

Open support

Israel recalls envoys to 3 nations after Palestine recognition move
WORLD, PAGE 7



Solar products targeted by new US curbs
BUSINESS, PAGE 8

Retrieving history

Relics in Wuwangdun shed light on how society was organized millennia ago
CULTURAL HERITAGE, PAGE 14



CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2024

Xi congratulates Vietnam's new president

By CAO DESHENG in Beijing and YANG HAN in Hong Kong

President Xi Jinping has congratulated To Lam on his assuming office as the Vietnamese president, pledging to work with him to promote bilateral relations. In a congratulatory letter sent to Lam on Wednesday, Xi said that China and Vietnam, both socialist countries, are friends and neighbors connected by mountains and rivers. Xi spoke of his state visit to Vietnam last year, when he and Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Cen-

tral Committee, jointly announced the building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance, opening a new chapter in the relationship between the two parties and the two countries. Xi said he is happy to see that various departments and local authorities of both countries are stepping up the construction of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future, and have made steady progress in that direction. Noting that he attaches great importance to the development of China's relations with Vietnam, Xi

said he is willing to work with Lam to maintain strategic communication and guide both countries in the building of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future, with more substantial results in broader fields, delivering more benefits to the people of both countries. Lam, 67, who was Vietnam's minister of public security since April 2016, was elected the country's new president on Wednesday. He serves as a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee in its 13th term. In his inauguration speech, Lam said he is deeply aware of his great

responsibility to the party, the state and the people, and pledged to seriously and fully perform the duties of the president of Vietnam as defined by the Constitution. Lam also vowed to actively fulfill the country's internal, external, defense and security tasks, and — together with the entire party, people, military and organization in the political system — promote the highest spirit of "self-reliance, self-confidence, self-strength, self-resilience and national pride".

Contact the writers at caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn



To Lam attends a swearing-in ceremony in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Wednesday. To Lam, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam, was elected as Vietnam's new president on Wednesday. DANG ANH / AFP

Traumatic experience



Above left: Passengers of the turbulence-hit Singapore Airlines flight SQ321 are greeted by family members on Wednesday upon their arrival at Changi Airport in Singapore. The London-Singapore flight made an emergency landing in Bangkok, Thailand, after experiencing sudden and severe turbulence that left at least one dead and 70 injured. ROSLAN RAHMAN / AFP
Above right: The interior of the Singapore Airlines aircraft is pictured on Tuesday after it made an emergency landing in Bangkok. Severe turbulence sent the plane, carrying 211 passengers and 16 crew, into a sudden dive. REUTERS See more, page 7



Visitors from US welcomed to see China

President invites tourists to experience for themselves all that the country has to offer

By ZHANG YUNBI in Beijing and YANG FEIYUE in Xi'an

President Xi Jinping has reached out to all visitors from the United States with a welcoming gesture in a message that he sent to the 14th China-US Tourism Leadership Summit, which opened on Wednesday in Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province. "We cordially welcome US tourists to travel to China to meet Chinese friends, experience Chinese culture, tour scenic mountains and rivers, and get a firsthand look at the real China," he wrote. US President Joe Biden also sent a congratulatory message to the event. Industry observers have voiced great hopes that both nations will further encourage two-way visits, as the most recent numbers on border entries and direct flights continue to increase, compared with those of last year, yet they are still lower than the highs achieved before the COVID-19 outbreak. In his message, Xi said that "tourism is an important bridge for the people of China and the US to engage in exchanges and get to better know and bond with each other". He expressed his hope that people from all walks of life in the two countries will take this summit as an opportunity for in-depth exchanges, consensus building and vigorous actions. The goal is to facilitate people-to-people exchanges through tourism cooperation, to perpetuate China-US friendship through cultural exchanges, and to help translate the San Francisco vision into reality, he added. The two countries are celebrating the 45th anniversary this year of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Xi said that the foundation of China-US relations was built by the people, the door of China-US ties was opened by the people, the story of the relations is written by the people, and the future of the ties will certainly be created by the two peoples. In his message, Biden said that

both the US and China "are countries of rich cultural diversity, immense natural beauty and vibrant communities, big and small, all of which support travel and tourism industries that promote prosperity and understanding between our nations". "Four years ago, a global pandemic closed our borders and halted travel and tourism around the world," Biden said when welcoming Chinese tourists to discover US cities and history and to engage with its people. Observers noted that the huge potential of the China-US tourism market could be illustrated by the fact that before the COVID-19 outbreak, more than 300 flights went between China and the US each week, and over 5 million visits were made between the two countries every year. Christopher Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA, an organization that promotes the US as a travel destination, said, "Last August, when the 14th US-China Tourism Leadership Summit was announced, we were all very excited to restart this type of connection between our two nations." Related discussions have since had a real impact on advancing tourism between the two economies, as well as fostering better cultural understanding, he told the summit. "We're very happy that consumer interest in visiting the US remains quite high," Thompson said, adding that the US remains a popular destination among Chinese travelers. Experts noted that, as a sign of the recovery of international travel between China and the rest of the world, the country saw 1.78 million visits by inbound travelers and 1.9 million outbound visits during the recent five-day May Day holiday, close to the level in the same period in 2019 before the pandemic. With fresh joint efforts from both nations, the number of direct flights has grown from 20 per week early last year to 100 per week now, according to a recent speech by Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng.

See *Tourism*, page 3

CELLPHONE MAKER XIAOMI HAS EV MARKET BUZZING

Launch of its first electric vehicle model has generated huge interest, controversy

By LI FUSHENG lifusheng@chinadaily.com.cn



As the newest Chinese electric vehicle maker, Xiaomi Corp has generated a buzz rarely seen in the history of the country's automotive sector, with both huge excitement and some controversy. The launch in late March of its

first model, the SU7 sports sedan, attracted more than 40 million views on Sina Weibo, online exposure other carmakers only dream about achieving. Weeks before the event, guessing

the sedan's price range had been a trending topic on China's social media platforms. The curiosity is understandable. The model is the first vehicle from any big phone manufacturer — Apple has canceled its car-making plans and Huawei insists that it does not make vehicles, although it sells smart driving solutions. The venture also has an aura of

mystery. Xiaomi's CEO Lei Jun called the car project his final entrepreneurial venture, and the crowning of his extremely successful business career. At an event three months ahead of the model's launch, Lei promised it would be a "dream car" to rival Tesla and Porsche. See *Vehicles*, page 2

Genuine warmth between people of two nations remains

When I first arrived in China, more than three decades ago, I had no idea it was the first of what would become dozens of visits. I also didn't realize I'd spend much of my professional career making non-fiction films in and about China. Back then, Beijing was a very different place. There was no highway connecting the international airport with the central city. On the way to my hotel, located across the street from the diplomatic district, the taxi got caught in a traffic jam caused by a farmer moving his tractor from one field to another. At night, truck drivers traveled along the dimly lit street outside the hotel with their lights turned off, unwilling to risk burning out irreplaceable headlight bulbs. Needless to say, those sorts of things don't happen in Beijing anymore. One thing that hasn't changed, however, is the sincere welcome I



received then and still do now. While traveling in China last October, I was surprised by the TV news coverage given to two elderly American military veterans. Melvin McMullen and Harry Moyer both served in China during World War II. They were members of a United States Army Air Forces unit called the "Flying Tigers," at a time when the US and China were allies. They returned to China last autumn, likely for the last time. Wherever they went they were honored. They even met with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng, and US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns. All of this took place during a period of intensifying US and Chi-

For decades, despite profound differences, both the US and China have fostered people-to-people communication. The most famous example is probably the Ping-Pong diplomacy of the early 1970s. It opened the door to eventual diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

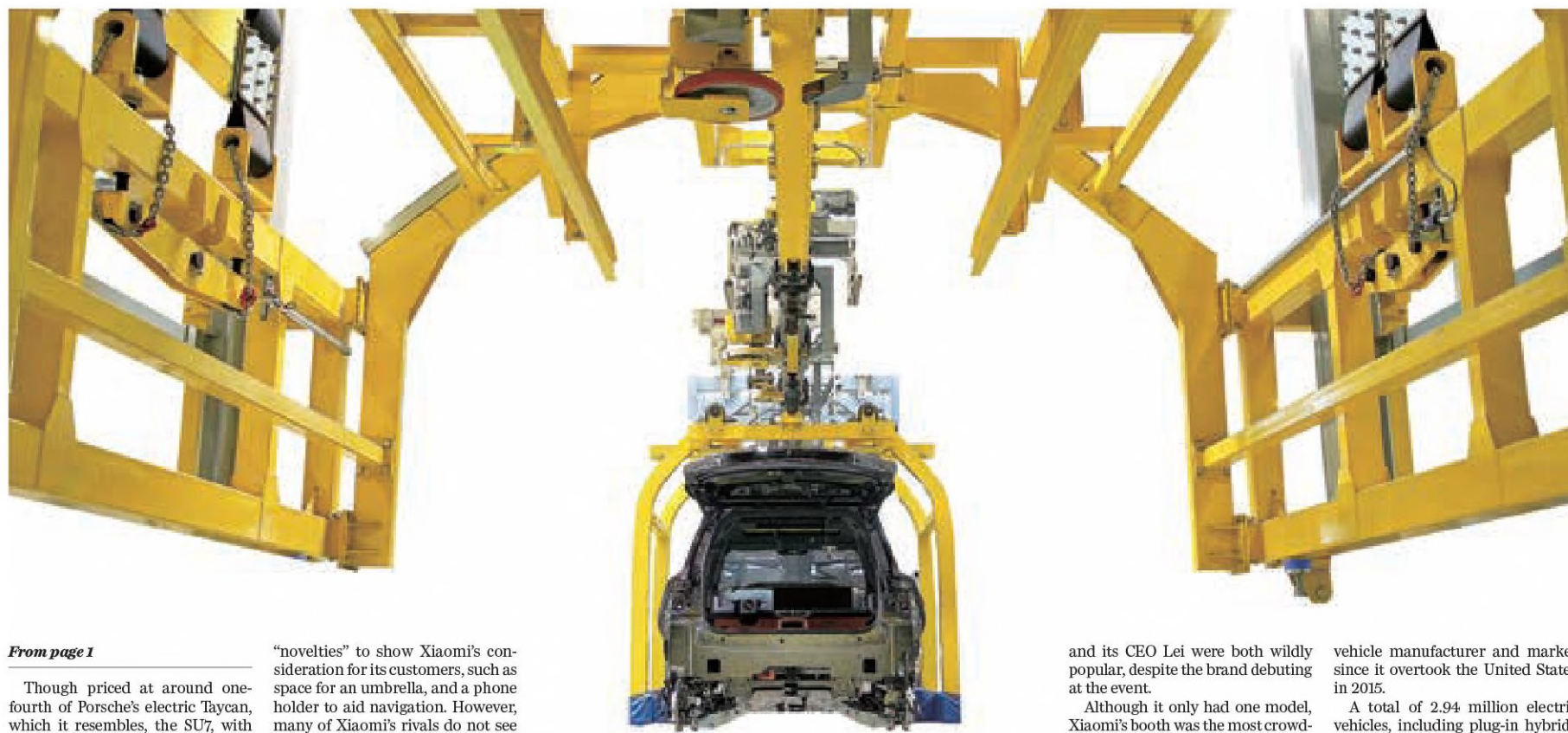
nese military activity in the South China Sea. Yet, it didn't detract from the genuine affection shown to the two, now aged, veterans. How is it these American heroes are largely forgotten at home, yet still celebrated in China? My latest film, an American Public TV documentary called Valor and Memory, looks to answer that question. In the process it explores the complex historical relationship between the US and China. It is the story of the Flying Tigers, US pilots who traveled to China to help its people repel a brutal invasion; the Chinese Tigers, Chinese pilots who earned their wings at US flight schools in places like Arizona and Texas, then returned home to defend their homeland; and what might be called the "Chinese American Tigers," young men raised in big city "Chinatown"

See *Diplomacy*, page 3

INSIDE RCEP ties should be actively treated Global Views, page 13

www.chinadailyglobal.com Member of ANN China Daily Global ©2024 All Rights Reserved Newsstand prices: US \$1 Canada C\$1 UK £1 EU €1 Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling Asia Pacific: Thailand 120 THB, Philippines 120 PHP, Myanmar 2000 MYR, Japan 210 YEN, Dubai 10 Dirham, Pakistan 300 Rupee

PAGE TWO



A workshop of Chinese NEV startup Li Auto in Changzhou, Jiangsu province. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

From page 1

Though priced at around one-fourth of Porsche's electric Taycan, which it resembles, the SU7, with the base model retailing for 215,900 yuan (\$29,840), does have some eye-catching features. These include good acceleration, a minimum range of 700 kilometers, as well as an operating system that allows other Xiaomi products to work seamlessly with the car.

Master marketer

But the excitement around the project would not have been possible without Lei, a marketing master who knows full well the power of social media.

Lei has verbal skills rarely displayed by other high-profile business leaders in China. Both Zhou Hongyi, CEO of network security company 360, and Liu Qiangdong, founder and chairman of online shopping giant JD, admit they cannot rival Lei when it comes to delivering a message.

In one of his videos posted on Sina Weibo ahead of the model's launch, Lei showcases the plant's paint workshop, saying: "Isn't it beautiful, our mirror-like paint finish?"

Such videos usually have millions of views on Sina Weibo, where Lei has more than 20 million followers.

Getting a thumbs-up for the post has little to do with the actual painting process, but the video is clever enough to allow potential buyers the rare opportunity of seeing inside a paint workshop.

Such good impressions give Xiaomi an advantage over its rivals when it comes to potential car buyers.

The SU7's features, coupled with Lei's marketing skills, have driven strong early demand for the model. Xiaomi said it received over 88,000 orders with a deposit of 5,000 yuan, within 24 hours of the launch.

In late April, Lei said at the company's shareholder meeting that the model's fully paid orders numbered over 70,000, and the company's goal is to deliver 100,000 units this year.

In the first full sales month of April, 7,058 units were delivered. It was a decent number, allowing Xiaomi to outperform electric vehicle makers Avatr and Voyah, both of which were established in 2018.

Xiaomi's sales fell just 2,300 units short of competitor Xpeng's deliveries in April. Known for its edge in smart driving, Xpeng has six models in the market and has been chosen by Volkswagen to codevelop vehicles.

Teething problems

However, the SU7 has encountered some teething problems as well as criticism.

One viral video showed a vehicle breaking down within minutes of it being delivered to its owner in Fujian province. Another showed a vehicle in Hunan province suffering brake failure after one month's use, which Xiaomi put down to a rare "software misdirection" that had been solved.

Such problems happen with other brands, but analysts said they could cool customers' enthusiasm for the SU7 as many of those first-time vehicle buyers are longtime customers of Xiaomi products.

The company's efforts to highlight differences between the SU7 and its competitors could also backfire, critics said. At the launch event, Lei gave a detailed list comparing the SU7 with Tesla's Model 3, a practice which is not an industry norm. He expounded on what he called

"novelties" to show Xiaomi's consideration for its customers, such as space for an umbrella, and a phone holder to aid navigation. However, many of Xiaomi's rivals do not see the need for a phone holder as navigation functions are integrated into the central display unit of their vehicles.

Despite this, Lei gave little information about the performance areas where the model was said to excel, such as smart driving, although he declared Xiaomi would be among the "top-class players".

"You don't declare so easily you are far ahead of others, do you? You should wait until it is a fact," said Li Shufu, chairman of the automotive company Geely Holding Group, in a livestreaming event on the same day as Xiaomi's vehicle launch.

The SU7's styling also has its detractors as it is very similar to a Porsche Taycan.

Liu Shuang, a photographer in Beijing, said the SU7 is good-looking, but added that Xiaomi should come up with a design that does not invoke other brands. "It doesn't matter if you call it 'paying homage' or whatever, it looks like a copycat, and a copycat will not earn you respect," said Liu.

Some netizens call the SU7 the "Porsch-mi", a hybrid of Porsche and Xiaomi, saying it reminds them of Zotye, a carmaker that was widely criticized for offering an SUV that resembled the Porsche Cayenne.

Although Lei has said the SU7 is targeted at tech-savvy "elite" buyers, critics have said the model's styling may be seen as a failure in Xiaomi's efforts to shake off its "value for money" reputation.

Boasting sales

New entrants to the electric vehicle sector often compare their products to established brands to grab the attention of car buyers.

When startup Li Auto's large L9 SUV was unveiled in 2022, its founder and CEO Li Xiang said the model was not inferior to a Rolls-Royce's Cullinan. In April, when Li

Vehicles: Online traffic a new way to sell cars

Auto launched the L6, a smaller SUV, Li stated it "beats Porsche's Cayenne in performance and dimensions".

At the Beijing auto show in April, Detlev von Platen, a Porsche board member for sales and marketing, was asked what the German marque thought about the claimed rivalry from Chinese startups.

"Being seen as a benchmark is a confirmation that you are strong, you are desirable, so we are not going to take any protective measures," he said. "The battery-EV market (in China) is more of a volume market. It is not yet there where we are."

Von Platen added that Porsche is

respectful of the multitude of new players, which are "very innovative".

But he said that building a recognized premium brand is not done quickly. "One word for defining luxury is 'credibility', which means 'are you authentic about what you are saying?' This is not something you can do in a few months," he said.

Under the influencers

Yet Xiaomi has something that established carmakers are eager to learn — how to garner online traffic, which has become crucial when social media is part of everyone's life and as competition intensifies with an influx of new vehicle models.

At the Beijing auto show, Xiaomi

and its CEO Lei were both wildly popular, despite the brand debuting at the event.

Although it only had one model, Xiaomi's booth was the most crowded. Lei was always followed by a large swarm of social media content creators as he visited other brands' booths to shake hands and exchange pleasantries.

His supporters even waited outside the men's restroom when he went to answer the call of nature.

Wei Jianjun, chairman of China's largest sport utility vehicle maker Great Wall Motor, is one of the automotive bosses trying to boost his profile on social media.

He made his first appearance in a livestreaming event just days after the Xiaomi launch in March.

People close to the project said Wei himself proposed the idea, saying that he wants to become "an online influencer". Prior to that, Wei had avoided interviews for years.

At a livestreamed company event in May, Wei said he realized that publicity should be "done in the way it is done now", to exchange ideas with fans and car owners online. "I am still working to get the hang of social media, but I will try to become a 'quality' influencer. We will not do things that attract traffic, but not quality (orders)," he said.

William Li, founder and CEO of startup Nio, admitted the way Xiaomi is doing business is creating pressure for its rivals, but the competitive environment is prompting him to make changes.

"Previously, I seldom used social media. But now what can I do? I make short videos otherwise they don't know who I am."

