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CHINA DAILY

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China, Russia intensify partnership

Xi, Putin meet in Beijing, agree to deepen cooperation

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing and Moscow pledged on Thursday to intensify their comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era as President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a joint statement in Beijing highlighting the countries' commitment to enhancing bilateral ties.

The two countries also agreed that a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis is the right way out of the conflict.

Putin arrived in Beijing on Thursday for a two-day state visit to China, his first foreign trip since being sworn in for a fifth term as Russian president on May 7. Xi held a grand welcoming ceremony for Putin before they held official talks at the Great Hall of the People.

During their talks, Xi said the steady development of China-Russia relations is not only in the fundamental interests of the two countries and two peoples, but is also conducive to regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

On the new journey, China is ready to work with Russia to stay each other's good neighbor, good friend and good partner that trust each other, continue to consolidate the lasting friendship between the two peoples, jointly pursue their respective national development and revitalization and uphold fairness and justice in the world, he said. Noting that China and Russia are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major emerging markets, Xi said that it is the shared strategic choice of both countries to deepen strategic coordination, expand mutually beneficial cooperation and follow the general historical trend of multipolarity in the world and economic globalization.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and Russia. Xi called on the two countries to take the anniversary as a new starting point, further synergize



President Xi Jinping walks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday during a grand welcome ceremony for the Russian leader who is on a state visit to China. Later, the two leaders held talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

their development strategies, and continue to enrich bilateral cooperation to bring greater benefits to the two countries and their peoples.

Putin said the development of Russia-China relations is not an expediency, it is not directed against any third party, and it is conducive to global strategic stability.

Russia is willing to continue expanding bilateral cooperation with China, closely communicate and collaborate within frameworks such as the United Nations, BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and promote the establishment of a more just and equitable international order, he said.

The two presidents witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents in fields such as trade, the economy, nature conservation, inspection and quarantine, and the media.

While jointly meeting the media with Putin following their talks, Xi said the Sino-Russian relationship has become a fine example of a new type of international relations and good-neighborly relations between two major countries.

He said that China and Russia are committed to international fairness and justice, and are dedicated to the political settlement of hotspot issues.

Both he and Putin are of the view that it is urgent to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Xi said, and UN resolutions must be earnestly implemented and the question of Palestine must be solved on the basis of the two-state solution.

He said both China and Russia maintain that a political settlement is the right way forward for the Ukraine crisis. China hopes that peace and stability will return to the European continent at an early date,

and stands ready to play a constructive role to this end, he added.

The joint statement issued following the two presidents' meeting said that the two countries are willing to support each other on core issues such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and development.

Both sides expressed concerns about the international security situation, and maintain that all nuclear-weapon states should uphold global strategic stability and take comprehensive measures to prevent direct military confrontations between nuclear-weapon states, it said.

In the statement, both sides

expressed serious concerns about the United States' attempts to disrupt strategic stability in order to maintain its absolute military advantage, including the construction of a global missile defense system and the deployment of missile defense systems around the world and in space.

Both sides called on relevant countries and organizations to stop adopting confrontational policies, stop interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, stop disrupting existing security architectures, stop creating "small circles" among nations, stop exacerbating regional tensions, and stop promoting bloc confrontation, the statement said.

Both sides oppose the formation of closed and exclusive group structures in Asia and the Pacific, especially military alliances targeting any third party, it said.

WORLD WATCH By Tahir Farooq

Hegemonic tendencies brew more tension and conflict

In the canvas of global politics, security challenges have frequently been the outcome of historical turbulence, colonial legacies and the interplay of superpowers. The 20th century bore witness to the decolonization of Africa and Asia. Complicating the scenario was the Cold War era's strategic gamesmanship, during and after which the United States engaged in myriad toppling of regimes and propping up of proxy governments. The vestiges of these policies are visible today in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, where past interventions have set the stage for ongoing conflict and unrest.

The geopolitical landscape today remains punctuated by the assertive hegemony of the US. It has been a central player in global politics, wielding its military, economic and cultural power to often dictate international relations. Such hegemonic tendencies, while at times stabilizing, have also led to exacerbating tensions and brewing conflicts, as evidenced in the military ventures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, as well as in Ukraine. These interventions, driven by a combination of strategic interests and normative agendas, have often resulted in outcomes contrary to the envisaged stability and democracy promotion.

The Ukraine conflict echoes the dissolution of the USSR and Russia's quest to regain its foothold in the global order while being beleaguered by the West. The enlargement of NATO and the application of sanctions have been perceived by Russia as direct threats to its sphere of influence, prompting it to secure its interests through assertive regional maneuvers. The intricacies of Russia's engagement in Eastern Europe and the Middle East underline the fraught relationship it maintains with the US and NATO, exacerbating the geopolitical tension palpable in today's global security environment.

In stark contrast, China's emergence on the world stage has been characterized by a different ethos. China's advocacy for a security outlook that encompasses "common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security" is reflective of its broader diplomatic philosophy. This approach, enunciated by President Xi Jinping in his Global Security Initiative, marks a departure from the dominance-driven paradigm that has typified much of the past century's international relations. By championing a more multipolar world order, where no single nation's interests override the collective good, China presents itself as a harbinger of a more equitable global governance model.

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Country to share President's insight into water practices at world forum

By HOU LIQIANG houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

The Ministry of Water Resources will unveil an English language publication showcasing President Xi Jinping's insights into water resources management in China during the upcoming 10th World Water Forum, in order to enhance global understanding of the nation's successful strategies in addressing water challenges.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, the country "has made historical achievements and undergone

transformative changes in water management", Li Guoying, minister of water resources, told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

Li will attend the forum, which will open in Bali, Indonesia, on Saturday.

China made such commendable progress by rolling out a series of innovative and strategic measures following the strategic approach proposed by Xi on water resources governance, which involves "prioritizing water conservation, balancing spatial distribution, taking systematic approaches and giving full play to the roles of both government and the market", Li said.

The forum, which will run through May 25, is themed "Water for Shared Prosperity". It will gather high-level officials, experts, entrepreneurs and economists from all over the world, who will share their knowledge, experiences and practices on a wide range of topics related to water.

With the new publication on President Xi's insights into water resources management, "we are eager to engage in more discussions with our international counterparts regarding our water resources management principles, deliberate on efficient strategies, share experien-

ces, and persistently strive to address universal water security challenges", Li said.

Citing the inundation of the Haihe River Basin last year, which was the most devastating incident of flooding in the area since 1963, the minister said the country has been able to conquer some historically rare drought and flooding disasters in its major watercourses by continuously strengthening its water resources management system.

This has helped significantly reduce the proportion of economic losses caused by flooding in the

country's GDP, he said. On average, the proportion stood at 0.24 percent each year from 2014 to 2023, compared with 0.51 percent from 2004 to 2013.

China has also seen a significant boost in its water supply capacity, thanks to the implementation of major water diversion projects, Li said.

To date, the initial phases of the middle and eastern routes of the country's giant South-to-North Water Diversion Project have transferred more than 70 billion cubic meters of water, benefiting over 176 million people, he noted.

EXECS, EXPERTS ENDORSE NATION'S PURSUIT OF CUTTING-EDGE GROWTH

New quality productive forces outlined by Xi essential for the future

By MA SI and LIU ZHIHUA

With one new car rolling off the production line every 76 seconds and over 700 robots seamlessly integrated into the manufacturing process, a new energy vehicle factory in southeastern Beijing is forging the way ahead for the automotive industry.



Run by Xiaomi Corp, what they call "the super car factory" is setting new standards for efficiency and innovation.

Powered by artificial intelligence technology, the plant has

developed an autonomous X-ray quality inspection system. This system ensures that all critical parts of the production process undergo high-precision monitoring to guarantee good quality standards.

As the global demand for NEVs continues to grow, facilities like this one are poised to lead the way in shaping the future of the automo-

tive industry.

"The smart driving functions of electric cars will be the decisive factor over the next decade," said Lei Jun, chairman and CEO of Xiaomi Corp, adding that the company is partnering with Chinese and international suppliers to make cars as intelligent as possible.

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INSIDE Chinese NEVs powering the future, today Global Views, page 13

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PAGE TWO

Economy: Efforts gaining traction

From page 1

The carmaking plant epitomizes how China's efforts to cultivate "new quality productive forces" is fueling the country's high-quality development and injecting fresh vitality into the global economy, company executives and experts said.

President Xi Jinping first proposed the term in September, and expounded on the theory of new quality productive forces during an inspection tour of Hunan province in March.

The president said technological innovation is the core element for developing new quality productive forces, and efforts should be made to proactively involve top-notch research and development institutions from home and abroad to enhance independent innovation capabilities in key fields.

The theory has struck a chord with Chinese and foreign entrepreneurs as they see abundant opportunities arising from the country's innovation-driven development and believe that China will continue playing a crucial role in fueling global economic recovery despite the challenges ahead.

Business titans' backing

Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, said in an interview with China Daily that China's sharpened focus on cultivating new quality productive forces "is essential", adding "it is the future".

Highlighting that "Apple and China grew together over the past three decades, a symbiotic kind of relationship both enjoyed," Cook said Apple's Chinese suppliers now have the most advanced manufacturing in the world.

"If you look at the automation level, it's not just off-the-shelf automation. It is customized automation. They have robotics, automatic guided vehicles and very precise vision systems," the senior executive added.

"There's no supply chain in the world more critical to Apple than that of China. We've been building up and investing more and more here," Cook said.

Denis Depoux, global managing director of market consultancy Roland Berger, said the concept of new quality productive forces indicates China's strategic shift toward modern and sustainable economic growth.

"The old China stories of the past — low labor costs, relatively few added-value products, massive exports and massive fixed asset investments in infrastructure building and fueling the economy — are gone," he said. "The new China story relies on factors such as advanced manufacturing, decarbonization, growing innovation progress and the services economy."

Jeffrey Sachs, a renowned economist and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University in the United States, said: "China's strength right now is that it is on the cutting edge of many of the most important technology innovations for the future, including low-carbon energy solutions, electric vehicles, batteries, supply chains, high-speed trains and many other sectors. All of this will be very good for China's growth in the future."

Beacon of progress

The evidence is already clear. China dominates the Global Lighthouse Network list, a project launched by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with consultancy McKinsey & Co to track advanced manufacturing plants, known as lighthouse factories, that apply state-of-the-art digital technologies.

To date, China is home to 62 lighthouse factories, the highest number of any country and accounting for more than one-third of the world's total.

China also ranked 12th in the 2023 Global Innovation Index, becoming the only middle-income country to break into the top 30, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization.



If you look at the automation level, it's not just off-the-shelf automation. It is customized automation. They have robotics, automatic guided vehicles and very precise vision systems."

Tim Cook, CEO of Apple

XING WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

As nurturing new quality productive forces gains traction in China, "in the future, we may see more similar patterns in industries such as healthcare, new materials and AI, and these efforts will provide big opportunities for foreign companies," Depoux added.

Frank Meng, chairman of Qualcomm China, said the wireless communication industry, which the US chip company operates in, offers strong support for nurturing new quality productive forces.

"China's smart car industry has shown strong momentum globally. ... We have helped 40-plus Chinese automotive brands in launching more than 100 new models with intelligent connectivity capabilities," he said.

Meng underscored Qualcomm's confidence in the long-term prospects of the Chinese economy. "Qualcomm has consistently considered China as a pivotal business partner and valued customer, viewing it as more than just a market or a link in the supply chain," he said.

Miao Wei, a former minister of industry and information technology, said the real economy is the main area for cultivating new quality productive forces. More efforts are needed to encourage enterprises to play a pivotal role in advancing major technological breakthroughs from laboratories to production lines, Miao added.

China is the only country in the world that has all industrial categories listed in the United Nations Industrial Classification, covering almost all traditional and emerging manufacturing sectors. This provides an unparalleled base for nurturing new quality productive forces, he said.

"But we need to further leverage the role of enterprises like Huawei in national major technological innovation endeavors," Miao added.

Strategic guarantee

Huawei began selling its much-anticipated Pura 70 smartphone series last month, which is widely seen as the key to further reviving its smartphone business in China despite lingering technological restrictions by the United States.

The latest phone showcases Huawei's technological strength and resilience amid mounting pressure, and it could enjoy a sales boom similar to that of Huawei's Mate 60 series unveiled last year, if production capacity can be guaranteed, experts said.

Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's rotating chairwoman, said: "Huawei has been investing heavily in foundational technologies to harness trends in digitalization, intelligence and decarbonization to create more value."

Zheng Yongnian, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), and president of the Qianhai Institute for International Affairs, said: "For a country to develop new quality productive forces, it needs to possess three core elements, namely promoting basic scientific research, facilitating the translation of basic research into applied technology, and ensuring a supportive financial environment."

"Expanding institutional opening-up is the strategic guarantee for nurturing new quality productive forces," Zheng said.

Zhao Zhongxiu, president of the University of International Business and Economics, agreed, highlighting that continuously advancing higher-level opening up and fostering high-quality international cooperation are pivotal for a country's development strategy.

Zhao emphasized the importance of avoiding isolationism and embracing international collaboration while being cautious not to over-rely on imported technologies.

It is of crucial importance to strike a balance between importing cutting-edge international technologies and fostering domestic innovation while safeguarding national economic security, he added.

Contact the writers at
masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Advances in brain-machine technology to bring major opportunities

By XINHUA

A monkey with soft electrode filaments implanted in its brain, controlled an isolated robotic arm and grasped a strawberry by simply using its "thoughts."

This innovative achievement in the application of China's brain-machine interface (BMI) technology was unveiled at the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum held in Beijing last month.

The NeuCyber Array BMI System, which was independently developed by Chinese scientists, fills the gap in high-performance invasive BMI technology in China, said Luo Minmin, director of the Chinese Institute for Brain Research, Beijing, which codeveloped the system with NeuCyber NeuroTech (Beijing).

With the development of technologies such as neuroscience, computational electronics and medicine over the years, BMI, as a frontier technology of human-computer interaction, has been a major force in leading a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial change.

The progress of multi-disciplines and technologies is accelerating the arrival of the BMI industry, making China not only a major innovation hub but also a target market for BMI technology, according to experts at the ZGC Forum.

BMI technology innovation has been used in about 40 countries and regions, with nearly 80 percent of the results emerging in the past decade, said Gu Xiaosong, an academican with the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

China is among the countries with the largest number of BMI scientific research projects, with a large scale and fast growth of scientific research output. Its invention patent applications involving BMI, account for more than half of the global total, Gu said.

"In the past 20 years, BMI technology has developed rapidly, and its application fields are gradually expanding," said Zhao Jizong, an academican with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Mainly used in the medical field, BMI technology can bring new solutions for the diagnosis and treatment of

nervous system conditions, such as epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, depression, paralysis, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, sleep disorders and autism.

Industry insiders believe that BMI technology innovation, rich clinical resources and the huge demand for brain disease treatments are advantages that will drive the development of China's BMI industry.

Hong Bo, a professor from Tsinghua University's School of Medicine, said China needs to seize the opportunity by accelerating innovations in BMI technology to promote industrial development.

BMI technology has a huge potential market. In the medical field alone, the potential global market of the BMI industry is expected to hit \$40 billion between 2030 and 2040, according to consultancy McKinsey & Company. In addition, BMI has great potential in markets such as healthcare and entertainment, it said.

"BMI technology has broad development prospects and huge market potential in many sectors, and is a typical representative of the future industries," said Jiang Juncheng, deputy director of the Beijing Municipal

Bureau of Economy and Information Technology.

As a rising sci-tech global innovation hub, Beijing, which is strong in the research and development of BMI, has made major breakthroughs in recent years in the analysis of brain cognitive principles and major disease research.

Beijing recently set out a road map for accelerating the development of the BMI industry.

By 2026, it plans to achieve breakthroughs in core BMI technologies and cultivate a number of leading enterprises. By 2030, with an independently well-developed BMI system, hundreds of small and medium-sized enterprises will be nurtured in the capital city, forming an industrial cluster.

According to the plan, Beijing will strengthen the integrated innovation of key technologies, enrich the supply of BMI products and build an industrial ecology with coordinated development. It will also promote the demonstration of applying BMI in five fields: medicine, healthcare, industrial safety, education and sports, and smart life.

CHINA-RUSSIA TIES

Xi, Putin exchange Ukraine views

In Beijing, leaders reiterate close ties as they discuss strategic issues in a turbulent time

BEIJING — President Xi Jinping held a restrictive meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday at Zhongnanhai in Beijing, during which they had in-depth exchanges on strategic issues of common concern.

The world is undergoing changes unseen in a century and entering a new period of turbulence and transformation, Xi noted, adding that in the face of the ever-evolving world landscape with volatility and turmoil, China has maintained its strategic resolve.

He said that under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people have overcome various difficulties and challenges, and are striving to

promote high-quality development and Chinese modernization.

China is willing to work with Russia and other countries to enhance solidarity and cooperation, steer global governance in the right direction, jointly safeguard international fairness and justice, and promote world peace and common development, Xi said.

Noting that China's development is unstoppable and that no force can contain China's growth and progress, Putin said that Russia is willing to improve cooperation with China and other Global South countries to promote international fairness and justice, and to work toward a more equal and multipolar world.

The two heads of state had an in-depth exchange of views on the Ukraine crisis.

Xi elaborated on China's consistent position and efforts to promote the political settlement of the Ukraine issue, stressing that to deal with any major issue, it is necessary to address both the symptoms and the root causes, and to plan for the present as well as for the long term.

He said the core of the Global Security Initiative is advocating the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and the fundamental solution to the Ukraine issue is to promote the establishment of a new balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture.

Xi said China supports the convening of an international peace conference recognized by Russia

and Ukraine at an appropriate time with equal participation and fair discussion of all options, so as to push for an early political settlement of the Ukraine issue, and China stands ready to continue to play a constructive role in this regard.

Putin introduced the relevant views and positions of Russia, saying that Russia appreciates China's objective, just and balanced position on the Ukraine issue and welcomes China to continue to play an important and constructive role in the political settlement of the issue. Russia is committed to resolving the Ukraine issue through political negotiations and is willing to demonstrate sincerity and maintain close communication with China in this regard, he said.

Xi said that over the years, they

have had many meetings and every exchange has been candid, in-depth and fruitful.

"I am ready to stay in close contact with President Putin and work together to steer the development of China-Russia relations in the right direction, guide the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era to achieve steady and lasting progress, bring more benefits to the two peoples, and contribute to world security and stability," Xi said.

Putin thanked Xi for his warm hospitality, saying that he is willing to maintain close communication with Xi, implement the important consensus reached between them, and ensure the full development of the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era.

Putin's visit to bolster momentum of relations

By REN QI in Moscow
renqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to choose China as the destination of his first overseas visit after beginning his new term of office 10 days ago shows the strength of Sino-Russian ties as well as his close personal relations with the Chinese leadership, Russian experts have said.

Upon the Kremlin's declaration of Putin's state visit to China, a diverse array of reasons were cited by Russian observers.

China is Russia's most important strategic partner, and their relations are evolving dynamically and across multiple layers encompassing the political, economic and cultural domains, said Sergey Suverov, an associate professor at the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation.

In 2023, trade between the two neighboring countries surged 26.3 percent, hitting a record high of \$240.1 billion, Suverov said, adding that energy ties between the two nations are rapidly advancing, with Russia serving as a key provider of energy resources to China, alongside a reciprocal exchange of technology between the two sides.

"Putin's visit will give further impetus to relations, particularly in energy and finance, resolve cooperation issues and establish new cooperation frameworks," Suverov said.

Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, said that Putin's visit to China was a clear and logical decision, because China has emerged as Russia's paramount partner.

Gabuev said that the Chinese yuan has surpassed the US dollar and the euro as the primary currency for trade between the two neighbors, solidifying its position as the most exchanged currency on the Moscow stock exchange and the preferred choice for savings.

Furthermore, he highlighted the cooperation between Russian scientists and Chinese enterprises, particularly in areas such as space exploration, artificial intelligence and biotechnology.

Oleg Timofeev, an associate professor at Russia's RUDN University, said that Russian-Chinese economic ties have reached a record high, referring to the most recent data indicating that bilateral trade increased by almost 5 percent year-on-year in the first four months of 2024.

