngest son, I need to stay by my parents' side and shoulder my responsibility," he said.

He has now decided to study teaching in the province's capital city, Lanzhou.

"My ambition is to improve people's educational levels in my hometown. Five years of study have made me see there's still a gap between here and more advanced areas," he said.

Gao Lei, 23, graduated from the vocational college in November, 2022, and has realized his goal to work as a professional translator in Iran. He encouraged the current crop of students to cherish their time at the school and lay a solid linguistic foundation.

"This is our goal — to tailor our education and help the students find their place in society," deputy director Su said. "The reform of vocational education is systematic work requiring longtime joint efforts."

Morteza starts to become emotional when he talks about how vocational training is changing the lives of his students. On



Morteza Akbari gives a lesson on Persian at Linxia Modern Vocational College. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

**“We do have a demographic dividend, but there are no large enterprises to solve employment issues. Developing vocational education is basically a way for us to solve employment, agricultural, and population issues.”**

Chen Yanhua, director of the vocational education department of Linxia education bureau

the wall of his classroom is painted an inspirational sentence in both Persian and Chinese that reads "Language is the key to the world".

"I'm happy for them that they are walking out of this remote place toward a bigger world," he said.

### Talent pipeline

Linxia is a small basin that is not blessed with large amounts of mineral resources or big manufacturing enterprises. However, the population density of Linxia city, the capital of the prefecture, is equivalent to that of Shanghai.

"We do have a demographic dividend, but there are no large enterprises to solve employment issues. Developing vocational education is basically a way for us to solve employment, agricultural and population issues," said Chen Yanhua, director of the vocational education department of the regional education bureau.

With tourism the pillar industry, Linxia has been actively developing its abundant cultural and natural resources.

Making its unique ethnic cuisine, for example, demands a large amount of manpower, which has been greatly supported by vocational training. Linxia Modern Vocational College and the prefecture's largest catering group, Baihua Jiayuan, jointly built a culinary institute in 2021 to train students and provide them with internships and business skills.

Chen said the training model offers more jobs for culinary graduates and related majors, attracts students through employment opportunities, and establishes a virtuous cycle of cooperation between schools and industries.

"It is not only basic training to do a job or ensuring employment upon graduation. Through this connection, we also aim to enhance the professionalism, standardization, and branding of the culinary industry," she said.

For years, Linxia has been exporting agricultural products such as freshly cut flowers to Central Asia and Europe. Last year, the college cooperated with the Linxia Baiyi Group, a major flower exporter, to establish the Baiyi Industry Academy.

By introducing corporate capital to majors including livestock, agriculture, forestry, and logistics, the college has become a talent pipeline for the agricultural industry.

Most of the students come from impoverished ethnic minority families, and many of them are left-behind children.

Apart from the college, there are seven

vocational schools in Linxia, and some of them provide financial assistance for their students. Linxia Guoqiang Vocational Technical School, for example, offers comprehensive free education for students in their first three years, including waiving tuition, accommodation, transportation and other fees.

The number of students studying at vocational schools in Linxia increased from 8,200 at the end of 2018 to more than 15,000 at the end of 2023, according to the local education bureau.

### In tune with environment

Primary and secondary education in the region is also being developed in accordance with local geographic conditions.

In March, Linxia geopark was listed in the Global Geoparks Network by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The Linxia UNESCO Global Geopark, with its dramatic landforms, diverse fossils and rich cultural relics, can play a big role in the education of primary and middle school students, said Ma Jun, director of the geopark.

A total of 12 primary and secondary schools are already located within the geopark. "We want to make the most of our geological resources to boost our children's interest in science and their understanding of their hometown as well as the Earth," Ma said.

Xiguan Primary School, located in Linxia's Hezheng county, is one of the 12 geopark schools.

Since 2018, the school has held classes twice a week in museums and at outside locations, so students can conduct hands-on research. Some of the children have volunteered as guides to share their rich knowledge with visitors about ancient creatures or geography.

"The wealth of fossil specimens in our park makes me so proud of our hometown, and I want to share it with my schoolmates and everyone," said Wang Zihan, a fifth-grade student who volunteers at Hezheng Paleozoological Museum and conducts her own research.

Zhang Wufan, another fifth-grader who volunteers at the museum, said her favorite extinct animal is the shovel-toothed elephant. "The big long teeth make it look so hilarious and whenever I pass by the model, it trumpets in a funny way," she said.

Zhang is eager to explain to visitors three-toed horses, and has modeled clay into the shape of the animal at a handicraft school club.

Ma Jiao, who graduated from the school, is now a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology.

Chang Hui, head of Xiguan Primary School, said the geopark gives his students the opportunity to learn about culture and nature for free. The students are passionate about researching subjects related to the park, he added.

"The children are particularly interested in immersive experiences such as reconstructing scenarios, treasure hunts and exploring fossils. Stepping out of classrooms gets their spirits and brains very excited, and I believe it's more effective than sitting in a room reading books all day."

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From left: Students get scenario-based language training from Morteza; students of the culinary institute of Linxia Modern Vocational School receive lessons from a local catering group; students from Xiguan Primary School paint extinct animals found in the geopark on gourds at a handicraft club. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## TOP NEWS

## Controlled implosion



Explosives are detonated on Monday to bring down the Francis Scott Key Bridge, which partially collapsed after being hit by the container ship *Dali* on March 26, in Baltimore, the United States. The bridge was demolished to free the vessel that had been trapped under it for seven weeks. MARK SCHIEFELBEIN / AP

## Special bonds aim to boost demand, growth

Ultra-long-term treasuries to support govt investment in key projects

By OUYANG SHIJIA, ZHOU LANXU and MASI

China's plan to sell 1 trillion yuan (\$138 billion) in ultra-long-term treasury bonds marks its latest move to bolster fiscal support for the economy, a step that experts say will stabilize expectations, boost domestic demand and shore up growth.

The issuance of 1 trillion yuan in ultra-long central special sovereign bonds will begin on Friday and run until mid-November. Three tenors are being planned — 20-year, 30-year and 50-year bonds, the Ministry of Finance said on Monday.

"The ultra-long bond issuance marks the introduction of a new policy tool that will be vital for supporting the government's investment in key projects, which will give full play to the crucial role of government investment in shoring up economic growth," said Zhang Liqun, a researcher at the macroeconomic research department of the Development Research Center of the State Council.

The country aims to raise funds

for major national strategies and build up security capacity in key areas, especially in fields including technological innovation, coordinated regional development, ensuring grain and energy security, and the high-quality development of the population.

Experts said the issuance and use of the bonds will not only expand effective demand and help achieve the annual growth target this year, but also will be conducive to fostering new quality productive forces and promoting high-quality development in the long run.

As the broader economy is still facing pressures from still-weak domestic demand, Zhang, the researcher, said the issuance and use of ultra-long bonds will accelerate the implementation of key projects and boost related orders, thereby promoting production and investment by businesses, stabilizing employment and stimulating consumer spending.

Zhang said the funds that are raised will be used to support key projects and fields, including urban underground pipe network

projects, upgrades of the education and healthcare systems, and boosting China's strengths in transportation, providing a solid foundation for China's long-term and high-quality growth.

Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, said the ultra-long bond issuance will help expand demand, consolidate the foundation for economic recovery and optimize the economic structure.

He also said the move will help optimize the debt structure of the central and local governments.

Hong Hao, chief economist at GROW Investment Group, said the ultra-long treasury bond issuance, together with the special government bond to be issued by November, represents an expansion in fiscal deficit.

Together, these bonds represent over 1 percent of GDP and are a powerful fiscal expansion that the market is looking for. In a low-rate environment and with low leverage on the central government's balance sheet, it pays to borrow to boost fiscal expansion, Hong said.

Regarding China's plan to issue

ultra-long, special-purpose treasury bonds for several consecutive years, Liu Sushe, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said the country has drafted an action plan to support its key strategies and enhance its capacities to ensure security in key areas.

Liu told a news conference in April that the focus will be on achieving greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology, promoting integrated urban and rural development, and enhancing the capabilities of ensuring grain and energy security.

Zhao Xijun, co-director of the China Capital Market Research Institute at Renmin University of China, said that issuing ultra-long-term special treasury bonds to support strategically important innovation projects can be an innovative way to leverage fiscal policy to build China's scientific strength.

Louise Loo, lead economist at British think tank Oxford Economics, noted that authorities are pledging the upcoming bond proceeds for the building up of "security capacity" in strategic projects in the areas of science and technology innovation and socioeconomic development.

On the monetary policy front, Loo said the People's Bank of China, the nation's central bank, is likely to facilitate the increased bond pipeline by keeping liquidity conditions loose and increasing its role in secondary Chinese government bond trading.

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## China, ROK willing to manage rift, better ties

By ZHOU JIN  
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Inside

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The latest engagement between the foreign ministers of China and the Republic of Korea has signaled the two countries' willingness to manage differences and improve ties, marking a new starting point in high-level bilateral exchanges, observers said.

In a meeting with his ROK counterpart Cho Tae-yul on Monday in Beijing, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that bilateral relations have been facing difficulties and challenges, which is not in the common interest of both sides and is not what China wants to see.

Wang expressed the hope that Seoul will work with Beijing to uphold good neighborliness and friendship, stick to mutually beneficial cooperation, eliminate interference, and jointly push for the sound and steady development of bilateral ties.

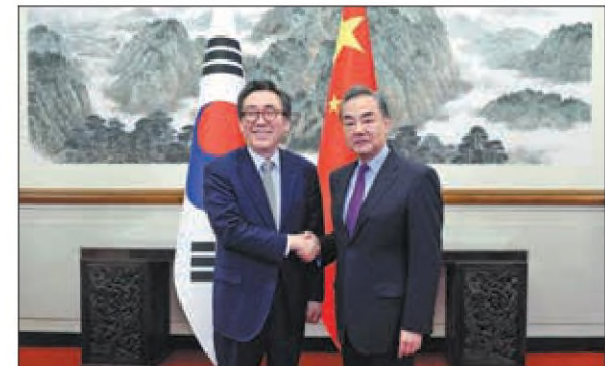
There is no fundamental conflict of interest between the two countries, he said, calling for the two sides to understand and respect each other, strengthen communication and exchanges, eliminate misunderstandings and enhance mutual trust.

China hopes the ROK will abide by the one-China principle, properly and prudently handle Taiwan-related issues and consolidate the political foundation of bilateral relations, Wang said.

Cho's two-day visit, which ended on Tuesday, marked the first trip to Beijing by an ROK foreign minister since November 2017. It was also his first visit to China since taking office in January, which Wang said is expected to play a positive role in improving bilateral relations.

China is the largest trading partner, largest export market and largest source of imports for the ROK, while the ROK is China's third-largest trading partner. Bilateral trade volume exceeded \$310 billion last year, statistics showed.

Observers said that Cho's visit shows that Seoul attaches great importance to its relationship with Beijing, highlighting the priority of cooperation as well as the importance of communication and dialogue in managing bilateral ties.



Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi meets on Monday with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul in Beijing. CHEN BIN / XINHUA

## Trade: Introducing new tariffs contradicts US' commitments

From page 1

severely affect the atmosphere of bilateral cooperation, said the spokesperson.

Sun Lei, a senior partner at Beijing Dacheng Law Offices, said that if these tariffs are imposed only on China, the practice violates the most-favored-nation principle of the WTO.

"If tariffs are indeed imposed solely on electric vehicles made in China, it would notably impact automakers such as Tesla that have invested heavily in manufacturing facilities in China," said Sun.

For example, once the tariffs are enforced, the EVs currently produced in China would in effect be limited to sales within China or in markets outside the US. This restriction would ultimately lead to an increase in the fixed costs for these automakers, he added.

Chinese new energy products

are highly popular in the global market, perfectly meeting the urgent demand of many countries' shift toward green energy, said Chen Bin, deputy director of the expert committee at the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation.

Each new energy vehicle is estimated to cut carbon emissions by approximately 1.66 metric tons annually. In 2023, China exported 1.2 million new energy vehicles, which could reduce annual carbon emissions by around 2 million tons, the Ministry of Commerce said in a separate statement on Tuesday.

Although the prices of Chinese new energy vehicles exported to Europe are lower than those of similar local models, they are still one to two times higher than their prices in China, ensuring significant profits and dispelling any concerns about dumping, the Commerce Ministry said.

Noting the advancement of Chinese EVs and their popularity in many Arab countries, Ahmed Fahmy, head of the League of Arab States' China representative office, said the production capacity is determined by market demand, and free trade is essential.

As global production capacity currently is insufficient to meet the needs of economic recovery, the "China overcapacity" narrative is overly exaggerated, he said.

## Dialogue: Together peace, stability can be achieved

From page 1

Hungary and China elevated bilateral ties to an all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era, sending their bilateral relations on a golden voyage.

It was noteworthy that a trilateral meeting among China, France and the European Union took place on the first day of the visit. International media had reported massively on the intention of the European side, which was basically about pressuring China on Ukraine and trade.

Admittedly, Europe has changed much over the past five years, and so has the way it sees China. This brings challenges to China-Europe relations. Unlike the EU's three-pronged characterization of China as a partner, an economic competitor and a systemic rival, China regards Europe as a partner, believing that there is no fundamental conflict of interests between the two.

Since last year, China-Europe interactions that were disrupted by the pandemic have resumed. This year, a series of high-level visits to China by European leaders, including Prime Ministers of Belgium and the Netherlands and the German Chancellor, the political con-

**China and Europe share the goals of upholding multilateralism and an open world economy. We may differ in specific ways and means of addressing challenges, but this will not stop us from cooperating with each other.**

sultations at all levels, China's visa-free policies for many European countries, and now President Xi's visit, have all enhanced dialogue and understanding and demonstrated the desire on both sides to work together in a changing and even turbulent world.

China and Europe share the goals of upholding multilateralism and an open world economy. We may differ in specific ways and means of addressing challenges, but this will not stop us from cooperating with each other.

China and Europe together can bring peace and stability and work toward improved global govern-

ance. China and France called for a global truce during the Paris Olympic Games and issued a joint statement on the situation in the Middle East. The two sides also reached common understanding on AI and biodiversity, areas that matter significantly to the world's future.

Europe expects China to play a bigger role on Ukraine. In fact, China has been actively promoting peace in its own way. China upholds the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and is unequivocal in its opposition to the use of nuclear weapons. China's Special Representative for Eurasian Affairs Ambassador Li Hui has conducted three rounds of shuttle diplomacy, contributing China's part to finding a political settlement for the crisis.

Europe seeks cooperation with China in many areas, including climate change. What China is doing is reducing emissions at home and contributing to global green transition with its quality and affordable green-tech products. Unfortunately, feeling threatened by China's growing competitiveness in green industries, the EU has resorted to protectionist measures, launching investigations under various names into Chinese companies. The good news is that there is still voice of reason and both sides are willing to

address differences through dialogue. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez witnessed in person the signing of an agreement on a joint venture to be established by a Chinese automaker in Spain. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire extended welcome to Chinese investment for setting up electric vehicle plants in France. Leading automakers in Europe have made clear their opposition to probes into Chinese EVs.

Some Western critics see President Xi's visit as China's effort to sow disunity among EU members and to drive a wedge between Europe and its transatlantic ally. To be clear, countries make their foreign policy decisions based on national interests, not an abstract concept of ideology. China and Europe moving toward each other is determined by the convergence of interests, especially at a challenging time. It does not stand in the way of deepening ties with any third party. There is no doubt that Europe has the wisdom to determine what to do and who to work with to best serve its own interests.

The author is the Special Representative of the Chinese Government for European Affairs. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Silken success

Farmers sort silkworm cocoons at a silkworm cooperative in Jiangjialing village, Yongzhou, Hunan province, on Monday. In recent years, local authorities have helped silkworm farmers improve silkworm quality and upgrade their farms, increasing their incomes.

JIANG KEQING / FOR CHINA DAILY



## 9 Shenzhen companies included on Fortune ESG list

By ZHOU MO in Shenzhen  
sally@chinadailyhk.com

Nine Shenzhen enterprises made it onto a list of China's most influential firms in terms of ESG development, according to the latest report by Fortune China.

Express delivery company SF Express, telecom equipment maker ZTE Corp and capital investment platform Shenzhen Investment Holdings have been on the list for three consecutive years, ranking seventh, 29th and 39th, respectively, among 70 enterprises on the list.

Some were newcomers, including electronics manufacturer Luxshare Precision Industry, lithium-ion battery maker Sunwoda Electronic, smartphone maker Honor and financial conglomerate Ping An Insurance Group.

ESG is a practice in which environmental, social and governance factors are considered by investors to evaluate a company, rather than focusing on its financial performance.

"China has been steadily implementing ESG practice. In a year when the macro economy faces serious challenges, ESG has become a course of action for companies to maintain their competitiveness," said Fortune China.

The performance of Shenzhen firms reflects how low-carbon development is gaining momentum in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

According to a separate report by HSBC in collaboration with the CECEP Environmental Consulting Group, 28 enterprises in the Bay Area either established new emission reduction targets or committed to new initiatives under the Science Based Targets initiative in the first three months of the year, up 33 percent from the last quarter of 2023.

"As a national innovation hub, the GBA has seen swift advancements in emerging sectors, including electric vehicles, renewable energy and smart robotics," said Daniel Chan, head of the Greater Bay Area at HSBC. "The momentum created by the new quality productive forces initiative is setting the GBA on a solid path to meet its ambitious 'dual-carbon' targets."

The new quality productive forces initiative refers to the strategy advocated by the Chinese government to enhance productivity through technological innovation.

Vehicle battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology grabbed the top spot on the ESG impact list, followed by polysilicon maker Tongwei and lender Industrial Bank.

China has been promoting ESG development as part of its push to drive sustainable economic growth. Guidelines on listed companies' sustainable development came into effect from the start of this month, requiring some public firms to make ESG-related disclosures no later than 2026.

## Consumer protection councils expand cooperation in Greater Bay Area

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou  
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Consumer councils in Guangdong province and Hong Kong have expanded cooperation on consumer rights protection.

A recently signed agreement allows people who have purchased goods or services anywhere in Guangdong or Hong Kong to file a complaint with their local consumer council, rather than the one where the business is located, reducing the cost and improving the convenience of consumer rights protection.

Meanwhile, consumer councils from the two regions will organize activities to improve their cooperation and promote exchanges.

Guangdong and Hong Kong will also utilize exchanges, symposiums, seminars and video conferences to enhance consumer protection and cooperation, the agreement said.

In addition, the agreement proposes exploring the establishment of a Guangdong-Hong Kong con-

"The main consumption of Hong Kong people in Guangdong is tourism, accommodation and food."

Benny Kwok, a Hong Kong resident who frequently visits Guangdong for sightseeing and shopping

sumer complaint warning system, and addresses the rising demand for consumer protection resulting from the growing number of Hong Kong shoppers traveling to the Chinese mainland.

The Guangdong Consumer Council has handled 567 consumer complaints from Hong Kong and Macao residents since it launched the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Consumer

Complaint and Transfer Platform in 2019.

Benny Kwok, a Hong Kong resident, said the agreement would promote cultural exchanges, increase the flow of people in the Bay Area and accelerate Hong Kong's integration with the mainland.

"The main consumption of Hong Kong people in Guangdong is tourism, accommodation and food," said the 50-year-old office worker, who frequently visits Guangdong for sightseeing and shopping.

Miao Lili, a white-collar worker from Guangzhou's Yuexiu district, said the cooperation of consumer councils from Guangdong and Hong Kong would certainly be good news for shoppers who frequently travel across the border.

The agreement makes consumer complaints more convenient and cost-effective, encouraging more people from Guangdong and Hong Kong to cross the border for shopping, dining and entertainment, she added.