He acknowledged that the huge online traffic generated by Xiaomi and Lei had put a bigger spotlight on electric vehicles in general, which was good for all companies in the sector.

Charging ahead

Electric vehicles are gaining momentum in China, which has been the world's largest electric

vehicle manufacturer and market since it overtook the United States in 2015.

A total of 2.94 million electric vehicles, including plug-in hybrids and battery-only vehicles, were sold in the first four months of this year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

The figure is expected to reach 11.5 million units this year, up from 9.5 million units the previous year, said the association.

The vast potential is good for the EV sector, but it also means intense competition, said Zhang Yongwei, vice-president and secretary-general of China EV 100, a major auto industry think tank.

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

He Xiaopeng, chairman of startup Xpeng, said there will not be more than seven major carmakers in China by 2030. Currently, there are dozens in the country.

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

Roy Lu, a Shanghai-based automotive analyst, said Xiaomi is competitive in this aspect, thanks to strong capabilities in consumer electronics, operating systems and AI.

But it will take time for these advantages to come to the fore, and some analysts point to a mismatch between Xiaomi cars and its vast number of phone users, who choose the brand for its "value for money" reputation.

Meanwhile, traditional carmakers are quickly partnering with technology companies to tailor products that appeal to car buyers. Recent examples include the partnership between Toyota and Tencent as well as the one between Nissan and Baidu.

Analysts agree that after the brutal competition is over in two to three years, there will be a surge in electric vehicle sales in China.

Ouyang Minggao, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, estimates that electric vehicles will account for 70 percent of new car sales in 2030, with their annual deliveries reaching around 20 million units.

Chinese EV brands also have a good chance to win their share of the global market, said Christof Engelskirchen, chief economist of Autovista Group, an automotive data, analytics and industry insights provider.

Their competitive edge is the result of their speed in coming up with new models, technologies and innovation, among other things, Engelskirchen said.

In Europe, Chinese manufacturers should study each destination market carefully as they can be "extremely different", he said.

"There are already so many brands, so many models. So if someone comes with a new product, there must be something new," he said. "It cannot just be about 'good product, good quality, good price and good design', it is too 'me too', he said.

Engelskirchen was at the Beijing auto show when Xiaomi and Lei received their rock star reception. It seems a "fantastic story" in China but "this type of hype around a brand, I think, will be difficult to replicate in Europe," he said.



Clockwise from top left: A visitor takes a selfie with Xiaomi's SU7 displayed at the Mobile World Congress 2024 in Barcelona, Spain, in February. GAO JING / XINHUA Chinese EV maker Nio's 500,000th vehicle rolls off the production line in Hefei, Anhui province, on May 9. ZHANG DUAN / XINHUA Visitors look at a Mercedes-Benz at the 2024 Beijing International Automotive Exhibition in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Robotic arms working on a production line of Chinese NEV startup Li Auto in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, on Jan 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Sino-Kenyan closer ties achieve positive results

By WANG XIAODONG
in Nairobi, Kenya
wangxiaodong@chinadaily.com.cn

China-Kenya cooperation has yielded fruitful results over the past decades and Kenya is looking to carry forward bilateral relations as well as supporting the one-China principle for mutual benefit, said a senior Kenyan official.

In an interview on Monday in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, Moses Wetang'ula, speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya, said bilateral relations have grown phenomenally since the start of the century, which has boosted growth in Kenya and brought benefits to the people.

"When you look today, China is a signatory to almost every major infrastructure project in Kenya, and the people of Kenya appreciate this," he said. "The relationship between Kenya and China is excellent."

"Look at the Nairobi-Thika Super-highway, the best highway we have in the country. Look at roads, even in the most unexpected rural areas that are being constructed by Chinese companies, water, dams, last mile connectivity and electricity, construction of institutions and universities," Wetang'ula said.

"We have a lot going on between Kenya and China. And I would encourage it to continue because it is changing the lives of our people," he said.

China and Kenya celebrated the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations last year. China is Kenya's biggest trade partner while Kenya is China's biggest trade partner in East Africa, where a number of signature infrastructure projects have been completed in recent years with the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative.

In addition to Kenya, China's "positive footprints," as Wetang'ula said, can be seen everywhere, including Africa, Asia and South America.

"There's a beacon everywhere that Chinese development is visible, such as roads, bridges, and so on," he said.

Wetang'ula, who is also a former foreign minister of Kenya, said the country firmly supports the one-China principle, and recognizes Taiwan as an inalienable part of China.

"Taiwan remains an integral part of China, and China is recognized as the only representative of the people

of China. Regardless of what those who support Taiwan say, Kenya followed the resolution of the UN with which we voted," he said during the interview on Monday.

In October 1971, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 2758, which restored all rights to the People's Republic of China, recognizing it as the sole legal representative of China at the UN. The resolution has since been followed by the vast majority of the international community.

Recognizing the one-China principle is "an inevitable development that no country will stand in the way," Wetang'ula said, adding that in Africa, developing relations with China has proved to be in the interests of the continent and individual countries as well.

Wetang'ula's comment coincided with Lai Ching-te assuming his role as the Taiwan region's new leader. China's State Council Taiwan Affairs Office on Monday said Lai has sent "a dangerous signal" of seeking "Taiwan independence" in a speech upon assuming the role on Monday.

Based on the one-China principle, Kenya is looking forward to intensified bilateral cooperation in many areas through various platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, said Wetang'ula.

Kenya embraces the Belt and Road Initiative and has been engaging the initiative with its own development plans, so the initiative can best align with Kenya's economic development, he said.

One major plan of the government of Kenya is to focus more on development of its mineral resources, which Wetang'ula said he hoped more Chinese companies can participate in.

"China will be a critical partner in doing so because we know that when we deal with your country, the red tape and roadblocks to making decisions are far less than some of our partners who put a lot of caveats on many things," he said.

Anticipating the new meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation to be held in Beijing in fall this year, Wetang'ula said he wishes it will put more focus on boosting international trade for Africa to create more wealth for the continent.



Flame shines

Delphine Ernotte (center), head of France Televisions, holds up the Paris 2024 Olympic torch on Tuesday at the 77th Cannes Film Festival venue in Cannes, southern France, as part of the Olympics torch relay.
CLODAGH KILCOYNE / REUTERS

Lai's radical stance on 'independence' blasted

Remarks seen as grave challenge to cross-Strait peace and stability

By YANG ZEKUN
yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

The speech made on Monday by Lai Ching-te, the new leader of China's Taiwan region, is full of hostility and provocation and made up of lies and deception, and is a complete confession of support for "Taiwan independence," a spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office said on Tuesday night.

Inside

• Editorial, page 11
• Comment, page 12

Chen Binhua, the spokesman, said that Lai is inciting anti-mainland sentiment and attempting to "pursue independence through military means," which will only push Taiwan into a perilous situation of war and conflict, bringing great calamity to the vast majority of Taiwan compatriots.

"Lai's speech clearly demonstrated that he is a betrayer of main-

stream public opinion on the island and a disruptor of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Chen said.

The speech was about peddling the "two-state" concept and pushing for "Taiwan independence" under a different name, reflecting that Lai was eager to reveal his true "Taiwan independence" intentions with an extremely arrogant attitude and even more radical propositions from the outset, Chen said.

The true status quo of the Taiwan Strait is that the Chinese mainland and Taiwan both belong to one China, and Taiwan is a part of China, Chen said. Taiwan's leader not only failed to address the fundamental question of the nature of cross-Strait relations, but also attempted to change the nature of the relations, which poses a grave challenge to the one-China principle, he said.

Lai promoted the idea of "self-determination for Taiwan's residents regarding the island's future" as a

guise for the ambition of "Taiwan independence," said the spokesman, adding that the future of Taiwan, as an inseparable part of China, can only be decided by the more than 1.4 billion Chinese people, including compatriots in Taiwan.

Chen noted that the Taiwan question is purely an internal affair of China, and no external interference will be tolerated.

No matter how much Taiwan's leader fawns over and seeks aid from external forces, he is merely a "pawn," and "Taiwan independence" is a dead end, Chen said, adding that the attempt to "seek independence with the support of foreign powers" will only lead to self-destruction.

Chen reaffirmed the strong desire of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to achieve national reunification through peaceful means, and highlighted that countermeasures must be taken against the Democratic Progressive Party

authorities' collusion with external forces in their provocative "independence" attempts.

Chen also revealed Lai's attempt to use the guise of "peaceful coexistence" and the empty talk about "replacing confrontation with dialogue, and replacing encirclement with exchanges" to suggest the resumption of tourism exchanges and the enrollment of degree-seeking students from the mainland. This ultimately aims to mislead some uninformed individuals into thinking he has the goodwill and sincerity to improve cross-Strait relations.

The inability of mainland residents and students to travel to and study in Taiwan is entirely caused by the DPP authorities, Chen said. Taiwan's leader not only fails to correct past mistakes but also adds the precondition of "bilateral reciprocity" to tourism and study, showing no genuine intent to promote cross-Strait exchanges and improve the island's economy and livelihood.

"No matter what Lai says or how he says it, it cannot change the fact that Taiwan is a part of China, nor can it alter the fundamental framework and direction of cross-Strait relations," Chen said. "It cannot alter the shared desire of people on both sides of the Strait to become closer and more connected, and it cannot stop the irreversible trend of China's reunification."

Finding his way back home



A man looks at a 900-year-old statue of the Hindu god Shiva, dubbed "Golden Boy", on Tuesday in Bangkok, Thailand, after it was repatriated from the United States. The statue is believed to have been smuggled out of Thailand 50 years ago. MANAN VATSAYANA / AFP

US firms, execs sanctioned in Beijing countermeasures

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing announced countermeasures on Wednesday against 12 military-related companies in the United States and their senior executives, including units of Lockheed Martin, in response to Washington's arms sales to China's Taiwan region and its unilateral sanctions against Chinese companies.

The measures, which include freezing their movable, immovable and other types of assets in China, as well as banning entry for senior executives, took effect on Wednesday, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry.

The ministry said that for some time, the US has, in disregard of China's just position and con-

structive role on the Ukraine issue, imposed illegal unilateral sanctions on many Chinese entities for so-called "Russia-related factors".

"Washington's engagement in massive unilateral bullying and economic coercion has severely violated the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies, institutions and individuals," the statement said.

The ministry also said that the US, at the same time, has been continuously selling arms to Taiwan, which seriously breaches the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, gravely interferes in China's domestic affairs and harms China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The countermeasures were announced just one day after the

ministry announced sanctions against former US lawmaker Mike Gallagher, including a ban on entering China, for his blatant, serious interference in China's internal affairs out of his own considerations and prejudice against China.

Gallagher, who stepped down in April, led the pushback from the US House of Representatives against China, including helping to pass a bill that could ban popular video app TikTok if its China-based owner doesn't sell its stake.

Speaking at a regular news briefing in Beijing on Wednesday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said China has unwavering resolve in safeguarding its national sovereignty, security and development interests.

He added that the nation "will

severely punish any individual or organization that goes all out to counter and contain China."

Lyu Xiang, a US studies researcher at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the countermeasures announced by the Chinese side are in response to a series of hostile actions by the US against China.

"The defense companies have, to different extents, been involved in the Ukraine crisis and arms sales to Taiwan, so China is justified to conduct these countermeasures," Lyu said, adding that the sanctions will also have a substantial impact on their businesses.

Though the impact of the sanctions on the ex-lawmaker could be limited, Lyu said China's countermeasures could make companies think twice before doing business with him.

Diplomacy: Stories live through people

From page 1

neighborhoods, sent by the US Army to China for their language and cultural knowledge as much as their technical skills.

The Chinese American Composite Wing, part of US 14th Air Force, was probably the most unusual unit of any combatant of World War II. It combined personnel from two different countries, who spoke two different languages, under the same command structure. Americans and Chinese fought side-by-side, as equals. They were aided by countless Chinese civilians, ordinary men and women who rescued US flight crews shot down over enemy-held territory. They saved them from

possible capture, torture or even death, at the risk of their own lives and those of their loved ones.

For decades, despite profound differences, both the US and China have fostered people-to-people communication. The most famous example is probably the Ping-Pong diplomacy of the early 1970s. It opened the door to eventual diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China. The "diplomats" were nine US table tennis players, one of whom missed the team bus at the 1971 World Table Tennis Championship in Japan, traveling instead with the Chinese national team. An invitation to visit China for a series of "friendship" matches soon followed. This at a time when the

US and China rarely communicated, and if they did, they talked "at" each other not "with." Table tennis provided a form of back-channel communication, away from the media spotlight.

That style of diplomacy continues today, through efforts like musicians from the New York Philharmonic teaching master classes in Shanghai. Or the return of elderly World War II veterans, like McMullen and Moyer, to China.

As a faculty member at the New York Film Academy, I was invited to lecture at the Beijing Film Academy and Xiamen University. As a filmmaker, I explore the US and China's shared — if contentious — history. The best way to convey that history is through the person-

al experiences of those who lived it. I've interviewed countless people about China, its culture, and its history. People who — regardless of where they were born or eventually lived — always considered China their 'home.' Many of them were kind enough to share their personal recollections with me. When I travel through China, I often have other people's memories in my head. Sadly, most of those people are now gone. I am honored that their stories still live on through me, and through the American and Chinese audiences who see my films.

The author is a three-time Emmy Award winning filmmaker and educator. He has developed and produced non-fiction programming for ABC, CBS, Discovery, HBO and PBS. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Tourism: More convenient visa policies urged by travel expert

From page 1

Xie noted that "the flights now are still far from enough, and the tickets are too expensive," and he said the China travel advisory issued by Washington "has deterred many American friends from visiting China."

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, told the summit that sustainable China-US tourism

exchanges and high-quality tourism development "would not have been possible" without the guidance of the leaders of both countries, high-level visits, political mutual trust and interactions among industry players.

"For the continuous increase in tourist visits between China and the US, it is necessary to pragmatically promote tourism, implement more convenient visa policies, continuously expand direct flight quotas, and deepen cooperation and exchanges between tourism investment institutions and market entities," Dai said.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to promote exchanges between the two countries' tourism industries, education institutions and think tanks, he added.

Contact the writers at zhangjunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

CHINA

Nations urged to increase conservation

China calls on major countries to better support developing ones in biodiversity

By **YAN DONGJIE** in Sanya, Hainan and **HOU LIQIANG** in Beijing

As the world celebrated International Day for Biological Diversity on Wednesday, Huang Runqiu, China's minister of ecology and environment, called on developed countries to follow through on their commitments to provide enhanced support for biodiversity conservation efforts in developing nations.

He made the remarks at an event held to mark the occasion co-hosted by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the government of Hainan in Sanya, a coastal city in the island province.

Addressing the event, themed "Be Part of the Plan", Huang, who is also COP15 president, reiterated China's enduring commitment to contributing to global biodiversity governance by actively deepening international cooperation.

Officially known as the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, COP15 was held in two phases, with phase one taking place virtually in October 2021 in Kunming, Yunnan province, and phase two hosted in Montreal, Canada, in late 2022.

China's consistent endeavors in biodiversity conservation have brought fruitful results, Huang noted, citing the significant increase of the Yangtze finless porpoise population and the expansion of mangrove forests as examples.

The number of Yangtze finless porpoises increased to 1,249 in 2022, up 29.4 percent from 2017, he said.

With its mangrove forests growing to 29,200 hectares, "China has become one of the few countries in the world where the net area of mangroves is increasing," he stated.

The theme of the event this year highlighted the need to mobilize global participation for further biodiversity conservation and emphasized how important it is for governments and all sectors of society to take collaborative action, he stressed.

As the host of COP15, China demonstrated leadership in presiding over the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which is both ambitious and realistic and was reflected in a balanced manner, he said.

The framework, which has four long-term goals to be achieved by

2050 and 23 action-oriented global targets to be reached by 2030, seeks harmonious coexistence between humans and nature by 2050.

Global conservation of 30 percent of all land, seas and inland waters, and restoration of 30 percent of degraded ecosystems are among the goals set to be achieved by 2030.

China and contracting parties such as Cambodia, Canada and Chile, as well as international organizations, jointly launched an initiative to implement the framework, which aims to establish a voluntary cooperation platform for all stakeholders to maintain the political momentum of global biodiversity governance.

Huang called on all contracting parties to update their national biodiversity strategies and action plans with targets in the framework as benchmarks and actively mobilize resources to enhance biodiversity conservation.

"Developed countries must fulfill their commitments, significantly increase support for funding, technology and capacity building in developing countries, and promote comprehensive and balanced implementation of the framework," he said.

Addressing the event via a written letter, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the framework offers a pathway to reverse loss and restore biodiversity while creating jobs, building resilience and spurring sustainable development.

"Governments must lead. But as this year's International Day for Biological Diversity reminds us, we are all 'Part of the Plan' — we all have a role to play," he said.

Inger Andersen, executive director of the UN Environment Programme, said, "With only seven years to implement the framework, we must all act now. And we must continue to act until our web of life is secure."

"On this, the International Day for Biological Diversity, we celebrate China's leadership. And we call on every government, every business, every investor and every individual to do what they can to protect and restore nature, for the benefit of all humanity," she said.

Contact the writers at yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

Having a ball



People watch a lion dance performance at the 33rd Naizifang Temple Fair in Beijing's Chaoyang district on Wednesday. This four-day event, which began on Wednesday, features a variety of activities, including martial arts demonstrations, intangible cultural heritage exhibitions and creative markets. People can explore the temple fair, watch performances, taste local delicacies and experience folk customs. WANG FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Fujian shipping route gets goods to Taiwan faster

By **JIANG CHENGLONG** and **HU MEIDONG** in Fuzhou

A cargo ship loaded with various daily necessities departed from a port in Quanzhou, Fujian province, and headed to Kinmen in Taiwan, an example of how Taiwan residents are now able to receive goods purchased from the Chinese mainland via e-commerce platforms more quickly.

The ship departed from Weitou Port last Thursday, carrying goods valued at 3.33 million yuan (\$456,000) and weighing 78.7 metric tons, according to the Quanzhou Maritime Safety Administration.

The voyage marked the debut of the overseas trade container route between Jinjiang, where the port is located, and Kinmen.

The cargo mainly consisted of clothing, bags, outdoor products and supplies for mothers and babies. Upon arrival in Kinmen, the goods will be distributed to other parts of Taiwan via water and air transport.

Weitou is the closest point on the mainland to Kinmen, making it the shortest route, according to a news release by the Quanzhou MSA. The opening of this express route has allowed goods, which are bought via e-commerce platforms and destined for Kinmen, to clear customs in the Quanzhou Comprehensive Bonded Zone and be transported via the Weitou Port.