According to Timofeev, talks on economic, energy and innovation collaboration will take place during Putin's visit, since the Russian delegation comprises five deputy prime ministers, the foreign and defense ministers and heads of economic departments, as well as the CEOs of Russian state corporations from the nuclear, aeronautics, railway, nanotechnology and oil and gas sectors.

The comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, established in 2019, elevated the relationship between the two nations to the pinnacle of bilateral ties, experts said.

Timofeev said that "strategic coordination" shows that the two countries intend to assume a greater and more important historical responsibility for the future of the world.

Experts also pointed out that the enduring personal friendship between President Xi Jinping and Putin over many years can often result in various symbolic gestures that hold significant diplomatic importance.

The two presidents have met on over 40 occasions in the past 10 years, both in person and virtually, surpassing all other leaders in frequency. They exchange birthday wishes and affectionately address each other as "old" or "dear" friends.

Timofeev recalled that over a decade ago, in 2013, President Xi chose Russia as the destination for his first state visit as China's head of state, a choice he repeated in March last year.

Putin's prompt visit to China, 10 days after his inauguration, appears to be a reciprocal gesture for one of his best friends among world leaders, Timofeev added.

Grand opening

A concert marking the opening of the 2024-25 China-Russia Years of Culture and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of China-Russia diplomatic relations is held on Thursday at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY



Young Russians eager to learn Chinese

By REN QI in Moscow

Every Sunday, Chinese-language tutor Kirill Burobin starts work early in the morning and remains busy until midnight.

Burobin said the number of his students has tripled over the past year.

"Sunday is the busiest," said the 20-year-old, who added that he makes a good living teaching online lessons. "I have 16 hours of virtual classes without a break."

The surge in demand for Chinese lessons in Russia reflects the nation's shift toward the East as tensions escalate between Moscow and the West.

And with President Vladimir Putin's two-day visit to China, which began on Thursday and is his first trip abroad during his new term of office, Russia also aims to elevate the two countries' comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, experts said.

Amid multiple rounds of Western sanctions, Russia seeks to strengthen ties with China for its economic and technological development, they said.

Natalia Danina, a manager at HeadHunter, Russia's leading online recruitment company, said there were almost 11,000 job openings last year requiring proficiency in Chinese, a 44 percent increase from 2021.

Over the same period, the number of jobs for Chinese speakers in Russia has doubled in the areas of sales, transportation and logistics, she said, noting an "accelerated transition" to Chinese-made equipment and spare parts.

Furthermore, the need for Chinese speakers in energy-related positions has tripled, Danina said.

Cao Shihai, minister-counselor of education at the Chinese embassy in



Russian children practice Chinese calligraphy during a cultural exchange event in Moscow on April 20, International Chinese Language Day. TIAN BING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Russia, said that educational and cultural exchanges have emerged as a crucial component of bilateral relations, playing an irreplaceable role in fostering mutual trust and friendship among the people of both countries.

Universities and other educational institutions in China and Russia have entered into over 3,000 agreements and formed 13 university alliances, encompassing more than 800 universities, he said.

With the rising popularity of language learning, approximately 120,000 Chinese students are studying Russian, while the number of Russian students learning Chinese has reached 113,000. Moreover, 150 universities and nearly 200 high schools have introduced Chinese-language classes, Cao added.

Burobin, who is also studying Eastern civilizations at a top Moscow university, said he was happy to help his students learn more about "a whole new world."

"Russians are taking up Chinese because Beijing has been our main

partner for decades," he said. "And this is just the beginning."

Alina Khamlova, 26, who teaches English and Chinese, said she had only three English-language students this year, compared with 12 who are learning Chinese.

One of her students is Maria, a 22-year-old designer who dreams of traveling to China to make clothes because it would be "cheaper than in Russia."

Khamlova also said many young people in Russia hope to study at Chinese universities.

Meanwhile, the Russian-Chinese International School is set to launch in Moscow in the fall. The school is now recruiting and has received numerous inquiries from Russian parents eager for their children to master the Chinese language.

Wu Hao, headmaster of the school, said: "With Putin's visit to China underway, the demand for Russian professionals proficient in Chinese is expected to rise. Learning Chinese has become a strong trend among youngsters in Russia."

Partnership between China, Russia lauded

By CAO DESHENG
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China is willing to work with Russia to deepen the alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union, and intensify bilateral cooperation in various fields to promote common development, Premier Li Qiang said on Thursday.

Li made the remark during a meeting in Beijing with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The premier said that under the strategic guidance of the leaders of both countries, China and Russia have consistently adhered to the principles of nonalignment, nonconfrontation and not targeting any third party in developing bilateral relations.

Practical cooperation in various fields has steadily progressed, cultural and people-to-people interactions and subnational exchanges have flourished, and the public foundation of friendship between the two nations has been solidified, he said.

The two countries have set an example of peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation between major countries, he added.

Noting that this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, Li said that China is willing to work with Russia to consolidate and carry forward the long-standing friendship, and deepen cooperation in various fields to benefit the people of both countries, contributing to the building of a

community with a shared future for mankind.

China is ready to work with Russia to promote regional integration and economic convergence, continuously enhance the level of trade liberalization and facilitation, and deepen cooperation in fields such as trade, energy and connectivity.

Li called on both countries to take the opportunity of hosting the 2024-25 China-Russia Years of Culture to further advance partnership in the fields of culture, tourism, sports, healthcare and youth development to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

China-Russia economic and trade cooperation made a historic breakthrough last year amid the slow global recovery. Bilateral trade reached a record \$240.1 billion in 2023, achieving the 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, up 5.2 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Noting that the Russia-China relationship has reached its highest level, Putin said the relationship is based on mutual equality, mutual benefit and win-win results, serving the interests of both countries and their peoples.

Russia is willing to work with China to further strengthen cooperation in areas such as the economy, energy, agriculture and infrastructure construction, deepen exchanges in education, culture, health, sports and youth development, and bring the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between Russia and China for the new era to a new stage, he said.

TOP NEWS

China set to counter US' tariff move

Nation vows to take resolute measures to protect rights and interests of its companies

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The decision of the United States to impose additional tariffs on Chinese imports marks a further escalation in Washington's efforts to curb emerging industries in China, forcing Beijing to adopt retaliatory measures to defend its interests, said analysts and heads of business associations on Thursday.

In addition to the existing tariffs under the Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974, the US announced on Tuesday additional tariffs on a range of Chinese imports, including electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, photovoltaic cells, critical minerals, semiconductors, steel and aluminum.

Notably, a World Trade Organization panel found in September 2020 that the Section 301 tariffs contravened its regulations.

After China's Ministry of Commerce vowed to take resolute measures to safeguard the rights and interests of Chinese companies, market watchers said that China has many options to counter Washington's actions that may not necessarily target US industrial goods, but could focus on other sectors.

The US' protectionist measures could reignite a "trade conflict" with China and damage the US economy in the process. Since tariffs essentially tax US businesses and consumers by raising the cost of imported goods, this could lead to inflation and harm job growth, said Wu Xinbo, dean of Fudan University's Institute of International Studies.

In the short term, the US might seem aggressive in its efforts to target emerging Chinese industries, but this approach is unlikely to yield practical results in the long run, said Chen Bin, deputy director of the expert committee at the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation.

As China has already taken the lead in the new energy sector, with the largest industry chain globally, additional tariffs cannot fundamentally alter the inherent comparative advantages of the Chinese manufacturers, he said.

Dismissing the "China overcapacity" narrative, He Yadong, a spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce, told a news conference that the so-called "overcapacity" perceived by some Western countries is not an excess of capacity but rather an excess of anxiety.

It shows worries of some countries about their own competitiveness and market share, which they use as a pretext to discredit and suppress China, said He.

According to research by the Paris-headquartered International Energy Agency, to achieve carbon neutrality goals, annual global sales of new energy vehicles need to reach about 45 million units by 2030. This



Overall, the global new energy industry is still in its early stages of development and rapid growth. Rather than overcapacity, there is a relative shortage of production capacity."

He Yadong, a spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce

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is more than three times the global sales in 2023, far exceeding the current global supply capacity.

As technology products in the new energy sector are updated and iterated more rapidly, new demand will continually emerge, said He.

"Overall, the global new energy industry is still in its early stages of development and rapid growth. Rather than overcapacity, there is a relative shortage of production capacity," he said.

Sun Xiaohong, secretary-general of auto branch of the Beijing-based China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products, said that the share of Chinese EVs exported to the US is fairly small compared to other markets.

The number of Chinese EVs exported to the US sharply declined to fewer than 2,000 units in the first quarter of this year, cutting the US market's share of China's global EV exports to less than 0.5 percent, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

With such a minimal export volume, the impact of US tariff increases on Chinese EVs is essentially negligible, said Sun.

In a statement released by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade on Wednesday, industries like EVs, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic cells in China are at the forefront of technological innovation and market competition, deeply embedding themselves in the global supply chain and making significant contributions to global efforts in energy conservation and sustainable growth.

Concurrently, the US government is providing significant subsidies to domestic industries like EVs and semiconductors, a move that starkly contradicts the principles of a market-driven economy and international trade norms, and threatens the stability and security of global industrial and supply chains, according to the statement.

Maritime training



The vessel *China Coast Guard 3502* replenishes other vessels in the South China Sea on Monday. The CCG conducted a regular training during operations of rights protection and law enforcement in the waters off Huangyan Island. WANG YUGUO / XINHUA



Olympic fever

Skateboarders try on-site experience activities during the first stop on the Olympic Qualifier Series 2024 on Thursday near the Huangpu River in Shanghai. The competition, which runs through Sunday, will showcase the dance form known as breaking, BMX freestyle, skateboarding and sport climbing. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Tech innovations boost digital accessibility, aid the disabled

By HOU CHENCHEN
houchench@chinadaily.com.cn

The accident that changed the course of 36-year-old Cai Yongbin's life came in a blinding flash. All of six years old then and unable to resist his worldly curiosity, Cai decided to find out what the contents of a bucket he had come across on a construction site were.

In that container, in his hometown of Dongguan in Guangdong province, was white lime, and as the young Cai lifted the container, its contents poured out, right into his eyes.

Despite the best efforts of doctors, Cai lost his vision. A life of perennial darkness awaited.

Fast forward 30 years, and a dozen members of a team that works for Cai sit at desks in an office block in Dongguan, each wearing headphones and each furiously tapping away at keyboards.

They are all IT engineers, and most of them, like Cai, are visually impaired. It is their aural skills that they employ to closely listen to computer codes through the headphones.

"The world's a big place full of choices," said Cai, chief executive of Etong Information Technology. Etong, shares the same pronunciation with *Yitong*, which means togetherness in Chinese.

"Being visually impaired doesn't mean you're destined to spend your life working as a masseuse or in the music industry," the young CEO added.

Two of Etong's IT engineers, Li Hongli and Li Liancai, know exactly the challenges their boss faced as he embarked on his career. Li Hongli was told to forget about preparing for an undergraduate entrance exam in computer science because exam papers for the visually impaired were not available.

Li Liancai worked as a masseur but decided to throw himself into studying computer programming, before eventually landing a job in the IT industry.

Cai recalls the early years as a

tough and gloomy journey, which ended when he attended a special school in Shenzhen, where, at the age of 13, he was introduced to software that allowed him to hear what was on the computer screens. That was in 2001, when desktop computers were relatively new to China and were by today's standards highly rudimentary. But for Cai and his peers, the machines transcended mere utility and became an extension of their senses.

"When I was a teenager, China got the internet, and screen reader software was developed, so computers opened up a completely new world of information for me," he said.

During Cai's early learning endeavors as a teenager, he first tried to scan textbooks, relying on screen readers. However, the technology lacked more advanced optical character recognition capabilities and he found himself at a loss when he encountered graphics and diagrams.

He contacted companies working with the technology, urging them to make their products more suitable for the visually impaired. However, the appeals largely fell on deaf ears.

At the age of 16, he decided to teach himself information sciences and downloaded myriad programming e-books from the internet, listening to them using software that turned text into audio.

Unable to see keyboards, the visually impaired IT aficionados relied on rote learning, noting the position of each key until it became ingrained in their memories. To commit code to memory, Cai often listened to a segment repeatedly, sometimes hundreds of times, until he mastered the material.

In 2014, by now in his mid 20s, and with his programming skills advancing, Cai joined the Information Accessibility Research Association in Shenzhen and became an information accessibility engineer.

His work at the association involved accessibility testing on internet products, reporting issues and proposing accessibility improvements.

"I opted for this role hoping to enable more individuals like me to make the most of the internet."

In 2018, he set up Etong Technology. Wu Zhenwen, the company's co-founder and a cousin of Cai, revealed that the staff are from diverse backgrounds, with 70 percent of them being engineers who are visually impaired, most recruited through referrals or drawn by Etong's growing reputation.

IT empowerment

In pre-e-commerce days, few visually impaired individuals could independently buy basic necessities, hampered by the difficulty of selecting products and not knowing how much cash they had, let alone whether what they were holding was real cash or not.

On one occasion Cai, thinking he was buying soda, bought beer, a mistake that may at first blush seem trivial, but could have had severe consequences, given that Cai is allergic to alcohol. This episode underlined for him the importance of easing the way for those with disabilities wanting to shop online to access e-commerce platforms.

The imperative of such a move is underlined by the fact that in 2022 about 29 million visually impaired people were registered in the country.

"With electronic products, the trend is toward touchscreens, but these are useless for the visually impaired because they cannot see what such screens display," said Cai.

Although the e-commerce platform Taobao provides accessibility features for visually impaired users, its image-to-speech conversion capabilities used to be limited earlier. Six years ago, Taobao's owner Alibaba worked with Etong to introduce optical character recognition software to fill this gap.

Its introduction has helped hundreds of thousands of people. Today as many as 300,000 visually impaired users shop on Taobao and Tmall every day.

At one time, the visually impaired

could not use music software to search for songs, Li Hongli said, but with recently developed software they now can. Such innovations are vital to build confidence and independence for the visually impaired, he added.

"For example, slider verification poses a challenge for the visually impaired because it requires assistance. By working with product teams to tackle these issues we have enhanced the independence of the visually impaired."

With technological advances, visually impaired consumers can enjoy more digitally driven services in growing sectors such as food delivery and transportation, allowing them to lead more independent lives.

Eleven months ago, China adopted a law on accessibility to new technology that calls on the owners of internet websites and mobile apps in fields such as social communication, lifestyle shopping, healthcare and transportation to adopt accessible-website design standards.

Chinese technology leaders such as Huawei and Xiaomi are now introducing screen recognition features similar to those developed by Etong and drawing on domestic models to provide localized accessibility support such as text-to-speech and speech-to-text functionality.

Cai eschews the term disabled while talking of himself and continues to push and break boundaries — one of his team's weekend pastimes being to climb mountains near their office.

"By building up digital accessibility, technology will progressively diminish the disparity between visually impaired individuals and sighted individuals," Cai said.

"Ultimately both groups will have access to the same information in their minds, albeit through diverse methods and channels, something echoed in the togetherness that our company's name evokes."

Hu Xinyue and Kuang Hanying contributed to this story.



Online
See more
by scanning
the code.

Security: Collective effort is path to peace

From page 1

Achieving sustainable international security is a multifaceted endeavor, requiring a recalibration of international policies and embracing of inclusive strategies. As China has illustrated, respecting national sovereignties and focusing on economic and social development are pivotal in addressing the conditions that breed unrest and conflict. The path to enduring peace and stability is through collective effort and mutual understanding, principles that are at the heart of China's international outlook.

The United Nations, envisioned as the embodiment of international cooperation and conflict resolution, must evolve to more effectively mediate contemporary challenges. Empowering this institution to uphold international law and provide a neutral platform for dialogue becomes even more critical in light of the complex security issues that confront us today. Reforming the UN to reflect the realities of the 21st century is not

just a necessity but a prerequisite for global stability, one that echoes China's call for a more representative and fair international order.

Furthermore, the fabric of today's security environment is woven with threads of economic disparity and technological innovation. The global economic system, often criticized for perpetuating inequality through debt dependency and skewed trade practices, demands reformative measures. Initiatives aimed at sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and equitable resource distribution resonate with China's emphasis on shared prosperity and harmony.

The digital realm, too, has brought forth unprecedented security considerations. Cybersecurity threats, the weaponization of information and space, and the ambiguous potential of artificial intelligence represent novel frontiers of conflict that require a collective approach to governance and ethical oversight. Here again, China's call for a global framework to manage these challenges under-

scores its commitment to a secure and stable international order.

The trajectory toward a secure and harmonious international order calls for an earnest embrace of cooperative principles and a collective rejection of hegemonic unilateralism. The vision for global stability, as articulated by China, champions such principles, advocating an inclusive approach that transcends parochial interests and respects the sovereign equality of all nations. By adopting a stance that endorses common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, China not only offers an alternative to the interventionist tendencies that have historically fomented discord but also presents a blueprint for a collaborative future. This vision is reflective of an emerging global consciousness that values mutual benefit and shared prosperity over dominance and division.

Moreover, China's commitment to fostering international cooperation is not merely rhetorical but is exemplified by its active engage-

ment in peacekeeping missions, its Belt and Road Initiative, and its efforts to address climate change. These endeavors signify a paradigm shift toward a more responsible and benevolent global stewardship. It is a path that promises to address not only the immediate security concerns but also the underlying socio-economic disparities that contribute to global tensions.

As the international community grapples with the multifaceted challenges of our time, it becomes increasingly evident that adopting China's forward-looking strategies is pivotal in the pursuit of a stable and secure global order. The way forward is clear: it is through cooperation, dialogue and mutual respect, hallmarks of China's approach to international relations, that a more peaceful and equitable world can be realized.

The writer is editor-in-chief at *Daily Ittehad Media Group and Pakistan Economic Net*. He is also the vice president and chairman of the foreign relations committee of *Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE)*. The views do not necessarily reflect those of *China Daily*.

CHINA

Jiangxi accelerates development of open economy

By ZHAO RUINAN

zhaorunan@chinadaily.com.cn

Jiangxi province is accelerating the development of an open economy by actively promoting high-quality "bringing in" and high-level "going out" initiatives, senior provincial officials said on Thursday.

Last year, Jiangxi's foreign trade reached 569 billion yuan (\$78.9 billion). Official data show that exports of the "new three" products — new energy vehicles, photovoltaic products and lithium batteries — increased by 73 percent, accounting for 4.3 percent of the national export volume and ranking sixth nationwide.

One of the engines that promotes the "new three" industries is Jiangxi's abundant lithium resources. Data from the Ministry of Natural Resources show that the city of Yichang has lithium oxide reserves

exceeding 9 million metric tons, and over 20 lithium mica mines, including the largest in Asia, which account for 40 percent of the national reserves.

"Jiangxi's development is open and inclusive. Over the past four years, Jiangxi has actively promoted the construction of an inland open economy pilot zone with high standards, accelerating the establishment of a comprehensive new open pattern," Ye Jianchun, deputy secretary of the Communist Party of China Jiangxi Provincial Committee, said at a news conference held by the State Council Information Office in Beijing.

In April 2020, the State Council approved the establishment of an open economy pilot zone in Jiangxi.

Ye, also governor of the province, said that Jiangxi has implemented a more efficient customs clearance model, reducing transport times

from Jiangxi to coastal ports from an average of 70 hours to less than 30.

He added that Jiangxi's export clearance efficiency now ranks fifth in the country.

Jiangxi is also promoting the development of cross-border e-commerce. The province's total cross-border e-commerce import and export volume reached 463 billion yuan last year, ranking sixth nationwide.

"Jiangxi is also actively integrating into the Belt and Road Initiative. Next, we will focus on accelerating reform and opening-up and injecting vigorous momentum into the development of Jiangxi," Ye said.

Riding on a more open development strategy, Jiangxi's GDP increased from 1.28 trillion yuan in 2012 to 3.22 trillion yuan in 2023. Per capita GDP rose from 28,600 yuan to 71,200 yuan during the same period. Song Dexiong, head of the prov-

ince's Science and Technology Department, said Jiangxi is also ramping up efforts to drive technological innovation, achieving breakthroughs in sectors like large civilian helicopters and semiconductor light-emitting devices.

Song said that over the past three years, Jiangxi has implemented six major actions to promote science and technology, leading to a positive trend in technological innovation.