## Action!

A visitor poses atop a drama scene adapted from martial arts novels by Jin Yong, the pen name of Louis Cha Leung-yung (1924-2018), at an exhibition in Macao on Tuesday. The show, presented by MGM Macao and Hong Kong's TVB, featured costumes, weapons and classic scenes from Jin Yong's novels-turned TV series.  
CHEONG KAM KA / XINHUA

## Engineers develop soft drone grippers inspired by climbing plants in nature

HANGZHOU — A team of Chinese engineers has developed a new class of soft grippers on drones that allow unmanned aerial vehicles to perform a variety of tasks, such as retrieving a key hanging from a tree branch or cleaning up garbage in the wild.

Currently, UAVs have rigid grippers that tend to be heavy, have a single grasping mode, and are limited in terms of the shape and size of the object that can be grasped.

Researchers from Zhejiang University drew inspiration from climbing plants with the remarkable ability to tightly clutch onto branches, or with hook-like structures that enable them to scale the vertical surfaces of tall buildings.

The gripper inspired by soft tendrils is designed for delicate grasping, while the one inspired by hook climbers can be

used for tasks requiring strong grasping, according to a study published as a cover story in the latest edition of the journal Science Advances.

The load capacity for a gripper with hook structures is about 29 percent more compared to one without such a hook, and it can grasp a maximum weight of approximately 450 grams, according to the study.

It can grasp common household items like plastic bottles, glass goblets, clamps and ceramic ornaments.

In an outdoor experiment, a drone flew toward a key suspended from a tree limb. Its gripper passed through tree limbs and managed to firmly grasp the key.

This ability can be useful in environmental protection, where it can be deployed for tasks such as

gathering trash in the wild and removing garbage from rivers and lakes.

In freshwater ecosystems, manual collection remains the main method of garbage cleanup, which is labor-intensive.

Unlike rigid grippers, the soft and adaptable gripper can absorb vibrations transmitted by UAVs and also allows an object to rotate or move within the gripper.

Outdoor applications have highlighted the unique advantages of the soft grippers across a spectrum of challenging environments. Such grippers can operate effectively even in cases of low positioning accuracy, reducing the need for complex planning of grasping execution, according to the researchers.

## UK criticized for accusations against HK

Officials condemn British authorities for detaining three men in London

By ATLAS SHAO in Hong Kong  
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Officials from the central authorities and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region have condemned the United Kingdom for making unjustified accusations about Hong Kong.

On Monday, British police arrested three men for allegedly assisting Hong Kong's foreign intelligence service. One of those arrested is Yuen Chung-biu, an office manager at the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London.

The trio appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court on Monday, charged with offenses under the UK's National Security Act. They have been released on bail, with the next hearing to be held on May 24.

At a regular news conference on Tuesday, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said any unjustified accusation against Hong Kong is "unacceptable".

He said the Hong Kong government has demanded the British Consulate General in Hong Kong provide full details of the matter, saying that the role of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office is to enhance overseas people's understanding of Hong Kong's economic and cultural advantages.

Hong Kong has established 14 economic and trade offices overseas, including four in Europe — in Berlin, Brussels, Geneva and London. Lee said the Hong Kong government had asked the UK government to handle the matter impartially, and ensure the normal operation of the office in London is not affected.

Any interference with the work of economic and trade offices goes against the principles of free trade and free economy, and such actions will only bring negative impacts to the UK economy, Lee said.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed grave concerns about the issue on Tuesday, with spokesman Wang Wenbin urging the British side to earnestly protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens in the UK.

Wang said the UK has staged a series of accusations against China, including ones about "China spies" and cyberattacks. All the accusations are groundless and slanderous, he said.

On Monday, the Chinese Embassy in the UK strongly con-

demned what it labeled as the UK's malicious fabrication and unwarranted accusation against Hong Kong.

The British authorities had harassed, arrested and detained Chinese citizens in the UK under the pretext of national security, constituting a grave provocation against China and severely contravening the basic norms governing international relations, the embassy said in a statement.

It urged the UK to immediately correct its wrongdoing, emphasizing that any political trick to divert public attention and cover up its own serious problems by smearing China is doomed to fail.

Also on Monday, the Commissioner's Office of the Chinese Foreign Ministry in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region strongly condemned the British side for what it described as trumped-up charges, the arbitrary arrest of Chinese citizens and the slandering of the Hong Kong government.

An office spokesperson said that under the pretext of national security, the British side had ignored basic human rights and made arbitrary arrests and detentions, which was not only against the spirit of the rule of law, but also naked political manipulation.

The UK must stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs and China's internal affairs, otherwise, the Chinese side will take resolute countermeasures, the spokesperson said.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant to the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies, said the incident might develop into "a diplomatic storm" between China and the UK as the charges against the trio are serious.

Lau said he believes there is no reason for the Hong Kong government to engage in espionage in the UK.

Regina Ip Lau Suk-ye, convenor of Hong Kong's Executive Council and a former secretary for security in Hong Kong, said she was surprised and shocked by the UK's accusation.

Ip said the National Security Act passed by the UK parliament in July is regarded as very stringent and includes broad but vague definitions. She said the Hong Kong government should lodge serious representations to the UK authorities, seek to find out whether they have reasonable grounds to target Hong Kong, and provide legal aid to the Hong Kong people involved.

## Briefly

## Ex-ICBC discipline chief on graft charges

Liu Lixian, a former member of the Communist Party of China committee at Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and the former head of its discipline inspection commission, has been charged with accepting bribes, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said on Tuesday. Prosecutors accused Liu of taking advantage of his various positions at the Supreme People's Procuratorate, China Huarong Asset Management and ICBC to seek profits for others and accepting a very large amount of money and valuables in return.

## Graduates to support western development

Chinese authorities have pledged further guidance and support for college students participating in a voluntary service program in China's less-developed western region. During a national video conference discussing the "Go West" program for 2024 to 2025, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League emphasized the importance of

enhancing the high-quality development of western China. In a statement issued on Tuesday, it said volunteers are called upon to contribute to key areas such as technological innovation, rural revitalization, green development, social services, and border defense.

## Primary school rapist executed in Hainan

Luo Chongchuang, a man who raped and molested multiple girls for years, was executed on Tuesday after China's top court approved his death penalty. The execution was carried out by the Hainan First Intermediate People's Court, where he was convicted of rape and child molestation and given the death sentence. At Luo's trial, the court heard that while working as a primary school teacher in Hainan from 2019 to 2021 he raped four girls several times and molested 25 others. Luo was sentenced to death by the court in April last year. He appealed to the Hainan High People's Court, but the original sentence was upheld.

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## CHINA

## Zhejiang's population increasing

Balanced regional development, favorable policies for talent key

By CHEN MEILING

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A foot massage therapist in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, made headlines recently after a video interview in which he said he received a 1.25 million yuan (\$173,000) housing subsidy from the city government for being a Class C high-caliber talent.

As a recognized "national technical expert", according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 40-year-old Zhao Zhanzhan became one of the beneficiaries of the city's policy to support the development of talent and encourage more people to work there.

"I used to think that high-level talent should be graduates from prestigious universities, academicians and those with higher levels of education," Zhao said. "I never expected that skilled professionals in the service industry like us could also be considered as such."

Zhao's story is the epitome of Zhejiang's efforts to attract talent, which have proved effective. Late last year, the province's permanent resident population was 66.27 million, an increase of 500,000 in a year. But with deaths outnumbering births, the natural population decrease was 57,000, meaning most of the increase was due to people moving from other parts of China.

With the country facing the challenges of a shrinking and aging population, it is time for cities to change their ideas about human resources and adjust policies to encourage more people to stay, said Wang Qiang, a researcher with the Institute for China Sustainable Urbanization at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

"Cities need to change from 'competing for talent' to 'competing for people'. People are the foundation for production, market and consumption," he said.

Cities should give equal opportunities to local residents and newcomers. For example, many migrant workers who have done well in their occupations have become shareholders in companies in Zhejiang, Wang said.

"With their salaries increased, some of them will bring their family members too, who together become part of the permanent population," he said. "If cities only want high-level talent, the downward trend of population will possibly accelerate."

Zhejiang's balanced development across the province is another reason for its powerful magnetism, according to Wang.

The GDP of two of Zhejiang's 11

cities — Hangzhou and Ningbo — surpassed 1 trillion yuan last year, and in five other cities it exceeded 500 billion yuan.

The difference in public services such as education and healthcare between the provincial capital and other cities is not large, which means outsiders can expect a good life settling in a small city, with similar wages but lower costs, Wang said. It is also why developed cities can avoid "big city malaise" as Zhejiang welcomes so many new people.

Yuan Xin, a professor at Nankai University's School of Economics and vice-president of the China Population Association, said the key reason Zhejiang had the biggest population increase among China's provincial-level regions last year is its strong economy.

"The biggest motivation for people to move from one place to another is to seek employment and economic benefits," he said.

Zhejiang's GDP was 8.26 trillion yuan last year and its per capita GDP was 125,043 yuan — compared with the national average of 89,358 yuan. Besides Ningbo's advantages in the manufacturing industry and Hangzhou's vibrant digital economy, almost every county has a characteristic industry, which means there are many job opportunities.

In the future, population mobility will still be vibrant, with economically active areas such as the Yangtze River Delta region, the Pearl River Delta region and Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region remaining the most attractive, Yuan said.

In 2022, 20 provinces reported a higher crude death rate than crude birthrate. The incoming population helps ease the tension from the natural population decrease, he said. However, in the long term, that effect may wane if the fertility rate becomes extremely low.

"It's time for cities to adjust economic and social planning based on the fact that population will keep decreasing," Yuan said.

Jilin and Liaoning, two provinces in Northeast China, reported net population inflows last year, reversing more than a decade of net outflows.

Wang said that is due to the central government's efforts to promote the revitalization of the region.

He said cities should not only create good employment, entrepreneurship and business environments, but also a good social and cultural atmosphere to help newcomers develop emotional ties to their new home.

## Care with a heart



Doctors screen infants for congenital heart disease in Qingzhen, Guizhou province, on Monday. Children who need surgery will receive it for free. ZHAO WENYU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Emerging COVID strain infections low

By WANG XIAOYU

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Infections with the KP.2 variant — an emerging COVID-19 strain suspected of harboring stronger transmissibility — make up an extremely low share of domestic cases at present and the risk of it triggering a fresh outbreak is low, the National Administration of Disease Control and Prevention said on Tuesday.

KP.2, first detected in samples collected from India in January, is an offshoot of the Omicron variant JN.1. The strain has new mutations to the spike protein that could potentially make it more infectious than other descendants of JN.1.

"But current research suggests that its advantage in transmissibility will not be significantly higher than other JN.1 lineages," the administration said.

Worldwide, KP.2 infections began rising in February and it was classified as a variant of interest by the World Health Organization on May 3.

"The share of infections with KP.2

and its lineages is on the rise, growing from 0.16 percent in early January to 14 percent in early May," it said. "In some countries, the proportion of KP.2 cases has reached 10 to 30 percent."

China reported its first KP.2 infections in Guangdong province on March 11. As of May 12, the nation had registered 25 KP.2 cases, accounting for 0.05 to 0.3 percent of weekly cases.

"Considering that KP.2 infections make up a very low share of domestic infections and the epidemic triggered by JN.1 has been contained at a relatively low level, the risk of KP.2 rising to prominence and sparking another wave of infections is low," the administration said.

It added that public health advice against the new variant remains the same, which is maintaining personal hygiene, wearing masks properly and paying attention to lifestyles and diets to enhance immunity.

According to data released by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the positivity rate of

COVID-19 fell from 13.5 percent in early April to 5.9 percent earlier this month. The most recent peak was in December, when it reached nearly 50 percent.

Maria Van Kerkhove, acting interim director of the WHO's epidemic and pandemic preparedness and prevention department, told a news briefing on May 8 that about 8 percent of viral sequences shared with the WHO were of the KP.2 variant.

"The prevalence varies by region for lots of different reasons, based on the other waves of infection that have happened, the other variants that have circulated and the amount of circulation of this virus," she said.

Van Kerkhove said the WHO recommends future formulations of vaccines include JN.1 and immunization efforts should prioritize people at the highest risk of developing severe disease.

The emergence of the new variant also underscored the need for continued surveillance of the virus as it continues to circulate and evolve around the globe.

## Campaign targets school bullying

China has launched a nationwide campaign to address key issues such as campus bullying and excessive homework in basic education.

A circular made public by the Ministry of Education on Tuesday said the campaign will continue until the end of this year and will focus on regulating and rectifying problems related to safety breaches, disorder in daily management and faculty misconduct.

The circular also included a list of 12 negative practices in basic education. They include encroachment on students' scheduled 10-minute breaks, tolerating bullying behavior, and compulsory education institutions organizing exams with the intention of selecting students.

Other prohibited activities include concealing or mishandling

significant accidents, discriminating against students from vulnerable groups, subjecting students to corporal punishment and engaging in unauthorized fee charging.

The Ministry of Education has instructed local authorities to refine the negative list, conduct self-inspections and implement corrective measures.

The authorities will advance the campaign by conducting research in various localities, appointing inspectors to supervise schools and providing professional guidance.

To ensure effective enforcement, a supervision and exposure mechanism and a reputation evaluation system will be established during the campaign.

China is home to nearly 500,000 primary and middle schools and kindergartens, with over 16 million

teachers and 230 million students. Its education system faces disparities in urban-rural and regional development, leading to significant variations in school management standards in different areas.

Shi Zhongying, head of the Institute of Education at Tsinghua University, said the 12 prohibited behaviors outlined in the circular are not new requirements, but rather a reminder of the minimum standards. The objective is to raise awareness and ensure that school faculty uphold and adhere to those standards.

The campaign will have a positive impact on improving the governance of basic education and optimizing the overall education ecosystem, Shi said.

XINHUA

## Stunning red sky over China wins fans online

By LI MENGHAN

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Photographs of stunning red aurora displays in parts of North China have attracted plenty of online interest recently, being praised for their exceptional beauty, rarity in the region, and distinctive coloring compared with the blue and green auroras typically observed in Nordic countries.

"As a 'byproduct' of geomagnetic storms, auroras are formed when high-energy particles brought by intense solar activity collide with the upper atmosphere of the Earth, resulting in a varied display of colors at different altitudes," said Chen Anqin, chief forecaster at China's National Center for Space Weather, adding that it is normal to see red auroras in mid-latitude regions like China during periods of intense solar activity.

People in parts of Heilongjiang and Gansu provinces, and the Xinjiang Uygur and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions witnessed the aurora borealis last weekend.

Parts of the United States, Namibia and Jamaica also reported auroras.

Auroras are formed when high-energy particles brought by intense solar activity collide with the upper atmosphere of the Earth, resulting in a varied display of colors at different altitudes.

Chen Anqin, weather forecaster

Most auroras happen about 90 to 400 kilometers above the Earth's surface, showcasing light red hues above 300 km, and transitioning to dark red between 200 and 300 km, green between 100 and 200 km, and a mix of colors like blue and purple below 100 km, according to Chinese National Geography, a monthly magazine affiliated to the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Because of the curvature of the Earth's surface, if the observation point is too distant from the aurora, the Earth itself will block some distant objects, resulting in only the higher-altitude red light being visible, the magazine said.

This year has witnessed more frequent and intense solar activity due to it being the peak of the 11.2-year solar cycle, Chen said.

Multiple moderate and strong solar flares associated with coronal mass ejections have been observed since last Wednesday.

Early on Saturday morning, the National Center for Space Weather announced its first watch for a G5 geomagnetic storm — the strongest rating on scale from G1 to G5 — since 2006, and it issued the strongest-level of warning for a geomagnetic storm the same day.

From Wednesday through Friday, solar activity is expected to be at moderate to high levels, with a chance of strong flare activity, G1 to G3 geomagnetic storms and ionospheric disturbance, the center said.

"Currently, the probability of observing additional aurora borealis in the near future is low, as the recently solar active region is about to rotate toward the far side of the sun, out of sight from Earth," Chen said, adding there was little likelihood of intense solar flares or coronal mass ejections in other regions.

## Workers find happiness in rooftop farm

By TAN YINGZI

and DENG RUI in Chongqing

A group of employees at Chongqing Meixin Group rolled up their sleeves and pants on Tuesday morning and waded into a paddy field on their factory building's rooftop.

They were taking part in an activity that has been organized by the company for four years, with the aim of helping staff members decompress after long hours of work.

They caught fish and planted rice seedlings 33 meters above the ground at Happy Farm, a 20,000-square-meter ecosystem created by Meixin, a door manufacturer headquartered in Chongqing's Nan'an district. The farm produces crops like rice, rapeseed and lotus root and also features a 1-kilometer artificial river teeming with fish and shrimp.

"Most of the crops on the farm are tended to by our staff," said farm

manager Liao Junli, adding that rooftop planting involves special cultivation techniques that utilize a thinner soil layer than traditional fields to prevent excessive loads on the roof.

The factory was selected as one of the fourth batch of "national green factories" by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology in 2019.

In Chinese, the expression "catching fish during work hours" refers to slacking off at work.

But at Meixin, "our employer pays us to catch fish and grow crops of our own at work", joked Xu Zhengrong, a 48-year-old safety worker at the group's technical center.

Xu, who has been with the company for 18 years, secured an opportunity to manage a plot of land at the farm through a lottery system.

In her spare time, she grows sufficient vegetables to sustain her family throughout the year.

Xu said the company organizes various enjoyable welfare activities and offers favorable policies, making the working atmosphere relaxed and pleasant.

Liao Kun, a human resources manager at the company, said, "Happy Farm enables our staff to strike a balance between rest and work, especially after prolonged periods of monotonous mechanical tasks or computer work."

Liao said that even though the real estate market has been depressed in recent years, sales of Meixin's door products have remained relatively stable, with that success partially attributed to some "happy employees" who proposed constructive marketing ideas.

A nationwide survey of employees' emotional status last year by recruitment portal 51Job found that constant changes brought about by factors such as digitalization, deflation and the COVID-19 pandemic in



An employee of Chongqing Meixin Group shows off his catch in a fish catching and rice seedling planting event in the rooftop farm in Chongqing on May 7. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the past few years had made "change fatigue" and "quiet quitting" common phenomena.

The report said more workers and graduates tend to believe that a "good job" is one with a low level of

competition, allowing for a happy personal life and the promotion of their psychological well-being.

Contact the writers at dengrui@chinadaily.com.cn

## WORLD

## Xi's visits to aid economic collaboration

Trips to France, Serbia, Hungary set to improve people's welfare, experts say

By YIFAN XU in Washington and ZHENG WANYIN in London

Chinese President Xi Jinping's just-concluded state visits to France, Serbia and Hungary contribute to fostering practical economic collaboration, aimed at improving people's welfare in these nations and beyond, experts say.

President Xi's trip to Budapest is a clear signal that China welcomes Hungary to grab the opportunities created by the development of the Chinese economy and is ready to help Hungarian development with new investments, said Gyula Thurmer, president of the Hungarian Workers' Party.

Last year, Hungary was able to attract a total of 13 billion euros (\$13.86 billion) in foreign direct investment, of which about 8 billion euros were from China, Hungarian Minister for National Economy Marton Nagy said in an interview with Xinhua News Agency.

The Hungarian side is looking forward to deeper cooperation with China in the fields of trade, capital investment, infrastructure, logistics, artificial intelligence, and new energy, among others, he said.

During President Xi's visit to Hungary, leaders of the two countries witnessed the exchange of multiple bilateral cooperation documents on Belt and Road cooperation, economy and trade, investment, science and technology, culture and agriculture. The two sides also issued a joint statement on the establishment of an all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era.

Serbia looks at China as an economic partner of crucial importance. The Chinese president's visit signals China's commitment to strengthening ties with Serbia, emphasizing economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and political dialogue, said Ivona Ladjevac, deputy director of the Belgrade-based Institute of International Politics and Economics.