The route has made it possible for a parcel to be shipped to Taiwan from the mainland on the same day of ordering, which has

significantly reduced logistics and time costs for local businesses, the news release said.

It added that this also means that goods purchased by Taiwan compatriots from the mainland via e-commerce platforms can be delivered up to one day earlier than before.

Yang Yi, customs manager at Jinjiang Hangtuo E-commerce Co, said that before the express route was opened, the firm's goods had to be transported to Xiamen first, and then from Xiamen to Kinmen.

"With the opening of this route, our company now has more time to collect goods. Meanwhile, the delivery time for Taiwan customers is expected to be five hours earlier, or even up to a day earlier," she said.

"This can provide a better shopping experience for consumers and help increase our business volume," she added.

Hong Xiumian, deputy manager of the container department at Jinjiang Pacific Ports Development Co, said, "Weitou is the closest point on the mainland to Kinmen, with the fastest voyage time of approximately one and a half hours."

"The opening of this route will provide a fast logistics channel for cross-strait e-commerce. We will continue to increase the frequency of trips and develop Weitou Port into a distribution hub of cross-strait e-commerce goods for Taiwan."

Contact the writers at jiangchenglong@chinadaily.com.cn

New Shanghai policy seeks to encourage childbirth

By **ZHOU WENTING** in Shanghai zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Individuals struggling with fertility who seek assisted reproductive treatment in Shanghai will have their medical bills partly reimbursed by the city's public medical insurance fund starting on June 1, according to a recent policy encouraging people to have more children.

Of the 17 assisted reproductive treatment procedures offered in the city, 12 of them — including egg retrieval, sperm retrieval, screenings for high-quality sperm, artificial insemination, embryo culture and embryo transfer — will be included on the medical insurance list, according to the policy announced by the Shanghai Healthcare Security Administration on Wednesday.

This means individuals will only need to bear around 30 percent of the costs, which will make the treatments more affordable for those who are eager to become parents but are having difficulties with conception.

Shanghai will budget roughly 900 million yuan (\$124 million) to fund the reimbursements each year. There are approximately

100,000 people receiving assisted reproductive treatment in Shanghai annually, and each patient is expected to save an average of about 9,000 yuan in treatment costs, according to the bureau.

Sun Yun, vice-president of Renji Hospital affiliated with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, said that the incidence of infertility in China is increasing rapidly, and the proportion has risen from 2 percent in the 1950s to 18.5 percent.

"Today, one in every eight couples of childbearing age in the country needs to seek help from assisted reproductive procedures, making China the place where one-third of the world's total number of assisted reproductive treatments takes place," said Sun, an expert in reproductive medicine.

She also mentioned that the policy will be especially helpful for older women who are trying to conceive, as they must often get multiple treatments, which pushes up their medical bills.

"For those under age 30, usually 70 percent can carry a baby after using the embryo transfer treatment just once. But the proportion drops to 30 percent for those age 35 and above, and 15 percent for those

Today, one in every eight couples of childbearing age in the country needs to seek help from assisted reproductive procedures."

Sun Yun, vice-president of Renji Hospital affiliated with Shanghai Jiao Tong University

age 40 or above," Sun said.

Qian Wenwen, who gave birth to a boy four years ago at age 32 after undergoing in vitro fertilization, said that she had been thinking about whether to undergo the treatment again to have a second child. The new cost-saving policy has encouraged her to give it a try, she said.

"Last time, I got pregnant after three IVF trials, which cost me nearly 100,000 yuan. Now I may undergo more attempts before getting pregnant successfully, and that may generate more costly medical bills. The new policy will help," she said.

To promote long-term, balanced population development, assisted reproductive procedures are being covered by public medical insurance in an increasing number of regions across the country.

Jiangxi province recently announced that residents will be reimbursed for most assisted reproductive procedures beginning next month. Other provincial-level regions, including the autonomous regions of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, and the provinces of Gansu and Shandong, announced similar policies earlier this year.

Beijing welcomed such a policy in July last year, as did the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in November.

Some women said they believe that better gender equality in the workplace, as well as more family and social support systems related to childbirth, may increase their willingness to become mothers.

"Compared with men, women's cost in marriage and raising offspring is much higher. However, work-life balance shouldn't be a question posed to women solely. Men should be encouraged to bear more household duties," said Bao Yiqing, a 34-year-old single woman working in Shanghai.



Students observe various shell specimens as they study marine biodiversity at Ailun Bay Marine Ranch in Rongcheng, Shandong province, on Wednesday. LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chongqing aims to make friends with major intl cities

By **TAN YINGZI** and **DENG RUI** in Chongqing

Chongqing, a city on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River known for its bridges, is looking to develop a "friendship bridge" that connects it with the rest of the world.

The southwest China metropolis hosted a global meeting on Wednesday to promote cooperation with major international cities.

Themed "Sub-national cooperation for common development", the Chongqing International Friend-

ship Cities Cooperation Conference 2024 has attracted mayors and representatives from 48 cities in 31 countries, foreign diplomats from 14 countries and delegates from international organizations, multinational corporations and business associations, according to the Chongqing Foreign Affairs Office.

"We aim to build a platform for multilateral cooperation among international sister cities, promote practical collaboration and enhance mutual understanding among people," said Chongqing Mayor Hu

Henghua at the opening ceremony. "It (the conference) will undoubtedly expand new development opportunities for sister city relationships."

He said that the city hopes to enhance communications with friendship cities by increasing the number of flights to them, optimizing its investment environment, promoting people-to-people exchanges and deepening cooperation in new energy vehicle development, electronic data, the digital economy, and the processing of food and agricultural products.

Chongqing established its first international sister city relationship with Toulouse, France, in 1982. Since then, it has fostered such relationships with 56 provinces, states and cities in 37 countries.

During the two-day event, Chongqing plans to stage a series of activities to promote cooperation in trade, culture and ecology, including a meeting on clean energy with a United States delegation from Sacramento, California, and a promotional event with the mayors of cities in Silicon Valley.

Marilyn Libbers, vice-mayor of Morgan Hill, California, and president of the China Silicon Valley Association, is visiting Chongqing with five mayors from the region.

"We have many goals for our time in Chongqing this week. The China Silicon Valley Association will help your district expand into the US market, provide market research, help your enterprises enter into the international market and help enhance global competitiveness," she said during a speech at the ceremony.

Chongqing became the country's fourth municipality in 1997 after Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin. Covering 82,402 square kilometers, it is

the largest of the four.

Last year, Chongqing's GDP reached a record 3 trillion yuan (\$423 billion), up 6.1 percent year-on-year. It is the first city in western China to achieve a GDP that high.

With its position on the Yangtze, the city boasts key geographical advantages. It serves as a strategic point in national development programs in the western regions as well as the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, and it is also a connecting point for the Belt and Road Initiative and the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

Contact the writers at tanyingzi@chinadaily.com.cn

Editor's note: As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.



From left: Conservation workers recycle a cage net used to monitor the types and quantities of migrating fish in one of the two fish ladders at the Datengxia Gorge Water Conservancy Hydropower Project in Guiping, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in May last year. CAO YIMING / XINHUA A worker checks the hatching of fish eggs at a stocking station at Datengxia in Guiping. YU JING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Workers check the status of a rescued spotted longbarbel catfish at the Hongshui River Conservation Center for Rare Fish in May last year. CAO YIMING / XINHUA

By HOU LIQIANG in Beijing and SHI RUIPENG in Nanning

Zhang Jiajun, the assistant director of the Hongshui River Conservation Center for Rare Fish, is embracing his busiest time of the year.

Split into two shifts, he and his six-member team have to live in their office from March to July.

"We are especially busy in April and May. For several months, I am barely home for more than three days," the 33-year-old said.

The Hongshui is a major river in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and a main tributary to the Pearl River. After joining the Liujiang River in Guangxi, it is called the Qianjiang River, which powers the 1.6-gigawatt Datengxia Gorge Water Conservancy Hydropower Project in Guiping, Guangxi, that came online last year.

For Zhang, the busiest season means that he has to make sure the rare fish conservation center's stocks of fish fry are regularly fed in order for them to be ready for release back into their natural habitat.

The fish have to be fed every two to three hours, and it is intense work, with Zhang claiming it's the reason for his thinning hair. Stretching 660 kilometers, the Hongshui spans Guizhou province and Guangxi, but as it is located in the Pearl River Basin it falls under the jurisdiction of the Pearl River Water Resources Commission.

With the hydropower project creating tangible changes to the river ecosystem, the center, established in March last year, is focused on ensuring that the ecosystem not only survives but prospers in its new form.

The center is part of a series of measures introduced along with the hydropower project to protect the existing ecosystem.

Other measures include two enormous "fish ladders". They are a series of artificial structures — for example, connected artificial lakes and ponds that, depending on the flow of the water, allow fish to navigate the dammed sections of the river either upstream or downstream. In addition to the "ladders", there are also two fish stocking stations, four floating artificial fish habitats and one artificial spawning ground.

Altogether, the scale of the system outpaces similar ecosystem-protecting efforts in any other water conservancy projects, according to Guangxi Datengxia Gorge Water Conservancy Development Co, the project's builder and operator.

"While enhancing the management of water resources and the control of water-related disasters to benefit mankind, the construction of the Datengxia project has also fully considered the overall natural environment and the reproduction and thriving of aquatic organisms such as fish," said Deng Xunfa, chairman of the Datengxia company.

He said the company chose to not follow a proposal to build a high dam for the project, considering that such a dam would have had a significant adverse impact on the area's natural environment.

Launched in 2014, the project is a crucial part of the country's water network to control floods, facilitate shipping, generate electricity, provide irrigation and enhance the water supply. Its main structure was completed in September.

The Datengxia Reservoir has significantly enhanced the flood control capability of the city of Wuzhou, an industrial hub in Guangxi. After flowing past Datengxia, the Qianjiang joins the

Conservation protects fish stocks in Guangxi

Spinoff of Datengxia hydropower facility ensures against negative environmental impacts on rare species



An overhead view of the fish ladder along the Nanmu auxiliary dam of the Datengxia Gorge Water Conservancy Hydropower Project in Guiping, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. It is one of two fish ladders built along with the project. CAO YIMING / XINHUA

Yujiang River in urban Guiping, becomes the Xunjiang River, runs for more than 150 kilometers and passes through Wuzhou.

The joint operation of the Datengxia Reservoir and other reservoirs upstream will enable the city with a population of over 2.8 million to withstand once-in-100-year floods. Previously, Wuzhou was only capable of coping with a once-in-50-year deluge.

Thanks to the project, the Qianjiang can accommodate ships of up to 3,000 metric tons, compared with only 300 tons before the project was completed, the company said.

Aside from addressing the threat of drought for 80,400 hectares of farmland, and water shortage for almost 1.4 million people, the project can generate more than 6 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, which is equivalent to negating the use of 2 million tons of standard coal, reducing emissions of carbon dioxide by 5 million tons.

Because of the Datengxia project's huge store of water, it can release freshwater at a greater speed to combat saltwater intrusion in the Pearl River estuary, which threatens the water supply in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The time it

takes to divert the water for this task has been reduced from seven to 10 days, to only two to three days.

According to Zhang, the construction of the Hongshui center was entirely funded by the Datengxia company. Its operating costs are covered by all 10 of the cascade hydropower plants along the Hongshui-Qianjiang, of which the Datengxia project is the farthest downstream, as well as the Changzhou hydropower station just a dozen kilometers upstream of urban Wuzhou.

The center is the country's first institute for aquatic ecology protection established by the government, participated in by enterprises, funded by stakeholder businesses and managed by a commission.

"The center is a pioneer in the country in regard to its management concept and operation," he said.

The 11 hydropower plants provide 17 million yuan (\$2.4 million) annually to the center, which has 20 permanent employees and is also supported by at least 10 workers from third-party service providers, he said.

Aside from its breeding department, the center also has teams dedicated to monitoring and conserving the river's biological resources.

"In its short history, the center has already made some progress in biodiversity conservation," Zhang said.

He said, to date, the center has collected about 4,600 fish of rare species for protection, including spotted longbarbel catfish and white cloud mountain minnow, both of which are under second-class State protection, and *Acrossocheilus iridescens longipinnis*, a species of cyprinid fish.

Breakthroughs have been made in breeding white cloud mountain minnow and *Acrossocheilus iridescens longipinnis*, with 200 and 10,500 hatched, respectively, he said.

"We screen for species under threat first and then make them priorities of our breeding efforts," he said.

While the breeding technologies the center develops will be shared with its member institutions, Zhang said the fish fry it cultivates will be freed into natural water bodies.

The efforts aim to enrich populations of fish species and enhance fish biological diversity in the river basin, he said.

For the species that are endangered and with a very limited population, the center will keep some live fish and also freeze their germ cells, he noted.

"With these cells, there remains a possibility to recover the population of these species in the future, though that is not possible in the short term with current technologies," he said.

Fish ladders

A team of over 20 has been hard at work since February, monitoring Datengxia's two giant fish ladders to make sure that fish are migrating through them smoothly.

For nine months, the monitoring is being conducted weekly in six different ways, including implanting tracking tags, catching and releasing fish sample sets and video monitoring.

"In the case of big variations in water levels and flows, the monitoring will be further intensified," said Zhou Jiawei, deputy head of the Datengxia company's monitoring department, adding that the efforts aim to figure out how these variations will affect the operation of the fish ladders.

According to Zhou, since the monitoring started about three years ago on the fish ladder that runs through the project's auxiliary dam, 66 species of fish have been recorded.

While it's hard to get an annual total, monitors have found an increase in the number of fish that manage to go through the ladder on an annual basis, he noted.

Stretching for 5.4 km, the fish ladder on the auxiliary dam is the country's longest fish ladder that mimics the natural watercourse, according to the Datengxia company.

Dotted with artificial lakes and wetlands, the fish ladder has a lot of twists and turns with a large degree of variability in depth. It has two lanes, with one specifically designed for the flood season.

The velocity of water in the fish ladder, which can range from 0.35 to 1.2 cubic meters per second, and its depth are set based on the characteristics of the main species of fish in the river section and tests the company conducted on the swimming capabilities of these species.

Zhou said the monitoring on the fish ladder of the main dam, which began in September, has so far recorded 30 fish species.

Huang Jun, chief engineer at the Datengxia company, said it lowers the water levels in the reservoir each year from April to September to create favorable conditions for fish to spawn upstream.

Fish that lay drifting eggs usually spawn from June to July. Aside from ensuring the spawning grounds of such fish are not inundated, low water levels in the reservoir help create the hydrologic conditions suitable for them to spawn, he said.

Li Guoliang, head of operations management at the Datengxia company's fish conservation center, said the company has released 12 million fish fry of 13 species, many of which are bred by the company itself, into natural water courses 18 times since 2020.

The company has so far bred 15 species of fish, which cover most representative species in the river basin, he noted.

The breeding and releasing operation has effectively enriched fish resources in the basin in terms of both quantity and variety, Li said.

"According to our monitoring in the past three years, 66 species of fish have managed to pass through the fish ladders, and a gradual increase in variety has been observed. This has to some extent demonstrated that our efforts to breed and release fish and enhance fish conservation have yielded progress," he said.

Contact the writers at houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Diversion project to secure water supply in Beibu Gulf

By HOU LIQIANG in Beijing and SHI RUIPENG in Nanning

The massive water diversion project for the Beibu Gulf in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, is expected to meet the water needs of 14 million people when it is completed by the end of this decade.

Launched in September, and estimated to cost 28 billion yuan (\$3.87 billion), the project aims to relieve water shortages in the Beibu Gulf, which has experienced declining rainfall in recent years.

Aside from enhancing the water supply, the project will help reduce the overexploitation of water and improve the health of the local aquatic ecosystem, according to Guangxi's department of water resources.

Once completed, it is expected to divert an average of 805 million cubic meters of water

annually from the Yujiang River to Nanning, Beihai, Qinzhou and Yulin in Guangxi.

About 404 million cubic meters of the diverted water will be used to meet domestic demand, benefiting 14 million residents.

With a total length of almost 492 kilometers, the project will connect 12 rivers and 15 reservoirs.

The project was launched following a decline in precipitation in Guangxi's Beibu Gulf region. The precipitation the region received in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2021, was remarkably less than the annual average.

From October 2022 to September, the rainfall in the region decreased by 60 percent from the same period in normal years, and the amount of water that flowed into water courses in the region also went down by about 50 percent.

"In Nanning, the capital of Guangxi, over 90 percent of water consumed in the city is from the Yongjiang River, resulting in reliance on a single water source. Meanwhile, Qinzhou depends primarily on the Qianjiang River for water. It has no adequate emergency backup capacity for water supply," said Zhao Hui, an official with Guangxi's department of water resources.

The project will diversify the water sources for the two cities, enhancing the safety of their water supply, he noted.

Thanks to the project, the region will no longer have to obtain 154 million cubic m of water every year from the Nanliu and Qianjiang rivers, and annually exploit 199 million cubic m of groundwater, the department said. This will help improve the aquatic environment in the region and maintain the local ecology.



The massive water diversion project for the Beibu Gulf breaks ground in Hepu county of Beihai, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in September last year. ZHOU HUA / XINHUA

WORLD

AI talks open window for cooperation

Mechanism offers platform for China, US to contribute to global regulation

By YIFAN XU in Washington and YANG RAN in Beijing

The first intergovernmental dialogue between China and the US is a positive sign for collaboration between the two leading countries in artificial intelligence, experts say, which has established a new platform to draw on each other's governance experiences and contribute to global AI regulation.



This new dialogue mechanism not only meets the international community's urgent call for AI governance but also showcases the responsible roles both nations can play."

Zhu Rongsheng of Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy

Both sides labeled the meeting "constructive" after talks in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 14.

Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-American Studies in Washington, said there was a genuine sense of "constructiveness" at the AI meeting, "given that it opened a channel for communication on an issue that will require a degree of cooperation and coordination from both sides for a long time and given its importance."

"AI is not going away anywhere," Gupta said, adding it is "ground enough" to label the meeting as "constructive" as the two sides were able to take a preliminary step in establishing a framework for dialogue.

Zhu Rongsheng, an expert from Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, said that in an era of rising geopolitical competition, it is a significant step for the two leading AI powers to sit down and discuss global AI governance.

"This new dialogue mechanism not only meets the international community's urgent call for AI governance but also showcases the responsible roles both nations can play," Zhu said.

"AI-related technologies like deep-fakes and misinformation have shown their global impact. By collaborating, the US and China can enhance their regulatory frameworks to protect their citizens and offer guidance to other countries."

Responsible role

It is hoped the United States can work with China in this field to play a responsible role as major powers,

jointly establishing rules to protect the interests of the global majority, said Zhu, who is also a senior researcher at Meta-Strategy Institute, a think tank in Beijing.