The growth of technology-based small and medium-sized enterprises has surged by 73.8 percent, and technology contract transactions have nearly tripled, Song said. While accelerating high-quality development, Jiangxi is also coordinating efforts to ensure the well-being of its people.

Ren Zhufeng, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Jiangxi Provincial Committee and

executive vice-governor of the province, emphasized that ensuring people's livelihoods remains a top priority.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, over 5 trillion yuan has been spent to promote employment, income growth and prosperity for ordinary people, Ren said, adding that more than 220 billion yuan in entrepreneurial guarantee loans have been disbursed, ranking first nationwide.

He said that last year, Jiangxi provided free HPV vaccinations for 487,000 eligible girls and established over 1,000 childcare institutions.

"This year, we have introduced services for caring for disabled individuals and developed elderly meal assistance services," he said. "Through these small but significant improvements in livelihood, we aim to ensure the people benefit."

Anhui banks on science and tech innovation

By ZHU LIXIN in Hefei and PAN YIXUAN in Beijing

New growth drivers will emerge in the Chinese economy's new development stage, and the eastern province of Anhui will be one of them, the province's governor said on Thursday.

Addressing a news conference in Beijing organized by the State Council Information Office, Anhui Governor Wang Qingxian said the province "has emerged as a powerhouse of industrial development and manufacturing."

The province's GDP last year was 4.7 trillion yuan (\$652 billion), up from 1.9 trillion yuan in 2013.

Its development has involved domestic and foreign enterprises.

For example, Volkswagen Group China announced in April that it will invest 2.5 billion euros (\$2.7 billion) in the expansion of its innovation hub in Hefei, the provincial capital.

At the heart of the hub is Volkswagen China Technology Company, the carmaker's largest development center outside Germany. The company was founded in the Hefei Economic and Technological Development Area last year with an initial investment of 1 billion euros.

Coming, a glass and ceramics maker from the United States, has invested in 11 projects in the Hefei Xinzhan High-tech Industrial Development Zone since 2015, with investment totaling more than \$3 billion.

Anhui has attracted investment from about 5,000 foreign companies, according to the provincial government.

"What those international investors care most about is the business environment of Anhui," Wang said in response to a question from China Daily.

In the Business Environment Evaluation for Thousands of Private Enterprises in the past two years, Anhui ranked in the top 10 nationwide in terms of comprehensive scores and had the highest reputation ranking.

The authorities said the province's rapid development in recent years has benefited a lot from the manufacturing sector, as well as scientific and technological innovation.

Anhui's manufacturing industry investment had maintained a consistent growth rate above 18 percent for 26 consecutive months by March, Wang said.

Seven carmakers, including Chery, Nio, Volkswagen and BYD, have invested heavily in Anhui, and the province produced 2.49 million automobiles last year, of which 868,000 were new energy vehicles.

Executive Vice-Governor Fei Gao-yun said the province exported about 1.15 million vehicles, with one in four vehicles exported from China made in Anhui.

Anhui is now home to nearly 20,000 national high-tech companies, with more than 4,200 added last year, Wang said.

The ratio of research and development expenditure to GDP, known as R&D intensity, stood at 2.56 percent in 2022, compared with the national average of 2.54 percent, according to statistics released in October. The ratio for Hefei was 3.91 percent.

"Anhui has strong innovation, partly because we have spared no effort in supporting innovation for decades," Wang said.

Anhui is home to more megascience facilities than any other province, and was given approval by the central authorities in 2017 to build the Hefei Comprehensive National Science Center, one of four such centers across the country.

"Anhui's fiscal spending in the science and technology sector ranks fourth among provincial regions," Wang said.

Adhering to market principles, the province founded the Grand Union of Innovation in Hefei in 2022 to give innovative startups all-around service, including helping them find application scenarios and attract investors.

By the end of March it had attracted 1,391 innovation-oriented enterprises and more than 200 funds of various types, with the capital volume totaling over 230 billion yuan, Wang said.

Contact the writers at zhuixin@chinadaily.com.cn

Construction starts on mega undersea link

China's longest underwater railway tunnel project begins breaking ground

By LUO WANGSHU

luowangshu@chinadaily.com.cn

Tunneling operations began at both ends of China's longest undersea high-speed railway tunnel project on Thursday, according to China Railway's 14th Bureau Group, which is overseeing its construction.

The Jintang Undersea Tunnel, a critical component of the high-speed railway connecting Ningbo and Zhoushan in Zhejiang province, will span 16.18 kilometers upon completion, with a shielded section 11.21 km long, making it one of the world's longest undersea railway tunnels. Trains will travel through it at speeds of up to 250 km per hour.

Construction of the tunnel is one of the world's most ambitious and challenging projects of its kind because of the geological conditions it faces, the immense pressures at depth, and its length, which is nearly 10 km longer than the tunnel on the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

Tunnel boring machines digging simultaneously from Zhoushan and Ningbo are set to meet in the middle of the seabed, delving as deep as 78 meters beneath the water's surface during construction.

It will traverse the Jintang Channel, a major water transportation route to Zhoushan Port in Ningbo. The channel can accommodate large vessels, and Zhoushan Port is one of the world's busiest ports in terms of annual freight throughput.

The tunnel will navigate a complex marine environment, passing beneath various risk factors such as oil pipelines, sea walls, docks and shipping lanes.

Hu Hao, an engineer from China Railway's 14th Bureau Group, underscored the exceptional challenges presented by the project, which include navigating 28 transitions between soft and hard strata.

"The construction complexity, difficulty and risks involved in this process are rarely seen in the world," he said.

Hu said the team has enhanced the design of the tunnel boring machines specifically for the Jintang Tunnel, enabling them to handle both soft and hard strata.

Upon completion, the tunnel will be the world's third-longest undersea railway tunnel, trailing the Channel Tunnel linking the United Kingdom and France and Japan's Seikan Tunnel. However, trains in those tunnels travel at a maximum speed of just 160 km/h.

Zhoushan and Ningbo are currently connected by a cross-sea bridge and ferries, which are subject to disruptions from typhoons, maritime transportation challenges and holiday congestion, resulting in erratic transportation capacities and inconvenience for commuters.

The Jintang Tunnel will be a crucial segment of the 77-km Ningbo-Zhoushan High-Speed Railway, which is expected to be operational by 2028.



A worker conducts checks on a tunnel boring machine at a construction site for the Jintang Undersea Tunnel in Zhejiang province on Thursday. YAO FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Follow the duck



Villagers chase a duck in a paddy field during a special activity held before the planting of rice in Panrong village in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Wednesday. Activities including hoeing, tug-of-war contests and duck chasing are staged to "awaken" the land in preparation for the rice planting season and pray for good weather and a bountiful harvest. LONG TAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Dinosaur teeth found in Guangdong belonged to a relative of *T rex*

By YAN DONGJIE

yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

A research team in China recently determined that four large dinosaur teeth discovered in the Sanshui Basin in South China's Guangdong province belong to the same group of carnivorous, bipedal dinosaurs as *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

This finding was published in the international geological journal *Cretaceous Research* on Thursday.

Xing Lida, an associate professor at China University of Geosciences Beijing, who led the research, said the fossilized teeth found in the cities of Sihui and Guangzhou date back to the end of the Late Cretaceous period, approximately 66 to 70 million years ago.

South China lacks evidence of large theropod dinosaurs from the Late Cretaceous, with the teeth found in the basin marking the first discovery of large theropod dinosaurs in the area and one of the southernmost fossil records of the Tyrannosauroida in China.

It is also one of the most recent records of the Tyrannosauroida in China, Xing said.

He said dinosaur egg fossils from the Late Cretaceous period



One of the four dinosaur teeth excavated in Guangdong. DONG TIANJIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

discovered in the basin also indicate that dinosaurs belonging to groups including the Troodontidae, Oviraptorosauria and Hadrosauridae lived in the region.

"The discovery of teeth from the Tyrannosauroida alongside these taxons forms a dinosaur biota, suggesting that the dinosaur biota in southern China was likely quite prosperous toward the end of the Cretaceous before the major extinction event," Xing said.

The Cretaceous period spanned from approximately 145 million years ago to 65 million years ago. The extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous period was one of the most severe mass extinctions in Earth's history, leading to the extinction of many kinds of animals, including dinosaurs, and paving the way for the emergence of mammals and eventually humans.

Guangdong is an important

region for various fossils from the Cretaceous in China, with dinosaur fossils mainly found in the Nanxiong Basin and Heyuan Basin in the north of the province. Although the sedimentary strata in the southern Sanshui Basin are comparable with those in the northern regions, the record of dinosaur fossils is scarce.

Xing said theropod dinosaur teeth typically have a banana or crescent shape, wider in the middle and narrower toward the edges. The three relatively intact teeth found in Sihui each exceed 6 centimeters in crown length, while tooth fragments were found in Guangzhou.

The research team, with members from China University of Geosciences Beijing, the Sihui City Museum, Sun Yat-sen University and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Institute of Earth Sciences, analyzed 145 features from 97 theropod species, with the results supporting the classification of the four teeth as belonging to the Tyrannosauroida.

The primary author of the paper, doctoral student Wang Donghao from China University of Geosciences Beijing, estimated that the dinosaur to which the teeth found in Sihui belonged was at least 5 to 6 meters long.

Briefly

Former senior bank official investigated

Lou Wenlong, former vice-president of Agricultural Bank of China, is being investigated by the country's top anti-graft watchdogs, they said on Thursday. The Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Commission of Supervision said Lou is suspected of serious violations of Party disciplines and the law. Lou, 66, a

native of Zhejiang province, once worked at the People's Bank of China and the China Banking Regulatory Commission. He was Agricultural Bank of China vice-president from 2012 to April 2017.

Ex-political adviser pleads guilty to graft

Ji Binchang, a former senior political adviser in Qingdao, Shandong province, pleaded guilty to taking more than 526 million yuan (\$72.9

million) in bribes at Wuxi Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu province on Thursday. Ji took advantage of his various work posts, including deputy head of the Shandong Provincial State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission and vice-governor of Shandong, from 2003 to 2022 to seek profits for individuals and departments in business operation, project contracting and employment, and then accepted bribes in return,

prosecutors told the court.

Nonprofit kindergarten access boosted

Nonprofit kindergartens in China, including public and nonprofit private kindergartens, now serve 90.8 percent of the country's enrolled children, the Ministry of Education said on Thursday. By the end of last year, there were 274,000 kindergartens nationwide, with 86 percent of them

affordable public and nonprofit private kindergartens, ministry data showed. The student-to-teacher ratio in kindergartens improved from 23.4 to 1 in 2013 to 13.3 to 1 in 2023. The ministry has taken steps to improve public access to affordable preschool education with a focus on bolstering kindergarten development in both rural and urban areas, a senior ministry official said.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

WORLD

FRIENDS AFAR

Documentary filmmaker takes 2nd shot at Yangtze

Editor's note: China Daily presents the series Friends Afar to tell the stories of people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries. Through the vivid narration of the people in the stories, readers can get a better understanding of a country that is boosting openness.

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

In 2010-11, Japanese documentary director Ryo Takeuchi filmed a series about the Yangtze River for Japan's public broadcaster NHK. A decade later, starting in 2021, he spent about two years retracing the river's 6,300-kilometer-long watercourse.

The documentary film *The Yangtze River* was released in Japan in April and will begin screening in China on May 24.

"More than 10 years ago, I filmed the Yangtze River, but I was not satisfied with the work at that time," said Takeuchi, 45.

"I couldn't speak Chinese then, and living in Japan, I didn't understand the real lives of the Chinese people, so what I filmed was very superficial.

"I always had an obsession with learning Chinese and understanding China before going to film the Yangtze River again."

Born in Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo, Takeuchi moved from Japan to China with his family in 2013 and settled in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, his wife's hometown.

Living there, Takeuchi developed an affection for the Yangtze River. He enjoys reading *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, a historical novel by 14th-century Chinese writer Luo Guanzhong. There are many places along the river related to the Three Kingdoms, including Chibi and the city of Baidi.

Along the river, there are cities that are familiar to Japanese people, such as Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan and Chongqing, as well as various ethnic minorities.

"After watching this movie, many Japanese will definitely want to visit China," Takeuchi said, adding that he hopes he has provided them with an opportunity to visit China.

"Nowadays, many Japanese only rely on Japanese media reports and think this or that about China is bad. I hope my film will be their first step in understanding China," he said.

"Don't blindly criticize China without ever having been there or met Chinese people."

During the filming, he revisited some of the people living along the river he had filmed more than 10 years ago, including Cimu, a Tibetan woman living in Shangri-La, Yunnan province.

Then, an 18-year-old Cimu, dressed in Tibetan attire, held a white lamb at the Napa Sea scenic area, inviting tourists to take photos with her lamb for 5 yuan (\$0.70).

Impressive experience

She had never left Shangri-La, and was curious about big cities, airplanes and skyscrapers mentioned by the documentary host, so Takeuchi's film crew decided to take her to Shanghai. The experience left a deep impression on her.

After returning to Shangri-La, Cimu found a job at a guesthouse and gained experience in the hospitality industry. Later, she and her family renovated their two-story Tibetan-style house, and opened a homestay called Aurora Hotel in November 2021.

When Takeuchi saw Cimu again, she had become an innkeeper. She said the trip to Shanghai was inspiring and strengthened her determination to open a homestay.

In the past decade, China has undergone profound changes, especially with the internet significantly reshaping people's lives. This is reflected in Takeuchi's latest film.

Compared with 2011, not only has Cimu's life undergone dramatic changes, but Takeuchi, who could not understand Chinese and could only stand behind the camera, has become proficient in Chinese and confident when facing the camera too. He attributes this newfound confidence to his decision to move to China.

Takeuchi made the move for two main reasons. First, he wanted to learn Chinese. At that time, he was well-known as a documentary filmmaker and for specializing in filming Chinese stories, but he could not speak Chinese. Second, he wanted to challenge himself and experience new things.

"When I moved to Nanjing, I was worried about my children because they are half Japanese and half Chinese, and I was afraid they would be bullied at school in Nanjing. But in reality, they have never been bullied. I have been living in Nanjing for 10 years, and Nanjing people have never shown any dislike for Japanese people."

In 2014, he and his wife founded the Nanjing Hezhimeng Culture Communication Company, where he tried to introduce Japanese culture to Chinese people by telling stories about Chinese people living in Japan. In 2015, he started publishing his works on video-sharing platforms such as Youku, iQIYI, Tencent and Bilibili.

Later, he found the Japanese people did not understand China, with most people relying on Japanese media for information on China.

Depicting the real China

"We Japanese living in China are particularly dissatisfied with Japanese media reports on China, because we know what the real China is like, and it is very different from the China depicted in those stories. There is too much negative information about China, so I want to introduce the real China to Japanese people," he said.



Poster of the documentary film *The Yangtze River* by Ryo Takeuchi. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese culture is rich and diverse, he said. Be it the landscape, food, culture, history, society or economy, there are many things that can be covered, he said.

"I have filmed documentaries in Asia, Africa, South America, Europe and the Middle East, but I still find filming in China most interesting. After all, China has thousands of years of history and deep cultural heritage.

"Moreover, the Chinese culture is diverse and fascinating. The country makes me want to film more and more."

He has now begun to film the stories of Japanese war orphans in China.

After Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945, when the Japanese army withdrew from China, some Japanese children were abandoned in China and later adopted by Chinese families. Some of them returned to Japan with the assistance of the Japanese government in the 1980s and 1990s.

However, their lives in Japan were not easy because they returned to Japan after growing up in China. They could not speak Japanese, which made it difficult to integrate into Japanese society. Many of them relied on subsidies from the Japanese government for their subsistence.

Takeuchi said he wants to film the stories of people who grew up in China and returned to Japan.

"They have always missed their former home but financial constraints have prevented them from returning to China," he said, adding he hopes to make their dream of returning a reality.

"I always wanted to film stories related to war," he said.

"As a Japanese person living in Nanjing, I always wanted to film this subject but it's too sensitive. I don't know what the final film will be like, but I still want to challenge myself.

"It's amazing that Chinese people are willing to adopt the children of Japanese invaders and raise them."



A man is detained after Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico was shot at in the central town of Handlova on Wednesday. RADOVAN STOKLASA / REUTERS

Slovak PM's condition 'very serious' but stable

President urges end to 'vicious circle of hatred' as world denounces attack

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico was in a "very serious" but stable condition on Thursday, a hospital official said, after he was shot five times in an assassination attempt decried as "politically motivated."

"During the night, doctors managed to stabilize the patient's condition," Deputy Prime Minister Robert Kalinak told reporters at the hospital where Fico was being treated.

"Unfortunately, the condition is still very serious as the injuries are complicated," said Kalinak, who is also defense minister.

Miriam Lapunikova, director of the Banska Bystrica hospital, where the 59-year-old leader was receiving treatment, said Fico underwent a "five-hour surgery carried out by two teams."

On Wednesday, another Fico deputy, Tomas Taraba, said the leader's surgery had gone well.

"He's not in a life-threatening situation at this moment," said Taraba, who is also minister of environment.

President-elect Peter Pellegrini told reporters outside the hospital on Thursday: "He is able to speak but only a few sentences and then he is really, really tired."

Media reported that the suspected gunman was a 71-year-old poet who had worked for a security company in his retirement.

Witnesses alleged that after a government meeting in the central town of Handlova, the suspect shouted to Fico to approach him, offering his hand, after which shots were fired.

The alleged suspect's son told Slo-

vak news site aktualny.sk he had "absolutely no idea what (his) father was thinking, what he was planning, why it happened."

On Thursday, Interior Minister Matus Sutaj Estok said a man has been charged with attempted murder, who did not belong to any political group.

The suspect acted alone and had taken part in anti-government protests, he added.

The suspect's actions "were accelerated after the presidential election since he was dissatisfied with its outcome," he told reporters, referring to Pellegrini, Fico's ally who won the presidential election in April and will be inaugurated in June.

Earlier on Wednesday, Sutaj Estok told a news conference that the attack was "politically motivated."

Bringing calm

Outgoing President Zuzana Caputova, an opponent of Fico, said on Thursday that the heads of the country's political parties would meet in an effort to bring calm.

"Let us step out of the vicious circle of hatred and mutual accusations," Caputova said at a news conference in the capital Bratislava.

Pellegrini called on political parties to suspend or scale back their campaigns for European elections, which will be held in June, to prevent "standoffs and mutual accusations between politicians."

It was the first major assassination attempt on a European political leader in more than 20 years, and spurred global condemnation.

European Council President Charles Michel said he was shocked at the news. "Nothing can

ever justify violence or such attacks," he said on X.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on X, "I strongly condemn the vile attack on Prime Minister Robert Fico."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the "shocking attack" carried out against Fico, his office said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin described the shooting as a "monstrous" crime and in a message sent to Caputova stated, "I know Robert Fico as a courageous and strong-minded man. I very much hope that these qualities will help him to survive this difficult situation."

China strongly condemned the violent attack. Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Thursday that China was deeply shocked by the attack and had extended sincere sympathies to Fico and his family.

Lubos Blaha, Slovak deputy parliament speaker and deputy chairman of Fico's Smer party, blamed "liberal media" for the attack.

"You, liberal media and political opposition. What hatred you spread against Robert Fico."

Slovakia's biggest opposition party, Progressive Slovakia, has called off a planned protest and called for restraint to avoid escalating tensions.

Fico has served as prime minister since 2023, having previously served in the position from 2006 to 2010 and from 2012 to 2018. He is the longest-serving prime minister in the country's history.

He has been among the few European Union leaders who have opposed sending arms to Ukraine.

Zhao Jia in Beijing and agencies contributed to this story.

Biden and Trump set for double face-off

WASHINGTON—US President Joe Biden and former president Donald Trump agreed on Wednesday to face off in two debates on June 27 and Sept 10, setting up the highest stakes yet in the race for the White House.

The sudden agreement, ending months of uncertainty over whether the debates would happen at all, came after Biden, 81, challenged his scandal-tinted Republican rival to "make my day."

Trump, 77, quickly responded that he was "ready to rumble." And within hours, CNN announced it would host the first debate in Atlanta on June 27 and ABC said it would stage the second on Sept 10.

With Trump leading polls in battleground states, Biden appeared to be trying to seize the initiative by proposing both the dates and an audience-free format for the debates.