"China leads the world in many of the high technologies today — and any such investments in Serbia and technology transfers could truly have a positive spillover effect on Serbian economic development and upgrading. A great step in that direction is the announced 300 student and 50 young scientist

exchanges," said Jelena Grubor Stefanovic, director of the representative office of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China.

"We hope to see more Chinese green technologies such as EVs and solar panels in Serbia that can significantly contribute to Serbian decarbonizing goals. I hope in the near future we will have a major logistics center in Serbia that will facilitate this flow of goods," said Stefanovic.

## Active engagement

France is actively engaging with China on economic initiatives. France invited BYD, a leading Chinese EV company, to build a factory there, according to Jack Midgley, principal of the global consultancy Midgley & Co.

In January, a new energy vehicle production base of BYD was established in the city of Szeged, Hungary, which marks the sixth Chinese automobile manufacturing plant in Hungary and is expected to create thousands of jobs, as People's Daily reported.

Midgley, who is also an adjunct associate professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University in Washington, said that with positive developments in France, Serbia, and Hungary, "next year or in two years, you will be able to buy, easily buy BYD cars with Chinese batteries made in Europe."

"It's a very practical strategy," he said. "Focus on the practical math, act in mutual interest, don't try to convince, just look at the facts, and make progress where you can."

The more China makes progress in EV, AI, or any other advanced technologies, the more it can contribute to the welfare of people all over the world, he said.

"China's development by itself does not pose a threat. We shouldn't start by saying this is a threat to national security. We should start by saying this is an opportunity to improve standards of living, welfare, and security all over the world."

Chen Weihua in Budapest and Yang Ran in Beijing contributed to this story.

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## Sun drying



Students dry damp books in the sun outside their classroom that was affected by floods earlier in Mathare in Nairobi on Monday. More than 90 percent of schools in Kenya reopened after flooding killed more than 270 people and delayed the resumption of classes by two weeks, the government said. SIMON MAINA / AFP

## Turkiye, Greece aim to bolster relations

ANKARA — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and visiting Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Monday underscored the significance of maintaining the recent positive trajectory in bilateral relations, despite long-standing disputes.

In a joint news conference in Ankara, Erdogan emphasized the importance of dialogue by declaring, "Despite the differences, we focus on the positive agenda by keeping our dialogue channels open."

The Turkish president said the two sides held a constructive dialogue, addressing issues in Turkiye-Greece relations, and agreed to aim for a bilateral trade volume of \$10 billion.

Erdogan expressed hope that the improved relations would positively impact the rights of the Turkish minority in Greece. He also stressed the necessity of a "fair and permanent solution" to the Cyprus issue, based on the island's realities, to enhance regional stability and peace.

However, regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict, Erdogan diverged from Mitsotakis, stating, "I do not see Hamas as a terrorist organization. Hamas is a resistance group that protects its lands."

Mitsotakis acknowledged the ongoing development of bilateral cooperation, stating mutual understanding and relations between the two sides are evolving positively. He also reaffirmed Greece's support for Turkiye's European Union accession process.

Mitsotakis noted a divergence in perspectives on the Gaza issue. "We



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) shakes hands with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at a joint news conference in Ankara on Monday. XINHUA

know that Turkiye accepts Hamas, which we consider a terrorist group, in a different way," he said, noting that Greece also agrees that civilians must be protected.

Erdogan visited Athens last December and the two countries signed the "Declaration of Athens" aimed at setting the base for a road map to rebooting relations.

They agreed to boost trade, keep communication channels open, carry out military confidence-building measures to reduce tensions and work on problems that have kept them apart.

On Sunday, Mitsotakis told Turkish daily Milliyet that his visit to Ankara — the first in five years — was an opportunity to evaluate progress and to reiterate Athens' commitment to improving ties.

Erdogan, speaking to the Greek daily Kathimerini on Sunday, said the main goal was to "raise the level of our bilateral relations to unprecedented heights", adding the neighbors had many issues they could agree on while seeking solutions to their problems.

However, they remain at loggerheads over several issues including maritime jurisdiction, Reuters reported.

Greece's plan to build a marine park in the Aegean, which it says is for environmental purposes, has upset Turkiye, while Athens was annoyed by Turkiye's decision to turn the ancient Chora Church, previously a museum for decades, into a mosque.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

## China hits out at Yellen remarks on new energy subsidies

By WANG QINGYUN wangqingyun@chinadaily.com.cn

China has slammed the United States for "bullying" and "trampling on market economy principles", dismissing US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's recent remarks about China's new energy sector.

In an interview with Marketplace news site published earlier this month, Yellen said the US, which is "very explicitly subsidizing investments" in strategic areas, does not want to see "massive Chinese subsidies to firms with huge overcapacity that will just drive our firms out of business".

Criticizing Yellen's remarks, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Tuesday in a daily briefing that the United States is playing double standards by justifying its own subsidies and exports, while accusing other countries' subsidies and exports as "unfair" and "overcapacity".

"It's just as a US expression goes: 'Do as I say, not as I do,'" Wang said.

The US is using the "overcapacity" narrative to suppress other countries' advanced industries and practicing protectionism under the pretext of "fair competition", he said.

The spokesman reiterated that the competitive edge in China's new energy sector, such as electric vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products, is not a result of "subsidies".

Instead, the sector's rapid growth is built on ongoing technological innovation, a sound supply chain and robust market competition, Wang said.

Such rapid growth meets the needs of the global economy's green transition, and is beneficial for China, the US and the world.

Wang went on to call the US "a big subsidizer to its industries".

"The US, by contrast, has adopted the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act in recent years to directly and indirectly offer hundreds of billions of US dollars of subsidies," he said.

Emphasizing that subsidy and protectionism cannot foster industries and companies that have a competitive edge, Wang called on the US to "abandon hypocrisy and double standards", and "stop repeating the old mistake of protectionism".

## French push reaps rich dividends in foreign investments

By JONATHAN POWELL in London jonathan@mail.chinadailyuk.com

France has announced a flurry of significant investments from tech titans to pharmaceutical giants, boosting the country's bid to become a global business hub.

The French government said US retail giant Amazon will make a 1.2-billion euro (\$1.3 billion) commitment to investments in the country, while Pfizer and AstraZeneca will commit nearly 1 billion euros.

The pledges were announced ahead of a pivotal foreign investment summit, Choose France, which opened on Monday in Paris.

French President Emmanuel Macron, seeking to enhance Paris' status as a premier European business hub and bolster the French economy, is hosting 180 corporate leaders at the Chateau de Versailles for the annual summit.

The event is part of a push by the government to revitalize France's industrial sector and streamline regulations to entice foreign enterprises, Bloomberg reported.

France has received combined investment commitments from foreign companies of more than 15 billion euros, Macron's office said on Monday.

The French presidency said the investments included 56 different



France's President Emmanuel Macron (center) shakes hands with CEO of ArcelorMittal, Lakshmi Mittal, during the Choose France summit at the Chateau de Versailles, outside Paris, on Monday. LUDOVIC MARIN VIA REUTERS

business projects and could lead to the creation of 10,000 jobs.

Over the weekend, France said Amazon would announce a 1.2-billion-euro investment at the event, to boost its logistics as well as Amazon Web Services' cloud infrastructure.

France is positioning itself as a European AI hub and the investments will help build the data infrastructure critical to support fast-growing, homegrown startups like Mistral AI.

Additionally, Pfizer plans to reinvest 500 million euros in France, while AstraZeneca is expected to invest roughly 365 million euros in the Dunkirk region.

## European presence

Microsoft announced its intent to invest 4 billion euros in constructing cloud and AI infrastructure in France, with the goal of training 1 million individuals and assisting 2,500 startups by 2027.

Morgan Stanley is enhancing its European presence in Paris with a new global research hub, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said.

The US bank has increased its Paris staff from 150 to about 400 since 2021 and plans to add 100 more employees, including expanding its research and development center from 90 to 120 workers.

Despite facing challenges such as budget deficits, the French economy, which ranks as the eurozone's second largest, experienced a modest 0.2 percent growth in the first quarter, Reuters noted.

Government officials did not give details on the public financial and other support, but the state offers tax credits for certain types of green investments and research and development.

Projects aligning with public priorities like hydrogen or computer chips often qualify for grants while local governments frequently make land available to foreign investors.

France was Europe's top destination for foreign investment for the fifth year running last year, according to an EY survey, with more than 1,200 investment announcements, Agence France-Presse reported.

"This is a result of the stability of our economic policies," Le Maire told public broadcaster France 2.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Briefly

UKRAINE  
Blinken visits Kyiv to tout US support

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Kyiv on Tuesday in an unannounced diplomatic mission to reassure Ukraine it has US support. "We know this is a challenging time," Blinken said in the Ukrainian capital where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The visit comes less than a month after Congress approved a long-delayed foreign assistance package that set aside \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine, much of which will go toward replenishing badly depleted artillery and air defense systems. Assistance from the new package "is now on the way," Blinken said, adding that some of it had already arrived in Ukraine.

SPAIN  
PM's Socialists win Catalan regional poll

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialists won a clear victory in the Catalan regional election, dealing a blow to separatists who lost their majority after 10 years in power. The vote came six years after Carles Puigdemont led a botched 2017 independence bid that triggered Spain's worst political crisis in decades. In gaining more than 200,000 votes, the

Socialists managed to deprive the separatist parties of the majority they needed to stay in power in a region they had ruled for the past decade. Hailing the result as "historic" in a post on X, Sanchez said it would mark the start of "a new era in Catalonia". Puigdemont said on Monday that he aims to form a minority regional government.

INDIA  
14 dead as billboard collapses in Mumbai

At least 14 people died and 75 others were injured when a billboard bigger than an Olympic swimming pool fell on them during a thunderstorm in India's financial capital Mumbai, authorities said on Tuesday. Dozens are still feared trapped. Videos showed the towering hoarding billowing in the wind before collapsing on houses and a fuel station in the eastern suburb of Ghatkopar on Monday as a dust storm and rain lashed the city in the evening, bringing traffic to a standstill and disrupting flights at Mumbai airport. Mumbai's municipal corporation said at least 75 injured people were taken to hospitals. The agency owning the billboard did not have a permit from the corporation to put up the hoarding, the municipal body said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## WORLD US

## Tariffs called 'unfortunate shift' in US policy

New duties on Chinese EVs, batteries, solar cells, minerals seen as move toward protectionism

By ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington  
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com

The US government's latest move to slap heavy tariffs on Chinese imports, including electric vehicles and solar cells, shows protectionism and industrial policy is the new consensus approach to economic challenges, which is an "unfortunate shift" in US policy, a senior economist said on Tuesday.

The United States is increasing tariffs on \$18 billion worth of Chinese imports, targeting electric vehicles (EVs), advanced batteries, steel and critical minerals, the White House said on Tuesday.

The fresh levies come on top of the already massive tariffs imposed on more than \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods, which were introduced during the Trump administration, according to the result of a four-year review of the China Section 301 tariffs, released by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) on Tuesday.

The review was undertaken under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which Trump invoked to first launch the China tariffs in 2018.

The centerpiece of the new tariffs is a quadrupling of levies on Chinese EVs to 100 percent starting this year, an attempt analysts said would likely result in thwarting the Biden administration's own efforts to fight climate change by speeding up EV adoption.

Erica York, a senior economist and

research director with the Tax Foundation's Center for Federal Tax Policy, said that at present, consumers are not likely to see an immediate increase in costs because Chinese EVs are already locked out of the US market.

"Longer term though, it means American consumers will lack choices, including competitively priced and innovative Chinese EVs and face higher prices for green tech and green energy at home," York told China Daily on Tuesday.

York's organization has estimated that the current tariffs and retaliation will reduce long-run US output by about 0.25 percent, costing thousands of jobs and reducing incomes.

Maintaining the current tariffs, which have been costly to American consumers and the manufacturing sector, and doubling or quadrupling down on the approach, will further increase costs, insulate US businesses from competitive pressures that lead to long-run improvements, and put US manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage abroad, according to York.

"Protectionism and industrial policy are not a recipe for success; instead, policymakers should pursue reforms that encourage investment, innovation and competition," she added.

The tariffs that take effect this year also cover solar cells, syringes, needles, steel and aluminum products, according to a statement from the USTR.

The tariff rate on semiconductors will surge from 25 percent to 50 percent by next year, while levies on



White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre (left) and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai speak with reporters in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington on Tuesday.  
ALEX BRANDON / AP

Chinese EV batteries and battery parts will more than triple to 25 percent by 2026.

Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow and trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, noted that as some tariffs are to be phased in over a couple of years, they won't have an "immediate" effect.

"But for sure they will delay the rate of EV adoption and hurt the clean air agenda," Hufbauer said of Biden's climate agenda, which includes ramping up the adoption of EVs to cut US greenhouse gas emissions.

The expert said that the tariffs are a "definite negative" for US-China relations.

China's Ministry of Commerce said

on Tuesday that the US tariff hike goes against the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and the promises of President Joe Biden, and will "seriously affect the atmosphere of bilateral cooperation".

"I expect China to retaliate in a measured way against iconic US exports," Hufbauer said. "I'm sure Beijing is studying the menu."

The Commerce Ministry said China will take "resolute" measures to safeguard its own rights and interests, according to a statement.

US media reports on Tuesday pointed to the fact that the tariffs in an election year come in the middle of a heated campaign between Biden and his Republican predecessor, Donald

Trump, where they both resort to China-bashing tactics.

A new set of polls show that Trump leads Biden in five of six crucial election battleground states, Michigan, Arizona, Nevada, Georgia and Pennsylvania.

"The timing is specifically aimed at voters in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan — auto and steel states," Hufbauer said.

"Since Trump promises equal or higher tariffs, I doubt the announcement will shift many votes toward Biden, but it may avoid further losses to voters who welcome protection," he added.

Douglas H. Paal, distinguished fellow of the Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Tuesday's announcement of fresh tariffs constituted one form of the US response to the "serious trade issues" with China.

"When leaders are weak in election years, they resort to popular measures that may be less effective in reality than in rhetoric. That is where we are," Paal told China Daily.

## Trade bodies 'disappointed'

Hours after the release of the results of the review of the China Section 301 tariffs, US trade organizations said they were highly disappointed by the outcome.

"The decision to extend Section 301 tariffs on a wide range of apparel, footwear, accessories, and textiles — while not unexpected — is a real blow to American consumers and manufacturers alike," said Steve Lamar, president and chief executive officer of the American Apparel &

Footwear Association.

"The Biden Administration has had two years to get it right. Unfortunately, they doubled down on a flawed tariff policy, despite the Biden Administration's own acknowledgment that this policy has failed in its goals, and overwhelming public input that supported a different outcome," he said in a statement.

The National Retail Federation also said it was "extremely disappointed" that the USTR and the Biden administration had chosen "to double down on a failed and inflationary strategy by sustaining and expanding the Section 301 China tariffs".

"Maintaining these tariffs on consumer goods will increase costs that consumers pay on everyday products imported from China," said David French, executive vice-president of government relations.

The US-China Business Council, a nongovernmental organization representing many of the world's largest brands doing business in China, also noted that maintenance of the prior tariffs — with no reductions — and imposition of additional tariffs ultimately make it harder for American companies to compete in the US and abroad, cost American jobs, and increase prices for US manufacturers and consumers during a time of ongoing inflation.

"Additionally, levying new tariffs invites retaliation from China, which combined could further disadvantage US companies selling goods and services in China's market compared to their foreign competitors," USCBC President Craig Allen said.

## On social media, puzzlement over EV tariffs

By HENG WEILI in New York  
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

The Biden administration's plan to impose hefty tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and batteries has raised questions on social media, with some calling it anti-climate, anti-competitive and an election year gambit.

Kristoffer Santucci, a stock trader, wrote on X: "Biden gives Plug Power (a US fuel cell company) a \$1.66 billion loan commitment and simultaneously tariffs China green energy related EV parts and metals. That's exactly how you stimulate inflation, fueling the fire, trying to keep this boat afloat through fiscal spending."

"I'm really curious how the team behind Biden's new China tariffs expects to hit 2030 targets for electric vehicles when they slap huge tariffs on batteries and components for batteries that fuel the EVs," posted "Will" on X.

"What to make of Biden's 100% tariff on Chinese EVs in light of the 'existential crisis' posed by climate change that EVs are meant to combat? I look forward to the logical pretzels Biden's defenders are about to twist themselves into," wrote Marian L. Tupy, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, on X.

"If climate change is an existential threat and your top priority, why would you quadruple tariffs on cheap, Chinese EVs? How is this going to achieve a zero-carbon economy by 2040?" wrote "ConservativeNotCrazy", publisher of InsideSourcesDC.

"You can't possibly think these people take climate change or inflation seriously if they want to increase the price of carbon reducing technologies," posted Sid Prabh on X.

"Protectionism taken to an extreme. China makes affordable EVs that move the industry forward," posted David Kudla, CEO of Mainstay Capital Management. "But they will be made artificially expensive by tariffs, thus further crushing the growth in EV adoption."

Nikhil Tiwari, who works in capital markets, posted: "Just when China started to pocket the market share for EVs around the world, Biden imposed tariffs on China's EVs and ancillaries. This is the decade of trade wars. Trade wars are highly inflationary."

"One year ago, people on X were



Visitors are checking Geely's all-electric model Galaxy E8 at the 2024 Consumer Electronics Show in January in Las Vegas. LI AZHU / CHINA DAILY

telling me that nobody in the US or Europe would buy a Chinese EV. Today, automakers and politicians in America are freaking out about China taking over the electric car market," wrote S.L. Kanthan, a columnist and podcaster in India, to his 136,000 followers on X. "Hence the increase of tariffs from 25% to 100%. You can't hide from competition forever!"

"Early indications are that we'll see competition between the two US presidential candidates this November over who will introduce the biggest trade tariffs on Chinese EVs," wrote David Watson, a proponent of clean energy in the UK.

"While you may be right about there being situations where tariffs can work, such an approach does not look good for US EVs. I believe the US has had a 27.5% tariff on Chinese cars since the Trump years. Raising the levies further signals it's a long road to US EV competitiveness," wrote Ted Dixon, CEO of INK Research, a financial information firm in Vancouver.

"For what I believe is the umpteenth time — regardless of party or president — tariffs are paid by American consumers," wrote Kai Ryssdal,

who works for nonprofit news organization Marketplace, to his 266,000 followers on X.

"Biden hiking tariffs on Chinese EVs is sad mostly because USA automakers refuse to produce an EV at \$10K — which is what the Chinese are doing. I'm looking at you, Elon!" posted Joe Krulder, Ph.D.

Shares of Austin, Texas-based EV maker Tesla, where Elon Musk is CEO, closed at \$177.55, up \$5.66, or 3.3 percent.

Ben Chu, economics editor for BBC Newsnight, wrote: "The big deal in these new US tariffs on Chinese imports is not really the 100% tariff on electric vehicles (EVs), given US EV imports from China are negligible, but the increase in the tariff rate on lithium-ion batteries from 7.5% to 25%."

Ricky J. Marc, J.D., M.S., posted on X: "Chinese EVs smacked w/a 100% tariff? I mean if you're scared, go to church or get a dog, because God forbid we're all able to afford EVs, reducing emissions and a reliance on petrol prices, right? Teslas don't have to be the only major EV option. "There aren't that many Chinese

EVs currently in the United States, but with how cheap they are, it was only a matter of time before the tariffs started," posted Ryan Egan.

"These Biden tariffs hurt the American consumer. We are forced (to) pay more for Chinese EVs or buy ... inferior American EVs. We are forced to subsidize an inefficient US auto industry," wrote Richard D. Cadena.