Gupta said: "There's value in all the big players in the system coming and proposing common rules by which AI is regulated at the international level. And so that's also a useful area of dialogue within the framework of this conversation."

In the context of current China-US relations featuring a mix of competition and cooperation, this intergovernmental dialogue mechanism opens new communication channels that help both sides clearly express their AI-related security concerns and development goals, reducing misunderstandings and strategic misjudgments, Zhu said.

However, the US' suppression and containment of China regarding AI have increased the difficulties in bilateral dialogue in this field, he said.

On May 8, a bipartisan group of members from the US House of Representatives unveiled the Enhancing National Frameworks for Overseas Restriction of Critical Exports Act, which seeks to restrict the export of US AI systems to prevent "foreign rivalries" from using US AI technology.

Restricting exports

It also aims to restrict the export of the systems to foreign competitors and authorizes the US Department of Commerce to prohibit US people from working with foreigners to develop AI systems that allegedly pose a risk to US national security.

The act defines an AI system as "any software or hardware implementation of artificial intelligence, including artificial intelligence model weights and any numerical parameters associated with the AI implementation."

The previous gradual tightening of US restrictions on advanced chips and the consideration of licensing US cloud computing companies to provide advanced AI computing power to foreign customers — especially those in China — are measures to escalate export controls in AI.

Such actions are intended to "raise the fences," Gupta said.

Zhu said: "The US approach is like 'cutting off your nose to spite your face'."

"It might also be impractical because AI system encompasses multiple facets such as hardware, software and data. Banning software, in particular, is especially challenging."

"If the US continues to contain China in this manner, it risks losing potential users and partners for American AI products and services in China. This would not only hinder short-term profits but also pose potential long-term losses for the US."

Contact the writers at yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com.



UN officials and representatives from various countries taste tea at an International Tea Day event on Tuesday at the UN headquarters in New York. MINLU ZHANG / CHINA DAILY

Cultural benefits of tea celebrated at UN event

By MINLU ZHANG at the United Nations minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

A Chinese envoy to the United Nations said that tea is a driving force for economic and social development, as it helps eliminate poverty, improve health and living standards, promote urban and rural development and enhance women's empowerment.

"Tea is a vivid embodiment of the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Tea fields not only bring the joy of harvest to tea farmers but also form a sustainable ecological cycle by sequestering carbon, producing oxygen and conserving water and soil, perfectly interpreting the sustainable development concept of 'lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets,'" said Dai Bing, China's deputy permanent representative to the UN.

He gave the speech at an International Tea Day event on Tuesday, organized by China's Mission to the UN and the Xinyang Municipal Government of Henan province, at UN headquarters in New York.

Since 2005, tea-producing countries, including China, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Uganda and others, have celebrated International Tea Day. The UN General Assembly selected May 21 as International Tea Day in 2019.

"Tea is a messenger that promotes exchanges between

civilizations among various countries. For thousands of years, tea has traveled along the Silk Road and sea lanes to thousands of households in different countries, creating cultural connections," said Dai.

"We hope that everyone can feel the charm of tea and share the story of tea through tea appreciation and tea tasting, so that tea can become a link to enhance communication and friendship, help implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and jointly draw a beautiful picture of a community with a shared future for mankind," he said.

Sri Lanka, famous for its Ceylon tea, has a history of 300 years of tea drinking, said Mohan Pieris, Sri Lanka's permanent representative to the UN. He added that the tea history goes much further back in China, when Emperor Shennong accidentally discovered tea when leaves from a tree blew into his boiling water.

International Tea Day aims to "raise awareness about the impact of tea on workers and growers," "promoting fair trade and sustainable practices within the industry," said Pieris, noting that tea has a long history and significant cultural and economic importance worldwide. He emphasized that tea plays a vital role in rural development, poverty reduction, and food security in developing countries.

Drinking tea promotes social interaction and facilitates conversation, providing opportunities for people to come together and fosters inclusivity within the community, Pieris said.

Sharing a cup of tea encourages egalitarianism, cultural exchange and mutual learning. Tea drinking can be an educational experience where participants learn about different traditions and rituals.

Tea also reduces stress, promotes relaxation and serves as a symbol of hospitality and respect, he continued. Unlike coffee, tea gatherings offer a setting conducive to resolving conflicts and strengthening community bonds, contributing to a shared sense of identity, Pieris said.

"You see in Chinese culture, in the spring, the jasmine tea is the best. In summer, we drink green tea. In autumn and winter, we drink black tea," Dai told UN employees as they were trying the tea at the event.

A whole process of preparing a cup of tea includes boiling the water, warming the teapot and cup, measuring the tea, pouring the water and steeping the tea, removing the tea leaves and serving.

Ernest Rwamucyo, Rwanda's permanent representative to the UN, described his whole tea drinking experience as "fabulous".

The tea feels soothing, and especially "the process of making the tea, the art, preparing the tea is just so enchanting," he told China Daily.

"By the time you take the tea, you really feel that way, you're calming down. It was very nice."

It was the first time the ambassador had witnessed the tea-preparation process, which he said was "very special".

"The single act of preparing a cup of tea can be an act of kindness, care and connection in the way of the sharing of content and concepts," said Li Junhua, UN under-secretary-general for economic and social affairs. He also emphasized the tea industry's role in job creation, empowering women and improving social conditions.

The annual global tea production has exceeded \$18 billion, and the trade volume has reached \$9.8 billion. It is an important source of income for low-income and emerging economies, Li said.

Xu Haoliang, UN under-secretary-general and associate administrator of the UN Development Programme, along with permanent representatives and deputy representatives from more than 50 countries, including Pakistan, France, Switzerland, Austria, Indonesia, Kuwait, Ethiopia, Guyana, and Morocco, participated in the event.

During the event, guests attended tea ceremonies, along with paper cutting, dough modeling and shadow puppet performances and participated in a virtual reality experience of traveling through the tea mountains of Xinyang.

Scholar: West's protectionism harms global economy

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

The US-led West is building protectionist "walls" one after another across the world, causing great damage to the global economy, a Chinese strategic scholar has said.

"More importantly, developing countries and emerging economies, as a result, have suffered great impact on their own development paths," said Yang Mingjie, president of China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations.

In an interview with China Daily, Yang expressed concerns over the West's roles that are giving rise to fragmentation of the international economic landscape, making global security increasingly bloc-based and widening disparity in science and technology sectors.

Hence, the steady recovery of emerging market countries after the COVID-19 pandemic "has seen negative impact by the developed countries, adding to their hardship in the recovery process", he said.

Citing BRICS as an example, he said some Western countries had stepped up efforts to contain the grouping as "they view the development of BRICS countries as a challenge to their global economic hegemony".

Noting the buzzword "geopolitical distance", he said some major economies have begun shortening the distance of their own supply chain and taking businesses back

to their homelands, relying more on outsourcing to trustworthy allies.

"This has posed greater challenges to developing countries, especially the less developed ones, and has been holding back efforts that serve globalization, such as the Belt and Road Initiative."

He said the trend of fragmentation is likely to persist in the short term, as "Western countries such as the United States still prefer basing their economic development on major countries' competition".

Speaking about the increasingly bloc-based security landscape, Yang warned Western countries against building their "arsenal of democracies".

China's neighborhood has seen a buildup of US-led trilateral alliances or similar arrangements, such as the ones among the US, Japan and South Korea, and among the US, Japan and the Philippines, he said, adding that the AUKUS bloc is also expanding its reach in military science and technology sectors.

"What is taking shape is a US-led bloc that is based on a wider range of areas and sectors, and is more live combat oriented. The military industries' share in the Western economy is on the rise, and the negative effect on the world is gradually unfolding."

Implementing consensus

When asked about China-US relations, Yang said the two

Washington has regarded China as a major competitor ... If this perception is not fundamentally corrected, the US will remain self-contradictory on many specific issues, including those related to its strategies."



Yang Mingjie, president of China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations in Beijing

countries are now working at all levels in implementing the consensus reached at the San Francisco summit, "but the biggest problem is the strategic perception of one another."

"Washington has regarded China as a major competitor," he said.

"If this perception is not fundamentally corrected, the US will remain self-contradictory on many specific issues, including those related to its strategies."

"Sino-US relations are still in a long-term, arduous phase of complexity."

As an expert on the Taiwan question, Yang had previously served as director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Taiwan Studies.

"There are always some people or groups in the US seeking to exploit the Taiwan question to contain and bargain with China," he said. "What will China do? We will not make concessions on the bottom line or the redline."

Despite the current turbulent cross-strait relations, China is maintaining its strategic determination and the ties have shown some positive signs, he said about the recent policy dividends released by the Chinese mainland to the island, and increasing cultural exchanges.

While the majority across the Strait calls for dialogue and integration, the Democratic Progressive Party constantly creates obstacles and stirs up new troubles, he said.

Recently, the US publicly distorted the landmark Resolution 2758 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1971 on the one-China principle, claiming the resolution does not preclude Taiwan's participation in the UN system and other multilateral forums, he said.

"The one-China principle is a universal consensus," Yang said. "There is little support from the international community to hollowing out or misinterpreting the resolution."

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

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

twitter.com/chinadaily

facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

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

WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108

529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

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

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

471 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

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

WORLD

Palestine state recognized by European trio

Israel recalls envoys to Spain, Norway and Ireland as UNRWA suspends aid in Rafah

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
jan@chinadailyapac.com

The recognition of the state of Palestine by more European countries points to wider support for a two-state solution to the Middle East crisis, though Israel, in defiance, continues to block aid to people in Gaza while continuing its bombings.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Wednesday that Spain will recognize Palestinian statehood, Xinhua News Agency reported.

On the same day, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store and Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris also said their respective countries "will recognize a Palestinian state".

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates welcomed Norway, Spain and Ireland's recognition of the state of Palestine, Wafa News Agency reported.

In a statement, it said that with this "important step", these countries "once again showed their firm commitment to the two-state solution and achieving long-awaited justice for the Palestinian people".

It also stressed that the recognitions "come in line with international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions", which, in turn,

"will contribute positively to all international efforts aimed at ending the illegal Israeli occupation and achieving peace and stability in the region".

Israel said immediately that it was recalling its envoys to Dublin, Oslo and Madrid for "urgent consultations" and also summoned the three European ambassadors for a rebuke.

Foreign Minister Israel Katz charged that "the twisted step of these countries is an injustice to the memory of the 7/10 victims".

"They decided to award a gold medal to the murderers and rapists of Hamas."

Meanwhile, the Palestinian death toll from Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip has surpassed 35,000 while injuring more than 79,000 since the deadly Hamas attack on Oct 7 that left more than 1,200 Israelis dead and about 200 others held hostage, health authorities in the Palestinian enclave said on Monday.

China always firmly supports the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate national rights, supports the two-state solution and is one of the first countries to recognize the state of Palestine, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday. China called for an immediate



Palestinians evacuate Kamal Adwan Hospital following an Israeli strike, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. OSAMA ABU RABEE / REUTERS

cease-fire to end the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and return to the right track of political settlement to the Palestinian issue based on the two-state solution as soon as possible, Wang said.

China will continue to work with the international community to play a constructive role to put an early end to the Palestine-Israel conflict and bring a comprehensive, just and enduring solution to the Palestinian issue, he said.

Israel's unrelenting attacks in Gaza have forced the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, to suspend food distribution in Rafah, as other agencies warned of a lack of urgent medical supplies.

Lack of supplies

In a post on X on Tuesday, the UNRWA blamed the ongoing military operation in eastern Rafah for

the insecurity there, the lack of supplies, and making its distribution center and warehouse "inaccessible" amid the continued displacement of people from the city.

"The Israeli ground offensive continues to expand, particularly in the southern regions of Gaza City and eastern Rafah, notably around the Karem Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) and Rafah crossing," the UNRWA said in its latest situation report.

It noted that most UNRWA shelters in Rafah "have been vacated, with internally displaced people moving to Khan Younis and Deir Al Balah".

The report said overall displacement numbers correlate with UNRWA registration figures in the new locations. For example, nearly 150,000 people have registered for essential services with the UNRWA in Khan Younis alone in the last 10 days, according to the UNRWA.

Israel's Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, or COGAT, which implements the government's civilian policy within the territories of Judea and Samaria and also regarding the Gaza Strip, contested the UNRWA's claims.

COGAT said on its X account that 14 trucks of aid were transferred into Gaza and more than 569 metric tons of humanitarian assistance has been delivered to Gaza for further distribution by humanitarian partners.

Food supply is not the only issue plaguing Gaza. World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus appealed to Israel on Tuesday to lift the blockade on medical supplies into Gaza, saying approximately 700 seriously ill patients were stuck in a "war zone".

Zhou Jin in Beijing and agencies contributed to this story.

China slams US claims of 'overcapacity'

By WANG QINGYUN
wangqingyun@chinadaily.com.cn

The accusation made by the United States of China's "overcapacity" in the new energy sector is a "complete deviation from facts", China said, slamming the US for practicing protectionism.

"China's capacity in the new energy industry is an advanced capacity urgently needed by the green transition of the world economy. It's not overcapacity," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday.

Wang made the comments at a regular news conference, dismissing US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's remarks.

Yellen said in Germany on Tuesday that China's industrial capacity is "leading to production that significantly exceeds global demand in key sectors, including electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and solar," and that this will be a focus on the Group of Seven meetings in Italy this week.

In response, Wang said the US accusation is protectionist in nature.

If overcapacity means an increase in exports, "don't the large annual exports of soybeans, planes and natural gas by the US constitute overcapacity?" he said.

Setting up barriers

The US is trying to coerce G7 member countries into setting up barriers against China's new energy products under the pretext of "overcapacity", Wang said.

"This goes against the trend of openness and win-win cooperation, not only harming the interests of consumers in related countries, but also disrupting and undermining the global green transition," the spokesman said.

Wang called on the US to abandon protectionism to better address climate change.

The US should not ask China to take on more responsibility to respond to climate change on the one hand, while engaging in protectionism and stopping the world from benefiting from China's green products on the other, he said.

The growth of China's new energy sector is a result of its companies' technological development and open competition, Wang said, adding that China hopes to deepen supply chain cooperation with all other countries.

"We hope all countries will stick to open cooperation and reject protectionism," he said.



A protester with red stained hands holds up banners saying "War Criminal" as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks in Washington, DC, on Tuesday. CELAL GUNES / GETTY IMAGES

Protesters interrupt Blinken in Senate

WASHINGTON — In wide-ranging testimony before the Senate on Tuesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken denounced the chief prosecutor of the world's top war crimes court for seeking the arrest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

He also said that despite offering condolences for the death of Iran's president, it did not change that leader's history of repression.

Speaking to senators about President Joe Biden administration's foreign affairs budget proposal, Blinken was repeatedly interrupted by protesters condemning US policy toward its ally Israel and its fighting against Hamas in Gaza.

The chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relations and Senate Appropri-

ations committees halted the hearings at least six times while Blinken was delivering his opening statements, as demonstrators stood up to shout their opposition to the administration's position and accused him of being a "war criminal" and being responsible for a "genocide" against the Palestinian people.

Several silent protesters held up their hands, stained with red paint or dye, behind Blinken during his appearances.

In his remarks and response to questions from senators, Blinken followed Biden and other administration officials in condemning the International Criminal Court's prosecutor for seeking arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant over

actions taken during their seven-month conflict in Gaza.

Blinken repeated the position that the tribunal, which Israel and the United States do not recognize, does not have jurisdiction and that it was "extremely wrongheaded" for the prosecutor to equate the Israeli officials with the Hamas leaders that he is also seeking to indict.

Senate Republicans have threatened sanctions against ICC personnel over the decision, but the administration has not yet taken a stand. Blinken, however, said the administration would work with lawmakers to come up with an appropriate response, should one be needed.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

AI safety, innovation highlighted at Seoul meeting

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong
kelly@chinadailyapac.com

Dozens of countries and companies made new commitments at an AI summit in Seoul on AI safety, innovation and inclusivity.

Co-hosted by South Korea and the United Kingdom, the two-day AI Seoul Summit ended on Wednesday, with a virtual leaders' session held on day one and an in-person ministers' session on the second day. It was a follow-up of the inaugural AI Safety Summit

hosted by the UK at Bletchley Park last November.

Addressing the summit, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said AI systems are still being deployed with little oversight or accountability.

"Let us build innovative and inclusive global governance tools of AI — with human rights, human dignity, and human agency front and center," he said.

During the leaders' session co-chaired by South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and UK Prime

Minister Rishi Sunak, the Seoul Declaration for safe, innovative and inclusive AI was adopted by Australia, Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Ripple effect

Noting the emergence of "generative AI" such as ChatGPT, Yoon said the rapid development of the technology will have a huge ripple effect on human society.

Chinese AI company Zhipu AI, together with 15 companies from the US, the Middle East and Europe, have agreed to the Frontier AI Safety Commitments to develop AI safely.

"For AI technology to be used inclusively to solve global challenges in various fields for humanity rather than being subordinated to a few organizations and companies, the technology must be shared and distributed equitably," Yang Yoon-seok, an assistant professor of computer science at the

State University of New York, Korea, said.

Yang told China Daily that AI can bring safety and ethical risks, the unequal distribution of development profits, and the potential misuse of war weapons, while also hoping that AI can improve human lives and solve global problems.

"These issues require stakeholders to come together and jointly discuss the commitment to develop balanced, fair, effective and controllable governance policies," Yang said.

A spokesperson for the Pacific Basin Economic Council in Hong Kong told China Daily that the

organization supports the commitments of leading global AI companies at the event, as it is an excellent starting point to build further trust between the private and public sectors.

"In the absence of suitable cross-border multilaterally agreed regulation ... these voluntary commitments are an interim solution along the path in getting there," the spokesperson said.

However, there were also doubts as the Seoul event saw fewer participating countries than the AI Safety Summit in the UK. Major tech companies such as Tesla and OpenAI did not send their CEOs to attend the meeting.

Shaken passengers arrive in Singapore

SINGAPORE — More than 140 passengers and crew members from a Singapore Airlines flight hit by heavy turbulence that left dozens injured and one dead finally reached Singapore on a relief flight on Wednesday morning after an emergency landing in Bangkok.

The scheduled London-Singapore Flight 321 on a Boeing 777-300ER plane diverted to Bangkok after the plane was buffeted by turbulence that flung passengers and crew around the cabin, slamming some into the ceiling.

A 73-year-old British passenger died of a suspected heart attack, and at least 30 people were injured.

"I saw people from across the aisle going completely horizontal, hitting the ceiling and landing back down, in, like really awkward positions. People, like, getting massive gashes in the head, concussions," Dzafran Azmir, a 28-year-old student onboard the flight, told Reuters after arriving in Singapore.