Earlier, he said in a video on X: "Donald Trump lost two debates to me in 2020. Since then, he hasn't shown up for a debate. Now he's acting like he wants to debate me again. Well, make my day, pal."

Biden also trolled Trump over his criminal hush money trial in New York, which features a mid-week break, adding, "I hear you're free on Wednesdays."

Trump's swift acceptance reflected the fact that Trump, who avoided any debates with his Republican rivals, has been itching to get his message out after weeks stuck in court.

"Let's get ready to Rumble!!!" he wrote on his Truth Social platform, describing Biden as the "worst debater I have ever faced."

Independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr said on X he will meet the criteria to participate in the CNN debate before the June 20 deadline. It remains unclear if he will qualify.

Tight race

Debates, which will draw a live television audience in the tens of millions, are fraught with risks for both candidates, who face a tight race and low enthusiasm from voters.

Biden aides think debates could hurt Trump by exposing his positions on various issues, including abortion, that they regard as political vulnerabilities.

Trump aides see Biden as prone to verbal slip-ups that could amplify voter concerns about his age. Trump will be 78 by the time the first debate is held.

"Both candidates will be under greater scrutiny than they have ever been due to their age," said Alan Schroeder, a professor emeritus at Northeastern University who wrote the book *Presidential Debates: Risky Business on the Campaign Trail*. He called the debate "one of the only moments in which the candidates don't have complete control."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Maui wildfire survivors face breathing issues, survey finds

HONOLULU — A University of Hawaii study examining the health effects of last year's deadly wildfires on Maui found that up to 74 percent of participants may have difficulty breathing and otherwise have poor respiratory health, and almost half showed signs of compromised lung function.

The data, gathered from 679 people in January and February, came from what researchers hope will be a long-term study of wildfire survivors lasting at least 10 years.

Researchers released early results from that research on Wednesday. They eventually hope to enroll 2,000 people to generate what they call a snapshot of the estimated 10,000 people affected by the fires.

Alika Maunakea, one of the researchers and a professor at the university's John A. Burns School of Medicine, said those who reported higher exposure to the wildfire tended to have more symptoms.

Many study participants had not seen a doctor, he said. Some study



A man looks at the aftermath of a wildfire in Lahaina, Hawaii, on Aug 19. JAE C. HONG / ASSOCIATED PRESS

participants said they were not able to because clinics had burned down or because they prioritized getting housing, jobs and food after the disaster. Maunakea urged people exposed to the wildfires to get themselves checked.

"There might be some problems

that might manifest in the future," he said. "Please see your doctor. Just pay more attention to your health."

Two-thirds of study participants lived in Lahaina at the time of the fires. About half reported daily or weekly exposure to smoke, ash or debris.

The Aug 8 blaze killed at least 101 people, making it the deadliest wildfire in the United States in more than a century. It burned thousands of buildings, displaced 12,000 residents and destroyed the historic town in Maui.

The report shows Maui does not have enough pulmonary health specialists, said Ruben Juarez, a professor of health economics at the university and one of the study's leaders.

Researchers are talking with Hawaii's congressional delegation to figure out how to bring these resources to Maui, he said.

Maunakea said researchers want to avoid the higher cancer and death rates experienced 20 years later by people affected by the 9/11 attacks.

"We'll hopefully be able to prevent this tragedy from compounding to higher mortality rates in the future, like we saw with other events like 9/11," Maunakea said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD

Protesters arrested on California campus

By AI HEPING in New York
aiheping@chinadailyusa.com

Classes at UC Irvine (UCI) in California were held remotely on Thursday after 50 people were arrested during a pro-Palestinian protest on the campus that saw police clash with some demonstrators.

All those arrested Wednesday afternoon were taken to the Orange County jail and released on citations, according to the university. At least two people who were taken into custody identified themselves as UCI faculty members, police said.

UCI officials said one student was injured, and three police officers were taken to a hospital. As of Thursday morning, two of the officers had been released, the officials said.

Most of the protesters were arrested after failing to follow a police order to disperse.

A university spokesman said police were called to the campus when about 500 people expanded an encampment that was in front of a lecture hall for weeks, using pop-up tents, wooden pallets, coolers and other supplies. A small group of protesters barricaded themselves inside the building.

Orange County sheriff's deputies and Irvine police, along with other neighboring agencies, responded.

The situation on the campus intensified over the past week after some protesting students received suspension notices from the university, including some who were involved in negotiations with UCI administrators.

Protesters have called for the university to divest itself from investments in companies that profit from the war in Gaza, to disclose the university's assets and investments and to end joint academic programs with Israel, among other demands.

Fourth-year student Sarah Khalil,

chair of Students for Justice in Palestine at UCI, said the university's response to Wednesday's protest was "unforgivable" and "irrational."

"We were peacefully protesting against a genocide and having our tuition money going toward murdering the people in Gaza right now," she told the Orange County Register. "And the university decided to call police departments and arrest students, community members and faculty members."

The clearance of the encampment will not end student protests, she said. "We still want divestment, we still want a liberated Palestine, and we're not going to stop until Palestine is free."

On Tuesday, the University of California's chief investment officer, Jagdeep Singh Bachher, announced that investments from companies that students are targeting in their call for divestment total \$32 billion, which is nearly one-fifth of the system's overall assets.

Last month, the University of California president said the institutions wouldn't boycott or divest from Israel.

UCI Chancellor Howard Gillman said in a statement that although the encampment had violated university policies since being set up in late April, the violations didn't rise to the level requiring police intervention until Wednesday afternoon. He called it "a last resort."

At the University of Tennessee in Knoxville on Wednesday, police arrested 11 people after not moving from the lawn outside the university's law school and to the student union lawn, which was reserved for them.

Police said 10 of those arrested are from Tennessee and one is from Texas. They didn't differentiate between students and non-students.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Change in UK visa rules affects foreign students

By EARLE GALE in London
earle@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Recent changes to the United Kingdom's visa rules that include a hike in the minimum wage needed to qualify for a skilled worker visa — from 26,200 pounds to 38,700 pounds (\$33,000 to \$48,800) — have led to job offers being withdrawn from foreign graduates of British universities.

Major employers, including HSBC, KPMG and Deloitte, have reportedly cited the UK government's stringent new visa rules when rescinding job offers made to foreign graduates, according to the Financial Times newspaper.

It said big firms had little choice after the new threshold was introduced in April, with dozens of job offers reportedly withdrawn as a result.

Neither HSBC, KPMG, nor Deloitte commented on the FT story. The UK government raised the threshold for qualification for a skilled worker visa in a bid to reduce the number of immigrants arriving in the country. While the threshold for qualification for a skilled worker visa now stands at 38,700 pounds for older people, the wage needed by those aged 26 and under is 30,960 pounds.

However, many graduates have complained that employers are simply not recruiting young trainee workers at that pay level.

One unnamed job seeker told the paper: "Having spent 50,000 pounds on attending university in the UK, I now have to go back to my home country."

The UK's Migration Advisory Committee, an independent body that advises the government on migration issues, said the government's decision to raise the threshold for qualification for a skilled worker visa while at the same time considering abolishing the graduate visa program, which lets foreign graduates of UK universities remain in the country for two years, are together causing widespread worry among overseas students.

The Conservative Party, which is in power but facing an uphill battle to secure reelection later this year, is understood to want to take a hard line on immigration in a bid to win votes.

Consequences warned

But university vice-chancellors have warned the government that the hike in the threshold for skilled worker visas and the potential abolition of the UK's graduate visa would spell financial turmoil for the education sector.

While the change has already been made to the threshold for the skilled worker visa, the government has not yet made a decision on the future of the graduate visa, although one is expected in the middle of next week.

The Guardian newspaper quoted Brian Bell, chairman of the Migration Advisory Committee, as saying: "Our review recommends the graduate route should remain as it is, and is not undermining the quality and integrity of the UK's higher education system. The graduate route is a key part of the offer that we make to international students to come and study in the UK."



Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng and winners of awards pose for a group photo at the ceremony for the fifth "My China Album" at the Chinese embassy in Washington DC on Thursday. YIFAN XU / CHINA DAILY

A call for cooperation at 'My China Album' fete

By ZHAO HUANXIN
in Washington
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com

China and the United States have only the responsibility to jointly uphold peace, and no single reason to incite confrontation, Beijing's top envoy in Washington said on Thursday.

"China is willing to be a friend and partner of the United States," said Ambassador Xie Feng. "In the era of war, we fought side by side; in the era of peace, we should also be each other's partner."

The ambassador made the remarks at the "My China Album: Sharing Our Stories About China" event at the embassy, attended by more than 200 guests, including Harry Moyer, a Flying Tigers veteran, now age 103.

During World War II, Captain Moyer fought shoulder to shoulder with Chinese soldiers to defend against invading Japanese forces.

Xie said that the foundation of the China-US relationship was laid by the two peoples, and its future will be created by them.

"Currently, China-US relations are still facing serious challenges. We need to forge a closer bond between our peoples and open our hearts to each other, so as to inject more warmth and impetus into this relationship," he said.

Since its start in 2019, the "My China Album" video series has rolled out five editions, with the fifth featuring stories of Moyer, Ambassador Winston Lord, a member of the US delegation on the historic trip to China in 1972, and other Americans in 12 video episodes, collectively themed around "My Impressions of China-100 Stories of China-US Friendship".

They capture the heartwarming moments and memories of people-to-people friendship, showcasing the historic interactions and profound bonds between the peoples of the two nations.

Xie noted that such stories have shown once and again that the two peoples can forge a profound friendship despite all the differences in system, culture and language.

He said that it is important to



Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng speaks at the awards ceremony for the fifth "My China Album" at the Chinese embassy in Washington DC on Thursday. ZHAO HUANXIN / CHINA DAILY



Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of China Daily Qu Yingpu delivers a video speech at the awards ceremony for the fifth "My China Album" at the Chinese embassy in Washington DC on Thursday. ZHAO HUANXIN / CHINA DAILY

develop a right perception toward each other, and be friends rather than rivals.

"Seeing the other as a primary strategic competitor, the most consequential geopolitical challenge and a pacing threat, in disregard of our peoples' will for exchanges and cooperation and the world's expectation for a stable China-US relationship, would only push our two countries toward antagonism, plunge the world into division and turmoil, and ultimately lead to 'self-fulfilling prophecies,'" he said.

The envoy also said it is important

to stay undistracted by domestic politics and avoid creating new hurdles for China-US relations.

He said that while China will not interfere in US domestic affairs, including its presidential election, it also firmly opposes any attempt to manipulate China-related issues, exploit China-US relations, and damage China's interests during the election.

In his first comment on Washington's latest round of tariffs imposed on electric vehicles and other Chinese imports two days ago, Xie said the move was driven by domestic politics.

"This is protectionism in the name of fair competition. The real aim is to contain China's new energy sectors, hamper China's high-quality development, and get advantage in the elections by competing to be tougher on China," he said.

The launch of the "My China Album" event serves to amplify the crucial role that people-to-people exchanges have been playing in enhancing China-US relations, said Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily.

Over the past five years, China Daily has been a partner of "My China Album", focusing on stories of China-US friendship, of endearment and goodwill, and reciprocal kindness between the two peoples, Qu said in a video speech.

For example, the 2019 edition focused on the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, and in the following year, it featured the Chinese and American peoples helping each other combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the "album" captured the beauty of sports featuring the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, and the 50th anniversary of giant pandas in America became the most popular theme in 2022.

"We believe stories of this kind are monumental and worthy of being recorded and retold," said Qu.

"The more we have explored the domain of China-US people-to-people exchanges, the more deeply we feel obligated and duty bound as China's national English-language news media. We are more committed now," he said.

Steve Blake, chief representative for environmental group WildAid China, said the "China Album" project offers a "really great" opportunity for people like him to tell a story about China.

"There's so much you hear in the news about challenges between the US and China, but there's millions of people just like me that have a personal story to tell, that our lives have been changed by our experience, whether we're Chinese people in America or Americans like myself in China," he said.

Blake said he had a lot of fond memories of China that he likes to share.

"So I'm really happy to be here today to be a part of something that connects our two countries more," he said.

The fifth edition of "My China Album" was jointly produced by the Chinese embassy in the US, the Chinese consulates general in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago, and China Daily.

Iraqi car bomb survivor eyes gold in Paris Paralympics

BAQUBA, Iraq — When car bomb survivor Najlah Imad first took up table tennis, her relatives warned against it. But a decade later, the Iraqi teenager who lost three limbs is gunning for gold at the 2024 Paralympic Games.

"Table tennis was a turning point. Since I started playing, my life has changed," the 19-year-old athlete said.

Najlah was just 3 years old in 2008 when a sticky bomb ripped into her father's car in Baquba city, northeast of Baghdad.

In a split second, like tens of thousands of Iraqis, Najlah became a victim of bombs that have ripped through the conflict-scarred country

for decades.

She lost most of her right leg, her left leg at the knee and her right forearm. But she now recounts the life-changing incident with a sense of calm. "Table tennis has improved my mental health," she said in a dilapidated sports center in Baquba.

Najlah's face lights up when she speaks of her sports journey. But her smile disappears when she stands on her prosthetics in front of the blue table, ready and focused to hit the ball with utmost precision.

The young athlete, with black hair at neck length, discovered her love for the game at the age of 10 when a trainer visited her house looking to form a local Paralympic team.

Her family was initially hesitant and cautioned her, predicting that she would be exhausted and "wouldn't achieve anything."

But it did not stop her. "When I first started, I saw other people with disabilities playing sports despite losing their limbs," she said.

Najlah admired their positive energy. "They were always smiling, which encouraged me," she said.

After six months of intensive training, Najlah played her first match in a local Baghdad tournament.

"I won!" Najlah said. "I was the surprise of the competition."

The first triumph fueled her passion, and she became a fierce

competitor. Over the years, Najlah has participated in 30 international tournaments, winning medals and trophies, which she proudly displays on a shelf in her modest home.

In 2021, she went to Tokyo for the Paralympic Games. And last year, she won a gold medal at the Asian Para Games in China.

Iraq's Paralympic Committee provides Najlah with a modest monthly stipend and travel expenses to competitions when the budget allows it.

She traveled to Qatar in March to prepare for the Paris Paralympics in August.

"I always aim for gold," Najlah said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

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WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1106 529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900, San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-6288

Fax: 415-348-6388

SEATTLE

600 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA / TORONTO

471 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M5G 6G6

Tel: 416-481-5706

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GLOBAL LENS



Watermelon seedlings are planted amid Chinese and local agricultural cooperation in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 5.
PHOTOS BY LI MENGXIN / XINHUA

SOWING SUCCESS

Suriname turns around farming fortunes with Chinese help



Local residents attend an agricultural class in the China-aided Suriname Agricultural Technical Cooperation Center in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 3.

As the sun rose over Saramacca District in Suriname, the promise of pomelo season filled the air. A scene of abundance unfolded in Ashwien Doekhi's orchard, with trees heavy-laden with ripe citrus fruits swaying gently in the breeze. Doekhi, his brother and an eager team of workers dived into their harvest.

The story had been different in previous years, when Doekhi's family struggled to afford even basic agricultural tools and they often borrowed money from friends and relatives.

In 2022, with Chinese aid, the Suriname Agricultural Technical Cooperation Center launched a technical assistance project that included 10 training sessions for over 300 individuals. Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi attended the launch ceremony. He saw China's technologies as instrumental in fostering high-yield, high-quality agricultural produce and vital for improving the livelihoods of farmers in Suriname.

Doekhi, a 26-year-old participant, lived a 10-minute drive from the center. Chinese experts visited Doekhi's fields almost every day and provided tailored advice at all stages of cultivation, from nurturing seedlings to applying fertilizer.

Doekhi started planting products like chili peppers, eggplants and watermelons, sold both at local markets and to neighboring countries. His crop yields and annual income doubled.



A Chinese expert (left) conducts training on seedling planting in a greenhouse in the China-aided Suriname Agricultural Technical Cooperation Center in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 3.



A Chinese agricultural expert (right) and farmer Ashwien Doekhi check the growth of fruits in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 5.



Farmer Ashwien Doekhi (center) poses with Chinese experts in his orchard in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 5.

“We cooperate quite well with Chinese agricultural experts, sharing the same goals and working together.”

Jason Bakker, Surinamese official

“This initiative is so good; it helps us export agricultural products worldwide,” said the farmer, after having seen the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative directly benefiting his community.

Suriname is among the first Caribbean countries to sign a cooperation plan within the framework of the BRI with China.

Jason Bakker, an official from the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in Suriname, told reporters that local agricultural technicians travel two and a half hours each day to attend training sessions, and are eager to learn more about agricultural technologies from China. “We cooperate quite well with Chinese agricultural experts, sharing the same goals and working together,” he said.

Su Lirong, a cultivation expert from Central China's Hunan province, said that the cooperation center has won the trust and affection of local farmers who often seek advice from his team.

Suriname's government frequently invites Su and his colleagues to visit local farms and production sites for research and suggestions. “I feel like we have truly entered the hearts of the Surinamese people,” he said.

Surinamese agricultural researcher Jan Jagnath said he believes that China's assistance to Suriname increases agricultural productivity and addresses food security concerns, and that Sino-Surinamese agricultural cooperation has “great potential and a bright future”.

XINHUA



Farmer Ashwien Doekhi (left) harvests grapefruit with workers in his orchard in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 5.



Chinese agricultural experts and farmer Ashwien Doekhi (center) water seedlings in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 5.



Workers check crops at the China-aided Suriname Agricultural Technical Cooperation Center in Saramacca District, Suriname, on April 3.

BUSINESS

Stimulus key to realty stability

As active signs emerge, experts call for more policy support

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

The latest optimization measures adopted by China's major cities to absorb housing inventory have borne fruit, with buoyant market activity being witnessed, based on which experts said that they expect more policy fine-tuning to be unveiled to unleash even more potential demand, stabilize market expectations and promote real estate market stabilization.

The optimized property policies are being introduced in cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, Xi'an in Shaanxi province, Chengdu in Sichuan province and Nanjing in Jiangsu province. The moves are in response to the tone-setting conference held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee late last month, which called for measures to digest housing inventories and optimize new supplies, experts said.

Active signs have appeared following the measures introduced by cities across China, as data revealed by real estate organizations showed.

New home transactions in 15 major cities reached 14,685 units during the week between May 6 and Sunday, soaring 74.24 percent week-on-week, though registering a dip of 2.51 percent from a year ago, said the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center.

"Overall, the new home sector is still awaiting further recovery," said Guan Rongxue, a senior analyst at Zhuge.

Performance of the pre-owned home market is more encouraging. Trade volume in the 10 major cities surged 184.9 percent from a week



Potential homebuyers ask queries on housing projects at a real estate agency in Beijing in March.
JIANG QIMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

ago to reach 19,379 units, up 85.73 percent year-on-year.

"With the wrapping up of the May Day holiday, the pre-owned housing market showed rapid resumption, and we believe the measures announced ahead of the holiday contributed to the demand recovery," said Guan.

On April 30, immediately after the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau meeting, Beijing announced that qualified households or single adults living in Beijing were now eligible to buy an additional apartment outside the Fifth Ring Road.

On May 3, an initiative related to trade-ins of commercial housing units was launched in Shanghai.

There was a peak of sorts on May 9 when Hangzhou announced a

scrapping of all restrictions on homebuying. Later that afternoon, Xi'an also lifted all its homebuying requirements. The new policies are intended to cushion the Northwest Chinese city's pressure in destocking its housing inventory, said Zhang Hongwei, founder of Jingjian Consulting.

"We expect a wave of policy easing in May with regards to property measures," said Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution.

"The recent measures announced by local governments have approached their limits, and these innovative measures will hopefully inspire more creative and targeted policy adjustments," said Yan.

"The existing policies will work

together to help destock residential properties, greatly boost market sentiment and spur transactions. In general, the upward trend of the real estate sector is likely to take place in a better, steadier and more rapid manner," Yan said.

Concerning property supply and demand, the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau meeting said Chinese people's expectations for high-quality housing, measures to digest property inventory and optimization of new demand should be handled in a coordinated manner.

"Close attention should be paid to building a new real estate development model and promoting the high-quality development of the property industry," it was stated at the meeting.