"An electric SUV that converts into a pickup truck in which you can camp out? Yep, China's Changan made one. Not a single US or European carmaker will take the risk to produce a 'niche' EV like this. Get why US and Europe are scrambling to impose more tariffs on the Chinese?" posted "Facts Chaser" on X.

Of the US move, Rukumis Geopolitics wrote "In the long term, it will have a more negative impact on the US than on China, as we saw how Huawei was able to circumvent and withstand the US pressure and sanctions."

"Chinese EV manufacturers are not only equipped to withstand the impact of US tariffs but can also leverage these challenges as catalysts for further growth and innovation."

## Doubled solar cells tax met with opposition

By AIHEPING in New York  
aiheping@chinadailyusa.com

The Biden administration's doubling of the import tax on Chinese solar cells to 50 percent on Tuesday has been opposed by some US contractors.

The increase "will protect against China's policy-driven overcapacity that depresses prices and inhibits the development of solar capacity outside of China", a White House fact sheet said. The administration is planning to exclude from tariffs equipment used to produce domestic solar panels.

The issue of tariffs on solar products has pitted US manufacturers that want protection from what they see as cut-rate Chinese competitors against contractors and installers who seek low-priced imported panels.

Jim, a house builder in Charleston, South Carolina, who asked that his full name not be used, said it was the wrong decision.

"South Carolina has the sunshine, and I need the solar panels to capture it," he told China Daily. "The new tariff will mean I will pay more and so will the customer."

He noted that many of his customers are recent retirees who moved to the state because of a lower cost of living and he said they won't be able to afford any price increase.

Keith, who said he has sold real estate in Charleston and the area for 15 years and asked that his full name not be used, told China Daily, "It's hard enough now with interest rates to sell anything. People want solar because it will lower their electric rates. But they will choose spending more money to put in a pool over a higher cost for many solar panels."

Abigail Ross Hopper, the president of the Solar Energy Industries Association, a trade group whose membership includes importers and installers, said the new tariff also will effectively mean another hurdle in the Biden administration's goal of transitioning the US to cleaner energy.

"This misstep will have a devastating impact on the US solar market at a time when solar prices are climbing, and project delays and cancellations are adding up," she said in a statement.

One of the key steps in the global solar industry supply

chain — the production of polysilicon solar wafers that are processed into solar cells — takes place almost entirely in China.

Although American companies can create raw polysilicon, and a handful of US factories produce solar modules, the industry is almost entirely dependent on China for the middle of the supply chain, according to solar industry experts. No American factory produces solar wafers or cells at scale.

The Trump administration imposed a separate set of global tariffs on the solar industry in 2018. In February, the Biden administration extended those tariffs but reduced their scope by doubling the number of solar cells that can enter the US without facing any levies, an attempt to resolve the conflicting interests of the domestic producers and domestic installers.

Chinese solar cells represented less than 1 percent of total US solar cell imports in the first half of 2023, according to data from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

In 2012, the US barred almost entirely the use of solar cells and modules made in China with prohibitive anti-dumping and countervailing duties, which rerouted US solar supply chains to Southeast Asia, said Pol Lezcano, a senior solar analyst at BloombergNEF.

Now US solar manufacturers allege that unfair domestic and Chinese government subsidies to manufacturers in four Southeast Asia countries — Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia — are enabling cheap solar exports. More than 80 percent of US solar panel imports come from those four countries, according to industry experts.

Biden last year waived tariffs on solar products from the four countries as the Commerce Department was considering whether those imports were dodging duties on goods made in China and violating US law.

A coalition of seven leading US solar manufacturers asked the Commerce Department last month to expand tariffs on solar imports from those nations. A tariff moratorium on the four countries is due to expire in early June, after which a 14 percent duty will be imposed on solar panels.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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# BUSINESS

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## Gold maintains glitter as haven for investors

By ZHENG XIN  
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Gold investment in China is expected to remain in positive territory over the next few quarters, supported by expanding demand, economic recovery and sustained purchases by the central bank, said industry experts.

The attractiveness of gold is expected to increase in the months to come, fueled by prudent domestic monetary policy and lower interest rates, which will further reduce the cost of investing in gold and prompt investors to seek other wealth storage options like precious metals, said Wang Lixin, CEO of the World Gold Council (China).

Furthermore, softness in the real estate market and escalating global geopolitical tensions may also contribute to the growth of retail investment demand for the yellow metal, a mainstream asset that generates sustained and stable returns, Wang said.

As the record-breaking pace of gold purchases by central banks worldwide continues to attract attention, retail investor interest in gold is likely to remain high, he added.

Central banks worldwide continued their strong appetite for gold, setting a new first-quarter record for net purchases, according to the latest report by the WGC. Official global gold reserves grew by a net 228 metric tons in the first quarter, surpassing the previous first-quarter record set in 2013 and marking a 68 percent increase compared to the five-year quarterly average, it said.

Gold prices have soared in recent months, reaching a series of record highs as investors anticipate a potential decline in interest rates in the United States. Central bank gold purchases, a trend that began in 2022, have further con-

**5.94**  
percent

year-on-year growth rate of China's gold consumption in the first quarter

tributed to this upward momentum, with Türkiye, China and India leading the way, said the council.

"The strong start reinforces the view that central bank demand will remain robust in 2024," it said.

The People's Bank of China continued its purchasing streak, adding 57 tons to its gold reserves in the first quarter, marking the 17th consecutive month of increases. This strategic accumulation has bolstered China's gold holdings to 2,262 tons, as the country seeks to diversify its reserves.

According to the China Gold Association, China's gold consumption rose 5.94 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, with consumption of the precious metal by the world's largest consumer amounting to 308.91 tons.

Louise Street, senior markets analyst at the council, said a number of factors are behind the recent surge, including heightened geopolitical risk and ongoing macroeconomic uncertainty driving safe-haven demand for gold.

In addition, the continued and resolute demand from central banks and increased net buying in the derivatives market have all contributed to the higher price of gold, Street said.

"Looking ahead, 2024 is likely to produce a much stronger return for gold than we anticipated at the beginning of the year, based on its recent performance," Street added.



A shopper tries on a gold bracelet at a jewelry store in Chongqing.  
SUN KAIFANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A view of a Tesla showroom in Shanghai. WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Tesla secures major construction permit

US automaker eyes early 2025 launch for Shanghai energy storage project

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

With its construction permit obtained on Monday, US electric vehicle maker Tesla's energy storage project in Lin-gang, eastern Shanghai — the first of its kind outside the United States — is expected to break ground this month and enter mass production in the first quarter of 2025.

The news was announced on Monday on the official WeChat account of Lin-gang Special Area, which was included in 2019 as part of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone. It was less than three months after Tesla signed an agreement with the local government to locate such an energy storage facility in Lin-gang.

Covering some 200,000 square meters, Tesla's new energy storage project has attracted total investment of 1.45 billion yuan (\$200 million). The plant is set to produce 10,000 Megapack units — advanced battery systems designed for large-scale energy projects — annually, which translates into nearly 40 gigawatt-hours of energy storage capacity.

Each Megapack can store more than 3 megawatt-hours each. Together, they are set to provide essential energy storage and grid support.

Tesla confirmed the intention of building an energy storage project in Lin-gang in December. This followed Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory, which broke ground in January 2019 and went operational at the end of the same year.

The energy storage plant in Lin-gang is an important optimization of Tesla's global production layout and "visionary" investment for the future of sustainable energy, the company said in a news release.

China's incremental new-type energy storage capacity spiked 150 percent year-on-year to 46.6 GWh in 2023 and its compound annual growth rate will exceed 30 percent between 2024 and 2030, said the China Energy Storage Alliance.

For the first time, the development of new-type energy storage has been written into the Government Work Report released in March.

Tesla's rapid progress in Lin-gang can be partly attributed to the welcoming stance and convenient services provided by the local government. Ever since Tesla expressed its new investment intention in December, Lin-gang provided a special "project service package", which can help the company streamline all the processes it needs to take for the new project.

"A construction project will include the coordination of different government departments and it can be quite confusing for a company, especially when its investment intention is not very clear at the very beginning. The package can help the company have an overview of the services the local government can provide and which requirements it needs to meet," said Min Zhiguang, deputy director of Lin-gang's approval and review center.

"When problems arise in launching the new project, the package provides a one-stop service mechanism which can link different government departments. Such efficiency can address the company's problems seamlessly," he added.

Global NEV leader Tesla has faced many challenges in the stock market back in its home country. Its stock price has fallen 31 percent so far this year, leading to speculation that Tesla should perhaps be removed from the so-called Magnificent Seven among listed US tech behemoths.

But a silver lining seems to be appearing for Tesla recently in the Chinese market. Upon the recent visit made by its CEO Elon Musk to China in late April, sources said that the Chinese government may have offered partial support for Tesla to test its autonomous driving system in the Chinese market.

## New rate swap contract in the offing

By ZHOU LANXU  
and LIU ZIZHENG

In a bid to expand the opening-up of financial markets, China will launch a key standardized interest rate swap contract under the Swap Connect, and continue to waive clearing fees, as the program approaches its first anniversary.

Experts said the new measures will be in line with global market practices and further attract overseas investor participation in China's bond and derivatives markets.

The Swap Connect, which commenced exactly a year back, is a connection mechanism between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong that facilitates offshore investors executing interest rate derivatives transactions with investors in the mainland.

The country's central bank, the People's Bank of China, said on Monday that the Swap Connect will incorporate interest rate swap contracts with payment cycles based on the International Monetary Market or IMM dates, which are highly standardized and aligned with the mainstream trading contracts in global markets.

The move, experts said, responds to investor demand for more standardized products under the Swap Connect to optimize their global risk management.

The connection program will also launch contract compression services, which allow investors to compress eligible interest rate swap contracts with opposite buy and sell directions, thus helping reduce capital costs for trading, the PBOC said.

Also, the fee discount policy for the Swap Connect will be extended for another year, with the transaction and clearing fees via the Swap Connect fully waived.

The package of measures would further meet investors' diversified risk management needs and effectively reduce the cost of taking part in the Swap Connect, thus helping attract more foreign institutional investors to the Chinese bond market and advance the internationalization of the renminbi, the PBOC said.

Tan Yueheng, chairman and executive director of investment bank BOCOM International Holdings Co Ltd, said the enhancement measures are in line with international investors' trading practices, indicating that the renminbi interest rate swap market will further integrate with the global markets.

Xu Zhaoxing, head of Investment Bank China, Deutsche Bank, which is a dealer of the Swap Connect, said that international investors are positive about the launch of interest rate swap contracts that have payment cycles based on IMM dates, which will further assist with their risk management, while the contract compression services will help them reduce costs.

Li Bing, head of Asia-Pacific at Bloomberg, which provides trading services for the connection program, said the Swap Connect has increasingly emerged as a popular channel for foreign institutional investors to hedge the interest rate risks associated with their rising investments in the onshore bond market.

Official data showed that, as of the end of April, 58 overseas institutional investors from more than 10 countries and regions have conducted more than 3,600 interest rate swap transactions via the Swap Connect, with a total principal amount of nearly 1.77 trillion yuan (\$244.64 billion).

"With the enhancement of Swap Connect, trading activity is expected to further increase," Li said.

The optimization of the Swap Connect came after the China Securities Regulatory Commission released a series of measures to expand the mutual access between the capital markets of the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, demonstrating the country's continuous efforts in financial opening-up.

Oswald Chan in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

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### Briefly

#### Reverse repos add \$281m to liquidity

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281.48 million) of seven-day, 1.8 percent reverse repos on Tuesday, to keep liquidity reasonable and ample. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

#### Freight on China-Europe trains grows

China-Europe freight train services saw solid growth from January to April, with continuous improvements to the transport capacity, efficiency and service quality. The number of China-Europe freight train services increased by 10 percent year-on-year to 6,184 trips in the first four months, China State Railway Group Co Ltd (China Railway) said. About 675,000 twenty-foot equivalent units or TEUs of goods were transported by the freight trains during this period, up 11 percent year-on-year.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Bayer sees rise of more innovative drugs

By ZHENG YIRAN  
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With China offering a constantly improving business environment, deeper industrial collaboration and more innovation, multinational corporations in the pharmaceutical industry and Chinese startups will have more growth opportunities, thereby bringing more innovative drugs to the market, said an executive of German life sciences company Bayer.

Juergen Eckhardt, executive vice-president, said the changes in China's pharmaceutical business environment over the past 30 years have been "dramatic".

He also heads Leaps by Bayer and the company's pharmaceuticals business development and licensing division.

A venture capitalist since 2002, he has served on more than 25 company boards. He first visited China in 1988. During his latest visit to Beijing in April, he said the developments in life sciences are "rapid", and that a number of scientific innovations are happening everyday.

Eckhardt said: "China has emerged as a key global innovation source in life sciences, thanks to academic collaborations for advancing scientific research, particularly in biotechnology and medicine.



Juergen Eckhardt

"We have seen a number of pioneers emerging, who had made great contributions to driving next-generation drug innovations.

"The improvement in the country's business environment is also encouraging. Over the years, we have carried out more than 100 research collaboration projects, which led to the discovery and structural analyses of novel targets."

In November 2023, Bayer announced a partnership with Shanghai Pharma to establish a new site of its incubator Bayer Co Lab Shanghai. The first of its kind in China, it focuses on cutting-edge innovations in cell and gene therapy and oncology, aiming to foster early innovation and startups with Bayer's global innovation network and R&D expertise, and accelerating the conversion of scientific research outcomes into innovative treatments.

In April, the incubator officially kicked off the recruitment of local partners, mainly startups in China.

This year, Bayer and RTW Investments announced equity investments of \$35 million and \$127 million, respectively, in Jixing Phar-

maceuticals Ltd, a Shanghai-based biopharmaceutical company. The three parties joined forces to advance the development of Jixing's pipeline in the fields of cardiovascular diseases and ophthalmology.

Wang Hongwei, a professor with the School of Life Sciences and vice-president of Tsinghua University, said China's biopharmaceutical industry is still nascent as local companies started in the past decade, and industrial chains in various segments are still forming.

"Because they were born in a relatively new era, they have more advantages in innovation, entrepreneurship, flexibility and efficiency."

In terms of innovative drug development, wider and deeper collaborations are increasingly seen between Chinese startups and biopharmaceutical MNCs. The former bring out new possible clinical-stage discoveries, while the latter focus more on offering support in finance, techniques, as well as talent in the subsequent stages, Wang said.

"This kind of collaboration has already been formed as an innovative ecosystem in China," he said.

Currently, Bayer operates two research and development and innovation centers and six production plants in China. Over the past

five years, Bayer has obtained approval for nearly 30 new prescription drugs or new indications in China, with new drugs being launched in China almost simultaneously with the other parts of the world, latest data from the company showed.

Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said at an earlier forum that China will take solid steps to accelerate the development of emerging industries.

The NDRC will constantly carry out practical measures, especially in the sectors of life sciences, high-end manufacturing and digital technologies, he said.

Seeing rising business opportunities, a number of pharmaceutical MNCs have been laying more emphasis on forging local partnerships in the country. Ever since China optimized COVID-19 control measures last year, more than 20 senior executives from healthcare MNCs, including Bayer, Takeda, Abbot, Medtronic and Merck, have visited the country to forge collaborations.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said MNCs working with local partners to take advantage of complementary capabilities is an inevitable trend.

## BUSINESS

# Med-tech of China gaining popularity

AstraZeneca exec: Chinese medical innovations benefit patients globally

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai  
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While taking strides to go global, China's medical technology sector has shown signs of overtaking and leading the world in some fields, such as cell therapy, gene editing, various medical equipment and certain cancer treatments, said a senior executive of a multinational pharmaceutical company.

A large proportion of the business in these areas is in overseas markets, said Leon Wang, executive vice-president, international and China unit president at AstraZeneca, during a media interview at the seventh AstraZeneca China Ecosystem Conference, which wrapped up in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, on Saturday.

According to AstraZeneca, the company has proactively promoted two-way exchanges and cooperation in the global health innovation ecosystem to link market opportunities around the globe over the past few years. More than 130 innovative Chinese enterprises have been involved in such initiatives of the company since 2023.

"Also, developing nations have a strong demand for medical technology from China. Although some such domestic innovations are still a bit homogeneous, they are a rarity in some other developing countries," said Wang during the conference that attracted nearly 100 foreign guests.

"So we organize local enterprises to expand business in many other developing countries so as to truly realize that Chinese medical innovations benefit patients around the world," he added.

China is a base for developing country markets for AstraZeneca. Wang said that reality gives the company an edge in understanding such markets well and knowing which countries to begin with when Chinese enterprises kick off their plans to go global.

"We usually recommend they begin with big countries that are also very friendly to China. Many such countries, such as Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Mexico, have populations of over 100 million, which translates into substantial market demand," he said.

For example, Amoy Diagnostics Co Ltd, or AmoyDx, based in Xiamen, Fujian province, and founded in 2008, has joined hands with AstraZeneca for a decade. The latter has supported the export of AmoyDx's products, including those used in gene mutation tests and nucleic acid

extraction, to more than 50 countries and regions.

Since 2020, AstraZeneca has also supported the products of AmoyDx to enter 32 oncology-related molecular diagnostic laboratories in 16 countries and regions.

Currently, AmoyDx is collaborating with AstraZeneca in the development of oncology diagnostic methods for several cancer types, including lung cancer, ovarian cancer and prostate cancer.

Industry insiders expect that the enthusiasm for domestic innovative therapies to go overseas will continue this year.

According to data in the public domain, as of the end of April, there had been 25 foreign licensing projects for domestic innovative drugs, a 56 percent year-on-year increase, and total cumulative transactions exceeded \$10 billion. The 25 projects involved multiple areas, such as antibodies and antibody-drug conjugate (ADC) drugs, a newly emerging class of highly potent pharmaceutical therapies, usually for treating cancer.

Ding Sheng, director of the Beijing-based Global Health Drug Discovery Institute, said the reason that China-developed ADC drugs are favored by multinational pharmaceutical companies is the increased domestic policy support for research and development and innovation as well as the rising R&D strength of domestic enterprises.

"Although domestic R&D of ADC drugs started late, the technology of domestic players in this sector has caught up quickly, and is currently almost no different from advanced international levels," he said.

During the conference themed "Accelerating health innovation, deepening global partnership" in Wuxi, AstraZeneca and five Wuxi-based local innovative biomedical enterprises released a collaborative overseas plan for this year. The initiative is aimed at assisting the enterprises to facilitate cross-border cooperation and exchanges in pharmaceutical innovation.

Also, AstraZeneca and an international medical research center in Saudi Arabia announced they would further promote in-depth cooperation between China and the Middle Eastern nation in the fields of medicine and healthcare. The two sides will bring the experience of China's medical innovation to drive the development of Saudi Arabia's life sciences industry. Also, this will accelerate the expansion of innovative Chinese enterprises in the broader Middle East via Saudi Arabia.



Visitors check out an aircraft during a demonstration event in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## EHang targets pilotless aircraft biz in Middle East

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou  
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EHang Holdings Ltd, one of the world's leading urban air mobility technology companies, will help foster collaboration and communication between the civil aviation authorities of China and the United Arab Emirates to expedite commercial flights of pilotless aircraft in the Middle East, a senior company executive said.

"After securing approval for demo flights with passengers and conducting the first flight, we are poised to continue leading the change of urban air mobility in the UAE and beyond," said Hu Huazhi, the founder, chairman and CEO of EHang.

Hu made the remarks after the company's pilotless electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft EH216-S completed its first demo flight with passengers in Abu Dhabi earlier this month. It was the first flight of its kind in the Middle East.

Another autonomous aircraft, the

EH216-F — it is designed for high-rise firefighting — and the EH216-L aerial logistics aircraft, made their debut flights in the UAE, showcasing a diverse range of urban air mobility use scenarios for pilotless eVTOL aircraft.