Photographs from the interior of the plane showed gashes in the overhead cabin panels, oxygen masks and panels hanging from the ceiling and luggage strewn around. A passenger said some people's heads had slammed into the lights above the seats and broken the panels.

Singapore Airlines took 131 pas-

sengers and 12 crew members on the relief flight from Bangkok, which reached Singapore just before 5 am. There were 211 passengers, including many Australians, British and Singaporeans, and 18 crew members onboard the original flight. The injured and their families remained in Bangkok.

Kittipong Kittikachorn, general manager of Suvarnabhumi Airport, said on Tuesday that seven people were critically injured.

"On behalf of Singapore Airlines, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of the deceased," Singapore Airlines CEO Goh Choon Phong said in a video message.

Officers from Singapore's Trans-

port Safety Investigation Bureau arrived in Bangkok on Tuesday night, Singapore's Transport Minister Chee Hong Tat said.

As the incident involves a US company, Boeing, which makes the 777-300ER aircraft, the US National Transportation Safety Board would be sending an accredited representative and four technical advisers to support the investigation, he said.

The plane encountered sudden extreme turbulence, Goh said, and the pilot then declared a medical emergency and diverted to Bangkok.

Aircraft tracking provider Flight-radar 24 said the flight encountered "a rapid change in vertical rate, consistent with a sudden turbulence event", based on flight tracking data.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Piped network



Residents fill their containers with drinking water from a municipal tanker on a hot summer day in New Delhi, India, on Tuesday. A red alert was issued for many states of India as heat wave conditions are most likely to prevail in the next five days, according to the Indian Meteorological Department on Wednesday. ADNAN ABDI / REUTERS

BUSINESS

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

HIGHER GROUND

Chinese tech giants slash LLM prices

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Competition in China's artificial intelligence-powered large language model sector is intensifying as leading Chinese tech companies have announced drastic price reductions on major LLM products, leading to a growing price war, industry experts said.

They added the application of generative AI is expected to see speedy growth along with technological advances in LLMs. They highlighted that the new round of price cuts will accelerate the commercial use and popularization of AI technology, as well as bolster and upgrade industrial development.

Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing unit of Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, announced on Tuesday a price reduction of 97 percent on its Qwen-Long LLM, which is equivalent to the performance of US company OpenAI's GPT-4 model.

The model, which supports up to 10 million tokens of long text input, now only costs about one-400th of the GPT-4 price. A token is the smallest unit into which text data can be broken down for an AI model to process.

The steep price cuts cover nine of Alibaba's self-developed LLMs known as Tongyi Qianwen. Liu Weiguang, president of public cloud business at Alibaba Cloud Intelligence, said the purpose of slashing prices this time is to speed up the application of AI models in the domestic market.

Hours after Alibaba Cloud's announcement, Chinese tech heavyweight Baidu Inc said its LLMs — including Ernie Speed and Ernie Lite, both launched earlier this year — are now available free of charge for all enterprise users. Last week, ByteDance announced that the main model of its Doubao LLMs will be priced 99.3 percent lower than the industry average for business users.

Chinese AI firm iFlytek said on Wednesday some versions of its SparkDesk LLM are free, or five times cheaper than similar products from competitors. Tencent Holdings also announced price cuts on its Hunyuan LLMs, and the Hunyuan-lite model is available for free from Wednesday.

Chinese LLM companies have already made great progress in optimizing algorithms and improving computing power, and are able to provide AI-powered LLM services at a lower cost, said Wang Peng, a

researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences.

Wang said the substantial price reductions for LLMs will not only lower the threshold for enterprises to adopt AI technology, but also promote their digital transformation, adding that the application of AI technology will help enterprises improve operational efficiency and reduce costs, and further enrich the ecosystem of AI applications.

Experts said Chinese LLM developers have primarily targeted businesses for monetizing their investments in AI models, although some have begun targeting individual users who need to pay for using advanced chatbot services.

Alibaba said earlier this month that its LLMs have been adopted by more than 90,000 corporate clients in a wide range of industries, one month after Baidu said its enterprise-level LLM platform Qianfan had been used by 85,000 business users.

Foreign AI model developers are also reducing their LLM prices. OpenAI has slashed prices on its products four times since the beginning of 2023, and the recently unveiled GPT-4o is 50 percent cheaper than the GPT-4 Turbo.

"The technological strengths, application scenarios and training costs of AI models vary among different LLM companies, which leads to differences in pricing tactics," said Zou Debao, deputy general manager of AI and big data research at market research firm CCID Consulting.

Zou said the price war will likely squeeze profit margins of some LLM startups, while large Chinese LLM developers will further consolidate their dominant positions, expand market share and grab more clients amid increasingly fierce competition.

Official data showed that the number of China's self-developed LLMs ranks second in the world, and over 100 LLMs with more than 1 billion parameters each have been launched in the country.

Zhao Gang, head of CIO Manage, a Beijing-based digital economy market consultancy, said the continuous increase in LLM users and expansion of application scenarios will be conducive to improving the performance of LLMs.

The significant AI model price cuts will give a boost to the rapid growth of the LLM sector, and motivate companies to beef up innovation efforts to roll out more LLMs for commercial applications, Zhao said.



An employee works at a chip maker in Huaian, Jiangsu province. ZHAO QIRUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

More proactive reforms to invigorate growth

Tech innovation and industrial transformation to be major focus

By OUYANG SHIJIA
ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

China is set to make further moves to deepen economic structural reforms in fields such as technological innovation and industrial transformation, in a bid to foster new quality productive forces and advance Chinese modernization, experts said on Wednesday.

Experts said the move came as the country scrambles to tackle issues hindering the steady economic growth and accelerate growth model changes, which will help create new growth drivers, stimulate market vitality and inject strong impetus into the world's second-largest economy.

Their remarks came after the country's top economic regulator said the country will speed up the implementation of deepening reform of the economic structure and build a high-level socialist market economic system.

In an article published last week in Qiushi Journal, the flagship magazine of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, the National Development and Reform Commission said the focus will be placed on fields including the building of a high-standard market system, removing obstacles and difficulties in the development

of new quality productive forces, building a higher-level open economic system, intensifying reform efforts in areas relative to people's livelihoods and strengthening economic security capabilities.

"The key tasks mapped out in the article showcase the country's strong commitment to fostering high-quality development, especially in fields including environmental protection, improving people's well-being and boosting economic security," said Liu Dian, a researcher at the China Institute of Fudan University.

As the broader economy is still facing pressures from still-weak demand and confidence, Liu said the reform efforts will significantly stimulate endogenous dynamics through institutional innovation, break barriers hindering smooth economic circulation and bolster market confidence.

According to a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held in late April, the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee to be held in Beijing in July will focus on further deepening reforms and promoting the modernization of China amid challenges at home and complexities abroad.

Liu said he believes the policy focus will remain on enhancing technological innovation, driving industrial transformation and deepening fiscal and tax system reforms.

"Technological innovation serves as the growth engine of the new development stage and is crucial for enhancing national competitiveness," he said. "I expect to see increas-

ing support for basic research and making breakthroughs in key technologies, along with reforms in incentive mechanisms."

On the industrial transformation side, he said reforms may involve upgrading traditional industries, supporting emerging sectors as well as developing the digital economy, intelligent manufacturing and green economy. Liu added that fiscal system reforms may focus on optimizing the tax system, reducing burdens on enterprises, optimizing the expenditure structure, promoting fairness and enhancing market vitality.

His views were echoed by Liu Xueyan, director of the Macroeconomic Situation Research Office at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, who said the July meeting will focus on reforms in fields like advancing Chinese modernization, boosting the digital economy and fostering new quality productive forces.

She said key topics may also include boosting the development of the private sector, building a unified national market, and enhancing financial system reforms and reforms related to expanding opening-up.

Looking ahead, Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said more efforts should be made to cultivate new quality productive forces and optimize the business environment.

"It is advisable for the government to increase financial support, offer tax incentives to enhance technological innovation and promote industrial upgrading," Wang said.

Officials rip asunder claims of overcapacity

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The claim that high volumes of exports by China's new energy industries indicate overcapacity is baseless and goes against both common sense and the available evidence, said Chinese government officials and market watchers.

Dismissing some Western countries' "China overcapacity" narrative, Ding Weishun, deputy director of the department of policy research at the Ministry of Commerce, said that global trade develops from different nations' comparative industrial advantages, shaped by factors like resource endowment, technological accumulation and development trajectories.

According to market economic principles, in the context of economic globalization, supply and demand issues should be considered globally rather than solely within one country, said Ding. The modern global economy has various local economies intertwined to form an indivisible whole where production and consumption are global, requiring supply and demand to match and adjustments on a worldwide scale, he said.

For instance, developed countries such as the United States, Germany and Japan have long exported a large share of their products worldwide. About 80 percent of US-made chips are exported, 50 percent of Japanese cars are sold overseas, and nearly 80 percent of Germany's auto output is shipped to foreign markets, data from the Commerce Ministry showed. In contrast, China's new energy vehicle exports constituted only about 12.7 percent of its total production in 2023.

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

Liu Qian, associate dean of the Emerging Markets Institute, Beijing Normal University, said that from a global market perspective, confining the balance of supply and demand within a single country undermines the principles of economic globalization.

Equating a country's export of advantageous products to "overcapacity" essentially denies the objectivity of comparative advantages and the rationality of international division of labor, said Liu.

Similar views were expressed by Chen Wenling, chief economist at the Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges. "Currently, there is no universally accepted standard or method for assessing 'overcapacity' among countries worldwide."

Chen said that measuring overcapacity should not be simply based on capacity utilization rates. It requires considering a variety of factors including the characteristics of the industry, market cycles, product prices, corporate profitability and growth potential, as well as a comprehensive analysis that includes both domestic and international markets.

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

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

Zhao Feng, president of SAIC Motor-CP Co Ltd, a joint venture founded by Chinese automaker SAIC Motor Corp and Thailand's CP Group, said the company will produce 12,000 electric vehicles in its factory in Chonburi province, Thailand, this year.

"These moves have brought competition in the Southeast Asian country, giving Thai consumers more choices," said Zhao, adding the local job market and the EV industry chain can also be boosted by Chinese investment in Thailand.



Participants learn about Baidu's products at the recent Create 2024 Baidu AI Developer Conference held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Coca-Cola bottler starts work on plant

The construction of a new factory of Swire Coca-Cola Ltd, a bottler of Coca-Cola, with an investment of 1.25 billion yuan (\$175.89 million), started Tuesday in South China's economic powerhouse province of Guangdong. Covering an area of some 128,000 square meters, the company's new factory will boast 11 new beverage production lines, multi-tier warehouses and supporting facilities, with an expected increase in annual production capacity of about 66 percent compared to the current level of the

company's Guangdong branch.

E-tail sales up 11.5% in January-April period

China's online retail sales saw steady expansion in the first four months, with emerging growth forces continuing to boost consumption, official data showed on Tuesday. The country's online retail sales rose 11.5 percent year-on-year to 4.41 trillion yuan (\$620.52 billion) during the period, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Solar products made in SE Asia targeted

By LIU YUKUN
liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

Solar products made by Chinese companies' overseas units or joint ventures are the target of a new round of US investigation into allegations that imports from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam are unfairly subsidized and priced low.

Several US solar product makers formally sought the probe last month, stating tariffs are needed for imports of such goods. Given that Chinese solar companies are increasingly setting up production facilities in Southeast Asia, experts said the probe is targeting Chinese imports in response to petitions of US manufacturers who are reportedly struggling from fiercer market competition.

However, as China is diversifying its exports and the US solar industry is heavily relying on imports from Southeast Asia, any potential tariffs will hurt the consumers of such products in the United States more than the producers. The burden of such tariffs will likely pass on to US solar project developers as well as consumers at large, experts said.

"China's PV (photovoltaic) industry has a significant advantage in technology, prices and (after-sales) service, thanks to years of large-scale

development and technological iterations. The US competitors are worried that China's PV industry will quickly dominate the global market, leaving little space for them," said Lin Boqiang, the head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

"Southeast Asia is a major source of imports for the US. If tariffs are imposed, they would hurt the US more as developers of solar projects as well as consumers may face higher payments on electricity amid US' decarbonization of its power sector," Lin said.

In 2023, the top three countries from which the US imported PV cells were Malaysia (\$320 million), South Korea (\$130 million) and Vietnam (\$90 million). Imports from Southeast Asian countries totaled \$460 million, accounting for 70 percent of the total US imports of PV cells, data from the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electric Products showed.

In 2023, PV module imports into the US from Southeast Asian countries were worth \$12.51 billion, making up 82.7 percent of the total import value.

"It's hard for the US to find any substitutes to solar products import-

ed either from Southeast Asia or China. Its upstream industrial chain is relatively weak and is seeking new producers from countries such as Mexico and India. The investigation and tariffs are more of a method to win more time," Lin said.

A majority of economies globally are offering financial support to solar companies at an early stage of development — and the US is no exception in this context.

Last year, the US Department of Commerce claimed certain Chinese producers were shipping their solar products through Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam for minor processing in an attempt to avoid paying antidumping and countervailing duties.

"Chinese photovoltaic companies have significantly expanded internationally in recent years. Through joint ventures, they produce related products in Southeast Asian countries. If tariffs are imposed, the cost of these products entering the US market would increase. The move will not only affect Chinese companies but also hurt local firms and international joint ventures in the area that also export solar products to the US," said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

BUSINESS

De Beers' prospects in nation glittering bright

Diamond giant expects surge in middle income group in country

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

Selecting China for the most new store launches in its global portfolio, London-based diamond company De Beers Group will open 10 more stores in the country due to China's resilient economy, growing middle-income group and huge business potential, said its top executive.

"Today... China is the second most important market in the world (only after the United States). It's been growing extremely strong over the last 25 years, but we have to be even more ambitious. China's growing so fast that we hope that China can become an even more important destination for diamonds than it is today," said Al Cook, CEO of De Beers Group.

Having more diamond retail venues in China than in any other country on earth, Cook said the group plans to further its expansion plan by opening more than 10 stores within the next few years in key growth cities in the country.

"For us, China is the number one country for our De Beers Jewellers... We really want to expand our presence in China, expand the number of our stores and expand the number of people who work for De Beers in China to create more jobs, also, and even more importantly, create more and more customers," Cook said.

Focusing on the exploration, mining, marketing and retailing of diamonds, De Beers Group produces

about one-third of the world's diamonds, and it currently operates 40 stores around the world, with 25 operating in China, the CEO added.

De Beers Group began to explore the China market in 2000 with local Chinese retailers and opened its first store in the country in Beijing in 2011.

"We are strong believers and strong supporters of the Chinese economy, and that is why we plan to invest more and more in China going forward," explained Cook.

Cook added that his confidence came from China's buoyant economic growth and the ensuing great demand for diamond products from Chinese consumers.

"China is a very important market for luxury products and for diamonds. Despite economic challenges, despite everything else, we find we know two things: China is resilient and we know that diamonds are resilient as well. Now we expect the Chinese economy will continue to grow," said Cook.

"Never in the course of human history has an economy grown like China's and never in the course of human history have we seen it in the economy the size of China's continuing to grow," he added.

Over the past two decades, China has grown into a major diamond market, with its diamond demand surging from \$841 million in 2000 to some \$8.8 billion in 2022. During the same period, its market share has grown from 1.5 percent in 2000 to 10.2 percent of the global diamond market, said the De Beers Diamond Insight Report 2023.

Major Chinese retailers still have full confidence in the natural diamond market in the year 2024.

"While it will take some time for natural diamonds to return to the pre-COVID level, the sector is believed to move forward to a positive direction," David Kellie, CEO of the Natural Diamond Council, was quoted by local Shanghai news portal ThePaper.cn as saying.

The De Beers report projected China's middle-income group will grow from about half of the population to some two-thirds by 2030, which will bring about a market potential of 140 billion yuan (\$19.3 billion) for diamond consumption.

"Our research shows natural diamonds are the third most desired gift by Chinese women, after only gold and holidays abroad," said Cook.

According to Cook, China and Shanghai, in particular, are extremely important for the group. Having its China headquarters in Shanghai, the city is home to five De Beers Jewellers stores, the most among all cities worldwide.

"Shanghai really represents the epitome of the center of Chinese business. Shanghai is such an important city in China. It's really such a center for business. It brings together all the influences of China, both the history and the future. I find that whenever I visit Shanghai, it's changed so much and it represents the future. It represents the change in China," Cook said.

"We anticipate investing in China and building more and more new stores so that we can bring the magic of De Beers Jewellers to more and more people," he added.

Online
See more
by scanning
the code.



Silver economy reshaping biz strategies

By ZHUANG QIANG
and PANG BO

Hao Yuling, a 64-year-old retiree in Beijing, had an unforgettable 10-day group trip in September 2003 to five European countries.

After arriving in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, she and her fellow travelers toured a windmill village and stayed at a ship museum hotel, followed by a boat trip to explore the whole city the next day.

Then from Germany, she arrived in Paris, visiting the Eiffel Tower, Cathedral of Notre Dame, Louvre Museum and Paris Opera House. Her trip, organized by Beijing-based Hongsong, ended after visiting the other Benelux countries.

"It was unforgettable," she said. "More importantly, I made friends with my travel companions — from complete strangers at the start to a deep friendship now, making my life richer," she added.

Fang Minghui, vice-president of Hongsong Group, the largest senior-focused service platform for retirees in China, said that compared with other tours, their study/travel services focus on study tours, letting the elderly learn from their sojourns and have more fun.

During the past six months, nearly 10,000 seniors have participated in Hongsong's offline study tours, touring five European countries and 12 Chinese cities.

He Jia, co-founder of Hongsong, said the retirees, part of a growing graying demographic, need more focused care and consideration as official data showed that by the end of last year, the country's population aged 60 and over numbered 296 million, accounting for 21.1 percent of the total population.

By end-2023, there were over 490,000 business entities engaged in the eldercare business in China, focusing on home care, rehabilitation, adult education, leisure and entertainment, said He Zhifang, a researcher from Hunan University of Technology and Business.

However, Fang said, study tour services for seniors face more diffi-



Tourists pose for photographs at a scenic spot in Wuyuan, Jiangxi province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

culties, as traditional sightseeing tourism can no longer meet the growing needs of the elderly in the new era.

He Jia said the State Council — the nation's Cabinet — hosted an executive meeting on Jan 5, calling for expanding the silver economy as a key measure to respond to the aging population.

It stressed fully utilizing the role of various business entities and social organizations to better meet the multilevel and diverse needs of seniors.

"At present, eldercare all over the world tends to focus on their physical health, such as accompanying the disabled, but a lack of a sense of value and social support networks was often overlooked," said He.