PATH TO MODERNIZATION

Guangdong moving up digital textile chain

By WANG XU, LI WENFANG,
QIU QUANLIN and ZHANG
RUOQIONG in Guangzhou

South China's Guangdong province, a powerhouse in textiles, is spreading a digital revolution that promises to transform the industry as it grapples with limitations in global high-end value and supply chains and has little say in setting the industry's international rules and standards.

"There are some 530 ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards in the textile industry worldwide, of which only 37 are led by China," said Li Lingshen, vice-president of the China Textile Industry Federation.

"This means that in terms of ISO standards, we are responsible for only 7 percent, showing that we don't have much of a say in the formulation of international rules."

Facing such a disparity, Guangdong is committed to bridging the gap through technological prowess. This resolve has sparked a wave of digital initiatives aimed at revolutionizing industrial processes and organizational frameworks.

At the forefront of this digital revolution is Guangzhou Zhijing Information Technology Co, a pioneering force in harnessing digital technologies to streamline textile operations.

"From smart clothing design platforms that slash design times from weeks to minutes to fully automated fabric inspection systems that ensure unparalleled quality, our company aims to empower small and medium-sized enterprises to embrace digitalization and drive efficiency across the textile and garment production industry," said Li Yaping, co-founder and senior vice-president of GZIT.

Utilizing technologies, the company has developed multiple smart cloud platforms covering the entire chain of textile and garment production, procurement, design and sales.

"The days of navigating fabric markets for days on end are a thing of the past thanks to the smart fabric sourcing platform developed by GZIT," said Shi Daqing, general manager of Guangdong Gongying Clothing Co. "With this new technology, fabric selection has been streamlined to a matter of minutes."

In fact, the impact of this digital transformation extends far beyond its borders. Data from GZIT showed that since its establishment, the company has provided digital empowerment services to over 50,000 textile and garment enterprises nationwide, driving the integration of manufacturing and the internet and propelling industries into the future.

Impressed by the digital monitors supplied by GZIT, Chen Kai, general manager of Foshan Xinwei Knitting Co, said, "The operation of equipment in real-time can reduce abnormal downtime of factory equipment by 35 percent and improve overall efficiency by 30 percent."

Wei Jianzhang, vice-president of the Belt and Road Initiative's International Cooperation and Development Research Institute in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, said the changes in the textile industry are just part of Guangdong's broader efforts to forge ahead with its digital agenda and cultivate a thriving ecosystem of industrial internet platform companies and service providers.

"The vision is clear. We must not only serve upstream and downstream enterprises, but also bridge them together, creating a more resilient and competitive industrial chain," Wei said. In an era defined by technological innovation, "Guangdong's digital transformation is not just a step forward — it's a leap into a brighter, more connected future."

Hu Xinyan contributed to this story.
Contact the writers at
wangxu@chinadaily.com.cn

JD to expand trade-in deals to boost consumption

By ZHU WENQIAN
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese e-commerce platform JD and its partners will invest 6.5 billion yuan (\$900 million) this year to encourage consumers to upgrade their refrigerators, televisions, other consumer durables and home furnishings through trade-in deals, as part of the country's broader efforts to bolster domestic consumption.

China is encouraging trade-in deals for consumer goods, including automobiles, household appliances and home furnishings, to boost consumption, thereby economic growth, according to a guideline released by the State Council,

"The trade-in program is expected to help increase sales of related products by 100 percent over last year."

Lei Sun, head of the service department at JD's home appliances and life business unit

China's Cabinet, in March.

JD said it is confident the favorable policies will encourage more than 20

million consumers on its platform to participate in the trade-in deals this year, thus potentially leading to recycling of more than 30 million items. Last year, some 10 million consumers participated in trade-in deals.

"The trade-in program is expected to help increase sales of related products by 100 percent over last year," said Lei Sun, head of the service department at JD's home appliances and life business unit.

"We accept various products for trade-in deals, regardless of brand, time of purchase, appearance or condition. We will also provide complimentary services nationwide to help transport and dismantle old products," Lei said.

Small appliances covering 55 categories can be exchanged for new, better ones on JD. Consumers can opt for trade-in deals across different categories of products — an electric fan, for example, can be exchanged for a rice cooker, the company said.

JD's small home appliances recycling warehouse in Wuhan, Hubei province, recycles about 2,000 to 3,000 old products daily, and the volume is expected to double, or even triple or quadruple, during the peak season.

For products that still have residual value, such as home appliances, JD will collaborate with upstream and downstream enterprises to disassemble and reuse the parts.

"Consumer goods like mattresses, sofas, cookware, garment hangers, bathtubs and smart toilets all can be traded in on JD, including those with no residual value. Consumers will get a certain amount of subsidy and we will help process the old products as construction waste," Lei said.

Meanwhile, different local governments have formulated specific plans to promote trade-in deals. In early May, the local government of Zhangjiakou, Hebei province, held events to promote the use of green and intelligent home appliances in urban communities and rural areas, and a green alliance for home appliance trade-in services has been established to meet such demand.

In addition, the local government of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region said it would encourage enterprises to carry out on-site

trade-in deals for appliance upgrades on a large scale.

The local government of Tianjin said it would support home appliance enterprises to establish a dedicated area for exchanging old products for new ones both online and offline, and promote sales through direct discounts or trade-in deals.

"China's consumption sector has significant growth potential, and that is why both the central and local governments have spared no effort in introducing policies to promote consumption growth," said Fu Yifu, a senior researcher at the Star Atlas Institute of Finance.

"The growth in consumer demand will also help drive the growth of industrial production, and further promote China's economic growth," Fu said.



The Belt and Road Initiative

Connectivity,
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CHINA UP-CLOSE

Trade-ins giving shot in arm to retailers

Incentives boost switch to electric vehicles amid China's green drive

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Chen Zhiguang, an employee from an internet company in Shanghai, bought a new air conditioner during the recently concluded May Day holiday, saving more than 1,500 yuan (\$208) thanks to current trade-in stimulus policies.

"I participated in the old-for-new promotional campaign as I can enjoy subsidies equivalent to 10 percent of new product prices, as well as discounts and shopping coupons from home appliance retailers," Chen said. "Green and energy-saving household appliances containing innovative technologies are very cost-effective."

Chen is also considering replacing his gasoline-powered vehicles that have been used for more than 10 years with a new electric car as local authorities have rolled out favorable policies and offered subsidies of up to thousands of yuan per vehicle to encourage drivers to place orders and cut their carbon footprints.

In addition, a string of Chinese automakers including BYD, Xpeng and Nio have provided subsidies for consumers who scrap old cars in exchange for new energy vehicles.

Chen is among millions of Chinese shoppers who are increasing expenditures on consumer goods under the new round of trade-in program, which experts said will further unleash consumers' purchasing potential, bolster consumption recovery and inject new momentum into the country's economic growth.

According to online service platform Meituan, search volume for "trade-ins" has surged more than 110 percent year-on-year since March, with the "old-for-new" campaign allowing electric vehicles, automobiles, home appliances, gold and mobile phones to gain popularity among consumers.

"Trade-ins have recently accounted for 40 to 50 percent of our orders every day," said Zhao Hongfu, manager of a store owned by Chinese retailer giant Suning in Shanghai, adding that the new plan has largely unleashed consumer vitality in the home appliance market.

Data from Suning showed that the orders for "trade-ins" soared 70 percent year-on-year across the nation during the May Day holiday break, while sales of green and energy-saving household appliances skyrocketed 110 percent compared with the same period last year. The orders for the replacement of old air conditioners with new ones jumped 78 percent from a year earlier, Suning said.

China has rolled out a raft of spe-



People browse trade-in services for home appliances at a mall in Shanghai on May 12. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

cific measures to facilitate and encourage trade-ins of consumer goods — nearly 15 years since the last such round of renewals, according to an action plan jointly released by the Ministry of Commerce and 13 other government departments in April.

By 2025, the recycling of scrapped automobiles will increase by 50 percent compared with 2023, and recycling of used home appliances will increase by 15 percent from 2023, while the market share of energy-efficient appliances will be further increased, the plan added.

The plan stated that subsidies will be given to consumers who scrap high-emission passenger cars to buy energy-efficient NEVs, so as to promote trade-ins for automobiles.

The country will also provide financial support to establish recycling systems for discarded home appliances. Local governments and home appliance companies are encouraged to offer subsidies or preferential policies for consumers who buy or trade for green and intelligent home appliances.

The plan includes encouraging the upgrading and renovation of old homes and bolstering the consumption of smart household products. Industry analysts said China's intensified push to promote trade-ins of consumer goods will help facilitate the scrapping of used goods in exchange for smart, green and low-carbon alternatives.

"With improvements in people's living standards, demand for quality high-performance products and environmental protection standards are on the rise. Meanwhile, energy conservation, emission reductions and green development have been put high on China's devel-

opment agenda," said Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute.

The old-for-new program is conducive to weeding out consumer goods with high energy consumption and declining performance, bolstering industrial upgrade as well as further stimulating purchasing appetites of consumers and improving people's quality of life, Hong said.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said the implementation of trade-in policy measures regarding consumer goods — especially automobiles and home appliances — is of great significance in effectively shoring up consumer confidence, unleashing domestic demand potential and stabilizing market expectations.

"Many consumers are now willing to replace their traditional fuel vehicles with more environmentally friendly electric vehicles, and the launch of the new policy will undoubtedly give a strong boost to this transition," Zhu said.

Sales of NEVs in China expanded 33.5 percent year-on-year to 850,000 units in April, accounting for 36 percent of total vehicle sales, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. NEV output totaled over 870,000 million units last month, increasing 35.9 percent year-on-year, the CAAM said.

Zhu added that with continuous advances in technologies, more intelligent and energy-saving new household appliances will gradually replace the old ones. The "trade-ins" in the field of home decor, kitchen appliances and bathroom products



Auto retailers present their trade-in plans during an automobile expo in Yantai, Shandong province, in April. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

will also drive the development of new materials and smart home device industries.

Major e-commerce platforms have announced plans to boost the new round of trade-ins of consumer goods.

JD said it will team up with industrial partners to invest 6.5 billion yuan to provide subsidies for the replacement of home appliances, electronic devices and automobiles. The number of users participating in the trade-ins skyrocketed more than 140 percent year-on-year in March, JD added.

Alibaba Group's online marketplace Tmall said it will invest 500 million yuan in the "old-for-new" program. Tmall said since late March, the value of trade-in deals involving home appliances and smartphones on the platform has surged 90 percent compared with a year earlier.

Chinese home appliance manufacturers are ramping up efforts to

offer subsidies to consumers who buy green and intelligent home appliances and support the recycling of discarded products.

The latest policy measures aimed at boosting trade-ins of consumer goods will effectively stimulate purchasing enthusiasm among consumers for home appliances, and bolster the transformation and upgrade of the traditional white goods sector, said Zhou Yunjie, chairman and CEO of Chinese home appliances giant Haier Group.

As Chinese consumers are exhibiting increasing preference for intelligent and green home appliances amid the rapid development and application of artificial intelligence technology, domestic white goods manufacturers are speeding up their layouts in AI and chips, which will be conducive to promoting technological advancement of the whole industry, Zhou said.

According to Zhou, the Qingdao, Shandong province-based company is ratcheting up efforts to recycle discarded household appliance products, with about 2 million units of such products dismantled and 30,000 metric tons of materials recycled each year.

Gree Electric Appliances, a major Chinese home appliance manufacturer based in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, recently announced plans to invest 3 billion yuan to promote trade-ins of consumer goods.

Gree said these specific measures will further improve the enthusiasm of users purchasing home appliances and help enrich the application scenarios of new technologies, while consumers can enjoy more cost-effective products with high quality.

It is also conducive to encouraging shoppers to choose energy-saving and environmentally friendly products, which not only reduces energy consumption and environmental pollution, but also helps accelerate the development of a circular economy and boost the green transformation of industries, the company said.

Currently, Gree has built six recycling bases for discarded home appliances and more than 30,000 offline recycling sites. By the end of 2023, Gree had recycled, dismantled and otherwise handled 56 million units of discarded electronic products, recycled 850,000 tons of metals such as copper, iron and aluminum, and reduced carbon emissions by 2.8 million tons.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce showed that as of the end of 2023, the number of household appliances in major categories such as refrigerators, washing machines and air conditioners had exceeded 3 billion units, which presents huge potential for renewal and replacement.

Pei Dongmin, deputy general manager of the home appliance business unit at Beijing-based market consultancy All View Cloud, said, "The new trade-in measures will not only unleash consumption demand for home appliances and bolster stable growth of the home appliances sector, but also give a boost to technological and product upgrades in emerging categories, and the green and smart transformation of industries."

Liu Buchen, an independent researcher tracking the home appliance sector, said that currently, the country's recycling system for such products has made great progress, but public awareness has not kept up and there is a large number of unwanted home appliances that have not made their way to regular recycling channels.

Moreover, consumers need to get additional support to exchange old home appliances and electronics for more green and intelligent alternatives, while Chinese home appliance enterprises should expand recycling channels and drive the popularization of energy-saving products, Liu said.

Home appliance makers eye bigger global reach

By FAN FEIFEI

Chinese small home appliance makers are accelerating steps to expand their footprint in emerging overseas markets and increasing investment in localized research and development as part of a broader push to bolster sales globally and enhance international influence and brand recognition, industry experts said.

Homegrown small appliances — such as coffee makers, air fryers, humidifiers and robotic vacuum cleaners — are increasingly gaining traction among overseas consumers, who are paying greater attention to quality of life, personal health and food safety.

Data from the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products showed that exports of Chinese small kitchen appliances increased by 14.3 percent year-on-year in 2023.

Bear Electric Appliance Co Ltd, a maker of small home appliances based in Foshan, Guangdong province, said sales revenue from overseas markets surged 105.66 percent

year-on-year in 2023 to 370 million yuan (\$51.1 million). Its self-owned brand products are mainly sold in Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States.

The company, founded in 2006, has developed and produced a series of creative electrical appliances, including yogurt makers, egg boilers, crock pots and steamers to entice young consumers.

Li Yifeng, chairman and general manager of Bear Electric, said, "In the past, our overseas business mainly focused on the original design manufacturer model, but now we are stepping up efforts to promote our self-owned brands to go global and develop the cross-border e-commerce business."

Currently, overseas sales only account for a relatively small proportion of the company's total revenue, Li said, adding that the company will continue to build up brand recognition overseas, intensify promotional efforts, expand retail channels and bolster global operational capacity.

Guangdong Xinbao Electrical Appliances Holdings Co Ltd said more than 70 percent of its revenue

is from overseas consumers from more than 120 countries and regions across the globe, including Europe and the US.

Guo Jiangang, chairman of Xinbao, said demand for small home appliances from overseas markets was strong in the first quarter, adding that the company's overseas sales reached 2.57 billion yuan during the January-March period, up about 30 percent year-on-year.

Based in Shunde, Guangdong province, Xinbao specializes in designing and manufacturing small home appliances such as electric kettles, blenders, toasters and coffee makers. The company is also expanding its footprint in emerging markets, such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Xinbao set up its first overseas factory in Indonesia last year, and plans to tap more opportunities from countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. It has ramped up the push to enhance operational capabilities through continuous technological innovation and expanding its portfolio of new products globally.

The domestic home appliance

market is almost saturated and companies need to find new growth drivers, said Liang Zhenpeng, an independent consumer electronics analyst.

"Expansion into overseas markets could not only relieve the pressure of high inventories in the domestic market, but also increase the international influence of Chinese home appliance brands," Liang said.

Establishing global production bases will not only bring China's advanced manufacturing, R&D as well as management capabilities to overseas markets, but also create job opportunities for locals and enhance the competitiveness of Chinese enterprises in the global market, he added.

Pan Jun, a visiting professor at Donghua University in Shanghai, said the demand for small household appliance products in different countries varies due to people's different living habits and culinary traditions.

Pan said Chinese home appliance makers should capture the changes in consumption trends, attach great importance to products' R&D, and pour more resources into technol-



A visitor checks out products of Bear Electric Appliance Co Ltd during an expo in Shanghai on May 12. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ical innovation in order to enhance the core competitiveness of enterprises on the global stage.

The rise in overseas orders of such appliances has also reflected the robust recovery of China's economy, and the country's home appliance sector is picking up growth momentum, industry experts said.

China has become the world's largest manufacturing base for home appliances, accounting for 60 to 70 percent of global produc-

tion capacity, said Li Ting, research director of the kitchen appliances department at Beijing-based market consultancy All View Cloud.

Overseas consumers have shown growing demand for China-made diversified, personalized and customized home appliances and are keen on buying intelligent and high-quality goods, Li said, adding she is bullish on prospects for Chinese home appliance makers in the future.

COMMENT

Editorials

Vitality of neighbors' relations continues to grow under guidance of the two heads of state

China and Russia issued a joint statement on deepening their comprehensive strategic partnership in Beijing on Thursday. They also inked a number of bilateral economic and trade cooperation documents.

Over the past 75 years, since Beijing and Moscow established diplomatic relations, the relationship between the two countries has experienced ups and downs, but the overarching trend has been for it to become stronger over time.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to China on Thursday and Friday testifies to the growing vitality of Sino-Russian ties, which have withstood the tests posed by the vicissitudes of the international situation and set an example for major and neighboring countries of how to live in harmony, and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results.

As President Xi Jinping stressed in his meeting with his Russian counterpart, countries should always respect each other and accommodate each other's concerns. He urged China and Russia to continue to uphold the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and provide mutual assistance for the development and revitalization of both sides. This is not only the correct way for the two neighbors to get along with each other, but also the direction in which major country relations should advance in the 21st century.

As Xi said, China is willing to always be a good neighbor, good friend, and good partner of Russia,

and it will continue to work with it to consolidate the friendship between the two peoples, and jointly achieve the development and revitalization of the two countries. Putin warmly echoed Xi's remarks, saying that developing Russia-China relations is not an expedient measure, and Russia is willing to continue to promote close strategic coordination and cooperation with China to promote the establishment of a more just and reasonable international order and the democratization of international relations.

As major emerging market economies, it is natural that the two countries should seek to expand their mutually beneficial cooperation and tap the potential of their comparative advantages. And, as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council that uphold the UN-centered world order and support a multipolar world and multilateral global governance, it is natural that they should work together to safeguard fairness and justice in the global governance system.

The 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations offers the two sides a good opportunity to enrich their cooperation and join hands to contribute more positive energy to world prosperity and stability.

With the joint efforts of both sides, the comprehensive strategic coordination between the two countries, which is not subject to any third party, continues to demonstrate its vitality.

Washington breaching its legal commitments

For a long time, the United States has openly claimed that preserving the "status quo" across the Taiwan Strait is in its, and every stakeholder's, best interest. In the name of safeguarding peace, Washington has issued persistent warnings against any party seeking to "unilaterally change the status quo".

The alarm is being raised again as the island prepares to inaugurate a new team of leaders on Monday. But this time it is Beijing's turn to say that to Washington. Because what the latter has been doing may effectively make the present state of affairs across the Taiwan Strait status quo ante.

Each time when a representative of the Democratic Progressive Party becomes leader of the local authorities on the Chinese island, Beijing reiterates it will have no truck with independence seekers.

But such a warning carries greater weight this year with Washington openly pushing for far-reaching changes to the "status quo".

The joint military drills the US conducted with Taiwan in April only provided an additional reason for Beijing to question Washington's commitment to the three joint communiqués the two governments have so far recognized as being the cornerstone of the China-US relationship. No matter how Washington interprets the US "one-China" commitment, it has a legal obligation to not develop official relations with the island.

Although the April drills were dubbed "unplanned sea encounters", they were patently anything but. They reportedly involved a half dozen vessels, including frigates and supply and support ships, lasted for

days, and covered operations from communications to searching for underwater targets. They certainly were not "I am dining in this restaurant, and you also happen to be here", as some sources in Taiwan tried to spin them to be. Last month, the island's "naval chief" visited the US to discuss how to boost cooperation. This month, the Taiwan armed forces "chief of general staff" attended the change-of-guard ceremony for the US "Indo-Pacific" Command in Hawaii.

Beijing has protested the increasingly brazen ties between the US military and the island's armed forces, which are clearly intended to be a demonstrative snub of its communique commitments without crossing, technically, Beijing's redline. Nonetheless, it is a betrayal of bilateral obligations and a violation of international law.