The EH216 series was seen as a transformative solution in addressing urban mobility challenges, such as emissions and congestion, the company said.

The pilotless aircraft features a compact fuselage, high redundancy and intelligent cluster management, enabling safety and efficiency as well as scalable operations, in order to provide safe, autonomous and eco-friendly operations, it said.

"In close coordination with partners and government entities in the UAE, we are actively engaged in the design and establishment of eVTOL vertiports, in preparation for the launch of commercial routes," Hu said.

The company's EH216-S has obtained the world's first type certificate, production certificate and

standard airworthiness certificate for passenger-carrying pilotless eVTOL aircraft issued by the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

EHang expanded into the UAE market by joining the Smart and Autonomous Vehicle Industries Cluster and establishing a strategic partnership with Wings Logistics Hub in December.

It further established strategic collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Investment Office, a platform that empowers growth of the private sector, and its local strategic partner Multi Level Group, a premier fintech and digital transformation solutions provider, in April to drive eVTOL development in the UAE.

The Nasdaq-listed company is looking to set up its regional headquarters in Abu Dhabi to promote business activities with local partners across manufacturing, flight operations, research and development, training and maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities.

The Abu Dhabi office will provide EHang with a comprehensive range

of growth-enabling support, including data and information related to establishing and operating a manufacturing and industrial services business in Abu Dhabi, setting up links with the Abu Dhabi ecosystem and international trade opportunities.

The office would continue to work with leading global players to accelerate the adoption of smart and autonomous vehicles across air, land and sea, according to Badr Al-Oloma, director-general of the office.

"The collaboration with Multi Level Group, and air mobility leaders such as EHang, will play a key role in driving Abu Dhabi's efforts in promoting eVTOLs to transform the way people and goods are transported and in advancing the future of mobility globally," said Al-Oloma.

"The seamless integration of technology and aviation represents a significant leap forward for our nation," said Mohamed Al Daheri, a board member of MLG, after taking a ride on the EH216-S.

## LNG-powered ship boosts Yangtze transportation

By TAN YINGZI in Chongqing  
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At 3:30 pm on Saturday, the Yangtze River transportation history added a new chapter when a new liquefied natural gas-powered ship, the *Innovation 5*, loaded with 5,400 metric tons of imported grain, arrived at Chongqing Luohuang Port from Zhoushan, Zhejiang province.

It is the first time that a 10,000-ton seagoing vessel directly reached the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. It is also the country's longest direct shipping route, from the East China Sea to a river port in Southwest China.

Once the cargo is unloaded, the ship will make its return trip on Monday.

Hailed as a major economic engine, the Yangtze River Economic Belt, comprising nine provinces and two municipalities, accounts for more than 40 percent of both the country's population and GDP.

Chongqing, a municipality of 32 million people, is a major industrial base of China and boasts 80 percent



The *Innovation 5*, an LNG-powered vessel, is berthed at Luohuang Port in Chongqing on Saturday. WANG QUANCHAO / XINHUA

of the cargo throughput of the entire upper reaches of the Yangtze River.

The new route will take 18 days from Zhoushan to Chongqing, far less than the 38 days taken by the traditional one, which requires changes from a seagoing vessel to a riverboat at the middle reaches of the Yangtze

River because the conventional 10,000-ton seagoing ships cannot pass through the Three Gorges Dam.

The Zhoushan-Chongqing direct route will not only save on the ship-changing fee of 110,000 yuan (\$15,200) but also reduce the cargo damage and loss to less than 0.3 per-

cent, saving about 20 yuan per ton in freight rates, according to the Chongqing Port Logistics Office.

"In the past, due to various reasons such as waterway restrictions, the seagoing ships departing from Zhoushan could only reach the Wuhan section of the Yangtze River," said Wu Jiafu, captain of the *Innovation 5*.

In order to make the direct seariver route possible to Chongqing, since 2021, the Chongqing Port Logistics Office has worked with Wuhan Innovation River-Sea Transportation Co to design a new river-sea ship type that can pass through the Three Gorges Dam. In May 2022, the company launched the construction of two river-sea ships — the *Innovation 5* is one of them.

Powered by LNG, the *Innovation 5* is smaller than the conventional seagoing vessels with a total length of 130 meters, a molded width of 16.20 meters, a molded depth of 8.50 meters, a design draft of 6.1 meters and a cargo capacity of 9,832 tons.

## Auto part firms eye opportunities in Central Europe

By LIU YUKUN  
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A growing number of Chinese companies are venturing overseas and launching localized production to embrace globalization, with Hungary emerging as a hot spot of investment, thanks to its strategic location, favorable policies and proactive efforts to attract Chinese auto part manufacturers, said business executives.

This shift comes amid increasing demand from foreign automakers who require prompt responses to their needs and their growing concerns over supply chain security against the backdrop of deglobalization and geopolitical conflicts, they said.

Nanjing Chervon-Auto Precision Technology Co Ltd is among those

Chinese firms that have set up shop in Hungary. The Shanghai-listed automotive component maker invested around 60 million euros (\$64.77 million) in 2021, and finished factory construction in 2023.

Shi Jiaqi, the company's director of overseas projects, explained the rationale behind its expansion.

"Generally speaking, our overseas orders account for 40-50 percent of our total orders, with around 80 percent of those originating from the European market. Establishing our overseas production base became inevitable to better understand and promptly respond to customer needs. We also sensed strong demand from our foreign clients who favor suppliers capable of auto part production near their sites to avoid instability from deglobalization and geopolitical conflicts,

which is also an important reason for us to set up overseas branches," Shi said.

"Moreover, in the past, when US, German or even Japanese automakers ventured outside their borders, their supply chains followed suit. Similarly, as Chinese design enters the global market, its supply chains will inevitably be stimulated to go overseas," he added.

The company chose Hungary after considering various factors like policy stability, labor force and technical background.

"We also encounter challenges such as establishing a robust supply chain in Hungary that aligns with our requirements and ensuring technology and skills transfer from China to our overseas factory. However, we are glad to see several attempts have stimulated local

industries and generated employment opportunities," Shi said.

The company also aims to establish a strong research and development center within three to five years in Hungary to better serve its European clients, he said.

Zhejiang Shuanghuan Driveline Co Ltd is another auto part maker that has established a presence in the Central European nation. The Shenzhen-listed company focuses on the R&D, manufacturing and sales of gears and their assembly, with products covering traditional vehicles, new energy vehicles and trains.

"Currently, our announced investment in Hungary is 122 million euros for the first phase of the project," said Wang Binlian, director of overseas projects at Zhejiang Shuanghuan Driveline Co Ltd. "In the coming

months, we will also sign a long-term investment cooperation memorandum with the local government."

Wang said that in today's climate of deglobalization and geopolitical conflicts, automakers are increasingly prioritizing supply chain security over simply minimizing costs. This shift favors suppliers capable of auto part production near automakers' production sites, which is why the company is establishing an overseas plant to meet client demands.

"Several Central European countries, including Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, have been the main destinations for Chinese companies' site visits," Wang added. "Considering factors such as costs, logistics convenience, policy friendliness and investment stability, we ultimately chose Hungary."

Hungary's proactive approach to welcoming auto manufacturing is evident not only to Wang, but also to Zhang Taixin, who is director of

Halms Hungary KFT, Zhejiang Huashuo Technology Co Ltd's overseas branch. Huashuo produces various forms of auto parts. Its Hungary site began construction in April 2022 and commenced production in March 2023.

Zhang highlighted the recent energy upgrade in Debrecen, Hungary, where Halms is based. The move was reportedly aimed at supporting auto and auto part manufacturers and securing reliable energy supplies for them, alongside government incentives and subsidies to attract foreign investment.

"We envision a strong R&D center at the headquarters, accompanied by powerful global production and manufacturing facilities. We leverage our global production capacity to address regional market imbalances, thus avoiding market fragmentation that does not serve manufacturers or consumers," Zhang said.

## BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Intelligent farming boosts yields, efficiency

High-tech allows year-round output at cutting-edge greenhouses

By LI JIAYING and LIU ZIZHENG

At a vegetable cultivation facility in Deqing county, Zhejiang province, clusters of tomatoes hang from branches like red and green Christmas ornaments, while workers shuttle back and forth, busily harvesting, sorting and packaging the fresh produce for distribution nationwide.

Spanning nearly 40 mu (2.67 hectares), Shuimu Vegetable Factory is the first agricultural complex in the country to possess national independent intellectual property rights. In contrast to traditional agricultural bases, the digital vegetable factory requires only 10 staffers.

The facility said its advanced agricultural facilities and equipment have employed techniques such as soilless cultivation and water-saving irrigation, along with an intelligent automated control system, thus breaking the seasonal constraints of traditional planting and enabling uninterrupted year-round production.

For instance, tomato cultivation at the factory has achieved full-life-cycle digital management, ensuring not only controlled product quality, but also reduced waste. With an annual output of 1.25 million kilograms of tomatoes, it can meet annual consumption demand of nearly 50,000 people, it said.

"At present, during the critical period of vegetable sales, we are employing soilless cultivation and full-scale digital management. Stable electricity supply enables us to achieve uninterrupted planting and cultivation," said Alfa, the factory's director.

The local power supplier has helped inspect distribution transformers and lines in the factory, conducted in-depth inspections of smart greenhouses, and checked facilities such as self-service fertilization machines and heat pump systems to ensure seamless electricity usage, he said.

"Following their suggestions, we replaced the old natural gas boiler heating equipment with geothermal or photovoltaic equipment to reduce energy costs. Now, energy consumption of heating equipment has been reduced by about 50 percent, saving a considerable amount



An employee checks rice growing status at an intelligent greenhouse in Wuhu, Anhui province, on May 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

of power costs," said the factory director.

To serve the digital transformation of the local agricultural industry and boost rural vitalization, Deqing has ramped up efforts to construct its village-level grid network, providing one-on-one electricity services and actively promoting smart energy management actions.

The move aims to enhance the reliability of farms' electrical equipment, reduce their annual operating and maintenance costs, reduce emissions of pollutants and contribute to green and prosperous rural development, said State Grid Deqing County Power Supply Co.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the rapid development of smart farming will inevitably result in surging power demand. Therefore, it is of great significance to ensure a stable and safe power supply to relevant entities.

"The power supplier should take full account of the rural areas' different characteristics, as well as the different intelligent technologies they have adopted, so as to customize service plans that suit them most. A

good match between the power supplier and the power consumer can help reduce energy loss and thereby increase the efficiency of energy utilization," said Zhou.

He added that the distributed generation of electricity should be further promoted in smart farming, which not only relieves stress on the main grid, but also strengthens the stability of the power supply for urban areas and industrial production.

Similarly, at a greenhouse in Zhendong village, Santang town, Anhui province, a dozen workers are busy harvesting Shanghai bok choy vegetables.

Currently, production and sales of bok choy in the area have entered the peak season. After weighing and packing, the vegetables are transported to the storage facility before being shipped in bulk to the Yangtze River Delta region such as Shanghai and Nanjing, Jiangsu province.

Santang is one of the major bok choy planting bases in the country. In recent years, some local growers have increased their yields and income by adopting new technologies and new equipment for large-scale cultivation.

"I have planted 60 mu of bok choy

this year. All the watering equipment has been upgraded to be digitally automated, and by simply pressing a button, the irrigation process begins. New technologies and equipment have increased both efficiency and income," said Wang Weng-peng, owner of the greenhouse in Zhendong village.

With help from cutting-edge technologies, data points such as temperature, humidity, soil fertility and light intensity can be monitored in real-time, ensuring suitable conditions for vegetable cultivation, Wang said.

"With stable and sufficient electricity connected to the greenhouse, the intelligent management system achieves higher production and saves a significant amount in costs," Wang said, adding that improved conditions lead to shortened growing periods of about 20 days, and with seven to eight harvests per year, local incomes have been significantly increased, thus encouraging more farmers to engage in greenhouse-based vegetable cultivation.

Vegetable planting area in Santang town has now reached 800 mu, with an annual output of over 100,000 metric tons. Greenhouse vegetable cultivation has become a

signature industry in the area.

"Smart farming lays a solid foundation for the country's rural vitalization," said Cui Ningbo, a professor at the college of economics and management of Northeast Agricultural University.

Cui said smart farming enables rural areas to efficiently allocate local resources and develop a series of new industries, including drones for crop protection, self-driving tractors and rural e-commerce.

Such smart technologies also help reduce uncertainty in agricultural production, thereby lowering production costs and ensuring sustainable growth of farming income, Cui added.

In rural areas of Wulian county, Shandong province, intelligent natural environment-simulative equipment allows mushroom greenhouses to operate year-round.

Integrating research and development, production, processing and sales of edible fungi yields, the edible and medicinal mushroom science and technology demonstration park in Wulian has a total investment of 50 million yuan (\$6.9 million) and covers an area of more than 30,000 square meters. It mainly grows high-end edible fungi such

as *Dictyophora indusiata* and *Cor-dyceps militaris*, which are sold to first-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, driving the development of high-end fungi industries in more than a dozen surrounding villages and facilitating employment of local farmers.

Since the growth of mushrooms involves high requirements related to temperature, humidity, light and other environmental conditions, cultivation requires a complete set of electrified bionic cultivation system technologies.

Therefore, each greenhouse is equipped with temperature and humidity sensors, which can complete automated monitoring and control, realizing the transformation from traditional planting methods to digitalized and technology-driven modalities.

However, such smart systems also require stable and reliable power support. "Recently, the temperature in the greenhouses was relatively high, and irrigation was needed every day. With the electrical equipment guaranteed, we feel more at ease," said a manager surnamed Gao, who is in charge of the park.

"We have set up a special power supply service team to provide door-to-door services and solve power problems on-site according to the needs of each stage in order to ensure the steady development of the local mushroom industry," said State Grid Wulian County Power Supply Co.

"Changes in rural populations and development of rural industries will lead to a series of far-reaching impacts on the planning, construction and operation of rural power infrastructure and services," said Yan Hu, a researcher with the State Grid Energy Research Institute, in an earlier interview.

In recent years, China has issued a series of policies to advance the digitalization of agriculture, stressing further efforts to utilize information technologies — such as the internet of things, big data, blockchain and artificial intelligence — in agricultural production.

For instance, according to an action plan published by the central authorities in December, agricultural entities and relevant service enterprises in China will strive to develop precision farming based on key data concerning weather, soil and pests in the next three years, thereby continuously improving agricultural production efficiency.

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## Nurturing specialty industries fundamental to rural development success

By LIU ZIZHENG  
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Over the past few years, farmers across China have stepped up efforts to develop specialty industries and promote industrial upgrading based on local characteristics, which has not only bolstered the country's rural vitalization, but also contributed to the development of new quality productive forces.

Meanwhile, State Grid Corp of China, a State-owned electric utility firm, said it has given sound support to the development of rural industries through continuous efforts in optimizing customer services and ensuring stable power supplies.

In Shijiagou village of Yantai, East China's Shandong province, over 20,000 dark blue solar panels are neatly arranged on the roofs of a breeding farm, converting sunlight into green electricity. Beneath the solar panels, flocks of white-feathered chickens leisurely peck at their feed.

"Utilizing the advantageous conditions of large roof areas, unobstructed sunlight and ample illumination at the breeding farm, we have combined agricultural breeding with photovoltaic power generation, establishing a harmonious co-location of green electricity," said Sun Ximin, the person in charge of the breeding farm.

Co-location, also known as agrivoltaics or dual-use solar, involves agricultural activities underneath solar panels — or adjacent to solar panels.

The innovative agrivoltaic farming model has not only improved land use efficiency, but also brought villagers additional income. This year, the farm has raised over 30 million white-feathered chickens, Sun added.

In addition, the model saves electricity costs, achieving the dual-empowerment of enterprise development and green electricity.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the agrivoltaic farming model sets a good example of ecological environment improvement.

"It enables farmers to utilize land resources more effectively. For regions with insufficient land resources, such a model could help avoid possible resource conflicts," said Zhou.

"Meanwhile, Chinese people's enthusiasm for participating in photovoltaics advancement, energy transition and low-carbon development could also be notably enhanced."

He added that there is still ample room for the model to expand further. Efforts should be made to promote the maintenance of relevant devices and improve energy storage technologies, based on local characteristics.

According to State Grid Penglai Power Supply Co of Yantai, Sun's agrivoltaics farm utilizes 55,000 square meters of idle roof space, installing 5.9 megawatts of solar panels, with an annual power generation capacity of approximately 8.4 million kilowatt-hours.

When it comes to the whole city, there are 81,342 distributed photovoltaic households, with a total installed capacity of nearly 3 million kW.

The company said it aims to further promote the integrated development of "power supply + energy efficiency", and ensure the smooth implementation of photovoltaic power generation projects.

Efforts will also be made to strengthen daily inspections, improve relevant facilities and integrate agrivoltaic farming models into the local power grid, the company added.

Around 750 kilometers away, a more complete industrial chain of *hanfu*, the traditional attire of the Han ethnic group, is expected to take shape in Caoxian county, Heze, Shandong, this year.

Renowned for manufacturing cost-effective products, Caoxian achieved 722 billion yuan (\$1 billion) in *hanfu* sales last year.

The county currently has a total of 2,282 firms, 13,989 online stores and 100,000 staff members dedicated to the *hanfu* business.

Since the beginning of this year, Caoxian has ramped up efforts to build a new manufacturing park, which is expected to support the upgrading of the local *hanfu* e-commerce industry.

Zhou, the researcher, said that in recent years, consumers in China have shown an increasing preference for products with Chinese cultural elements, including *hanfu* attire.

Therefore, it is necessary for the

country to further optimize and supplement relevant resources, especially power resources. Electricity suppliers should continue to improve both the accuracy and efficiency of customer services, said Zhou.

In addition, during major holidays and promotional activities, power suppliers should open "green channels" for *hanfu* manufacturers to ensure stable supplies, thereby contributing to the recovery and upgrading of domestic consumption, Zhou added.

His remarks dovetail with what the local power supplier has done to help the county expand its *hanfu* industrial chain.

State Grid's Caoxian Power Supply Co said it had made it more convenient for local customers to obtain their services.

The company said it takes into account all the local *hanfu* business clusters. A series of service stations have been set up in large communities and villages home to *hanfu* factories, e-commerce firms, warehouses, and logistics outlets.

The company said it has also compiled a detailed list of local electric facilities and established an emergency response team that is on call 24/7. Whenever there is an issue, the team will be on site within 10 minutes.

Cooperating with the local government, the company regularly sends staff members to visit *hanfu* firms, so as to gather their suggestions for power supply and keep abreast of industrial development.



Consumers try on *hanfu*, the traditional attire of the Han ethnic group, at a production base in Caoxian county, Heze, Shandong province, in March. LIANG BEN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

"The power supplier guides us to use electricity more smartly. Thanks to them, now we have no worries on this front," said the owner of a local *hanfu* factory.

The company has so far built 11 new electric transformers for Caoxian, connecting 6.9 kilometers of power supply lines, which has significantly empowered industrial upgrading in the county.

The moves came after the release of this year's No 1 Central Document in February, which encourages rural areas to actively develop specialty industries and cultivate local brands based on their own characteristics.

The document also said China

will continue to optimize the agro-processing industry utilizing intelligent technologies, construct a better logistics system for agricultural products and promote the high-quality development of rural e-commerce.

As a result, this year the country is expected to accelerate the construction of a modern rural industrial system, and further promote the integration of the primary, secondary and tertiary industries.

The document also stressed efforts to consolidate and improve rural power grids, as well as drive the development of distributed renewable energies for rural areas.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Manila acting like the snake that bit the farmer that came to its aid

Atin Ito, or "This is ours", a Filipino nongovernmental organization, is reportedly organizing some Philippine fishermen to fish and organize a regatta in the waters near China's Huangyan Island this week at the same time the China Coast Guard vessels and some Chinese fishing boats are carrying out a maritime rescue exercise in the same sea area.