"Take the example of Zhang Yunfeng, an 81-year-old retiree in Beijing, who was the eldest among Hongsong's clients.

Engaged in machine-tool technical work which kept her extremely busy, she also cared for her bedridden husband for six years before her retirement.

As her two sons live far away with their own families, she lives with her grandson, who is also very busy at work and can't arrive home until midnight. During the day, she is the only one at home, and has to make do with a walk in the park.

Hongsong noticed this and interacted with her often over the past three years, making her life more fulfilling, said He.

Another Hongsong co-founder, Li Qiao, said one of the reasons they set up the company in 2020 was to let his mother enjoy a higher quality retirement life, by focusing on social interactions.

"The elderly population is accelerating the development of the silver

economy, whose scale has reached some 7 trillion yuan (\$979 billion) currently, accounting for about 6 percent of the country's GDP," said He, who has a doctorate from West China Hospital of Sichuan University.

The China Tourism Academy forecasts that by 2025, China's senior population tourism income could surpass 1 trillion yuan, while statistics showed that by 2030, the market size of China's elderly education services could reach 1.2 trillion yuan.

So far, Hongsong has tailor-made online learning, socialization, e-commerce and offline study tours for seniors, said He.

To provide high-quality courses for seniors, Hongsong has hired over 4,000 lecturers nationwide.

"Our online and offline courses cover hundreds of areas, with a cumulative number of participants exceeding 10 million, and a total number of clicks on courses surpassing 200 million."

Fang said, "The silver economy has vast potential for development," adding that the market size of study tours alone can run up to 2 trillion yuan.

He Jia said that by February, they had set up research and development centers in Beijing; Chongqing; Chengdu, Sichuan province; Hangzhou, Zhejiang province; and Wuhan, Hubei province, and have finished their B+ round of financing.

According to a report by the Institute of Aging of Fudan University, by 2035, the size of China's silver economy will reach 19 trillion yuan, accounting for 28 percent of total consumption and nearly 10 percent of GDP.

Contact the writers at
zhuangqiang@chinadaily.com.cn



State Grid employees check power transmission lines in Tongliao, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. WANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Northern regions ramp up green efforts

By LI JIAYING
and LIU ZIZHENG

With the establishment of a series of key renewable energy projects, Tongliao in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region is actively developing its renewable energy industry chain and reinventing its ambition of becoming a leading national green energy base.

The projects include the recently built Longma wind power equipment manufacturing base, Kailu county's Mingyang 600,000-kilowatt wind power 220-kilovolt transmission project, and the Zhuri River 500 kV transmission and transformation project.

"Looking ahead, while ensuring the provision of clean energy to Tongliao, green electricity will also be directed westward. During critical periods of rising electricity demand, Inner Mongolia's renewable energy will facilitate cross-province consumption, maximizing the export of renewable energy and promoting its wider utilization," according to the project developer, State Grid East Inner Mongolia Electric Power Co.

Generation of renewable energy in Tongliao has made remarkable progress in recent years. Currently, 46 wind farms are spread across the southern and northern parts of Tongliao, forming an extensive wind and solar energy belt over 300 kilometers long.

Wind and solar power have sur-

passed fuel power to become the primary energy sources in the area, transforming the region's long-standing reliance on traditional thermal energy.

Riding the wave of dual-carbon goals, a series of major grid projects have strongly supported the high-quality development and utilization of renewable energy in Tongliao, the power company said, adding that it will help accelerate the region's transition to clean and low-carbon energy.

Similarly, at an industrial park in Minning township, Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, a green power project is also in full swing.

By the end of this year, with the completion of the energy storage station and the coordinated control of the source-grid-load-storage system, Minning will achieve the goal of 24-hour green power supply.

Upon the completion of Minning Green Power Town at the end of this year, the comprehensive green power supply system will attract more enterprises favoring green power to establish their operations here.

This will significantly reduce carbon emissions in the township area, saving an estimated 70,000 metric tons of standard coal annually and reducing carbon emissions by 48,000 tons, according to State Grid Ningxia Electric Power Co, the project builder.

Through a rooftop photovoltaic project, which provides paid space leasing, local farmers can achieve an

annual increase in income of about 1,000 yuan per household while reducing carbon emissions, and the initiative will create more employment opportunities and promote rural vitalization and high-quality economic development, the Minning township government said.

"The successful grid connection of the village's photovoltaic sector is thanks to the precise and efficient services of the power company. With their support, we are full of confidence in our future development," said Ma Ning, Party secretary of Wuhe in Minning.

"We have established a panoramic monitoring system for the Green Power Town in Minning to capture real-time data on the distribution of new energy sources, generation capacity, load rates and power usage situation. This lays the foundation for further optimization and flexible interaction of source-grid-load-storage resources," said Wu Haikun, head of the internet office of State Grid Yinchuan Power Supply Co.

"In the future, we will utilize big data of Ningxia Electric Power Co to dynamically analyze the electricity consumption trends of Minning's industries and key sectors. This will help the government and related departments grasp industrial development trends and implement precise policies," Wu said.

Contact the writers at
lijiaoying@chinadaily.com.cn

'Overcapacity' narrative against China aimed at fulfilling 'US-only' dream

TALKING
BUSINESS
By Hu Meidong
in Fuzhou

China's so-called overcapacity problem is a straw man that the United States has raised to elbow out emerging industries from other countries for a "US-only" dream.

Shortly after US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's overcapacity narrative about China in April, the administration of US President Joe Biden announced plans to raise tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles to 100 percent from 25 percent earlier, along with other new tariffs on clean energy imports.

If the US definition of overcapacity is producing more than what's needed domestically and then exporting, should Tesla EV and iPhone sales to China be tagged as overcapacity?

If exporting 12 percent of Chinese-made EVs is termed overcapacity and tariffs are raised consequently, then what about Germany, Japan and the US, who export 80, 50 and 25 percent, respectively, of their automobiles?

It is worth mentioning that China's domestic demand is still booming and far from being met on a global scale. The National Information Center estimates that China's new energy vehicle penetration rate will increase from 35.2 percent in 2023 to 60 percent by 2033.

According to the International

Energy Agency, global renewable energy capacity is expected to grow by two and a half fold by 2030, but governments need to go further to achieve the goal of tripling it by then.

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

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

If we go down the rabbit hole of "overcapacity" accusations by the US, there wouldn't be any point in having global trade at all.

Historically, countries have played to their strengths, engaging in international trade and dividing labor, which have given birth to the current world market and global economic order.

At the 2024 Beijing International Automotive Exhibition in April, Zeng Yuqun, founder of Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd, the world's largest vehicle battery maker, had a friendly exchange with Porsche CEO Oliver Blume.

Blume said that the collaboration between Porsche and CATL has been "very positive" and the batteries used by Porsche came from CATL's factory in Germany.

This market-driven cooperation exemplifies global division of labor and cooperation, mutual demand, and complementary prosperity among global industries.

By the way, the US was the trail-

blazer in the game of global trade and concepts.

The US deficit accelerated starting from 1991, peaking from 2005 to 2007. The root of the deficit lies in the technology bubble of the 1990s and the financial bubble of the 2000s. Meanwhile, China's surplus accelerated from 2005, making it a victim of the two bubbles led by the US.

Yet, the US demanded that China should take responsibility for the international financial crisis and foot the bill to mitigate global imbalances. By the end of 2008, China's macro leverage ratio was 142 percent; it has now reached 290 percent.

Currently, the world economy is entering a new era of green, new energy, and digital technology revolution.

The newly installed capacity demand of global photovoltaics, for instance, will reach 820 gigawatts, which is about four times that of 2022. It shows that the current production capacity is far from meeting market demand globally.

If there are no negative spillovers of geopolitical tensions, protectionism, and generalized security concerns, the supply and demand of new energy vehicles, photovoltaics, and lithium batteries will be dynamically balanced at the global level.

As the US tries to squeeze industries from other countries and regions to protect and support its own, especially in the new energy sector, should other countries foot the bill for such a "US-only" dream?

Contact the writer at
humeidong@chinadaily.com.cn

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Wanderlust spurs tourism, museum visits

Since beginning of year, ticket bookings for such venues up 104%

By ZHU WENQIAN
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

The growing popularity of embarking on cultural trips has been witnessed in China, and museums and other cultural venues have become popular spots for domestic and foreign tourists alike traveling around the country.

During the May Day holiday that lasted from May 1 to May 5, more than 6,000 museums across the country received a total of 50.54 million person-time visitors, according to the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

With International Museum Day celebrated on May 18, museums across the country have launched a series of diverse themed exhibitions and social educational activities in May, leading to higher popularity of the cultural and museum tourism market in China.

Since the beginning of the year, the booking volume of museum tickets from domestic tourists has increased by 104 percent over last year. Among every 10 people who booked admission tickets for scenic spots, one was booked for museum tickets, said Trip.com Group, China's largest online travel agency.

"Behind the popularity of cultural and museum tours is the in-depth integration of traditional culture and latest ways of travel. Museums, as important places for inheriting and showcasing culture, have attracted more attention and participation of tourists by hosting various exhibitions and activities," said Cai Miao, product manager of East China at Tuniu Corp, a Nanjing, Jiangsu province-based online travel agency.

In addition, museums across the country have been actively exploring innovative and diverse display measures that meet tourist demand. These include digital and intelligent displays, interactive experiences, short videos and livestreaming sessions, and the development of more cultural and creative products, Cai said.

Young tourists and families with children have become the main consumer groups of cultural and museum tours. This year, travelers aged 45 and below account for 86 percent of the bookings for cultural and museum-related travel products, Tuniu said.

In terms of tourist sources, those from Beijing; Shanghai; Nanjing; Guangzhou and Shenzhen of Guangdong province; Chongqing; Chengdu, Sichuan province; and Xiamen, Fujian province, have shown a strong demand for taking cultural and museum tours, Tuniu found.

"More young tourists and families are experiencing the charm of traditional culture and the fun of museum tours by checking in on some



Tourists visit the Nanjing Museum in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on May 4. LIU JIANHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY

renowned cultural relics, collecting cultural and creative products, and visiting museums online," Cai said.

"The growing trend of *hanfu* (traditional Chinese clothing of the Han ethnic group) culture and the development of innovative cultural and creative products have also created new consumption hot spots and growth points for the cultural and museum tourism market," she said.

Cultural and historical museums, as well as science and technology museums, have been among the top choices for parent-child travel. Since March, the online search volume for natural science popularization, outdoor exploration and research tour products has doubled compared with February, according to Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

So far, the total number of national first-class museums has reached 327, following the recent rating of the latest batch of museums that were rated as first-class museums by the China Museum Association.

"National first-class museum" stands as the highest-level classification of museums in China, representing the advantages of the museum in quantity, type and preservation of precious cultural relic collections. As important cultural and tourism resources, such museums have attracted a large number of tourists, the association said.

This year, the Palace Museum, National Museum of China in Beijing, Nanjing Museum, Shaanxi History Museum, Hunan Museum and other national first-class museums have been particularly popular with high



Primary school students learn about sea creatures at the National Natural History Museum of China in Beijing on May 1. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

volumes of bookings, Tuniu said.

During holidays and weekends, it is difficult to get an admission ticket. Group tour options that include itineraries visiting museums are well received by travelers.

In addition, with more flights available to smaller cities and county-level towns becoming new

growth points in the domestic tourism market, more tourists are shifting their attention to some niche and thematic museums.

Such museums include the Shanghai Auto Museum, Zigong Dinosaur Museum, Nanjing City Wall Museum, Qingdao Beer Museum and Nanjing Imperial

Examination Museum of China.

"These museums meet tourist demand in a specific field or theme through exhibitions, unique cultural charm or regional characteristics, and they have attracted an increasing number of tourists," Cai said.

Meanwhile, foreign visitors are

“These museums meet tourist demand in a specific field or theme through exhibitions, unique cultural charm or regional characteristics...”

Cai Miao, product manager of East China at Tuniu Corp

enthusiastic about checking out museums in China. So far this year, booking volumes of museum admission tickets from foreign tourists have increased 10-fold compared with all of last year, Trip.com said.

Among foreign cultural and museum enthusiasts, orders from the post-90s, post-80s and those travelers who were born after the year 2000 accounted for 34 percent, 25 percent and 21 percent of the total, respectively.

Tourists from Japan, South Korea, Australia, the United States and Thailand have been most interested in visiting museums in China, according to Trip.com, and the platform can support guests from 140 countries to book museum tickets in China in 35 languages.

Trip.com said it has strengthened cooperation with more domestic museums to provide convenience for foreign tourists.

In April, the company and Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum — which houses the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an, Shaanxi province — officially launched a platform for integrated services for foreign visitors. The two sides provide online ticketing channels in 24 languages and 29 currencies for consumers in 39 countries and regions.

Since the launch of the service, more than 3,000 overseas consumers have booked trips related to viewing the Terracotta Warriors. Trip.com has also promoted the artifacts overseas such as in South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Thailand.

Next, the Terracotta Warriors scenic area plans to establish an overseas tourist data center with Trip.com to improve reservation services and provide overseas tourists with a better browsing experience.

In addition, some museums have launched night tours. At the Historical Museum of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, a branch of the Nanjing Museum Administration, visitors can watch performances at night, according to Qunar.

At the Nanjing Folk Museum, visitors can enjoy waterworks shows and folk music performances in the evening. In addition, some museums have launched diverse cultural and creative products, such as ice cream and cultural and creative notebooks and bags, Qunar said.

Travel ease taking more Chinese tourists overseas

By ZHU WENQIAN

Chinese outbound tourists have shown growing enthusiasm for visiting museums overseas, and some of the most popular destinations include the Louvre Museum in Paris, the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Erawan Museum in Bangkok, industry players found.

Some other international museums sought after by Chinese travelers include the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the British Museum, the Prado Museum in Madrid, Al Shindagha in Dubai, the National Museum of Luang Prabang in Laos and the National Museums of Kenya, according to Tuniu, a Nanjing, Jiangsu province-based online travel agency.

Chinese travelers have been increasingly venturing far out of the country, heading to some niche destinations such as Serbia, Morocco and Tunisia, fueled by more flight options and favorable visa policies of different countries.

"Visiting a museum can help travelers learn about the history of a city. Chinese consumers have indicated an increasingly strong interest in visiting museums, which serve as important places of cultural inheritance," said Xiao Peng, a researcher with the big data research institute of Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

During the May Day holiday that lasted from May 1 to May 5, the booking volumes of international flights and hotels on the platform both hit new highs, according to Qunar.

In particular, booking volumes of flight tickets from China to Saudi Arabia and Egypt more than tripled year-on-year, and booking volumes of flights to the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Qatar jumped over 50 percent on a yearly basis, Qunar found.

Despite being affected by regional turbulence to some extent, the tourism industry in the Middle East has shown good growth momentum in the past year, becoming one of the fastest-growing regions in the world,

according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Globally, the number of international tourists visiting the Middle East reached 86.3 million person-time last year, growing 22 percent compared to the pre-pandemic period in 2019, the UNWTO said.

Hong Jiayin, a 70-year-old retiree from Beijing, and his family went on a holiday to Iran in late January, and the experience was beyond his expectations. He was hugely impressed by Iran's rich history and its friendly people during his trip.

Eyeing a great inrush of Chinese tourists, Iran has unilaterally granted a visa-free policy for China and trained dozens of Chinese-speaking tour guides since 2019.

Now, Iran is increasing the convenience for Chinese visitors at some of its museums, not least by offering Chinese versions of artifact introductions, said an Iranian museum official recently.

Hadi Mirzaei, director-general of the General Office of Museums in the Iranian Ministry of Cultural

Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, made the remarks in Teheran to announce the events and programs which were scheduled to be held in the country during the National Cultural Heritage Week from May 18 to May 24, but were called off after the demise of the nation's leader.

"We have prepared catalogs for Chinese tourists in their own language to enable them to gain more knowledge about Iran's culture while visiting the country's museums and sites," said Mirzaei.

Mirzaei praised the Chinese government's policy of defining Iran as one of the top six priority tourist destinations for Chinese travelers. He noted that this policy has attracted many more Chinese visitors to the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year, which started on March 20, compared to the same period last year.

From March 21, 2023 to Jan 20, 2024, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Iran exceeded 54,000, and Chinese tourists spent nearly



Visitors walk near ancient sculptures at the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, in April. AFP

\$1,000 on average during their stay in Iran, according to the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The ministry now plans to provide training in Chinese language and cuisine to Iranian hotel staffers

and chefs. "China is the world's largest tourism market," said Moslem Shojaei, director-general for marketing and international tourism development at the ministry.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

COMMENT

Editorials

Each time Taiwan separatists make waves they trigger a tsunami against themselves

The majority of the international community upholds the one-China principle, and did not send any wrong signals to the new authorities on the island of Taiwan. But as expected, the new Taiwan administrative head Lai Ching-te's inauguration speech in Taipei on Monday has won some "well-done-buddy" praise from a few external powers, which have lauded it for being "pro-peace".

Yet, as these commenders know, that feigned stance is nothing but a superficial veneer. Fundamentally, Lai's speech was riddled with hostility and provocation, lies and deception.

Essentially, it was the most radical "pro-independence" declaration ever made on such an occasion. If it is to be the template for the course the Lai authorities intend to take over the coming years, it will undoubtedly lead the island to the most undesirable situation of all.

It is therefore no surprise that the escalated tensions the speech has triggered have increased the anxiety of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait about a possible conflict. Compared with his predecessor, Lai's approach to pursuing Taiwan "independence" is more barefaced, provocative and dangerous.

While he went to great lengths to try and disguise his "pro-independence" discourse and took great detours to try and straighten out his distorted logic, he nonetheless sought to present the fiction that the island is a country.

Describing the cross-strait status quo as a "reciprocal" "interstate" situation, he said he would seek to close the island's ranks with "other democratic countries".

Painting black as white, he attributed the rising tensions to Beijing's bullying, coercion and threats, while portraying the island as a victim, a model and a defender.

Lai's duplicity is testament to the support the Democratic Progressive Party has received from Washington for its secession-seeking antics. His speech shows that Lai is gambling on that backing being unbounded.

It is ridiculous that the DPP thinks it can change the reality that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. That is deter-

mined by history, and enshrined in international law and a series of binding post-World War II international documents.

Shame on Lai for forgetting that the primary obligation of his new post is to serve the well-being of the Taiwan people, rather than the geopolitical agenda of Washington, which fundamentally conflict with each other.

Being an "elected" leader of the island by no means qualifies Lai to behave in such an unscrupulous manner. He is trying to make the decision on the future of the island that can only be made by the whole Chinese nation.