But Washington's latest attempts at reinterpreting UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 are a more direct challenge, because they are aimed at the jurisprudential foundation of the one-China principle. Though the US' proclaimed purpose is to facilitate Taiwan's "meaningful participation" in international organizations, it is intended to do more than that, with US officials calling Taiwan's status "undetermined" and calling for Taipei's "meaningful participation" in the United Nations system.

Like the US' recent claim that UN Security Council Resolution 2728 demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza is "nonbinding", the US' distorting of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 shows its hubris in placing itself above international law. But no matter what it tries, the US cannot change the fact that Taiwan island is part of China.

Manila recklessly pushing envelope on disputes

The latest farce staged by the Philippines to challenge China's sovereignty over Huangyan Island in the South China Sea came to an end on Thursday after a convoy of so-called civilian boats tasked with trespassing into the waters around the Chinese reef — in the name of distributing fuel and food to Filipino fishermen there — called off the plan even before reaching the targeted area while declaring "mission accomplished".

To save face and give itself an out, a spokesman for Atin Ito coalition, the organizer of the mission, told reporters that an "advance team" had already completed the provision task a day earlier about 50 kilometers from the reef.

That the Philippine coast guard deployed three patrol ships and a light plane on Wednesday to escort the convoy and invited dozens of journalists to join the voyage indicates it was just another attempt by the Philippines to push the envelope on the territorial disputes with China.

It would be naive to think that the Philippines refrained from pushing ahead with its provocative moves out of its own will. The deployment of many Chinese vessels including several China Coast Guard ships patrolling around Huangyan Island has obviously served to deter the Philippine convoy from taking further adventurous actions, which would only end in fiasco.

The increasing frequency with which the Philippines is raising tensions with China in the South

China Sea suggests it is trying to test China's limit and will not stop until it hits a dead end.

Just a little more than two weeks ago, a Philippine coast guard ship and a government vessel tried to intrude into the waters surrounding Huangyan, only to be expelled by China Coast Guard ships.

Beijing warned Manila on Wednesday against any attempts to infringe on China's sovereignty, and reiterated its determination and readiness to take countermeasures in accordance with the law.

It is not the first time that Manila has used so-called civilian vessels to encroach on Chinese territories in the South China Sea in the hope of misleading the international community and portraying China as the country that "bullies the weak".

Atin Ito led a similar mission in December to deliver supplies to troops stationed on a warship that the Philippines illegally grounded on China's Ren'ai Reef in 1999. It also cut short that mission after CCG ships took necessary measures to safeguard China's rights and enforce the law.

The constant disputes and confrontations at sea between China and the Philippines over the past more than one year are mainly due to the Philippine government reneging on the previous agreements and arrangement the two countries reached to maintain peace and stability in the region.

The Philippines must stop provoking China. The more reckless it becomes in doing so, the stronger China's response will be.

Cao Yi



Opinion Line

Green advantage makes investors see opportunity, not overcapacity

In an address delivered during the opening ceremony of the Global Trade and Investment Promotion Summit 2024 in Beijing on Monday, Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng said China will continue expanding high-level opening-up and sharing its development dividends with all parties, while reaffirming China's stance that they should uphold win-win cooperation and work together to promote common development.

A number of foreign participants affirmed China's important role in maintaining the stable development of the world's supply chain, looked forward to cooperation with China in a wide range of fields, and held in-depth discussions with Chinese participants on how to unblock the supply chain.

Former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff, who is president of the New Development Bank, stressed the key role of the Belt and Road Initiative in reforming the international financing system, while calling for a new structure to improve financing conditions for countries in the Global South. Rousseff believed the "decoupling"

and "de-risking" attempts promoted by Western countries have made globalization more fragile and called for a reform of the existing international financing system.

A study by the International Monetary Fund says China's economic growth has had positive spillover effects on the rest of the world, saying that for every percentage point of its economic growth, output in other economies would increase by an average of 0.3 percentage points. As the world's second-largest economy, China's economic performance has added much-needed stability and vitality to the world economy.

China makes it clear that its commitment to wider opening-up remains unwavering. In the Beijing Initiative released at the summit, China vows to build a network of services for enterprises, expand its international "circle of friends", and put up multiple platforms to provide better services and help the business communities of all countries seize the opportunities of the Chinese market, so as to contribute better to the building of an

open world economy and a community with a shared future for mankind.

China has a huge domestic market and this advantage can help it play a leading role in stabilizing global supply chains and boosting global economic growth. The sharing of China's experience through the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative is also expected to help promote the realization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. China's advantages in green and low-carbon development, especially in clean energy and new energy vehicles, mean that there is still a lot of room for its cooperation with foreign countries. China's far higher economic growth than the world's average will also bring more development opportunities.

Many foreign participants did not agree with the argument of China's "overcapacity", believing instead that cooperation with China can not only accelerate carbon reduction, but also set an example of cooperation to address climate change.

- CGTN

Reducing pressure on teachers a just demand

More than 40 days after Song Kai, a 38-year-old associate professor at Nanjing Forestry University, committed suicide, his death continues to stir controversy. Reportedly, he had failed to pass the annual review and would have been demoted to the post of lecturer. The pressure young college faculty members face is real. Quite many universities adopt the "up or quit" policy, under which a young faculty member must quit the job unless he/she gets promoted to a higher rank within a certain period. As a result, fewer people are

choosing basic science subjects such as math and physics that are the foundation for the nation's innovation, because it is more difficult to make breakthroughs in these fields that help their promotion.

That is a matter that doing away with the "up or quit" system will not help. The "up or quit" policy plays a key role in keeping college faculty on their toes. The policy stems from the pressing need for faculty members to make more academic achievements so their universities can be the winner in

their competitions.

But the "up or quit" policy should be adjusted. As early as 2020, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the Ministry of Education jointly issued a document that demanded colleges to set a time span for reviewing performance, while many called for improving the review standard to reduce the pressure on young faculty members. Song's tragedy shows that the demand remains very much relevant today.

- ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Singapore building on past legacy for brighter future

Singapore's new Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, a 51-year-old US-trained economist, vowed to make "tomorrow better than today" as he took his oath of office on Wednesday, becoming the first leader of the city-state born after its independence from Malaysia in 1965.

Since then, Singapore has developed to become a regional logistics and financial center, with the baton of power relayed from Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of Singapore, to Goh Chok Tong in 1990, from Goh to Lee Hsien Loong, son of Lee Kuan Yew, in 2004, and now from Lee Hsien Loong to Wong.

Singapore's fast development started drawing many of its neighbors, including China, to learn about the secret of its success in the 1970s during Lee Kuan Yew's regime, in the hope of learning helpful lessons for their own development.

But what they might not have expected is that, unlike other

Southeast Asian countries that have still been exploring their growth model after reaping the dividend of cheap labor in the early stage of their economic takeoff, Singapore has not only gone beyond that development phase but also continuously moved up the global value chain after the 1970s.

In the process, despite its racially and ethnically diverse population, the country has largely managed to keep its social stability, realizing harmonious coexistence between different groups of people and maintaining social fairness and justice, a difficult task that has tripped up many developing economies in their catch-up phase.

Lee Kuan Yew's nearly four decades of rule laid the institutional foundation for Singapore's prosperity, leaving a historical legacy for his successors to make "tomorrow better than today". Goh and Lee Hsien Loong have indeed done a good job

in continuously adapting Singapore's growth model to the changing economic landscape since the 1990s.

The principles Lee established for running the city-state — including the rule of law, inclusiveness, openness and pragmatism — are still the pillars of the country's governance and policy today. And they have evolved into common values that most Singaporeans consciously uphold and live by, forming sustainable endogenous impetus. These principles have also helped shape Singapore's balanced diplomacy that has won it high profile on the world stage.

It is to be hoped that, with a new prime minister, Singapore can continue to uphold its strategic autonomy in handling foreign affairs while keeping its robust growth momentum so as to extend its development legend into the future.

- LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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Contact us at:

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

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

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

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

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

COMMENT

Alexander Lukin

Putin's visit to China cements ties

Russian President Vladimir Putin is visiting China at the invitation of President Xi Jinping on Thursday and Friday.

It has become customary for the two heads of state to make exchange visits, with the Chinese leader visiting Russia one year, and the Russian leader visiting China the following year. There is no official agreement on this, but this tradition has been maintained since the 1990s. Another significant aspect is that Putin chose China as the destination for his first visit after re-elected Russian president. This signifies the importance of cooperation between Russia and China.

Putin's visit is very important because it shows that despite regional conflicts and outside pressure, Sino-Russian comprehensive strategic partnership remains firm and is developing steadily.

During the visit to each other's country, the leaders usually discuss a wide range of international and bilateral issues. Apart from that, top ministers and company heads also sign dozens of trade and investment agreements in the presence of the countries' leaders, which gives these deals special importance. During Putin's visit, the two leaders have issued a joint statement and the two sides inked several cooperation docu-

Both China and Russia are countries with independent foreign policy, and they will not yield to any external pressure no matter how powerful it is.

ments in a range of areas.

The visit is particularly significant as this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, when the Soviet Union became the first country to recognize the PRC on Oct 2, 1949, the day after Chairman Mao Zedong announced the founding of the PRC in Tian'anmen Square.

And when the Russian Federation came into being in late 1991, China swiftly recognized it as the legal successor to the USSR and supported Russia's bid to retain the Soviet Union's seat on the UN Security Council.

As of now, both Russia and China are being targeted by the United States and its allies, in order to contain the development of the two countries and main-

tain a unipolar world order which no longer exists.

The Western sanctions, imposed on Russia and China, may temporarily affect some specific areas of the two countries, but the general trend toward closer cooperation between Moscow and Beijing will continue. The very idea of unilateral sanctions not supported by the UN Security Council is rejected by both Russia and China, as well as other countries advocating for a fairer world order.

However, for ideological reasons, Washington is not going to change its counterproductive policy anytime soon.

One of the justifications given for imposing those sanctions is Russia's position on the Ukraine crisis.

China is actively engaged in efforts to resolve the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Last year, it put forward its position on the issue in a 12-point document, and appointed an experienced diplomat and former ambassador to Russia, Li Hui, as its special envoy. Despite some differences, Russia and China agree that negotiations on the issue should start without any preconditions and outside pressure and that Russia's security concerns should be addressed. But this approach is rejected by the West.

The strengthening of strategic cooperation between China and Russia

manifests the general tendency to multipolarity. Both China and Russia are countries with independent foreign policy, and they will not yield to any external pressure no matter how powerful it is.

China's Global Security Initiative, put forward by President Xi, is very close to Russia's vision for a future world order. It is also based on the idea that security is indivisible, which means the security of one country cannot be achieved at the expense of the security of another country. That's why security arrangements should be global and based on compromises by all sides.

This common vision creates a solid basis for Sino-Russian cooperation. The leaders of the two countries have established close personal ties. Apart from formal visits, they also meet several times every year at various international events and other gatherings. Trade and mutual understanding between Moscow and Beijing have been growing for several decades and there is no reason for this momentum to change.

The author is academic head of the Institute of China and Contemporary Asia at the Russian Academy of Sciences. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

The author is chief of China Daily EU Bureau based in Brussels. chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Punitive tariffs show Biden's desperation, not toughness

US President Joe Biden decided on Tuesday to impose punitive tariffs on Chinese products, such as electric vehicles (EVs), solar photovoltaic panels and batteries for EVs, worth \$18 billion, perhaps to show his tough stance toward China in the run-up to the presidential election in November. However, his decision has exposed his weakness and desperation.

Despite his incessant self-glorification in speeches and on social media, Biden is trailing his opponent Donald Trump, especially in the swing states, in various polls. A Gallup poll released on May 6 showed that US voters' confidence in Biden to recommend or do the right thing for the economy is among the lowest Gallup has measured for any president since 2001. While 46 percent of the respondents said they have a "great deal" or "a fair amount" of confidence in Trump to recommend or do the right thing, only 38 percent said they trust Biden to do so.

Besides, Biden's disastrous policy stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict has triggered student protests across US universities.

A poll conducted by The New York Times/Siena College and released on Monday showed that Trump led in nearly all the six battleground states he lost to Biden in 2020. What is troubling for Biden is that the survey found Trump leading among registered voters with roots in the Middle East or North Africa and other Muslims in the swing states.

In his bid to slow down China's green revolution, Biden will undermine global solidarity and cooperation in the fight against climate change.

A Pew survey released on April 24 was equally damning for Biden, because about half of the respondents said that, if given a chance, they would replace both Trump and Biden as presidential candidates.

Biden hopes that by imposing punitive tariffs on Chinese products, he will win the support of some union voters. But that is wishful thinking. People such as Colorado Governor Jared Polis, a Democrat, and Harvard professor Dani Rodrik criticized Biden's protectionist measures, calling them bad news for US consumers and a major setback for clean energy. And some US economists have accused Biden of putting politics above good policy.

Even German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson called Biden's tariffs a bad idea on Tuesday.

During his 2020 presidential campaign, Biden had lashed out at Trump's tariff war against China, promising to lift them once he was elected US president. But he broke that promise, possibly due to the fear of a political backlash. His tweet on Aug 2, 2019, went viral again on Tuesday. In that tweet, Biden had censured Trump for not caring about US farmers, workers and consumers, because they were being crushed by his irresponsible tariff war against China. "It's easy to act tough when someone else is feeling the pain. I will reverse his senseless policies," Biden had asserted.

But after imposing the latest round of tariffs three days ago, Biden is being mocked for being more senseless than Trump and for not caring for US consumers who will bear the actual cost of the tariffs. Biden's punitive tariffs are worse than Trump's because they target EVs and other green products, which are necessary for reducing carbon emissions. In his bid to slow down China's green revolution, Biden will undermine global solidarity and cooperation in the fight against climate change.

In his speech on Tuesday, Biden accused China of giving excessive subsidies to Chinese companies when the fact is, the US Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS Act which he signed into laws grant so much subsidies to US enterprises that even European Union states protested against them.

In a way, Biden admitted that he intends to sabotage China's green revolution when he tweeted on Tuesday that "China is determined to dominate these industries. I'm determined to ensure America leads the world in them".

The Biden administration has gone berserk in its desperation to curb China's peaceful rise. But history shows that such farcical efforts have not made any perpetrating country stronger; instead, they have made the targeted country even more powerful.

Wang Hanling

US behind the Philippines' farce over Ren'ai Jiao

About 200 Filipinos aboard five commercial fishing vessels set sail on Wednesday towards China's Huangyan Island in the South China Sea, an area over which China has indisputable sovereignty along with its adjacent waters.

The expedition was organized by a group known as Atin Ito (This is Ours), occurring approximately two weeks after the China Coast Guard took action to expel a Philippine Coast Guard vessel and another official vessel that had entered the waters surrounding Huangyan Island without authorization.

The incident once again brought the maritime disputes between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea into the spotlight. At the crux of the disputes is Manila's illegal occupation of Ren'ai Jiao, an uninhabited reef that is an integral part of China's Nansha Qundao in the South China Sea.

On May 9, 1999, two days after the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the Philippines deliberately ran aground a warship, BRP *Sierra Madre*, on Ren'ai Jiao. Since then, Manila has stationed a contingent of more than a dozen Philippine Marines and sailors on the dilapidated vessel, in a bid to permanently occupy the maritime feature and turn it into a military outpost.

The presence of the Philippine ship prompted immediate and serious representations from China. In response, the then Philippine president Joseph Estrada vowed to tow away the ship, saying it ran aground the reef due to "malfunction". Later, Estrada's successor, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo also pledged to remove the vessel from Ren'ai Jiao and not to "construct (new) facilities" there. But neither Estrada nor Arroyo kept their promise, nor did the later Philippine administrations.

China has patiently negotiated with the Philippines to peacefully settle the maritime disputes, including the Ren'ai Jiao issue, with the two sides reaching a series of "gentlemen's agreements", including a "new model" arrangement, to resolve the Ren'ai Jiao issue.

But instead of honoring its promises, the Philippines has been using various ploys to challenge China's historical, legitimate claim on Ren'ai Jiao and the relevant waters around it. For example, Philippine National Security Adviser Eduardo Año, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. and the Department of Foreign Affairs have recently issued statements denying the existence of any "gentlemen's agreements".

China, out of humanitarian concern, had allowed Philippine vessels to ship necessary supplies to the personnel on board the grounded warship on condition that Manila notifies Beijing in advance of any such plans. But Philippine government vessels and warships have repeatedly forced their way to Ren'ai Jiao, supplying construction materials to the personnel stationed there for overhauling and reinforcing the dilapidated vessel without prior notification. And that is the root cause of the tensions.

The Philippines has violated international law, as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements and arrangements, including the Declaration on the Con-



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

duct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) which the 10 member states of ASEAN and China signed in November 2002.

Article 5 of the DOC states: "The Parties undertake to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability including, among others, refraining from action of inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays, and other features and to handle their differences in a constructive manner." Article 7 further says the parties concerned should continue their consultations and dialogues on relevant issues, promote harmony, mutual understanding and cooperation, and make sincere efforts to resolve the disputes.

And Article 8 says the parties should respect the provisions of the DOC and take actions consistent with the DOC. All those bilateral and multilateral agreements and arrangements as well as international law require the Philippines to tow away its dilapidated warship, together with the navy personnel, from the Chinese territory of Ren'ai Jiao.

What has prompted the Philippines to violate the DOC rules, bilateral agree-

ments and international law is the interference of the United States in the issue. In fact, Washington has been encouraging Manila to make provocative moves, including breaking DOC rules and bilateral and multilateral agreements, with the aim of using the resulting chaos to push forward its "Indo-Pacific" strategy. Washington has even sent military aircraft and warships to survey the area in the name of honoring the promises it has made in the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951.

The US-Philippines treaty says the two sides recognize that an armed attack on one would be dangerous to the other's peace and safety as well and, therefore, pledge to take joint measures in such situations to meet the common dangers. And it stipulates that an armed attack on either party would be deemed an armed attack on both parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific Ocean, its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific.

Moreover, the new US-Philippines Bilateral Defense Guidelines of May 3, 2023, reaffirm that an armed attack in the Pacific, including anywhere in the South China Sea, on the public vessels or aircraft of either party, including those of

the coast guards or armed forces, would invoke mutual defense commitments under the 1951 treaty. Backed by the US, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said that even one Filipino serviceman's death in an attack by a foreign power would invoke the treaty. Marcos Jr. sees the treaty as the last life-saving straw, even though there are doubts over the commitment of the US.

Personal and family interests, too, are a major consideration for Marcos Jr.'s China policy. Being threatened by US agents that he would be ousted like his father was in 1986, Marcos Jr. has been complying with the US in exchange for protection and the return of the Marcos family's ill-gotten wealth. In doing so, however, Marcos Jr. has sacrificed Sino-Philippine relations.

He should realize that, in the long run, peaceful management and settlement of the maritime disputes through talks are in the best interest of both China and the Philippines.

The author is a research fellow with the Institute of International Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategy Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.

WARWICK POWELL

Powering the future, today

Chinese NEV leadership is being attacked by the US, the legacy automobile manufacturer and biggest supplier and consumer of oil

China is the global leader in the design and manufacture of new energy vehicles, including electric vehicles. In the past four years, Chinese NEV manufacturers have taken the world by storm. Production output has increased from 350,000 in 2020 to 9.6 million in 2023. Previously unfamiliar brands outside



China, such as BYD, are rapidly becoming global marques. The move to EVs is seen as being integral to the global process of decarbonizing economies and meeting the common objectives of nations as hammered out in the Paris Climate Agreement on climate change.

Given this, China's capacity and ability to deliver EVs at relatively low-cost should be welcomed. Yet, in recent months, the political elites in the United States and Europe have bemoaned what they have dubbed China's "overcapacity". They have badgered China about the low cost of its NEV exports, and have threatened bans and prohibitive tariffs.

There are plenty of reasons why these anxieties are misplaced. There are also good reasons why the opportunities of Chinese capacity and know-how can be harnessed for global benefit.

Chinese NEV manufacturers principally service the demands of a growing domestic market. Over the past four years, as China's NEV

output has grown, between 75 percent and 85 percent of its output has been absorbed domestically. In 2023, for example, China's output was 9.6 million NEVs and the domestic market absorbed 8.3 million, with almost all of these being locally made models. This pattern reflects the overall trend in Chinese manufacturing over the past 30 years. In 1995, 11 percent of Chinese manufactured output was exported. This rose to a peak of 18 percent in 2004 before tapering back to current levels of around 13 percent.