The organization has also invited some international reporters and observers to join the voyage to monitor and document the situation and, it claims, "witness firsthand the challenges faced by Filipinos in those waters".

Although it alleges that the regatta is not "a provocation to incite conflict", by emphasizing that the activity is intended to "reclaim our space and assert our territorial integrity", it has made it clear that the "civic" activity in Chinese waters around Huangyan Island is exactly that — a provocation. It is a move that is intended to provoke a response by which it can portray Beijing in a negative light.

The Philippines never challenged China's sovereignty and jurisdiction over the island before the 1990s. It was in the late 1990s, that the Philippines started advancing its territorial claim over some Chinese islands in the South China Sea, including the Huangyan Island and Ren'ai Reef, on the grounds of "geographic proximity" and on the excuse that the islands are located within the 200 nautical miles of the Philippine exclusive economic zone according to a one-sided interpretation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In 1999, the Philippine Navy deliberately ran a World-War II landing craft, the BRP *Sierra Madre*, aground on China's Ren'ai Reef, claiming it had a hull leak that needed repairing as an excuse. Despite Beijing's request that the vessel be removed, the Philippines has not done so, instead it has occupied the vessel with rotated troops, to create the impression that the reef and nearby waters "belong to" the Philippines. And about 15 years ago, the Philippines amended the Philippine Territorial Sea Baselines Act to brazenly include the Chinese islands, including Huangyan Island, into its territory.

Despite the insatiable appetite Manila has demonstrated in its desire to gobble up Chinese territory, Beijing has exercised great restraint and displayed considerable composure and always borne the bigger picture of Sino-Philippine ties in mind, insisting on resolving the disputes through talks.

Beijing has not only allowed the Philippines to supply necessary life support to the military personnel it stations on the stranded old ship but has also given a green light to Philippine fishing boats to fish in the waters near the Huangyan Island, excluding its lagoon.

However, after the Ferdinand Marcos Jr government took office about two years ago, the once tranquil waters were quickly stirred up by its shortsighted betting on taking a free ride on the United States' China containment strategy to help whitewash its looting.

The US has willingly let it do so as it wants to use the Philippines as proxy to provoke and confront China. The push-and-shoves the Philippine coast guard has initiated between its vessels and those of its Chinese counterpart, and the cat-and-mouse game the Philippines has been playing with its fishing boats in the waters are both aimed at prompting Beijing to act as recklessly as Manila, so as to provide the US side with an excuse to interfere in the bilateral affair.

The activity organized by Atin Ito in the waters near Huangyan Island is another attempt to incite a response whereby China can be portrayed as a bully, and a threat to regional peace and stability. The Marcos government, encouraged by the US, clearly has no qualms about using civilians, no matter the potentially dire consequences that may arise should a mishap occur. Indeed, it appears Atin Ito is speculating on that exact possibility.

If the Philippine side insists on taking advantage of China's restraint with such dangerous stunts, it will ultimately result in a lose-lose situation, but one in which the Philippines will pay the higher price.

## Seoul should not let interference ruin ties

Meeting with his Republic of Korea counterpart Cho Tae-yul in Beijing on Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi remarked that China and the ROK are close neighbors and it should be natural for their foreign ministers to have frequent exchanges and "to come and go often".

That this has not been the case is due to the steady deterioration of ties after the ROK agreed to the deployment of a US missile defense system on its soil, and Seoul increasingly aligned the ROK with the United States' "Indo-Pacific" strategy, including membership of its China-excluding high-end semiconductor manufacturers' club.

Therefore, the fact that the meeting took place at all, and that both sides pledged to preserve the momentum of constructive engagement, is a positive sign that the ROK recognizes the need to reset its ties with China.

There is no fundamental conflict of interest between China and the ROK. As Wang urged, the two sides should strengthen their communication to eliminate misunderstandings and foster the right perceptions of each other so they can deepen their mutually beneficial cooperation, and be reliable and long-term partners for each other's development process.

This would be conducive to not only strengthening bilateral relations, but also promoting a fruitful trilateral summit of China, the ROK and Japan that is under discussion, and thus the future of the neighborhood going forward.

If the trilateral summit, which has been on hold since 2019, can be resumed soon, as Seoul anticipates, it has the potential to inject precious dynamism into the largely dormant discourse on trilateral cooperation, if not give impetus to restarting the long stalled negotiations on a trilateral free trade agreement.

The present state of China-ROK and China-Japan relations is not in line with the common interests of the three countries, and not what Beijing wants. But despite the reiteration of their common interest in improving bilateral relations, the Chinese and ROK foreign ministers both displayed prudence as to how things will play out, with Wang urging Seoul to "eliminate interference".

Although some domestic media have already read Cho's Beijing visit as his country adopting a change of approach, Wang was more cautious.

"I hope your current working visit will play a positive role in improving and developing China-ROK relations," Wang told his guest.

While Cho's visit may be a signal of Seoul's willingness to adjust its approach to improve relations with Beijing, as some optimistic Chinese analysts observed, the current state of bilateral relations does not allow for too much optimism at this point in time, considering the issues between the two sides, which, as has been observed, have "piled up like a mountain".

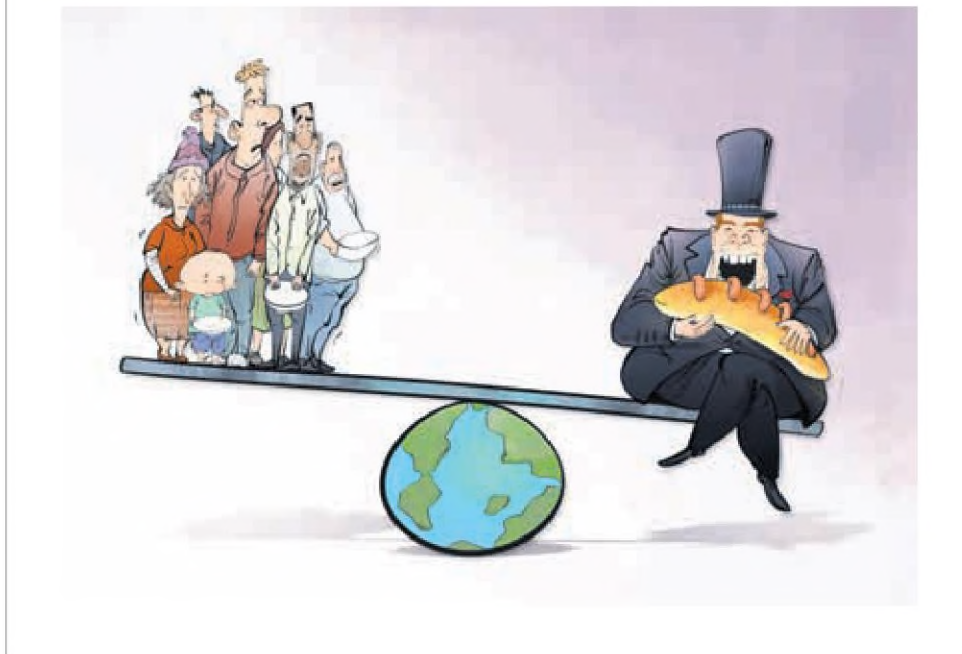
The ROK government's proactive participation in the US-led technological blockade against China has no doubt been high on Beijing's list of concerns. What irks Beijing even more is the ROK leader's personal ill-considered remarks on Beijing's core concerns and redlines, most notably regarding the Taiwan question. That was why the Chinese foreign minister urged Seoul to abide by the one-China principle and properly handle Taiwan-related issues.

It is to be hoped that Cho's visit does represent "an important step forward", as he expressed. But that will only be the case if Seoul is willing to make the necessary adjustments to work with Beijing to reboot bilateral relations.

Despite the downturn in their ties, economic and trade cooperation remains large-scale and complementary. Last year, the trade volume exceeded \$310 billion and there is still much potential to be tapped by deepening cooperation.

Beijing has repeatedly shown it is willing to work with Seoul. It remains for Seoul to show it is sincere in seeking a "healthier" relationship.

Cao Yi



## Opinion Line

## 'Big food' concept will grow to ensure Chinese rice bowls in Chinese hands

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, China has attached great importance to establishing and practicing the "big food" concept, which was put forward by the top leader during his days in Fujian province.

The Central Rural Work Conference in 2015 proposed establishing the concepts of "big agriculture" and "big food". In 2016, cultivating the "big food" concept was enshrined into the Central No 1 document. At the 2022 annual meetings of the nation's top legislature and top political advisory body, and during his inspection of Guangdong and Hunan provinces and other regions, the top leader repeatedly talked about the need to establish the "big food" concept.

Fujian took the lead. Over the past 30 years, while stabilizing grain production and ensuring food security, Fujian has built marine pastures and forest grain storage infrastructure, and developed modern agriculture on barren and saline-alkali lands, achieving remarkable results. Per unit yield of grain has

increased, while food supply has become abundant and diversified. Fujian is now one of China's main provinces producing and exporting vegetables.

As seen from Fujian's experience, establishing and practicing the "big food" concept, expanding the boundaries of traditional grain production, and optimizing the food supply structure can help meet the diversified food needs of consumers. The concept of "food" has extended from the narrow category of grain to broader food categories, and the food supply path has extended from cultivated land to entire land and resources.

To establish and practice the "big food" concept, China should give full play to the comparative advantages of its agricultural resources. China's cultivated land resources are limited, but it has rich grassland, woodland and marine lake resources, as well as vast stretches of wasteland and saline-alkali land. While protecting the ecological environment, all localities should develop advantageous and characteristic

agricultural products in light of local realities and achieve a balance between supply and demand of various types of food. All localities should speed up breakthroughs in core technologies such as machinery and equipment development, and breeding seedlings and tap the potential of food supply.

China is a big agricultural country with rich and diverse agricultural products, but the problem of smooth sales remains prominent in each "gold sale" season of agricultural products. This underlines the need to build a modern agricultural product logistics system and a national unified market in which agricultural products can be sent directly to consumers.

Establishing and practicing the "big food" concept can help China diversify its food structure, diversify food sources, promote sustainable food development and improve the resilience of food industry and supply chains, ensuring that Chinese rice bowls are firmly held in the hands of Chinese people.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## Reputation too comes with an expiry date

Two McDonald's branches, one in Zhengzhou, capital of Henan province, and another in Jinan, capital of Shandong province, have, it seems, found a solution for food that doesn't sell by the sell-by date — just replace the use-by label. Some journalists who did an undercover investigation earlier this year found that staff members at both restaurants were tampering with the food expiration labels. Back in 2012, CCTV had named a McDonald's restaurant that was reselling expired food. In 2021 and 2022, some stores were again exposed for

replacing expired food labels. McDonald's apologized on Monday and said they were cooperating with the local market regulatory bureau's probe. Discarding so much unused food means huge losses, after all. However, should consumers pay the price because of poor management in the kitchen?

The company claims that customers can enjoy the same quality and services at any McDonald's outlet. But it should be aware that any outlet's malpractices might affect its overall brand image and credibility. Not to mention its mul-

tiple outlets have been caught erring many times during the years.

The standards that are set are not just regulations; they are a commitment made to consumers. Failure to uphold these commitments concerns the company's integrity.

As of the end of 2023, McDonald's had 5,903 outlets in China and it is aiming to exceed 10,000 branches by 2028. The burger giant understands that standardization is the foundation of chain operations.

— BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## DPP authorities' WHA bid just a secessionist trick

The registration for the 77th World Health Assembly concluded on Monday, and the secessionist-minded authorities of Taiwan island have not received an invitation to participate.

The WHA will bring together health ministers and other governmental leaders from the World Health Organization's 194 member states from May 27 to June 1 to talk about accelerating the goal of health for all and ensuring the world has the resources needed to address the health challenges of the future.

But the primary goal of Taipei's bid to take part in the WHA was not to promote public health but to use their presence in the international meeting as evidence that the island is recognized as a separate entity from the Chinese mainland.

The great lengths Taipei goes to in its attempts to use the WHA as a means to carry out such "independence-seeking" public relations campaigns, in which it is encouraged by the United States, are generally

viewed as a waste of time and energy by the other participants.

That the Democratic Progressive Party authorities of Taiwan claimed that their absence from the WHA will cause a "gap" in global anti-epidemic efforts is a ridiculous effort to try and divert attention from their embarrassment, as the participants are well aware of the true purpose of its soliciting a WHA invitation. The WHA is not their "pro-independence" tool.

Taiwan is an inalienable part of China under the jurisdiction of the central authorities in Beijing. Beijing's position on the island's participation in the activities of international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, is consistent and clear. That is, it will only approve if the island's authorities uphold the one-China principle, as recognized by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1.

That means the Taiwan island, unless given approval by Beijing, has no basis, reason or right to participate

in the WHA. After coming to power in 2016, the DPP has refused to recognize the 1992 Consensus and been hell-bent on its separatist stance. As a result, the political foundation for the Taiwan region to participate in the WHA as an observer no longer exists.

Hence, Beijing decided not to approve the Taiwan region's participation in this year's WHA. It's not just about upholding the one-China principle but also about the sanctity and authority of relevant UNGA and WHA resolutions.

For quite some time, the DPP authorities and their backers in Washington have been deliberately distorting and challenging UNGA Resolution 2758, trumpeting the notion that Taiwan's status is undetermined, and advocating support for Taiwan's participation in the UN's multilateral forums, including the WHA. These moves are intended to mislead international public opinion and challenge the one-China consensus among the international community. Such endeavors to turn back history are doomed to failure.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Chung Jae-hung

## ROK can ride on China's quality growth

Amid the rapid changes in the world order, in part due to the three-year-long pandemic and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, China and the Republic of Korea are celebrating the 32nd anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations. The two countries' close interactions have contributed to the rapid development of their relationship based on their complementary economic structures.

The relationship between the two countries, upgraded to a substantive strategic cooperative partnership in 2008 and further strengthened in 2017, has progressed well in trade and socio-cultural exchanges. Yet compared with Seoul-Beijing economic and trade relations, cooperation in the foreign affairs and the security field lags behind. In particular, differences have emerged over mutual interests, with the intensifying strategic competition between the United States and China, especially against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, having a big impact on ROK-China relations due to rising economic security and geopolitical risks.

However, since ROK-China relations have developed over a long period of time, it is not possible to de-synchronize them. So the two countries should adhere to the principles that define the original diplomatic relationship.

Of late, the national status of both the ROK and China has changed significantly, with China taking measures to establish a new multipolar international order and consolidate its position as the world's second-largest economy and a country with the most complete manufacturing supply chain.

As for the ROK, it is one of the top 10 economic and technological powers in the world, and a country with immense soft power. Given the multifarious impacts of the Ukraine crisis and the Israel-Palestine conflict, the ROK needs to deepen its economic cooperation with China so as to adapt to the great historical changes — the great energy, social and digital transformations — especially because it accounts for more than 20 percent of the ROK's trade, and the two countries' cooperation is very important to maintain the stability of the regional and global industry and supply chains.

Of late, however, economic exchanges between the two sides has become difficult due to the intensification of the strategic competition between the US and China, and

**The ROK and China could also strengthen cooperation in digital industrialization and digital transformation to become leaders in the fields of high-tech manufacturing, service trade and new industrial sectors.**

attempts by the US to decouple from China's economy. However, trade between the ROK and China is more or less with the focus being on semiconductors and batteries.

There is a need therefore for the ROK and China to conclude their economic exchange agreements, hold events and consultations to attract investments, and organize exhibitions and meetings to exchange cutting-edge technology information.

Moreover, the potential for cooperation between Seoul and Beijing in the digital and other high-tech sectors is very high. As the world's cutting-edge information and communications

technology (ICT) sector develops rapidly, e-commerce is emerging as a new growth engine for the global economy.

Promoting the digital economy is an integral part of China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035. As the ROK is also an ICT powerhouse and is taking measures to develop the digital economy and realize eco-friendly growth, there is ample space for the two sides to engage in cooperation to achieve their new common goals.

In its mid- to long-term strategy to boost its growth, China emphasizes the importance of high-quality development and "new quality productive forces" in response to the US' economic and technological sanctions, as well as to lead the high-tech sector in the future. To achieve that, the country has been promoting advanced manufacturing and green development, creating strategic high-tech industry clusters, next-generation ICT, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, new energy, new materials and advanced manufacturing equipment.

China has also been taking measures to secure new growth engines in fields such as high-quality service industries, high-tech manufacturing, agricultural convergence and the digital economy.

In other words, China will pursue qualitative development in accordance with its policy stance and implement policies to boost domestic demand, become self-reliant in high-tech, promote innovations and establish a China-led modernized industrial-technology system.

By doing so, China has created an ideal atmosphere for the ROK to pursue the joint development of the "Asian Semiconductor Index" and "Asian Electric Vehicle Index" using its advantage as a semiconductor and battery automobile production base and based on its objective analysis of the international order.

The ROK and China could also strengthen cooperation in digital industrialization and digital transformation to become leaders in the fields of high-tech manufacturing, service trade and new industrial sectors. As the two countries celebrate the 32nd anniversary of the establishment of ROK-China diplomatic relations, efforts need to be made to boost development in the region to build a new, better future.

*The author is the director of Center for Chinese Studies of the Sejong Institute. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Huang Weiping and Wang Xiangran

## 'Overcapacity' just an excuse for US protectionism

News has emerged that the US administration has announced to impose new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), semiconductors, batteries, solar cells, steel, and aluminum on Tuesday. Specifically, the tariffs on EVs are set to escalate to 100 percent, marking a quadruple increase from the existing 25 percent tariff. This decision, in excuse of China's purported overcapacity, is essentially a clear act of protectionism.

Since the global industrial sector has always endeavored to reduce overcapacity and strike a balance between supply and demand in the global market, one has to view overcapacity from the perspective of the market to truly understand the global industrial situation.

First, some countries produce more than what they need to meet their domestic demands, so they can export some of the products to countries which need them to complement their insufficient supply. In fact, Nicholas Lardy, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, questions whether producing more than needed should be called overcapacity: if every country produces only to meet its own consumption demand, global trade would cease to exist.

China's recent significant increase in the exports of EVs, lithium batteries and solar photovoltaic (PV) products mainly reflect the increasing global emphasis on environmental protection and development of green technology and intelligent economies. More important, China has been exporting such products because the demand is real.

Second, surplus is always relative. So, aside from the relationship between supply and demand, we also need to consider the long-term, structural changes in supply and demand,

**In addition, the causes of overcapacity in a given period are complex, and need to be analyzed and handled on a case-by-case basis.**

as well as the changes in external factors that help form new supply and demand relationships in order to determine whether there is overcapacity. The fact is, demand for new energy products is rising because most countries are pursuing sustainable development. This trend is likely to continue.

According to the International Energy Agency, by 2030 the global demand for EVs will reach 45 million, which is 4.5 times that of 2022. Global demand for newly installed capacity for photovoltaic products will reach 820 gigawatts, which is about four times that of 2022. The current global capacity of new energy products is far from enough to meet the current and future demand of both developed and emerging economies.

Considering the trend of environmental protection in developing countries, it can be said that there is huge real and potential demand for new energy products in the world, which suggests there is insufficient supply instead of overcapacity. Hence, by exporting more new energy products, China is increasing global supply, alleviating inflationary pressure, promoting global environmental protection and meeting the global demand for green products.

It is misleading to assume that China's subsidies for the new energy industry have unfairly advantaged Chinese companies, leading to alleged

"overcapacity". Chinese products succeeded in the market due to their competitive pricing and quality. Moreover, it is crucial to note that providing subsidies to the new energy sector is a widespread practice globally as countries strive for sustainable, environmentally friendly development.