His ugly show has done one thing. It has exposed the true color of his feathers as a radical secessionist from day one.

Coming straight to his point in this way might be a good thing. It shows there is no point in pinning any hopes on him acting wisely to help deescalate the regional tensions that have built up continuously over the eight years since his secessionist-minded predecessor took power.

Lai should bear in mind that as long as he accepts the mantle of his predecessor's "pro-independence" cause, he will be accountable for the historical debt incurred.

Lai should also be reminded that the several reckless "pro-independence" moves his predecessor took were all invariably rightly and promptly answered, with the mainland accelerating the advances of its national reunification agenda in different spheres, which have all become a fait accompli of the cross-strait status quo.

Given the extent to which Lai has made clear that he will pursue Taiwan "independence", Beijing can now better concentrate on planning and executing its countermeasures to ensure the Lai authorities are duly, timely and accurately served what they have ordered.

It will only be a matter of time before Lai learns the lesson that the farther and faster he goes in trying to bend the red line on cross-strait relations, the swifter and tougher the countermeasures will be. The Chinese authorities' resolve to reunify the motherland should never be underestimated.

Ingrained bias gives life to Xinjiang 'forced labor' lie

Accusing some major European automakers of defying the United States' ban on forced labor, the US Senate Finance Committee appealed for stricter law enforcement to ensure businesses comply with the US' unilateral ban.

In a report released on Monday, the committee said BMW, Jaguar Land Rover and Volkswagen were sourcing auto parts from a company banned by the US administration for allegedly being linked to "forced labor" in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Committee Chair Ron Wyden urged Customs and Border Protection to "supercharge enforcement and crack down on companies" that he described as fueling the so-called forced labor in Xinjiang.

Instead of accusing the European automakers of "sticking their heads in the sand", the US senator should open his eyes to the truth of the matter in Xinjiang.

At least he should ensure he is better informed about what is actually going on there so he can sift the truth from the lies when he listens to different, even conflicting, narratives. Better still, if he bothers to travel to the Chinese region in person, he would be able to see for himself what things are like.

The real problem regarding international perceptions of Xinjiang is that they are shaped by the allegations of "human rights" violations, which is a fabrication divorced from facts and aimed at smearing and creating trouble for Beijing. The hyping up of this false picture has created a stereotyped view that is never questioned by those who are antithetical to the rise of China. Their bias runs so deep that they are willing to

accept as a matter of faith the lie that the vocational training facilities in Xinjiang are really "concentration camps". Nor does it matter whether the local governments are actually trying to help ordinary Uygurs find jobs, as far as these "believers" are concerned, the authorities in the region are simply playing the role of slave trader.

But facts are facts, and truth prevails no matter how many lies are shoveled on it in order to bury it. Alena Douhan, UN special rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, has just concluded a fact-finding trip to Xinjiang. Though her final report won't be available until September, her preliminary findings help excavate the truth from the dirt heaped upon it.

In extensive interviews, she said that she found a "decline in business activities", "significant loss of global markets either due to unilateral sanctions per se or due to overcompliance with such measures by foreign businesses and entities", which in turn caused "job losses", "disruptions in social protection schemes by disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable, particularly in labor-intensive sectors, including women, older persons, and all those in informal employment".

By stressing the illegality of the extraterritorial application of unilateral sanctions and the "overcompliance of businesses and other entities", she effectively highlighted their unwarranted genesis.

But are Washington politicians content with the comforting cocoon of their ideological fervor going to heed her words, especially her plea for justice, due process, and presumption of innocence? Not unless pigs start flying.

Protectionism will drive green transition to dead end

The United States is trying to sell its false narrative on China's "overcapacity" to Europe in the hope of soliciting the European Union's support for Washington's protectionist moves aimed at suppressing the development of China's new energy enterprises.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, during her visit to Frankfurt, Germany, said on Tuesday that the US and Europe needed to respond to China's industrial overcapacity in a "strategic and united way" to keep manufacturers viable on both sides of the Atlantic. "It's more forceful to communicate to China as a group," she said.

She made the remarks after the Joe Biden administration announced plans to slap new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, advanced batteries, solar photovoltaic panels, steel, aluminum and medical equipment last week, with the tax rate on imported Chinese EVs expected to increase to 102.5 percent this year, up from a total of 27.5 percent, and those on solar panel imports to double to 50 percent.

Such naked protectionism, which tramples on the principles of the market economy and goes against international trade rules, has so far received a cold shoulder from EU countries, with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson describing it as a "bad idea to start dismantling global trade".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that European and even some North American manufacturers are "successful in the Chinese market, and we have to take that into account", while stressing the importance of trade between the West and China.

Instead of subsidies, the rapid growth of China's new

energy industries is driven by continuous technological innovation as a result of fierce domestic competition, well-developed industry chains, and intense research and development. The so-called overcapacity is just a myth fabricated by the US to smear China's image as a leading driver of the global green transition.

In 2023, China sold 9.49 million of the 9.59 million EVs it produced, the majority in the domestic market, which reflects the dynamism of its EV industry. The claim that China is flooding overseas markets with its EVs is patently untrue, as the country exported only about 12 percent of the EV units it produced last year. In comparison, 50 percent of Japanese cars are sold overseas, and nearly 80 percent of Germany's auto output is shipped to foreign markets. In wielding the big stick of protectionism, the US will not only hurt the interests of Chinese new energy enterprises, but also increase the cost of living for US consumers. It will also cause increased damage to the security and stability of global industry and supply chains, and put a brake on the global green transition.

The world needs to urgently accelerate the green transition, not slow it down, and there is huge demand for China's new energy products. The US is only bringing misfortune on the world by impeding the global low-carbon transformation. It must act rationally and stop politicizing the trade issue and start working with China and Europe to facilitate the greening of lifestyles, rather than using sanctions and other protectionist measures to derail the process.

Cai Meng

SOMEDAY, I'LL CALL UPON YOU TO DO A SERVICE FOR ME.



Opinion Line

Focus on the main business can promote firm growth

In their recently released first-quarter financial reports, major domestic internet giants such as JD.com, Alibaba and Tencent have all registered revenue growths exceeding market expectations.

In the early days of internet development, domestic enterprises learned about competition and scale expansion. Some internet companies pursued offline development based on large-scale mergers and acquisitions, and invested a lot of capital to create "flows" in financial, educational, medical care, travel and other fields, resulting in disorderly competition and expansion.

Pinduoduo, a popular e-commerce platform, overtook Alibaba, which was once regarded as an unshakable e-commerce leader, in terms of market value, in November 2023, and Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, the video-sharing platform, has grown rapidly, posing a huge challenge to Tencent. Unlike other internet giants, Pinduoduo and Douyin focus on their main business and strive to expand their main business to overseas markets. The strategy of focusing on their main business has helped

them gain advantages over competitors obsessed with the diversified investment expansion strategy.

Pinduoduo persists in its "preferential prices and good services" principle, which has helped it realize rapid market expansion. At the same time, providing better services and consumer experiences has also helped it attract new consumers while retaining old consumers. That has prompted Alibaba and JD.com to attach greater importance to also providing consumers with competitive prices and better customer experiences to consolidate their main business.

Enterprises should shift from pursuing scale expansion to a people-oriented strategy that focuses on innovation, efficiency and quality. To pursue bigger development, they should take aim at overseas markets and rely on scientific and technological innovation. The era of relying on "burning money" for development has passed, and the era of truly testing enterprises' competitiveness has come.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

Celebs can't do for city what culture can

After a livestreamer shot to fame overnight earlier this month with a song he sang at the square of the Heze South Railway Station of Heze city, Shandong province, a large number of livestreamers, hoping to copy his success, have been gathering in the square to perform their respective talent shows in front of the camera.

Local residents complained about traffic jams and noise pollution, which led to the railway station declaring on Monday that they won't hold any more entertainment activities from that day on.

Livestreaming is an important platform to promote a place's tourism. But the way so many livestreamers put on their amateurish, if not unpleasant, shows at the same time in a

public square makes the overall atmosphere mind-bogglingly grotesque.

Few viewers would associate Heze, an ancient city with time-honored cultural and historical legacies, that is renowned for its Chinese roses, with such an absurd vanity fair in pursuit of fame and fortune.

A city's cultural heritage, history, natural scenery and humane environment are what make it attractive. These require time and careful crafting. Cities cannot rely solely on the short-term boost of the internet celebrity effect.

The case of Heze should remind other cities that for sprucing up a city's image one should not put the cart before the horse.

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

SCO security imperative collective endeavor

Editor's note: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi delivered a speech at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan, on Monday. The meeting was a preparation for the SCO summit in Astana in July. The following are excerpts of his speech:

After 23 years of joint efforts, we have successfully built the SCO into a security barrier, a bridge of cooperation, and a constructive force in the region. At present, a few countries pursue a hegemonic, protectionist, coercive, divisive and bullying approach to international affairs, and even contribute to the activities of the "three evil forces" in the Central Asia region. Their purpose is to suppress the strategic independence of the Global South and block the rise of emerging markets.

The more chaotic the world becomes, the more we must adhere to the right direction and effectively safeguard our common interests, respond to various challenges, and uphold fairness and justice by further implementing and strengthening SCO cooperation. The SCO countries should adhere to strategic independence and maintain unity and collaboration. We must respect each other's core interests, resolve conflicts and differences through dialogue, and firmly hold the future and destiny of our countries and the peaceful development of the region in our own hands, and never allow external forces to turn the region into a geopolitical arena.

Common, comprehensive, cooperative and

sustainable security should be the norm in this region. China is willing to work with all parties to improve the SCO's mechanisms for responding to security threats and challenges and deepen security exchanges and cooperation so as to enhance the overall security level of the region.

The SCO countries should adhere to inclusive and win-win cooperation and empower cooperative development. The SCO is a promoter of economic globalization. We need to adhere to the direction of integrated regional development, implement more cooperation projects and stimulate multilateral cooperation momentum.

The SCO countries should adhere to openness and inclusiveness and deepen exchanges and mutual learning. We should allow diverse civilizations to flourish, deepen understanding among the people of all countries, and build a solid social and public foundation for friendship from generation to generation.

China is willing to work with all SCO partners to actively advocate an equal and orderly multipolarization of the world system, and promote inclusive economic globalization that benefits all.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENT

Marcus Vinicius De Freitas

Western double standard on Taiwan exposed

The greatest challenge facing Western society, which is also primarily responsible for its steady decline, is the double standard it has been practicing with regard to all issues of global importance. Western double standard has discredited institutions, regulations and security in Western countries. When conflicting standards are applied to similar situations, frustration grows. The practice also exposes Western schizophrasia regarding moral, social and political standards. As a result, consistency and coherence — two of humanity's significant traits — have been replaced by inconsistency and incoherence. Examples abound in the actions of Western countries.

Comparing the Taiwan question with the Ukraine crisis, for instance, is one of the most common mistakes Western media and analysts have made. Such superficial comparisons seek to simplify two very different, complex and challenging issues.

The Taiwan question is China's internal affair, whereas the Ukraine crisis is an international law issue resulting from NATO's continuous eastward expansion to restrain Russia's capacity to act internationally. The Taiwan question and the Ukraine crisis are different according to international law.

The Taiwan question is about the reunification of Taiwan island with the motherland and the application of the one-China principle.

Moscow, on the other hand, has affirmed that its actions seek to protect ethnic Russians in Ukraine and prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and bringing the Western military alliance to its doorstep and thus posing a huge security risk.

However, Western media deliberately mixes these issues. Taiwan has been an integral part of China since ancient times. It was occupied by Japan after the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) but following Japan's unconditional surrender which ended World War II in 1945, the Potsdam Declaration (1945) determined Taiwan's return to China — the Cairo Declaration of 1943, too, had done the same. Equally important, United Nations Resolution 2758 clearly and unambiguously states that Taiwan is an integral part of China, and most of the countries in the world adhere to the one-China principle.

However, after the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out, major Western media outlets have been wrongfully comparing the Ukraine conflict to the Taiwan question, basically indicating that China will follow in Russia's footsteps to take military action against the island to realize national reunification. However, it should be noted that China has been pursuing the goal of national reunification for generations, dating

back to 1949, well before the Ukraine crisis.

What's more, such media outlets never take into consideration those voices on the island that seek peaceful reunification. By encouraging separatist forces on the island to intensify their stir and selling billions of dollars worth of weapons to the island on the pretext of protecting US interests in Asia, Washington is blatantly interfering in China's internal affairs and causing regional instability.

The "Asian century" heralds as a period of global peace and harmony, especially because Asia has had a much less bellicose history in recent centuries than the West.

Moreover, China is leading global efforts to improve global governance to help build a community with a shared future for mankind where wars and chaos have no place. In contrast, the US is promoting global instability to maintain its global hegemony.

By resorting to double standard, Western countries have created serious challenges for other countries. In the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict, it is evident that Israel's policy of eliminating Hamas disregards preventive action to minimize civilian casualties.

The incoherent migration policies of the European Union and its member states, which are mainly aimed at barring the entry of foreigners into the EU, are another major example of Western double standard. The European coun-

tries now seek to protect themselves from the negative consequences of their colonial rule, which has caused so much suffering to the people in the countries of the Global South and thrust many of them into political instability.

Furthermore, Western interventionist policies to promote so-called democracy in other countries have only worsened the situation in those countries. Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, to name a few, are apt examples of the West's high-handedness and know-it-all attitude which have condemned millions of people to death, economic instability and political chaos.

The West is failing because of its double standard, and refusal to believe that the world needs peace, welfare and stability. The US-led West also refuses to accept that the Taiwan question is China's internal affair and continues to interfere in it to fulfill its narrow political goals. The Vietnam War which claimed millions of lives and the continuing impact of Agent Orange on the Southeast Asian country should be a constant reminder that the West creates problems in every issue it pretends to resolve.

The author is a visiting professor at China Foreign Affairs University, and senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South based in Morocco. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Hou Changkun and Lan Shunzheng

AI influencing ties between China and US

As a core technology of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution", artificial intelligence (AI) has been playing a significant role in international relations. AI has altered the global political landscape by increasing power imbalances, developmental uncertainties and global inequities.

As the global hegemon, the United States has been using AI to its advantage, instead of global common good, and has adopted a multi-level, multi-actor, cross-sectoral and multidimensional geopolitical strategy. As such, China needs to leverage all its strengths to address the global political challenges and seize the opportunities created by AI.

AI exacerbates power imbalances when one country develops and uses AI to serve its own global political interests, prompting other countries to emulate it or catch up with it. As a country develops aggressive AI capabilities, it could become vulnerable in defense as other countries will imitate it. It will thus become both aggressor and defender, thereby altering the power balance. This is the paradox of investing substantial resources to accelerate the AI arms race while suffering from its adverse effects.

AI has created uncertainties for the international community, mainly pertaining to security, both internal and external security. It has also created uncertainties in technology and power. The uncertainties and risks of AI primarily include accidental capability issues where dangerous functions are unpredictable or go undetected. As a result, preventing AI's deployment for warfare becomes a challenge, and the rapid increase in AI models leads to accountability difficulties.

In response to the power imbalances exacerbated by AI, China has been developing AI to catch up with the US.

AI has widened global inequities, too, as developed countries continue to leverage advanced technologies to maintain their first-mover advantage. With the developed countries controlling core AI technologies, the global power disparity will further widen. For example, developed countries strive to maintain, if not monopolize, their advantages in key areas by intensifying research and development, yet they often shirk the corresponding responsibility of regulating the AI sector.

Moreover, some of the most advanced countries using AI for military applications have not joined the ranks of those calling for a ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

The US' current global AI strategy exhibits a multi-dimensional, multi-actor, cross-sectoral pattern. First, the US' AI strategy is layered, extending from the lowest to the highest level. At the lowest level, the US aims to dominate the core production aspects of AI. At the mid-level, it has been developing AI for cognitive and counter-cognitive warfare. And at the highest level, it uses technological supremacy to maintain its hegemonic, aggressive position in the world.

Second, the US' AI strategy involves multiple actors, including countries, global alliances and transnational entities. At the national level, the US invests significant resources in the development of AI, and has been competing with China on a state-to-state basis.

When it comes to global alliances, the US uses AI to strengthen NATO's allied identity. At the transnational level, US high-tech giants and R&D institutions are helping Washington use transnational bodies to boost its national strength, capture global interests and reshape the power and interest structures between countries.

And third, the US' AI strategy is cross-sectoral, spanning security, production, financial and intellectual domains. Also, the US has been building up "structural power". A concept introduced by Susan Strange, a British pioneer of international political economy, "structural power" consists of four basic structures: security, production, finance and knowledge. These structures interact with each other, with each representing a source of power. The US is a leader and one of the biggest investors in all of the four structures.

On the other hand, China has become a pivotal player in the AI field, and has been addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities AI has created. In response to the power imbalances exacerbated by AI, China has been developing AI to catch up with the US.

To address the uncertainties brought about by AI, China has been focusing on AI research and risk prevention. China's voluntary standards, an evolving system of technology ethics, third-party certification and localized actions, help minimize frontier AI risks. And almost one year ago, in June 2023, the State Council, China's Cabinet, announced in its annual legislature plan the intention to draft a national law on AI, covering all types of risk management.

In response to the inequalities created by AI, China has been engaging in global cooperation, promoting international collaboration in AI and advocating for inclusive development. Accordingly, in October 2023, China announced a global AI governance initiative, assuming a more proactive and assertive role in global governance, emphasizing the necessity of United Nations-led global governance and sharing AI achievements with developing countries.

In other words, since AI is changing the international political landscape and the US has adopted a global multidimensional, multi-actor, cross-sectoral AI strategy, China needs to actively and specifically respond to the emerging situation and address the challenges.

Hou Changkun is a Taiwan-based research fellow on political science, and Lan Shunzheng, a research fellow at the Charhar Institute and a member of the Chinese Institute of Command and Control. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Kanni Wignaraja

Financing critical for transitioning to a net-positive future

The Asia Pacific region is 32 years behind schedule in achieving the SDGs, with Goal 13, climate action, even regressing.

This is not an abstract measure. For some countries in the region, it quite literally means disappearing into the ocean.

Humanity cannot afford any SDG complacency and least of all climate complacency. With densely populated coasts, heavy dependence on agriculture, poverty that still afflicts millions, and temperatures rising twice as fast as the global average, this is the most vulnerable region to climate change.

Between 2000 and 2023, over 1,600 floods devastated the Asia Pacific region, killing more than 88,000 people, and impacting 1.6 billion. They represent 91 percent of all people affected by severe flooding globally. Counting the economic losses, they are a staggering \$452 billion.

By 2050, this region risks losing one-third of its GDP to climate change. And with over 4.3 billion people reliant on this region growing sustainable economies, this means climate investments are needed at greater speed and scale.