Chinese NEV manufacturing is doubtless the global leader in both volume and price terms. Global demand remains strong. Indeed, recent data from the International Energy Agency shows that EV demand continues to expand. The IEA's Global EV Outlook 2024 Report observes: "Electric car sales in 2023 were 3.5 million higher than in 2022, a 35 percent year-on-year increase. This is more than six times higher than in 2018, just five years earlier." While demand remains concentrated in China, Europe and the US, demand for EVs in emerging markets is also growing strongly, albeit from a low base. This is particularly evident in Southeast Asia and Brazil.

The IEA notes that "an equitable and inclusive transition to electric mobility, both within countries and at the global level, hinges on the successful launch of affordable NEVs (including but not limited to electric cars)". This is why Chinese low-cost products are so important as a catalyst for ongoing demand

growth, not only in the markets in which EVs already have a strong foothold but in other markets, too, where price barriers have been prohibitive historically.

The IEA estimates that by 2035, annual demand for NEVs will rise to over 55 million from current levels of around 14 million. Others have estimated that it could be as high as 60.4 million. Either way, current capacity is well short of what's required.

The world is confronting not an overcapacity crisis, but an emerging undercapacity crisis.

More manufacturing capacity is needed to meet the projected demand. Fortunately, Chinese manufacturers, and others, are already expanding their capacity across the globe through direct investments in new factories and joint ventures where appropriate.

Chinese enterprises are building or exploring opportunities to build new facilities in Thailand, Malaysia, Brazil, Vietnam, Hungary, Mexico, Spain and Italy. A globally distributed capacity makes sense when logistics costs are taken into account. Proximity to markets shortens fulfillment cycles, and enables whole-of-supply chain efficiencies to be realized.

Indeed, this is already one of the hallmarks of the Chinese NEV sector today. Chinese NEV manufac-



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

turers work on lean inventories but back this up with high productivity throughout. As such, their demand for working capital is less than traditional manufacturing. Presales with deposits provide certainty of demand over the forward horizon, with the additional benefit of an injection of working capital. This results in shorter turnover cycles through the process of design, build and fulfillment and, therefore, a higher system-wide efficiency of capital. With less capital locked up as working capital and inventory, enterprises, and their funders, are better placed to adjust to short-term market fluctuations.

Production automation is further driving down unit costs. Reportedly the Xiaomi SU7 production line delivers a new unit every 76 seconds. Preordered demand is such that the waiting time stretches for months. There's little idle inventory.

This is not a symptom of "overcapacity".

A lack of comparable capability in the US is doubtless one of the reasons for elite anxiety in this sector. The fact that the legacy internal combustion engine sector is concentrated in Michigan, whose electoral college votes may be determinative in the November presidential election, strongly suggests that the recent rhetoric is designed more for domestic consumption than anything else. The US motor vehicle sector was bailed out by the government in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. It remains locked into old fuels and technologies. Votes are probably top of mind, too, when it's recognized that the US is the world's single largest producer and consumer of crude oil.

Developing countries will benefit from the availability of low-cost

electrified transportation. Many nations will also benefit from Chinese investment in localized manufacturing capability. To complain about Chinese NEV prices is in effect to seek to put up barriers to developing nations accessing new affordable technologies.

Aside from seasonal domestic politicking, we can only hope that the political elite in the US aren't acting out of concern that developing countries will have a chance of leapfrogging legacy technologies and pursue a low-carbon development path.

The author is adjunct professor at Queensland University of Technology and a senior fellow at Tsinghua Institute. 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.

JOSEF GREGORY MAHONEY

Principled position

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence remain a cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy

Seven decades ago, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence for the first time — mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, which served



in Beijing.

The Five Principles appeared at a very important moment in Indian and Chinese history. Both countries had recently reestablished sovereignty and were pushing for national rejuvenation, but were doing so amid the Cold War with proxy conflicts taking place on their respective borders and the efforts of major powers to undermine their nascent political systems and independence. Whether because of these dangers or in spite of them, the Five Principles offered an exceptionally clear way forward.

Unfortunately, the agreement would breakdown and not be renewed in 1962, when differences between China and India became a flashpoint of increasing global tensions. Indeed, in 1962, a border war broke out between the two Asian giants, exacerbated substantially by Indian siding with the Dalai Lama and giving him refuge after he conspired against China with the US Central Intelligence Agency to undermine Chinese sovereignty in 1959, a violation of the Five Principles.

However disappointing the history of the agreement, it should not color our view of the Five Principles themselves. What's more important is that they were enshrined in the preamble of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, and thus have been an essential cornerstone for Chinese foreign policy-making ever since. Additionally, the Five Principles have been cited by others who've also sought con-

structive means for fostering peace and development, including the "10 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" issued at the historic Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955.

That citation and many others in the region have given rise to the belief that the Five Principles reflect a pan-Asian sensibility that also resonates with many other countries in the Global South. We should note that despite the sometimes difficult relations between China and India, both sides still cite the Five Principles affectionately, with New Delhi referring to them as the *Panchsheel*.

The weak often appeal to principles, the strong often violate them. Therefore it should not surprise us that recently independent countries in the 1950s would find the Five Principles attractive: many were still recovering from the destructive experiences related to conquest, colonialism, expropriation and wars for independence, legacies that have not altogether disappeared for many today.

Nor should it surprise us that China remains committed to the Five Principles today, including the principle of non-intervention, which remains central to its ties with other countries. As evident by it making the upholding of the one-China principle a prerequisite for the establishment of diplomatic relations, as expressed, for example, in the 1972 Joint Communiqué with the United States, which acknowledged there is "but one China and Taiwan is a part of that China". This is one of the reasons China abhors attempts by other countries to foster color revolutions or simply manipulate political systems through various schemes aimed at perpetuating



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

imperialism and hegemony.

From Zhou's Five Principles to President Xi Jinping's principles-based foreign policy, China got strong adhering to principles, and it realizes there's no real security without them despite one's strength. Does the US feel secure today despite its power? Not at all. It lacks a clear ethical stance aside from reactionary and narrow self-interest, unable to govern itself effectively or play a constructive role in peace and development.

This thread in Chinese history remains compelling, especially giv-

en the mainland's sensitivity regarding Taiwan and increased provocations by the US in recent years that have sown doubt regarding the US' commitment to the one-China principle. Is Washington finally showing its cards? It is increasingly trying to leverage Taiwan against the mainland as part of its growing efforts to contain and suppress China, returning to Cold War practices such as demonization, clique building, trade wars, tech blockades and de-risking, nee "decoupling", while fighting proxy wars far from its shores, including

against Russia in Ukraine. It even blames China for these conflicts, while disciplining Europe by exacerbating the security trap sustained by NATO's steady expansion since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Is this why the US is selling nuclear-powered submarine technology to Australia and putting nuclear capable bombers there, selling advanced cruise missiles to Japan, installing advanced missile-defense systems in the Republic of Korea with the help of politicians who cheated their way into office with the acknowledged help of the Korean intelligence services, and sending special forces to the Philippines? Is this about peaceful coexistence and non-interference or do we hear louder and louder drumbeats for war?

What should be recognized is that China today is strong, having returned to the forefront of nations as a major power. While it is the world's second-largest economy now, recent studies indicate China will account for about 21 percent of the world's new economic activity from this year through 2029, more than all the G7 nations combined. In terms of military abilities, only Russia is China's near-peer in the region, but Sino-Russian ties are presently on very solid ground, perhaps best exemplified through their work together in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. With the SCO they've avoided competition and instead have helped foster peace and development in Central Asia, working to push out foreign interventions like those committed by the US during its so-called War on Terror, and done so by extending mutual recognition and respect to the Central Asian nations themselves.

More to the point, the principle of having a principle-based foreign policy remains central to Chinese policymaking, as we've seen demonstrated repeatedly through the years, especially as China has developed what it calls its new "major country diplomacy". In fact, this is the rubric that guides all of China's major policies, including the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, which collectively aim to promote genuine multilateralism and open the door for a shared future for humanity.

There are naysayers of course, liars and cheaters, killers and stealers, who care only about their own narrow interests, who refuse to recognize the old ways have brought too much ruin and destruction and have left the world on the brink with climate change and other ills. It should be enough to say, let those fools go down with their ships. Unfortunately, their ships are heavily armed and provocatively traversing the Taiwan Strait. Let them go down elsewhere.

Too often we describe such US games as win-lose, but history and our present circumstances teach us they are lose-lose. But perhaps it's worse than this. Perhaps misery loves company, or perhaps there's a dark inclination to drag others down as you collapse, your destructive tendencies proven once and all to be self-destructive, but unwilling to get out of the way of human progress. But of course it's in this context that the Five Principles are more important than ever, and likewise China's insistence on principles-based international relations.

The author is a professor of politics and international relations at East China Normal University and a senior research fellow at the Institute for the Development of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics at Southeast University and the Hainan CGE Peace Development Foundation. 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.

CULTURAL HERITAGE



As the result of a royal coup, 27-year-old Li Shimin, a prince who once campaigned to help his father impose stability across the country and establish the Tang Dynasty (618-907), ascended to the throne, taking the place of his elder brother, Li Jiancheng.

This dramatic moment is perhaps controversial. Nonetheless, when viewed over the long term, this detour in history led to an era of prosperity.

The 23-year reign of Li Shimin, posthumously known as Emperor Taizong of Tang, left a long list of impressive achievements to admire, including battlefield triumphs, a receptive attitude toward good advice in politics and national governance, even from followers of former rivals, and an inclusive policy toward ethnic groups from afar.

Consequently, the name given to his reign, Zhenguan, is widely seen as symbolic of a peaceful and flourishing time in ancient China.

An exhibition in Beijing at the National Library of China offers intriguing insight into this time as it guides visitors through the Zhenguan era.

Organized by Art Exhibitions China, the national library and several other institutions, *Zhengan: Li Shimin's Saga of Prosperous Era* is the first major exhibition in Beijing to focus on this iconic figure and includes 249 exhibits from 15 museums around the country, including pottery figurines, gold and silver artifacts, stone statues, and epigraphs. It will run until Aug 25.

It seeks to show the human side of its subject. "Through this exhibition, we will not just portray Li Shimin as a ruler with ambition and great expectations," explains Art Exhibitions China's Feng Xue, who is curator of the exhibition. "We also want to present him as someone with emotions just like everyone else."

"Looking back on the civilization of the Tang Dynasty from various perspectives, we can sense the continuous innovation and creativity that define the cultural ethos of the era."

A cherished icon

About 70 kilometers from the Tang capital Chang'an — today's Xi'an in Shaanxi province — lies the Zhaoqing Mausoleum in Xianyang, Li Shimin's resting place. It is the largest Tang Dynasty royal mausoleum.

Although the main grave where the emperor and his empress are buried remains mostly untouched, about 200 satellite graves, which belonged to concubines, princes and high officials, have yielded a trove of items, as if from a time capsule, key examples of which can be seen in the ongoing exhibition.

A mural portraying a smiling court lady is one such example. Dressed in a blouse with exquisite decorative patterns on its sleeves, a long skirt, and a knot of silk tied in across the front of her chest, the woman not only demonstrates the fashion and aesthetics of the Zhenguan period, but also provides an important academic reference for how attire evolved.

Another exhibit from the mausoleum, a blue-glazed pottery figurine of a standing woman, also reveals elegance and a sense of nobility, while the rarely seen color of the time indicates cross-cultural influences, as the



A ruler who ushered in an era of prosperity

Tang emperor helped establish a confident and flourishing nation, as exhibition shows, **Wang Kaihao** reports.

ingredients for the dye may well have been brought to China along the Silk Road, Feng says.

"To modern eyes, the figurine's attire may look Japanese," Feng adds. "But it just reminds us of how the style originated and how Tang aesthetics influenced those of its neighbors."

The curator also adds that governance was effective and social harmony prevailed during the Zhenguan era, and that the Tang people of the period did not have access to the luxuriant attire of the later period.

"People were elegant, their style combining a demeanor of composure and vitality," she says. "In these murals and figurines, the beauty of the era reveals a sense of confidence, and this is vividly portrayed."

As a musician, calligrapher and poet, Emperor Taizong fully understood the importance of culture in creating prosperity.

"Clouds hide the sun above layered palaces, while mist and wind rise from the splendid forests," he once wrote in a stanza for a chant to celebrate the grandeur of Chang'an.

Those "layered palaces" have gone, and the beauty depicted in the scene has been lost to time, but the cultural relics on display at the exhibition can still transport visitors to this distant and wondrous horizon.

The largest of them is a 1.5-meter pottery roof figure, an architectural component used to decorate the ends of rooftop ridges. It is a *chiwei* (literally "an eagle's tail") and is shaped to resemble a hovering eagle overseeing the top of the palace.

"This alone allows you to imagine how grand the original palace was," Feng says. "A lot of palace architecture had such large *chiwei* pieces back then, and they were connected to each other in rows. What a splendid sight it must have been."

Li Shimin was proud, but he also had fears. Folk legend often claimed that as he got older, he regretted seizing the throne at the cost of lives.



Clockwise from top left: A blue-glazed pottery figurine of a woman from Zhaoqing Mausoleum. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY A 6th-century vase with Greek decorations from Ningxia Hui autonomous region. A pottery figurine, from Zhaoqing Mausoleum, of an official. A Buddhist statue of the Tang era from Shanxi Museum. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

To keep the demons of guilt at bay, he hung portraits of two of his trusted generals Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde over the front gate. The act is said to be why portraits of the two generals are viewed in China today as "gate gods" and are put up to protect homes.

It is perhaps difficult to be sure how credible this anecdote is but one epigraph on exhibit may be an indication of the high esteem in which the emperor held Yuchi, who despite his birth status as a commoner, was buried in the imperial mausoleum to protect the emperor forever. The epigraph, written in a script known as *feibai* ("the flying white"), a noble writing style favored by Li Shimin, is the only ancient epigraph written in the style found so far in China.

"Recognizing and appointing capable people, accepting advice with an open mind, Li Shimin created the template of benevolent governance with loyal ministers," Feng says.

To expound on this political legacy, the National Library of China has also contributed precious ancient books to the exhibition. For example, a 14th-century edition of *Zhengan Zhengyao* (Essentials About Politics From the Zhenguan Reign), a compendium of statecraft compiled by Wu Jing, a historian during Li Shimin's time, is displayed near the entrance.

"The book documents disputes, discussions, admonitions, and advice both from Emperor Taizong and his high officials," Zhang Zhiqing, deputy director of the national library, says. "It is a monumental work on ancient Chinese political theory, strategy and practice."

"Visitors to the exhibition can also do some extra reading to explore the historical wisdom contained in the ancient classics," Zhang says. "That will provide them references in a modern context."

Road to the peak

The Tang Dynasty is generally considered to be a golden era in China's imperial period, when national



Left: Over 240 relics from 15 museums display the prosperity of Tang Dynasty (618-907) emperor Li Shimin's era in the National Library of China.

Far left: Yuchi Jingde's epigraph. Above: A *chiwei*, an architectural decoration, shows the grandeur of Tang palaces.

PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

strength reached its zenith around the mid-8th century during the reign of Li Longji, Li Shimin's great-grandson.

Scholars throughout Chinese history tended to credit the Zhenguan era as the beginning of a boom that lasted about a century.

"The Tang Dynasty is known for its well-functioning politics, successful economy, flourishing cultures, and the shared development of many ethnic groups within a united nation," Sun Xiaobing, deputy director of Art Exhibitions China, says.

"Li Shimin devoted his life to an epoch-making journey that started a long career," Sun adds. "He led the Tang from the rubble of war to a society that fully displayed its prosperity. ... His legacy has been honored and learned from by following generations."

Consequently, as a pivotal node in history, the Zhenguan period needs to be viewed in a wider context, Feng adds.

"The era didn't suddenly appear," she says. "The exhibition also aims to place his time in a bigger picture."

The Tang era was established on the basis of the centuries-long mixing of ethnic groups, from across northern China in particular, and benefited from constant cross-cultural communication thanks to the Silk Road.

Feng's team chose items that place this era in its global context. For example, a gold-gilt silver vase from a Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581) high official Li Xian's tomb displays Greek decorative patterns typical of the Trojan War. The vase, which dates to about half a century before the Zhenguan era and which was found in present-day Guyuan in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, demonstrates a willingness for contact with faraway lands.

Also from Guyuan, a group of Byzantine gold coins bearing the head of Justinian the Great dating to the Northern Zhou period may hint at international trade along the Silk Road before it reached its zenith following the Tang era.

Many other exhibits from the Tang Dynasty, including gold decorative fillets, glass bowls, turquoise ornaments, and stone carvings with Sasanian patterns, all remain as evidence of cross-cultural communication, echoing the open nature of the Zhenguan era.

According to ancient records, Li Shimin received envoys from all over the world in a grand ceremony in Chang'an in 639, adding a new chapter to the tale of the city as a crossroads of the ancient Silk Road.

"The light of the Tang Dynasty shone brightly on the stage of world civilization," Feng says. "It left references for national governance during dynastic periods."

"Using the Zhenguan era as a mirror, we are able to better understand how civilizations rise and prosper," she adds.

Contact the writer at wangkaihao@chinadaily.com.cn

What's on

Archaic bronzes

About 160 bronze vessels from the collection of the National Museum of China are currently on show at the Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan, Sichuan province. They illustrate the rise and evolution of bronze culture from around the 19th century BC to the first century AD. *A History Cast by Fine Metal* runs until July and reveals the qualities and texture of bronzes referred to as *jijin* (fine metal work), and their significance in the early stage of Chinese civilization as the embodi-



ment of state sovereignty, political hierarchy and social etiquette. Objects for various purposes are included: food and drink containers, musical instruments, weapons and armory, items for use on horses and carts, and other ornamental pieces. The exhibition also investigates the philosophy behind the different shapes of bronze ware, their intricate patterns and the text inscriptions, which have been studied intensively and have influenced other categories of art and craft over the centuries until today.

8:30 am-6 pm, daily. On the bank of Yazi River, west of Guanghan city, Sichuan province. 0838-553-3333.

Treasure hoard

In the 1980s, an earthen jar was discovered at a site in Yixian county in Hebei province. People were startled to discover hundreds of objects of gold, silver, jade, amber and other kinds of ornamentation. They displayed the artistic characteristics of the Northern Song period (960-1127) blended with features of the Liao Dynasty (916-1125), which was



founded by the nomadic tribes of northern China. A selection of 400 gold and silver pieces from this precious cache are currently on display in *Reflective Light of Yishui River* at the China Museum of Southern

Water Town Culture in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. They are divided into the categories of wine vessels, accessories, currencies and other craft and illustrate the prosperous material and cultural lives of the time, as well as conflicts and exchange on the borders of the Song and Liao territories. The exhibition runs until Aug 11. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 95 Nandajie, Linping district, Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. 0571-8624-5461.

CHINA DAILY

LIFESHANGHAI



Visitors appreciate exhibits donated by Robert Chang to the Shanghai Museum. Chang, a 97-year-old collector of Chinese artifacts, is based in Hong Kong. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Museum shines spotlight on cloisonné

Donations by influential Hong Kong antiques dealer and collector include pieces unparalleled for their beauty, **Zhang Kun** reports.

Thanks to the donations of a patriotic connoisseur, the Shanghai Museum has become one of the country's first public museums with a showroom dedicated to cloisonné enamel objects.

On May 8, the museum celebrated the opening of its new room and an exhibition, *All that Glitters*, which features 55 cloisonné pieces donated by Robert Chang, a 97-year-old collector of Chinese artifacts.

"In the future, I will make more donations, and I hope everyone will be able to gather here again then," he said from his wheelchair, clad in a blue linen jacket, elegant white trousers and a smart white fedora.

"I began to collect fine cloisonné objects in my 40s, and now all of them are in the Shanghai Museum," Chang says.

"I will keep on supporting the Shanghai Museum for the remaining days of my life. People all over the world who love cloisonné will come to the museum and learn about the great civilization of China," Chang says. "We've had top-class culture, art and education for millennia... I hope one day students from all over the world will come to study here and be fascinated by the glorious history of China."