Both the United States and the European Union grant huge subsidies to such industries. In 2022, the US passed the Inflation Reduction Act, providing \$369 billion in tax incentives and subsidies for clean energy projects. And many EU states continue to give huge subsidies, from tax exemptions to purchase discounts, to both EV makers and buyers. On the other hand, China's subsidies to the new energy sector have been declining year by year due to the fast development of the industry.

The new energy industries, especially the EV sector, have developed rapidly because of the Chinese people's increasing awareness about the advantages of emissions reduction and environmental protection, massive investments by private enterprises in R&D, China's complete industry and supply chains, 5G connectivity for intelligent driving, and excellent mileage on highways.

And third, claiming that China's increase in EV exports signifies "overcapacity" is unfair, because the country exported only 12 percent of the EVs it produced. In contrast, Germany exported nearly 80 percent, Japan nearly half, the Republic of Korea about 70 percent and the US nearly 25 percent of their automobile productions. So which country (or countries) has overcapacity?

In 2023, China emerged as the leading auto exporter for the first time, shipping out 4.91 million vehicles, surpassing Japan's exports of 4.42 million vehicles. Additionally, several other

countries also exported a substantial number of vehicles, for instance, Spain exported about more than 2.2 million. This data refutes the notion of overcapacity and underscores legitimate concerns regarding competition in the global automotive market.

In addition, the causes of overcapacity in a given period are complex, and need to be analyzed and handled on a case-by-case basis. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the US and European countries helped their residents by giving them "living allowances". At the time, the economic activity of these countries had almost come to a standstill, so they needed to import huge quantities of general consumer goods. China and other countries expanded their production capacity to meet the sudden increase in global demand. That demand, however, declined drastically with the end of the pandemic, creating "overcapacity" in those countries that had expanded their production capacity to meet other countries' demands.

So instead of discussing "China's new energy products and overcapacity", the countries would do better to deepen cooperation, further promote the development of the new energy industry, establish a sound global new energy product chain, build a global production network of new energy products and meet the sustainable development needs of countries to achieve win-win results. China has set an apt example in this regard by lifting the entry barriers to its manufacturing sector.

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Khalid Rahman

## CPEC security key to Sino-Pakistani ironclad relations

While the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects have yielded tangible benefits for the local economy and its people, recent attacks targeting the CPEC should serve as a cause for serious concern. Despite the enduring ironclad friendship between the two nations, the security issue must be prioritized.

The killing of seven workers in the Pakistani coastal city of Gwadar in Balochistan province on May 9 hit the headlines around the world. A few weeks earlier, 11 people were shot dead in two separate incidents in Balochistan.

The fact that all the seven victims in Gwadar and the nine bus passengers who were gunned down near Noshki were from Punjab province adds an ethnic dimension to the incidents, especially because the Baloch Liberation Army, designated a terror group, has been openly threatening to target people from Punjab. However, this viewpoint is too simplistic because Pakistan is facing a multidimensional terrorist threat.

In the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and its extraordinary importance for Balochistan, Gwadar in particular, and Chinese nationals working on projects there, it would not be wrong to say the killings are a continuation of the attempts to create instability in Pakistan to check the progress of the CPEC and damage China-Pakistan relations.

On March 26, five Chinese nationals and a Pakistani citizen were killed in a suicide attack on a vehicle carrying Chinese staff working on the Dasu Dam in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Similar attacks happened in 2021 and 2022, too.

**Security issues are not a new phenomenon in Pakistan, and there are many internal, regional and international reasons for that.**

Each of these incidents has its own specific dynamics, with the identity and motivation of the perpetrators and facilitators varying. However, given the current global and regional situations, it wouldn't be wrong to assume that the masterminds of the attacks want to cause instability in Pakistan. Their other objectives include derailing the CPEC projects and straining Sino-Pakistani ties.

While these incidents attract global attention, they cause severe concerns in China, undermining its confidence in investing in development projects in Pakistan, eroding the trust between the two governments and weakening the spirit of Chinese investors and workers engaged in Pakistan.

Beijing's reaction to the incidents has been firm. After the March 26 Dasu attack, Beijing called for a "thorough investigation", insisting on forming a joint investigation team. The Chinese embassy in Islamabad demanded that Pakistan take practical and effective measures to improve the situation. Although it was reassuring to see the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson emphasize that as all-weather strategic cooperative partners, China and Pakistan's cooperation cannot be sabotaged by any attempt, several Chinese companies suspended work on their projects. They resumed operations only after security was beefed up and the Pakistani prime minister visited the Chinese workers at the Dasu site and promised to make "foolproof" security arrangements and hand down "exemplary punishment" to the attackers.

There is no doubt there have been administrative failures and security lapses, and strict measures are required at every level to safeguard China-Pakistan interests and, most importantly, protect human lives. As such, a comprehensive joint strategy is needed to address the situation.

Security issues are not a new phenomenon in Pakistan, and there are many internal, regional and international reasons for that. As a matter of fact, terrorism attacks were more frequent and deadly when the CPEC was negotiated and launched. Nevertheless, the two countries agreed to launch the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative because of their mutual trust and a desire to achieve common development.

In the years that followed, Pakistan achieved remarkable success in curbing terrorism, but could not uproot all terrorist groups. In fact, the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan in August 2021 made the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, an amalgam of several terrorist groups, even stronger thanks to the release of prisoners and terrorists getting access to the sophisticated weapons and equipment left behind by the Americans. Although there is little common between the Afghan Taliban and Baloch terrorist organizations, the room for cooperation with various elements of the TTP at the tactical level has increased compared with the past.

On the other hand, with polarization and instability being at their peak in Pakistan, economic, security and social vulnerabilities have increased, creating governance issues and slowing the pace of the CPEC projects. Apart from creating a favorable environment for terrorist outfits, the situation has also made it easy for outsiders to interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs, especially to sabotage the CPEC projects and ruin Pakistan-China friendship in order to fulfill their own narrow goals.

Despite the evil designs of the anti-Pakistan and anti-China forces, however, the Chinese and Pakistani peoples' opinions about each other remain positive. In the case of Pakistan, where almost everything is debated, successive public opinion surveys and political discourse verify this fact.

There is indeed a need to ensure the safety of workers and projects by strengthening security and taking administrative measures, but those moves should be accompanied by a comprehensive strategy in order to maintain an environment of mutual trust at the public and government levels.

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# GLOBAL VIEWS

LI WEI

## Three-dimensional struggle

Sino-US competition is reshaping the global order in an all-around manner

After the United States defined China as its primary strategic competitor in 2017, it launched a trade war against China the next year, starting a new round of major country competition. Since then, Sino-US competition has become the defining feature of the international landscape.

During the Barack Obama administration, the US carried out a series of actions to cope with the fallout of the global financial crisis and contain the rise of China, which



were continued by the subsequent Donald Trump administration and intensified by the Joe Biden administration. After Biden took office, the US has launched three "wars" against China to hold back its industrial development and technological upgrading and to revive US manufacturing.

The first is the tariff war. By raising the barriers for mid-to-lower end products from China to enter the US market, the US government has tried to undermine the price advantage of "made-in-China" products and make them less attractive to US consumers. In addition, the US has joined hands with its allies to take protectionist measures targeting China in a bid to grab the market share of Chinese products.

One prime example is the US' crackdown on China's telecommunications giant Huawei. Under the pretext of so-called national security concerns, the US teamed up with some of its allies to ban 5G equipment provided by Huawei, aiming to erode the company's market share or even shut its products completely out of Europe and the US. By launching the tariff war, the US aims to cut off China's access to Western markets.

The second is the technology war. The technology war is an escalated measure of the US to hobble the development of China's advanced manufacturing and its industrial upgrading. The US' tech war against China is being waged on

two fronts. On the one hand, the US is trying to suppress China's tech progress by placing Chinese high-tech companies on its "Entity List" for export controls; and on the other hand, it has erected barriers to Chinese companies' investing in the US by tightening the review processes. The two-pronged approach is designed to prevent China from accessing cutting-edge technologies and pushing for Sino-US tech-decoupling.

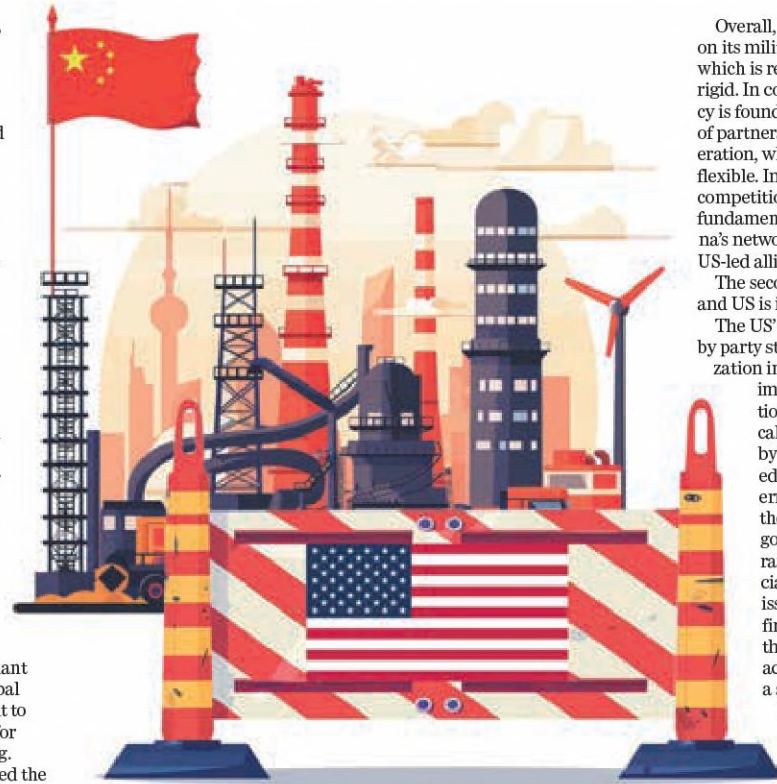
The third is the financial war. Although the US has until now stopped short of starting a full-scale financial war against China, it has been seeking to prevent Chinese enterprises from acquiring US capital — first, by creating barriers for Chinese companies to seek listings in the US; and second, by directly impeding US investment in China via the issuing of executive orders. The dominant position of the US in the global financial system empowers it to suppress China by pushing for Sino-US financial decoupling.

In a word, the US has waged the three wars against China to force a transfer of industry and supply chains away from China and prevent its industrial upgrading, thereby outcompeting China and preserving its global hegemony.

Looking ahead, the evolution of the international order will be to a large extent shaped by China-US competition, which will play out in three realms.

The first is diplomacy.

The Sino-US competition in the diplomatic field is mainly unfolding on three fronts. The first is the competition in the international system. The US' dominance in the



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

international system is reflected in its control over rules, personnel and policies. The Sino-US competition in the diplomatic field revolves around the fight over dominance in the international system, which exacerbates the contest in the international governance system.

The second is the competition for market share. The size of their market is a key factor determining the competitiveness of enterprises. As the global trade system is paralyzed, both China and US will race

to sign regional free trade agreements to expand their overseas market.

The third is the competition for energy security. With the critical mineral resources used for clean energy production gaining increasing importance, the US is doubling down on diplomatic efforts to secure key raw minerals. A primary example is the Minerals Security Partnership which is designed to win the competition for minerals vital for the green transition.

Overall, US diplomacy is based on its military alliances system, which is relatively exclusive and rigid. In contrast, China's diplomacy is founded on a global network of partnerships that focus on cooperation, which is more open and flexible. In the future, the Sino-US competition in diplomacy will be fundamentally a fight between China's network of partnership and the US-led alliance system.

The second battlefield of China and US is in the realm of capital.

The US' political system, plagued by party strife and political polarization in recent years, has

impaired the nation's taxation capacity and led to fiscal instability, as evidenced by the "fiscal cliff" repeatedly faced by the US government. To make up for the fiscal deficit, the US government is forced to raise funds from the financial markets in the form of issuing treasury bonds. Its financial hegemony allows the US to draw capital from across the world, enjoying a steady stream of funding.

In comparison, China has a highly efficient and sophisticated taxation system, which enables the Chinese

government to accumulate wealth at home. However, China's financial system is different from that of the US. As a result, Chinese enterprises are unable to raise funds overseas on a massive scale. In this sense, the status of Hong Kong as an international financial center is crucial for the Sino-US competition in the capital realm.

In essence, the Sino-US competition in the capital field is a contest for efficient utilization of capital. The more capital flows to technological innovation, economic production and social services, the

more efficiently the capital is used.

The third field for Sino-US competition is technology, which is unfolding in two dimensions. One is competition in tech innovation and the other in tech application, which is highly dependent on a relatively complete industrial ecosystem.

On the one hand, the US' domestic tech innovation ecosystem has largely retained its vitality, and the country's overall tech innovation system remains quite active. The country is still a leader in global tech innovation. On the other hand, due to massive industrial transfers and the decline of its manufacturing sector, the US' capacity for tech application and industrialization has been weakened. The country is experiencing "deindustrialization" against the backdrop of economic globalization owing to the lack of tech application scenarios. Hence, the US' tech innovation can be described as "innovation without industrial support". This is why the country is promoting a modern industrial strategy centered on "friendshoring" and "reshoring". Meanwhile, the US is trying to make up the deficiency in application scenarios and bolster its innovation capacity through international tech cooperation.

By comparison, China boasts a strong industrial foundation and a complete industrial ecosystem. Some Chinese companies have achieved significant results in seeking progressive tech innovation. The country's active industry clusters also provide a robust support for its tech innovation. But on the other side of the coin, China is still lagging behind the US in basic science and in its appeal to global talents.

The Sino-US competition is set to be a long-term battle.

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MARCOS CORDEIRO PIRES

## Close connections

China is a country that has to be seen with the eyes of a brother, a friend, and with love

Beijing is 17,000 kilometers from Brasilia, but the distance that separates the two peoples is bridged by the establishment of the relations between Brazil and China 50 years ago.

Ordinary Brazilian citizens have viewed China as a distant and exotic civilization, of which the Great Wall and the Forbidden City are the first ideas that come to mind. The wisdom associated with great philosophers such as Confucius, Lao-Tse and Mencius also stands out.



In addition to these traditional perceptions, new ones have been incorporated recently. A modern and thriving China is being seen by Brazilian families from the sofa at home, in films, apps and on the television news, as well as on market shelves and in e-commerce. Around 30 years ago, when Chinese-manufactured products arrived in Brazil, "Made in China" was associated with cheap products that helped improve the level of consumption among the lower classes. This perception has changed, as Brazilians now see China as a great power, and Chinese consumer goods are associated with technology and reliability, such as cars, smartphones and electronics.

It is worth noting that contacts between the Chinese and Brazilians date back to the colonial period through the Portuguese fleets that left Macao, and stopped in Brazil on their way to Lisbon. Chinese goods, chiniserie (from French), were part of the consumption of wealthy families such as silks, porcelain and tea. In fact, tea in the Portuguese language is "cha", the same as the Chinese pronunciation. The first

**Over the past 50 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, bilateral cooperation has advanced in several fields, such as trade, investments, science and technology, agriculture, finance, and environment.**

Chinese families arrived in Brazil in early 19th century, introducing tea cultivation. Today, the ethnic Chinese population in Brazil numbers more than 250,000, concentrated mainly in Sao Paulo.

Zhou Shixiu, a Chinese expert in Brazilian history, identified in his studies several aspects of Chinese culture in Brazil, such as the "China Gate" in the Church of Nossa Senhora da Conceicao, in Sabara, Minas Gerais; the image of a Chinese monk in the Sao Bento Monastery, in Sao Paulo; the Chinese-looking Saint Cecilia in the Archdiocesan Museum of Mariana, Minas Gerais; the Chinese painting on the ceiling of the sacristy of the Church of Nossa Senhora de Belem, in Cachoeira, Bahia; and the stone lion with Chinese characteristics in Morro do Adro do Convento de Santo Antonio, in Joao Pessoa, Paraba.

Over the past 50 years since the

establishment of diplomatic relations, bilateral cooperation has advanced in several fields, such as trade, investments, science and technology, agriculture, finance, and the environment. In 1993, the two countries established a strategic partnership, which was raised to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2012.

Over the past 20 years, economic relations have boomed. According to Brazilian customs, the bilateral trade volume reached \$157 billion last year. Since 2009, China has replaced the United States as Brazil's largest trading partner. Brazil is also the largest recipient in Latin America of offshore direct investment from China.

Data from the Brazil-China Business Council suggests that it was more, with Chinese companies investing \$71.6 billion in Brazil through 235 projects, specifically in the infrastructure sector, between 2007 and 2022. Chinese companies operate in the oil sector, as well as the generating, transmitting and distributing of electrical power, telecommunications, and, more recently, the railway sectors.

This broad bilateral relationship is also expressed in articulating major global themes. Brazil and China have excellent coordination on major global issues. We can cite as an example of their strategic partnership the creation of BRICS, the advocacy of the interests of developing countries on issues such as trade, reform of the World Trade Organization and climate change, the search for peaceful solutions to the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, and the defense of a multipolar international order that is inclusive and effectively democratic.

As we celebrate 50 years since diplomatic relations between Brazil and China were established, we are sure our peoples will have even



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

greater rapprochement. In this aspect, the Confucius Institutes create a strong bridge between our nations. We are proud because the Confucius Institute at Sao Paulo State University was the first to open its doors in Brazil in 2008.

It is worth highlighting the words of former president Jose Sar-

ney, the second Brazilian leader who visited China in June 1988: China is a country and a people that mark the history of humanity, civilization and great discoveries. China has to be seen with the eyes of a brother, a friend, and with love. These are Brazil's eyes toward this fascinating nation.

*The author is a professor of international political economy at Sao Paulo State University in Brazil. 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.*

## LIFE



# The moral of China's timeless murals

A US youth visits the Taiyuan Northern Qi Dynasty Mural Museum, exploring ancient Chinese history and art through well-preserved murals, advanced technology, and a diverse artifact collection.

By DYLAN WALKER  
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As I stepped into the Taiyuan Northern Qi Dynasty Mural Museum for the first time, I was filled with excitement. As a young person from the US, I knew I was standing on the doorstep of an adventure into the depths of ancient Chinese history and art.

Located in Taiyuan, the capital of North China's Shanxi province, the museum uniquely addresses the challenge of preserving ancient tomb mural sites. It is the first of its kind in China, according to Wang Jiang, the museum's curator.

"It's the first thematic museum built on the original site of mural tombs," said Wang.

At the heart of the museum was a collection of murals, ranging from vibrant depictions of daily life to mysterious scenes rich in symbolism, each showcasing the unparalleled artistry of the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577) and its diverse culture.

One of the most impressive examples was the tomb of Xu Xianxiu (502-571), a respected official from the Northern Qi era. This tomb was

famous for its incredibly well-preserved murals, covering an imposing area of 300 square meters. It provided a fascinating glimpse into his life, with scenes depicting him and his wife adorning the walls. These murals not only showcased the artistic talent of the time but also offered valuable insights into the lavish lifestyle enjoyed by the dynasty's elite.

As I wandered through the exhibition halls, I could not help but be drawn in by the stories told behind each brushstroke. Every color seemed to reflect the skill and imagination of the artists, captivating my attention.

As a relatively new museum, which opened its doors to the public in 2023, it employs advanced technology, such as VR (virtual reality), AR (augmented reality), and interactive digital art devices, to bring ancient murals to life.

By using these innovative technologies, the museum aims to provide visitors with an engaging historical journey, according to Wang.

"Digital displays, panels, and videos are used to interpret the stories behind the relics, immersing the audience in a tactile atmosphere to



Top: Dylan Walker at the Taiyuan Northern Qi Dynasty Mural Museum in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. Above: Wang Jiang (right), the museum's curator, introduces its merchandise to Walker.

ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

deepen their understanding of these treasures from both historical and artistic perspectives," he said.

I also had the chance to experience this cutting-edge technology firsthand. As I put on the VR headset and looked through the lenses, I was able to virtually enter the tomb of Xu Xianxiu and examine the intricate

details of the murals up close, which, due to conservation efforts, was not possible to do physically. The murals on the inner walls of the tomb were clearly visible in 4K resolution, allowing me to engage more deeply with the works and the other artistic aspects of the exhibition.

Apart from murals, the museum

also houses a diverse collection of artifacts from the Northern Qi period. These include tomb figurines, unique items like a pot shaped like a chicken, a sapphire ring adorned with gold, epitaphs and their covers, and glazed pottery bowls. Together, these treasures, along with the murals, provided a comprehensive view of Northern Qi society, shedding light on its material culture and social dynamics.

Wang also discussed the significance of the murals' portrayal of Western figures and attire, suggesting a history of vibrant East-West trade and interaction during the Northern Qi period.

He mentioned that many of the Western figures depicted in the murals came from Central Asia.

"Through trade and social integration, they became part of the social fabric of the late Northern Dynasty (386-581)," he said. "This exchange undoubtedly facilitated profound cultural dissemination."

Surrounded by these ancient artifacts, I felt a deep connection to those who came before me, realizing our shared humanity across the ages. It was a humbling experience, reminding me of how art and cul-

ture can reach beyond time and space.

My visit to the Taiyuan Northern Qi Dynasty Mural Museum was an unforgettable encounter. It opened my eyes to the rich cultural heritage of China and gave me a newfound appreciation for the complexities of history.

I agreed with Wang when he emphasized the museum's unique role, stating that "a museum serves as an art palace, a hall showcasing excellent traditional culture", which, I think, echoes President Xi Jinping's sentiment that "every museum is a big school", preserving historical narratives and cultural legacies.

Leaving the museum, I took away more than just memories; I gained a deeper understanding of the world and its countless wonders. I truly wish that more people, from China and around the globe, will get the chance to explore the marvels held within this museum. May its doors continue to welcome all who are eager to discover the beauty and history of the Northern Qi Dynasty, and, although my visit was short, its impact will stay with me forever.

## 青 YOUTHFUL INSIGHTS

In April, student protests swept across campuses in the United States in reaction to the escalating violence in the Gaza Strip. Clashes occurred as some protests encountered opposition from university administrations and even the police, igniting debates on freedom of expression and the right to protest.

These protests underscore deep-rooted issues and contradictions within American society, reflecting a growing political awareness and dissatisfaction among American youth. This movement has the potential to significantly impact American politics and attract widespread attention from the international community, especially among young people globally.

## Navigating the Gaza crisis from afar

Even as a young Chinese person working and living far away from the Middle East and the US, I find it hard not to be concerned when hundreds of thousands suffer from a dire lack of food, water, medical resources, and safe shelter from bombs and bullets in Gaza.



Zhong Yutong

However, I understand that the conflicts among Israel, Palestine, and Arab countries are complex, as many Jewish people started moving to the Jerusalem area in the 19th century. Many matters cannot be simplified as black-and-white narratives. Therefore, from a third-person perspective, I have been trying to learn about what is going on with a combination of curiosity, empathy, and an analytical attitude.

In addition to watching videos on social

media and reading news from mainstream global media, I've gone the extra mile to seek analyses from both the Palestinian and Israeli sides by talking with well-informed friends: those I acquainted with while studying in the UK, doing business in the US, and working in Shanghai.

"In these US young students, we still see hope in education," a friend who graduated from a US Ivy League university texted me, echoing the sentiments of many netizens in other countries.

Furious at the heavy police force and even snipers deployed to enter campuses to evacuate and arrest protesters, a British friend, now studying Arabic and French at a UK university, calls the media that legitimize the unprecedented police violence against students and faculty "hypocrites who used to advocate for the freedom of speech and human rights".

Why does a ceasefire deal seem so difficult? Firstly, certain third-party countries, driven by their narrow interests, may not

want the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in Gaza to end. Secondly, negotiations face resistance from the Israel and Palestine parties, too.

An Israeli friend who has been working and living in China for over 10 years shared with me his reasoning after experiencing the sudden attack from the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) on Oct 7, 2023. "More than 1,200 people were killed in the attack, and over 200 were taken hostage. A major bombing occurred just a kilometer from where I lived," he recalled, his words still displaying post-traumatic emotions.

His terror is real, and so is the suffering of around 2 million people in Gaza, one of the most densely populated areas in the world.

My Israeli friend finds no excuse for the current Israeli leaders who have made the living conditions of Palestinian people even more miserable. He also believes the two-state solution should be the way out of the mess.



A projection of US President Joe Biden is seen on the wall of George Washington University during the students encampment protest on May 7. CFP

Nonetheless, his eyes dimmed when I continued to ask him if any progress toward humanity can be achieved if we only focus on who fired the first, second, and third shots, and on what if the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine had been well executed.

"The conflicts have been going on for more than seven decades. Why haven't we taken concrete action earlier?" he sighed.

Written by Zhong Yutong, a Schwarzman Scholar at Tsinghua University.

## LIFE



Jin Ming competes in the 2023 China Freediving Championships in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# ‘Breath-taking’ dedication

Jin Ming, a freediver from Shanghai, set a new world record by swimming 311 meters underwater on a single breath, highlighting his dedication and China's growing prominence in the sport.

By GUI QIAN  
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How far can someone swim underwater with just a single breath? For Jin Ming from Shanghai, that distance extends to an impressive 311 meters.

The 31-year-old freediver recently achieved a remarkable feat by setting a new world record in DYN (Dynamic Apnea with Fins) at the Ultimate Freediving Challenge in Singapore on May 4. This accomplishment of 311 meters surpassed the previous record of 301 meters, held by French athlete Guillaume Bourdila two years earlier.

In the realm of freediving, divers rely solely on their lung capacity rather than any scuba equipment. Competitive freediving encompasses two primary categories: “depth” competitions, which involve descending as deep as possible in open water on a single breath, and “pool” competitions, which require athletes to hold their breath underwater while remaining stationary or swimming horizontally.

Having competed in both categories, Jin prefers DYN, which falls under the pool category. He considers DYN to be the fastest discipline among all freediving events, providing a sense of water flow and speed.

“It’s like piloting a submarine or living out *The Fast and the Furious* beneath the surface,” he said.

In addition to his recent DYN achievement, Jin has a history of making significant strides in the sport. He holds an impressive tally of 46 Chinese national records and 22 Asian records in freediving, establishing himself as the highest-ranking Asian athlete in pool competitions.

“Effort, perseverance, and talent are Jin’s defining traits, but it’s his relentless effort that truly sets him apart. When given a task that requires 100 percent, he always puts in 120 percent to complete it,” said Jin’s coach Zhao Lei, also known as Enzo Zhao, founder of One Freedive Club in Beijing.

Unlike many other sports where athletes start training at a young age, freediving is relatively new, especially in China, which is why Jin didn’t kick off his career as a professional athlete until his 20s. In 2018, during the fourth year of running his tech startup, he stumbled upon the 1988 French film *The Big Blue*. At that time, he was struggling with immense work pressures and was captivated by the tranquillity and serenity of the ocean depicted in the film, which prompted him to explore freediving.

“Freediving proved to be an excellent stress

“I believe it’s important for people to constantly challenge themselves and embrace competition. Settling into a comfort zone too early might cause one to miss out on many possibilities in life.”

Jin Ming, entrepreneur and freediver

reliever,” Jin said. “Immersing yourself underwater for extended periods while holding your breath puts you in a state of flow. It also allows you to engage in meditation and relaxation techniques that you can’t normally practice on land.”

According to Jin, the key to success in freediving lies in one’s ability to handle pressure. Among mental, cognitive, and physical skills, freediving requires more mental strength than most other sports. Keeping calm underwater also leads to a lower heart rate and reduces oxygen consumption.

After a year of consistent training, Jin’s performance could rival that of professional athletes. So, in 2019, Zhao encouraged him to compete in international events.

But Jin wasn’t just competing for himself. “Back then, Japan held most of the freediving records in Asia. At that moment, a spark ignited within me — a sense of national duty, aspiring to propel China to the forefront of Asian freediving,” he said.

From late 2019 to mid-2021, Jin dedicated 18 months to achieving this objective, training and participating in competitions, setting three Asian records in the process.

He then aimed even higher: to elevate China to the pinnacle of global freediving.

At the 30th AIDA Pool World Championship in 2023, Jin secured China’s first gold medal in the DYN event, positioning China alongside traditional freediving powerhouses like France, Italy, Russia, Poland, and Croatia.

Jin’s achievements have left the international freediving community in awe, leading them to coin his training and competitive tactics as the “China Style”, diverging from the conventional

methods employed by Western athletes.

Explaining his approach, Jin pointed out that since Chinese athletes are not as proficient in breath-holding as some Western counterparts who can endure up to 10 minutes underwater — Jin’s national record for Static Apnea (STA) is 8 minutes and 56 seconds — they prioritize speed to cover more distance in less time.

“Our pace surpasses that of most Western freedivers. I maintain an underwater speed of approximately 1.3 meters per second, exceeding the typical one-meter-per-second pace of top athletes from other countries,” said Jin.

“Also, our muscle training doesn’t emphasize bulking up, but rather focuses on developing lean, highly efficient muscles with strong explosive power and a high lactate threshold for endurance,” he explained.

Not being a full-time athlete means Jin must juggle work and freediving training, while also facing the same challenges as professional athletes, including fluctuating performances and self-doubt.

Yet, he never regrets his decision. Starting his freediving career in his 20s means he made the choice independently, unlike many young athletes who might have been influenced by their parents.

“I chose to pursue competitive freediving as an adult, which adds a deeper significance to my decision,” he said. “I believe it’s important for people to constantly challenge themselves and embrace competition. Settling into a comfort zone too early might cause one to miss out on many possibilities in life.”

While Jin competes in freediving, he also stresses that freediving skills — even at a beginner level — can be crucial lifesaving abilities. He highlighted their usefulness in various emergencies, such as water accidents, escaping fires while holding one’s breath, or avoiding inhaling harmful gases in situations like being stuck in an elevator, near landfill sites, or behind car exhausts.

Transitioning from a novice freediver to a world-class champion, Jin also witnessed the surging popularity of this niche sport among China’s youth. He notes a significant increase in certified freedivers in China, rising from around 80,000 to over 600,000 in the past five years. Many young individuals also embrace freediving as a means of relieving stress or as a lifestyle choice for exploring the world and the ocean.

The 2025 World Games, scheduled

to be held in Chengdu, Southwest China’s Sichuan province, will also feature freediving in its athletic program for the very first time.

“China is increasingly recognizing the value of freediving as a sport. Initiatives such as athlete rating standards and additional points for college entrance exams are being implemented. Youth training systems, including sports schools for teenagers, are also starting to recruit,” Jin observed.

As a leading figure in Chinese freediving, Jin has established his own freediving community, the Huangpu Diving Academy in Shanghai. The name pays homage to the esteemed Whampoa (Huangpu) Military Academy in China’s modern history.

The community emphasizes core values of “passion, competition, nationality, and cultural richness”. It currently has 76 active athletes and has consistently dominated the national freediving championships from 2021 to 2023. Jin is also involved in teaching and mentoring students himself.

“My dedication has always revolved around pushing the boundaries of Chinese freediving,” he said.

Whether it’s for personal improvement or promoting the sport, Jin remains committed to nurturing and preserving the flame that was ignited within him six years ago.

“I aspire for the fire in my heart to keep burning brightly, regardless of age,” he said.



## LIFE

# Pipa star lights up French streets

By MENG WENJIE  
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In the bustling tourist city of Strasbourg, France, street performers from various countries can be found. Among them is Zhao Yang, a 24-year-old Chinese student studying film at the University of Strasbourg, who plays the *pipa*, a four-stringed Chinese lute.

Zhao's fascination with the *pipa* began at the age of four when she was captivated by its elegance and the skills of the player. This enchantment ignited her musical journey, starting with her first *pipa* adorned with a traditional Chinese pattern of two dragons playing with a pearl.

Toward the end of 2021, Zhao decided to showcase her *pipa* skills on the streets of Strasbourg for a video project. This impromptu performance attracted a growing audience who gathered to enjoy her music. What began as a casual filming session evolved into a street performance lasting nearly 40 minutes. "The atmosphere was amazing, so I captured that moment on video," said Zhao.

She shared the footage on social media, quickly drawing the attention of viewers worldwide. Since then, Zhao has been regularly playing the *pipa* on the streets of France in her free time and has built an online following of almost 300,000 fans through her vlogs.

During her street performances, Zhao has established meaningful connections and cultural exchanges with locals and tourists from around the world. Once, an elderly man who was visually impaired approached her and felt her *pipa*. Zhao vividly remembers the man's words: "This is it! I visited China in the 1970s and 1980s. When I heard it on the street today, I knew it was a sound from China."

During her five years of studying in France, Zhao has witnessed traditional Chinese culture resonating afresh in the modern era and on a global scale.

In one of her videos, she introduced classic pieces from China's Kunqu Opera, such as the story of Du Shiniang, a legendary courtesan of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), while performing the *pipa* in traditional Kunqu attire and makeup. One comment from a female viewer under the video left a lasting impression on Zhao.

The viewer said she was inspired by the female characters in these tales who bravely broke free from traditional societal constraints, which challenged her preconceptions of ancient China. She also shared how this influence translated into her own life experiences,

motivating her to boldly try new things and explore the world.

"Through my videos, I've been able to change some global audiences' perceptions of our culture and offer them encouragement in their lives. I find it very touching," said Zhao.

Zhao has also noticed a growing awareness among the French public regarding Chinese traditional musical instruments.

When she first arrived in France, Zhao found it difficult to acquire instruments like the *pipa*. However, in recent years, she has observed that Chinese traditional instruments have become more accessible. Major cities like Paris now have shops selling these

Zhao Yang, a Chinese student in Strasbourg, France, captivates global audiences with her *pipa* performances, redefining perceptions of Chinese youth through music.

Zhao Yang, a Chinese student in France, plays the *pipa* on the coast of Nice, France.  
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



instruments and even offering courses for learning to play them.

The understanding of foreign audiences regarding Chinese traditional instruments has also evolved. Previously, they only recognized the instruments mainly by name and appearance. But now, as Zhao has noticed during her street performances, spectators talk to her about the instrument's range, notes, and playing techniques, with guitar enthusiasts drawing parallels between the *pipa* and other string instruments.

"They are truly listening to my performances, and this deeper exchange of music and culture is fascinating," said Zhao.

Apart from showcasing tradi-

tional Chinese classical *pipa* music, Zhao is also looking to expand the playing styles of the *pipa* because she believes that, as a musical instrument, it holds greater potential.

In 2023, for example, Zhao performed *La gloire a mes genoux* (The Glory to My Knees) from the French rock opera, *The Red and the Black*, based on the 1830 novel by Stendhal (1783-1842). It was her first try to explore blending *pipa* playing techniques with contemporary music styles.

In subsequent attempts, she even experimented with incorporating bass guitar techniques into her *pipa* performances for rock-pop music. "Using the *pipa* to play rock, jazz, and other diverse music genres can inspire new possibilities and vitality for this traditional instrument, expanding its audience across different artistic realms," she said.

This is probably why Zhao's performances have gained a significant following on international social media platforms like YouTube and TikTok.

Her videos also offer global audiences a fresh perspective on Chinese youth. Zhao noticed that many foreign students initially perceived Chinese students as shy and introverted, with impressions of China often leaning toward the solemn and mysterious. However, she believes that while these aspects are part of Chinese culture, they do not fully define it.

"Young people in China can be both reserved and vibrant, and Chinese culture can be both ancient and inclusive," said Zhao. "I hope to display a more multifaceted and dynamic image of Chinese youth to break traditional stereotypes held by overseas audiences about China."

Recently, Zhao collaborated with a composer in China to create videos that use music for cultural exchange, commemorating the significance of 2024. This year marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France, coinciding with the upcoming Paris Olympics.

Known as "Miss Qianmi" (meaning "keep exploring") on social media, Zhao said she picked this moniker because it symbolizes freedom, romanticism, and a spirit of exploration.

"I want to embody this limitless vitality to explore more possibilities and expand the path of our traditional culture," she said.



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Watch the video  
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the code.

## Global Insights

# Serbia & China: bridging nations together

I arrived in China at an earlier age than most foreign expats typically do. My family and I moved to China right after I finished first grade in Serbia. Suddenly, everything felt so unfamiliar, especially school. I remember one day at lunchtime, I left the classroom with my bag, ready to go home, because back in Serbia, the school day was only half a day long. However, the teacher asked where I was headed, and I replied, "Home. Isn't it time to go?" She kindly explained that school ended at 4:30 pm.

My initial reaction was to seek solace in the bathroom and shed tears upon realizing that I would now have a full school day stretching into the afternoon for the next five years. Little did I know that this extended schedule would continue for 12 years, spanning elementary, middle, and high school.

Looking back on those 12 years, it was all worth it. This rigorous structure taught me the virtues of persistence, diligence, and self-discipline, which have proven to be essential skills in overcoming challenges and

acquiring new knowledge throughout my life.

One vivid memory I have is from my third-grade year when we had dictation and recitation exercises every day. One day, I didn't feel like writing anything, so I handed in a blank page. The teacher questioned why I couldn't write what my classmates could. I realized that while I had only been studying Chinese for a year, the teacher held me to the same standards as my peers who had been speaking Chinese since birth. She wanted me to understand that my Chinese level at that time was enough to learn Chinese just like everyone else.

This experience instilled in me a profound sense of acceptance and unity with my new and unfamiliar environment.

Since the time I attended Fudan University in Shanghai, I've been eager to learn any skill that interests me because I know I'm capable of achieving anything as long as I set my mind to it. Even though I wasn't very good at math, I found that I could quickly grasp scientific con-



Filip Filipovic (front left) takes a selfie with other international students at the 2023 Higher Education Expo China in Chongqing.  
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

cepts because I had developed a solid learning ability thanks to the Chinese education system. I know that I have strong self-discipline and can easily immerse myself in my studies, which I consider to be the most valuable asset I've acquired during my upbringing in China.

Since my undergraduate years, I

have shifted my focus from merely acquiring knowledge to also embracing social responsibilities. China's concept of "building a community with a shared future for mankind" deeply resonates with me. This idea, which aims to prevent conflict and encourage cooperation through initiatives like the Belt and

Road Initiative and BRICS cooperation, needs greater global recognition.

As a Serbian youth, I've been working to promote collaboration among young people between our two countries and worldwide. Fudan University organizes the Youth Innovation Competition on Global Governance, which will take place in Hungary this year. I first participated in 2016. This competition seeks to foster innovative solutions and invites students from all around the world to present their solutions to global governance challenges.

My first internship at the Consulate General of the Republic of Serbia in Shanghai allowed me to witness the "ironclad friendship" between China and Serbia firsthand. I saw the strong bonds between our nations, which became even more apparent during my subsequent internship with a media outlet. Throughout these experiences, I actively contributed by creating videos and translating articles, aiming to deepen mutual understanding

between Chinese and Serbian audiences.

As a Serbian who grew up in China, I know that the bond between the two nations runs deep. The NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in 1999 had a profound impact on our relationship, bringing us even closer together. I'm grateful for every day I have spent in China. My upbringing here has shaped my identity and perspective on the world. With two homelands, Serbia and China, my goal is to enhance the connections between them.

Written by Filip Filipovic, a 27-year-old Serbian who has lived in China since 2005. He pursued both his bachelor's and master's degrees in international relations at Fudan University and is currently pursuing his PhD studies there.



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