Chang was born to a family with a long background in art and antiques in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, in 1927. His grandfather Zhang Jiru, was a famous bamboo carving artist, and his father Zhang Zhongying, a renowned antique dealer in Shanghai in the early 1900s. In 1948 Chang moved to Hong Kong to found his own antique shop, Yong Yuan Hang, in the 1950s.

He was one of the first Chinese to attend international auctions in the 1960s.

Nicolas Chow, the former international head and chairman of Chinese art at Sotheby's, writes in a column that "auctioneers in Hong Kong, Paris, London, New York, Tokyo and Beijing will not wield their gavel until Robert Chang has made his theatrical entrance, center aisle, and has taken his favorite seat at the front row, paddle 001 at the ready?"

As an important collector, Chang exerted significant influence on the collection of ancient Chinese art and auctioneering, both in China and abroad, according to Chu Xiaobo, director of the Shanghai Museum,



and also played a pivotal role in turning Hong Kong into a prominent trading center for Chinese art in the latter half of the 20th century.

"When Julian Thompson, the late chairman of Sotheby's, brought groundbreaking auctions to the city in 1973, his first port of call was Robert, who supplied hundreds of pieces to his early sales," Chow writes.

With his extensive collection of traditional calligraphy, Chinese paintings, jade and cloisonné enamelware, Chu says that Chang has significantly influenced and encouraged the focus of collectors worldwide on the collection and research of cloisonné enamelware from different historical periods.

"Upon learning about the relatively limited collection of cloisonné enamelware at the Shanghai Museum, Mr Chang expressed his intention to donate the treasures he has collected over the long years to expand the museum's collection," Chu says.

Chang made the first donation —



Top: Robert Chang is center stage at the display of cloisonné enamel objects he donated to the Shanghai Museum on May 8. Above: Chu Xiaobo (right), director of the Shanghai Museum, issues a certificate to Chang recognizing his donation to the institution.

46 pieces in 32 sets — to the museum last September.

This year, he donated a further nine pieces in eight sets. These include furnishings, daily necessities, and stationery items from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the early 1900s.

"Chang's gifts have helped the museum fill in a gap in our collection. To show our gratitude, we have decided to set up a special room for the permanent display of these fine objects," Chu says. "This is also the first permanent exhibition in China's public museums dedicated to the art of cloisonné enamelware... We hope this will encourage more art lovers to donate fine objects from their collections to the museum."

Among the 55 objects, pieces from the Kangxi period (1662-1722) and the Qianlong period (1736-1796) are especially important, as they demonstrate the high level of cloisonné craftsmanship at the imperial palace.

Cloisonné is a decorative tech-

nique that involves soldering delicate metal wires bent into the outline of a pattern onto a metal surface and filling in the spaces with enamel paste.

The earliest examples date back to the Mycenaean period in southern Europe 3,300 years ago, and in China, cloisonné was widely made during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, when it was used to produce a large number of fine objects in a variety of forms with distinctive Chinese aesthetics.

It is known as *jingtai lan* — literally "the blue of the Jingtai period" — because Chinese cloisonné enamelware reached its technical peak during the reign of Emperor Jingtai (1450-1457) in the Ming Dynasty.

The Qing Dynasty marked another peak in craftsmanship. During the reign of Emperor Qianlong, the production of *jingtai lan* underwent unprecedented development.

An office for workshops dedicated to the production of imperial utensils was established under the administration of the Yangxin Dian (the Hall of Mental Cultivation) at the imperial court. One of these workshops made cloisonné.

There were other important production centers for enamelware outside the capital, such as in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Yangzhou, Jiangsu province.

Chang is especially proud of the pair of incense burners with a flower-and-bird design and elephant-headed feet, that are among his gifts to the Shanghai Museum.

The two identical objects stand 127 centimeters high, and have a diameter of 91 centimeters.

"These are definitely representative cloisonné artworks and the most treasured objects among our collection. It would be hard to find such a large pair of fine enamel incense burners today, even at the Palace Museum," says Chu.

He adds that Chang's donations have laid a solid foundation for cloisonné research at the museum.

"We hope in the future we can take these objects on international tour, and introduce overseas visitors to the evolution of cloisonné enamel in China, and how it became a traditional handicraft favored by the emperors," Chu says.

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

Drama as dance in new production of *Thunder and Rain*

By **ZHANG KUN**

One of the most famous plays in modern Chinese literature, *Thunder and Rain*, will be adapted for the first time into a dance theater production.

Produced by the Shanghai Oriental Art Center, the show will be choreographed by Zhao Xiaogang and is set to premiere on July 25.

Thunder and Rain — which is also known as *Thunderstorm* — was the first play written by Cao Yu (1910-96), the pioneer of the stage drama genre, in 1934.

Since then it has been widely performed in theaters, folk operas, TV series and movies.

"We browsed through all the important works of modern Chinese literature, and chose *Thunder and Rain*, because it powerfully condenses the problems of society in the past century through a series of dramatic conflicts one evening between two families that are the result of 30 years

of events," says Gu Shengyin, producer of the show.

Zhao says at the news conference announcing the show: "The play is a suspense in which one secret is unveiled after another, and readers become intrigued to dig out the hidden past of the family."

"The challenge for us is how to peel away layer after layer, the secrets, conflicts and the repressed emotions of the characters, through body language instead of dialogue," he continues. "To achieve this we needed dancers who are also great actors at the same time for all eight principal roles."

Founder of Beijing's Xian Wu Ren dance studio, Zhao is known for his national award-winning creations inspired by traditional Chinese art, from Buddhist murals and ink paintings to literary classics.

"It will be a great show if the dancers are able to successfully present the distinct personalities of each of the main characters in signature dance moves and solo performances," he says.



Left: Zhao Xiaogang is the choreographer of the dance drama production *Thunder and Rain*, which will be premiered at Shanghai Oriental Art Center on July 25. Right: Two dancers showcase moves from the upcoming production. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Shan Chong, artistic director of the China Opera and Dance-Drama Theatre, will be playing the female lead as Lu Shiping, a maid seduced by the young master of the household, Zhou Puyuan.

After giving birth to an illegitimate son, Lu is kicked out, her baby is taken away from her, and she is forced to live in poverty with a working class husband. She returns to the Zhou household 30 years later, only to find her children bullied and harassed by the young masters and is burning with love and hatred, consumed by the contradicting emotions, Shan says in a video message.

"Part of her accepts her fate, while another cannot and is indignant. It is a great challenge to present the depth and complexity of all these emotions, as well as the cultural background of the character."

The production features a group of 16 male dancers, who Zhao believes "will be powerful to present the play's emotional momentum and conflicts".

"We want to present a modern interpretation of the story," says Lei Wen, general manager of the Shanghai theater. "If the audience sees the settings, costumes and music they imagined, we will have failed... We will be faithful to the original play, but we have to find new ways to present it."

As one of the prime theaters in Shanghai's Pudong New Area, the Shanghai Oriental Art Center has frequently presented dance and theater adaptations of literary classics from all over the world, among them *Damocles*, *Anna Karenina* and *Hamlet*, which have been warmly received, according to Gu.

"Few modern, contemporary Chinese literary works have been adapted to dance theater, and we want to give it a try."

After five performances, the production will tour the country, and Lei hopes to introduce *Thunder and Rain* to international audiences and take the production on tour abroad at a later date.

LIFE

As the Beijing Dance Academy celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, the established dance school has announced the first nationwide tour of a selection of standout entries from the 13th edition of the Taoli Cup National Dancing Education Performance of China. The national event, initiated by the academy in 1985, has been held every three years and is a platform for training top young dancers and was originally known as the Taoli Cup National Dancing Competition.

The 13th Taoli Cup was held in Beijing last August and featured 200 programs divided into six sections according to style, including classical Chinese dance, Chinese folk dance, ballet and contemporary dance. Students representing 64 schools from 27 cities and provinces participated, making it the largest event in the cup's history. For the first time, the competition featured contemporary dance, a relatively new style in China compared to traditional Chinese dance and Chinese folk dance, and which still caters to a minority taste.

According to Xu Rui, president of the Beijing Dance Academy, 15 performances will be held in 11 cities, including Beijing, Chongqing, Suzhou in Jiangsu province, and Kunming in Yunnan province, between May and November.

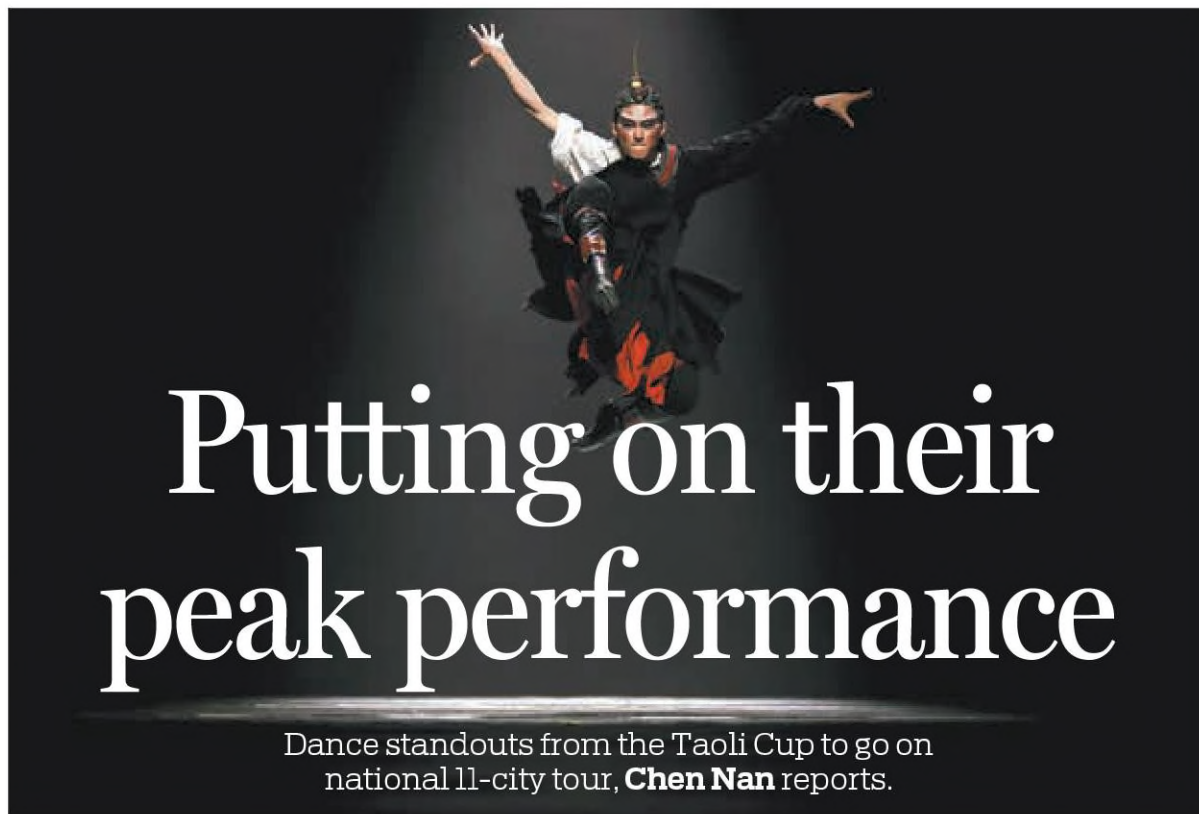
Students from over 10 art schools who participated in the 13th Taoli Cup, including those from the Beijing Dance Academy, the Central Academy of Drama, the Nanjing University of the Arts and Hangzhou Normal University, will take part in the tour.

It will feature four major styles: classic Chinese dance, ballet, Chinese folk dance and contemporary dance. Before each performance, the winners of major awards in previous editions, among them star dancers like Wang Yabin, Hua Xiaoyi and Wang Zihan, will introduce the history of the Taoli Cup and the pieces to be staged.

"For nearly 40 years, the competition has been a key platform for young dancers to show their skill and be seen by a wider audience. Many young Chinese dancers shot to stardom after winning the competition, and have become top dancer-choreographers today. They have taken leading roles in dance productions in theaters, and have created their own work, promoting the development of the dance scene in China by growing a large fan base for the art, especially among the young," says Xu.

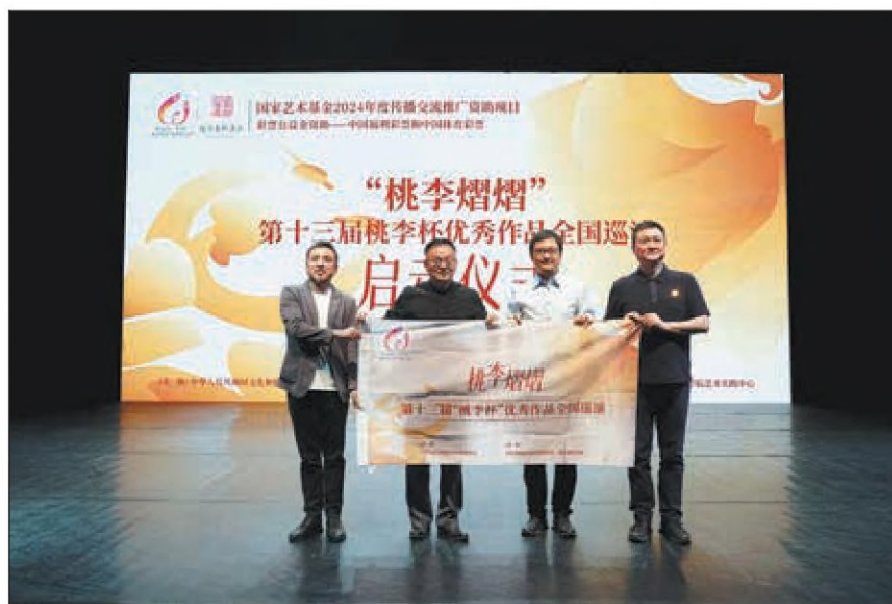
He says that the competition is also a platform for showcasing the achievements of dance instructors, and promotes higher levels of teaching and performing, stimulates the creation of new dances, and propels the development of dance in the country.

Jiang Tiehong participated



Putting on their peak performance

Dance standouts from the Taoli Cup to go on national 11-city tour, **Chen Nan** reports.



Top: Yu Zixuan, a student of the Beijing Dance Academy, performs during the 13th Taoli Cup National Dancing Education Performance of China. **Middle:** Ba Tu (second from left), Party Secretary of the Beijing Dance Academy, and Xu Rui (second from right), president of the academy, announce the launch of the nationwide tour. **Left:** Student dancer Wang Dashan. **Above:** Li Shuhan, a student from the academy. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



“The Taoli Cup is a leading incubator allowing young dancers to grow.”

Ba Tu, Party secretary, Beijing Dance Academy



“For nearly 40 years, the competition has been a key platform for young dancers to show their skill and be seen by a wider audience.”

Xu Rui, president, Beijing Dance Academy

in the Taoli Cup in 1991 when he was a student at the Minzu University of China majoring in dance. He was named one of the top 10 dancers during the competition, which he says helped launch his career by giving him more opportunities to appear onstage.

"I can still remember the first day of the competition in 1991," says Jiang, who is now head of the dance school at the Minzu University of China. "I was sitting with the other dancers on the audience benches at the Beijing Dance Academy, feeling excited and nervous. We were so young and ambitious, all hoping to win and be recognized."

"For any young student majoring in dance in China, the Taoli Cup is a symbol of success, a clear goal to pursue, even for those who received training as children. Now, many students from the dance school at the Minzu University of China also participate in the competition and get awards, which makes me very proud," he says.

Zhu Han won second place in the classic Chinese dance category during the 2006 competition with the solo piece, *Shi Lang*, which recounted the story of the legendary military figure from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

"I prepared for the competition for about two years, a long and tough period. My teachers helped me create the solo dance piece and trained me for hours every day. The training and rehearsals were exhausting," says Zhu, who now teaches at the dance drama department at the Central Academy of Drama. "However, looking back, the experience was about more than the competition itself. I gained confidence and challenged myself over and over again through training and rehearsals."

Besides award-winning dances from the 13th edition, winning entries from previous editions will also be part of the tour. Highlights include *Drinking Alone Under the Moon*, featuring Su Hailu and inspired by Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai's poem of the same title, and *Tang Yin*, a piece by Sun Can, which was inspired by tricolor Tang figurines of female dancers.

Besides live performances, the tour is inviting scholars and experts to discuss the development and achievements of dance education over the past 40 years.

In 2016, the focus of the competition shifted to take on an educational aspect, and the event was renamed the Taoli Cup National Dancing Education Performance of China.

"The Taoli Cup is a leading incubator allowing young dancers to grow. We have seen many original dances created for the competition. Those pieces deserve to be seen by more people," says Ba Tu, Party secretary of the Beijing Dance Academy.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Science now confirms what the ancients always told us

Tai chi, according to a recent study, is better than aerobic exercise for lowering blood pressure.

That's good reason to rejoice, and not just for those dealing with hypertension. After all, it shows that science is confirming the benefits long ascribed to this treasured Chinese art.

Researchers are also likely to note, as veteran practitioners like myself have found, that the body's ability to regulate its systems and to adjust and adapt to myriad challenges is enhanced through the regular practice of tai chi.

Specifically, based on my own direct observations, tai chi improves physical coordination and balance; fortifies the immune system; strengthens the body's muscles and joints via a constant emphasis on big and small rotations of the torso, waist, limbs and joints; taps into the "body brain" (which includes, but goes far

beyond, muscle memory); and improves breathing, circulation and mental acuity.

Tai chi can be practiced anywhere, anytime, alone and without equipment. During the periods of pandemic isolation, this proved to be a huge advantage.

What's more, each of the various styles of tai chi imparts its own distinctive benefits in addition to those common to all tai chi (also called *taiji* or *taijiquan*).

That's why the 42 Combined Taijiquan competition routine, whose movements are culled from the four major styles of tai chi — Chen, Yang, Wu and Sun — is particularly appealing.

I had the good fortune to learn this splendid routine nearly 25 years ago from a dedicated student of Beijing's renowned Professor Li Deyin, who choreographed the 42-movement routine for introduction at the 1990 Asian Games.

I begin my daily training with the first section of the 42-movement routine, because that section's emphasis on Yang style tai chi's gentle and "soft" movements



Foreign students practice Chen style tai chi at an international cultural exchange center in Wenxian county, Jiaozuo, Henan province. XU HONGXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

and calming rhythm allows one to take an inventory, while moving slowly, of the body's current strengths and weaknesses, and to detect any sore spots or injuries. This serves as a perfect warm-up exercise before moving on to more robust training.

What makes tai chi so reward-

ing is that it simultaneously does its magic at many levels.

As Chen Xin wrote in 1932 in *The Illustrated Canon of Chen Family Taijiquan*, "The secret of taijiquan ... lies in the fact that its movements exist not of themselves, but are elements in an ancient tapestry of thought and

consciousness, combining philosophy, healing and fighting into a single fabric".

Any style of tai chi is a good choice, but you can optimize the experience by reflecting on your nature and what you hope to achieve.

For example, Chen style tai chi, the original style, is the most comprehensive regarding martial, health and mental/spiritual aspects, and it features fast and slow movements, as well as explosive bursts of power described as "fire touching gunpowder".

The Yang style is remarkable for its emphasis on softness and elasticity, so it's a good fit for "gentle souls" who are less interested in martial features.

The Wu style has a distinctive compactness and a power-building tendency to lean into a technique, and it includes balance-challenging postures done while standing on one leg.

Finally, the Sun style features higher stances that allow older people to practice it, a stepping method that enhances agility and balance, and constant repetition

of a deep-breathing technique that improves lung function.

It's best to find a teacher who has a solid traditional background. Make sure you choose an instructor who is demanding yet patient, and who spends time correcting your postures and movements.

This is important because, as with baking, tai chi is an exacting art. When making a cake or cookies, you can't afford to stray from the recipe in the amount of sugar or salt or butter or baking powder, or the temperature of the oven, because even small deviations can be ruinous. Likewise, tai chi's benefits are in direct proportion to the devotee's adherence to important physical principles. So find a teacher who knows the details as well as the big picture.

It's heartening to see that science increasingly recognizes, as through the blood pressure study, that in order to fight disease or ward off the ill effects of aging, you needn't look any further than tai chi.

Contact the writer at jameshealy@chinadaily.com.cn