As it currently stands, the Asia Pacific region faces a significant shortfall in climate financing: at least 800 billion dollars annually.

With public finances depleted by the COVID-19 pandemic and other simultaneous shocks, it is evident that it will take the unleashing and directing of more private capital to help fight climate change. Public finance, both domestic and international, must still play that critical role to incentivize, de-risk and hence leverage private finance.

Globally, nature-positive solutions can create an annual 10-trillion-dollar investment opportunity and close to 400 million new jobs by 2030. The vast majority of these opportunities sit in Asia.

By contrast, according to the Climate Policy Initiative, staying on our current trajectory would trigger projected global losses of 2.3 quadrillion dollars by 2100.

Meeting the 1.5 degrees Celsius target of the Paris Climate Agreement would save four-fifths of that amount.

The math is clear: green investments support not only people and planet, but also, prosperity. However, turning heavily laden massive industries, hard-to-abate sectors and huge business and political interests around will take more than doing the math.

Encouragingly, some key countries and investors around the world are catching on. Globally, ESG assets are



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

expected to surpass \$33.9 trillion by 2026, representing over one-fifth of total assets under management.

UNDP is deeply committed to supporting this transformation through four areas of support currently underway with several countries in the region.

First, through initiatives like the "Unlocking Private Capital" program and Sustainable Finance Hub, UNDP supports the design of SDG-aligned investment projects, and sustainable debt instruments. Green and Blue Bonds have been taking off in this region, and hopefully the rates and terms improve, so countries benefit more from a green/blue premium.

Second, UNDP has developed the SDG Impact Standards, helping businesses and investors worldwide to bet-

ter incorporate sustainability, the SDGs, and impact management. These standards move beyond just managing ESG risks, to making a net-positive contribution.

Third, UNDP has developed SDG Investor Maps highlighting SDG investment opportunity areas in over 40 countries which are used by investors in formulating investment strategies.

Fourth, UNDP works with Securities & Exchange Commissions to develop SDG measures and guidance for their listed companies and provide a dedicated platform to track and report on their contributions to the SDGs.

Many of these global initiatives have been piloted in China. This includes a successful initiative with the New Development Bank supporting the issuance of a 5 billion RMB (\$0.69 billion) SDG bond on China's inter-bank market in 2021.

UNDP has also worked with the National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors (NAFMII) in

China and provided technical assistance to initiate their first trials of social and sustainability bonds.

Through the flagship Biodiversity Finance Initiative and support to the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures in over 40 countries,

UNDP is working to redirect both public and private finance towards activities with nature-positive outcomes. The governments of Shandong and Shanghai have joined us, generating lessons and innovative approaches to advance biodiversity finance around the world.

Globally, through the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group, UNDP is actively working with countries to develop a set of principles on transition finance.

A report on "Financing Climate Transition in China's Agri-food System: Mitigation, Adaptation, and Justice", was recently launched in collaboration with the Macro and Green Finance Lab of Peking University's National School of Development and the Climate Bond Initiative.

It identifies the opportunities and challenges of transition in agriculture — a hard-to-abate sector with the least evidence-based research available — towards net-zero paradigms. It also explores financial mechanisms and policy incentives to support the transition, along with growth opportunities, so together they can guide stakeholders to invest at scale.

For the private sector, the business case is clear: hundreds of studies have proven that addressing sustainability boosts competitiveness and market share. And — if done properly — can also improve financial performance and risk resilience.

These wide-reaching transitions require strong political and social buy-in to strengthen the governance mechanisms and institutional and human capacities needed to protect the poorest and most vulnerable in terms of their livelihoods, food security, and human development opportunities.

With the deadline for the SDGs only six years away, the Asia-Pacific region faces daunting development challenges to ensure a low-carbon future. But, with international organizations, businesses, and governments all working together, the region also has the potential to lead the way in realizing the necessary financing to deliver shared prosperity, and ensure a cleaner, more sustainable, and inclusive future for all.

The author is UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

SHIZHONGJUN

Fruits of labor

The RCEP is a major cooperation achievement of Asian economies that should be actively treasured

In June last year, with the official entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership for the Philippines, the world's largest free trade zone entered a new stage of full implementation. The RCEP creates a huge market with strong



diversity and inclusiveness. The implementation of the RCEP has played an important role in promoting regional economic and trade cooperation, improving the policy environment, strengthening the resilience of the production and supply chains, enhancing connectivity, bolstering cooperation in the digital economy, and supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Significant early harvests have already been achieved in implementing the RCEP. The positive effect on ASEAN-China cooperation is a vivid example in this regard.

The RCEP was initiated by the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. China was the first country to ratify the agreement. With complementary economic structures and interconnected production and supply chains, ASEAN and China have a huge market demand for each other's goods. In 2022, the total trade volume between ASEAN and China reached 6.52 trillion yuan (\$901.9 billion), accounting for 15.5 percent of China's foreign trade. The total import and export value of China with ASEAN accounted for 50.3 percent of China's total trade value to other RCEP member countries in 2022. In 2023, ASEAN-China bilateral trade reached 6.41 trillion yuan. ASEAN and China, for four years in a row, have remained each other's largest trading partners. As each other's major source of invest-

ment and important market, the industry chains and supply chains of ASEAN and China are deeply interconnected, and the connectivity is constantly being enhanced.

In today's world, regional economic cooperation is becoming increasingly important and prominent in the global economy. The full and high-quality implementation of the RCEP shows that regional countries are committed to strengthening economic integration and promoting more open regional economies. ASEAN and China, as well as other economies in the region, should join hands to further unleash the potential of the RCEP, so as to inject more impetus into regional economic growth and help bolster global stability.

First, by seeking common development via win-win cooperation, ASEAN and China, through the sound and steady growth of their comprehensive strategic partnership, can contribute more to promoting the development of the RCEP and regional economic integration. To further boost ASEAN-China cooperation is of great significance to regional economic integration, stability and development. Meanwhile, the implementation of the RCEP has also injected stronger momentum into ASEAN-China cooperation. The two sides should fully seize the opportunity brought about by the RCEP to expand the benefit of economic and trade cooperation through pursuing higher-level opening-up, leveraging the Cumulative Rules of Origin and other innovative policies to integrate the industry and supply chains effectively. A more efficient industrial structure can be forged based on the complementary advantages in the industries of both ASEAN and China. Mean-



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

while, new energy, the digital economy, cross-border e-commerce and other emerging industries have created new growth points for cooperation. ASEAN and China should continue to work on fostering new types of industries and contribute to promoting the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries in the region.

Second, it is important to further unleash the dividends of the full and high-quality implementation of the RCEP, so as to give stronger impetus to the recovery of both the regional and global economy, as well as sustainable development. With mounting uncertainties in the

world, the geopolitical and economic landscape has become increasingly complex. The global economic recovery remains sluggish. Unilateralism, protectionism and de-globalization are on the rise. Against the backdrop of declining global openness, rising trade costs and supply chain bottlenecks, the RCEP can promote the free flow of production factors on a wider scope, realize the optimal allocation of production factors, promote the specialized division of labor, and spur more new quality productive forces and innovations, which will make the regional cooperation advance toward a more inclusive,

modern, comprehensive and mutually beneficial direction.

Third, the solid social foundation and strong public support create favorable conditions for forging consensus on cooperation among regional countries to promote the full and effective implementation of the RCEP. The rapid and sustained growth of ASEAN-China relations would not have been achieved without mutual understanding and trust, nor could it have been achieved without collective wisdom and vision, the same goes for RCEP cooperation. The year 2024 has been designated by ASEAN and Chinese leaders as the ASEAN-China Year of People-to-People Exchanges. This opportunity should be made full use of to further cement the friendship between the peoples of both sides.

While witnessing the sound momentum of RCEP cooperation, the risks and challenges should not be ignored. Against the backdrop of the current challenging international and regional political and economic situation, RCEP countries have a more urgent need for increasing regional cooperation. Strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation is the only way to tap into the potential of regional economic growth and deal with challenges. To help ensure the sound and sustained development of RCEP cooperation, more attention should be paid to the following aspects.

First, enterprises should be aware of the real benefits that can be reaped by seizing the opportunity to fully utilize the RCEP rules and mechanisms. By taking advantage of the favorable condition created by the rules and the institutional innovations in regional openness, enterprises can

improve their competitiveness with high-quality products and services, and contribute more to economic growth in the region.

Second, the RCEP signatories should treasure this cooperation outcome and actively implement the agreement. Relevant government agencies need to transform the RCEP rules and regulations into operable measures to promote the implementation of the agreement. Government authorities should improve the business environment to facilitate trade and investment, create public service platforms for the implementation of the RCEP, promote the construction of industrial cooperation zones, and strengthen cooperation in the areas of connectivity, intellectual property rights protection, commodity inspection and quarantine, and customs. ASEAN plays a leading role in RCEP cooperation and can take the lead in improving the relevant working mechanism of the RCEP as soon as possible. Greater efforts should be made for capacity building as well as personnel training and exchanges.

Last but not least, the RCEP signatories should stay vigilant against the impact of geopolitical factors on the implementation of the RCEP, and the attempts at "decoupling" and the building of "small yards with high fences". ASEAN and China should work together to create an open cooperation platform to safeguard the open global economy, and build a fair, equitable and transparent system of international trade and investment.

The author is secretary-general of the ASEAN-China Center. 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.

POU SOTHIRAK

Coordinated response

Joint studies can help Lancang-Mekong countries address the challenges posed to the river basin and its communities by climate change

Recent weather patterns deriving from climate change have rattled all the Mekong countries with blistering heat waves and flash floods.

Erratic hydrological phenomena in 2023 impacted the Mekong River, creating drought followed by intense rainfall and flooding across all Mekong countries. Cambodian Tonle Sap Lake's reverse flow remains low and short, affecting fisheries and livelihoods severely. For 2024, this pattern of blazing hot temperature and not enough rain continues to unfold, with dire consequences expected.



Regional solutions to mitigate climate induced vulnerabilities are needed more than ever. According to the Mekong River Commission, climate change is considered a key issue, which threatens the Mekong River Basin and communities living on its embankments. The impacts of climate change adversely affect the livelihoods of the millions of people who rely on the river's natural resources. The countries of the Lower Mekong River Basin — Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam — are all vulnerable to the effects of climate change on the river which in turn weaken mainland Southeast Asia's economic growth and harm the Mekong's ecosystems and threaten social and regional harmony.

The unprecedented extreme weather has shifted the focus of regional attention to the search for a more durable solution to address the perils of climate change.

The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) mechanism and the Mekong River Commission (MRC) can take the lead in strengthening regional cooperation to better manage the transboundary water resources and effectively address the complex issue of climate-induced consequences, helping the Mekong region withstand the socioeconomic and environmental challenges. China welcomes stronger synergy between the MRC and LMC to better contribute to the well-being of people and the sustainable development in the subregion. China has been making joint efforts with the Mekong countries to further enhance cooperation in the utilization of water resources, flood mitigation and prevention and capacity building on water resource management.

To start with, the China-led LMC and the MRC can garner a regional commitment to alleviate the effects of climate change by encouraging the Great Mekong Subregion to adopt alternative renewable energy solutions, gradually moving away from the carbon emissions induced energy generation toward renewable energy-based electrification with the aim of attaining the goal of zero emissions by 2060. Focusing on renewable energy-based electrification would be good for the regional economy and help mitigate the effects of climate change in the long run. The LMC and MRC should hasten their collaboration to encourage Mekong countries to divert the use of fossil fuels in power generation, transportation, and home cooking, cooling and heating, replacing natural gas and coal-based power generation with renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and hydro.

An exemplary collaboration took

place between the LMC and the MRC with the signing of a memorandum of understanding on Dec 19, 2019 by the MRC Secretariat's CEO and the secretary-general of the LMC Water Center, at the Ministerial Meeting of the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation in Beijing in the attendance of the water and environment ministers of the six Lancang-Mekong countries.

The MoU entails the cooperation between China and the lower Mekong countries to ensure effective upper and lower Mekong River Basin management for future sustainability and shared benefits. The MoU committed both parties to work together for the joint management of the regional water resources over the five years from 2020, including experience sharing, data and information exchange, basin monitoring, joint assessment and study, knowledge management, and associated skill building and training.

A two-phase joint study by the MRC Secretariat and Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center (LMC Water Center) heralded a new dynamic in data and information exchange, basin-wide monitoring, and joint assessment on the Mekong water and related resources. Its objective is to provide a scientific basis for future cooperation of the six countries to address the problems facing the Mekong as a result of climate change.

A comprehensive Integrated Flood Risk Management system, containing elements of flood prevention, flood protection and flood preparedness, should also be put in place for the Mekong Basin countries.

The study emphasizes the Mekong River management must



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

be done on a Mekong River Basin basis, and cross-national cooperation is important.

Climate change is very real as are its effects. This year, severe drought is expected, which can lead to the devastation of crops and fisheries, making communities more prone to food shortages and lost livelihood due to low agricultural yields in the most productive area of the Mekong River Basin.

The joint study commissioned by LMC and MRC signified a valuable and beneficial collaboration between China and the Lower Mekong Countries with technical measures and actions related to data and information sharing and improvement among all the riparian countries.

The use of renewable energy is the key to fight climate change. The LMC and the MRC should engage in a more targeted study to assist Mekong countries aggressively transition toward a renewable energy-driven power system.

The technical collaboration between the MRCS and LMC Water Center represent a concerted effort to uplift the cooperation between China and the Lower Mekong Countries as they seek to ensure effective upper and lower Mekong River Basin management.

The China-led LMC and the MRC are highly qualified institutions with resounding technical capabilities and their joint study in regional water resources cooperation will foster synergy to contribute to live-

lihood improvement and better socioeconomic development in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin. The study helps develop a clear communication protocol and enhances the coordinated operations of the reservoirs in both China and the Mekong countries for a more effective response to the current and future issues of drought and water flow.

The author is former minister of industry, mines and energy of Cambodia and a retired academic and distinguished senior advisor to the Cambodian Center for Regional Studies. 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



Above left: The No 1 tomb of the Wuwangdun Site in Huainan, Anhui province, believed to be the tomb of King Kaolie of the Chu state, who reigned during the late stage of the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). **Jiang Dong / China Daily** **Top right:** A lacquerware plate with exquisite patterns discovered at the site. **Above right:** A lacquer table found at the site. **PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY**

The 15-meter-high mound at the Wuwangdun Site in Huainan, Anhui province, has long been recognized as an important tomb, and was listed as a key provincial cultural relic protection site in 1981. As China often takes protective measures for important tombs without necessarily excavating them, Wuwangdun could easily have continued to conceal its millennia-old stories.

However, its silence was shattered by grave robbers. While graves have been plundered throughout history, a major incident in 2015 was the last straw. When the public security authorities successfully cracked the case in 2018, archaeologists inferred from the confessions of the criminals and from field surveys that although many artifacts still lay buried, the underground environment had changed, leaving them exposed to damage. Consequently, an archaeological rescue project began in 2020 and the ongoing project has already yielded exciting findings.

The Wuwangdun Site has been identified as a tomb belonging to the Chu, a vassal state to the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC) from about 2,000 years ago. It is the largest in scale, highest level and most complex Chu structure excavated to date, and the tomb probably belonged to King Kaolie (290-238 BC) from the late Warring States Period (475-221 BC), says Gong Xicheng, deputy director of the Anhui Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, and head of the project.

A large bronze *ding* (an ancient cauldron) and more than 3,000 exquisite artifacts, including sets of bronze vessels, lacquerware, musical instruments, wooden figurines and a great number of animal and plant remains have been discovered.

Located about 15 kilometers from the ruins of Shouchun city, the last Chu capital in Huainan, the site, which is actually a cemetery, houses more than the large No 1 tomb.

This is believed to contain not just the king's remains, but also a chariot and sacrificial pits, with smaller tombs accompanying the main tomb in an independent cemetery surrounded by a moat, that occupies an area of about 1.5 square kilometers.

The No 1 tomb is roughly square and has a tomb passage, a common Chu typology. "Based on our previous experience, large Chu tombs, while varying in level, basically adopt this format. This distinguishes them from tombs of the Qin state (another vassal state), which often have two or four tomb passages," Gong says. Rulers of the Qin state later united China and founded the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC).

One remarkable feature of the tomb is the presence of 21 levels of inwardly recessed steps leading to the bottom. The overall structure exhibits a well-organized arrangement. "The construction of steps is also a common practice in Chu tombs, and typically, the higher the social status of the tomb's occupant, the more steps are found," Gong says.

At the heart of the tomb lies a remarkable arrangement of burial chambers laid out in a cross shape, with eight side chambers surrounding a central chamber. "The nine-chamber structure represents the highest level of burial during that era. Previously, we had discovered a maximum of seven chambers in a Chu tomb," says Xu Lianggao, a researcher with the Institute of

Retrieving history from the past

Findings at Wuwangdun shed intriguing light on how society was organized millennia ago, **Wang Ru** reports in Huainan, Anhui province.



Archaeology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The chambers are particularly large, Gong says, adding that any one of the nine chambers, if discovered in a single Chu tomb, would be categorized as at least medium-sized.

The side chambers contain funerary objects such as bronze vessels, wooden figurines and musical instruments, and it is presumed that the tomb's occupant rests within the central chamber. Gong says that archaeologists are currently retrieving the funerary objects from the side chambers before they proceed to open the central chamber.

The chambers are covered in four layers of planks, some of which bear ink inscriptions. Archaeologists have carefully identified nearly 1,000 words using infrared cameras, and believe they are typical examples of the Chu language.

"The planks have been buried for a very long time in a water-saturated environment, causing them to turn black. Soil and pollutants have made it even more difficult to recognize the inscriptions. As a result, we can only see them clearly using infrared equipment," Gong says.

Some of the words have been deciphered, shedding light on the function of the chambers. For instance, in a northern chamber adorned with words related to music, instruments and dancing figurines have been discovered. Many more inscriptions are yet to be explained, promising further insights in the future.

Discoveries

Sets of bronze vessels, probably for ritual use, have also been found, among them a *ding*, whose diameter exceeds 88 centimeters, making it larger than the Zhuke giant bronze *ding*, and it has become the largest *ding* ever found from Chu tombs.

The Zhuke *ding* was unearthed at the Lisangudui Site, about 14.5 kilometers from Wuwangdun and which is widely believed to be the tomb of King You of the Chu state, son of King Kaolie.

Archaeologists have found iron tools probably used in building the tomb. Analysis has shown them to be well-preserved, not corroded by



Above: A ceremonial bronze vessel used to contain grains, known as *fu*, unearthed from the site.

Left: A bronze vessel to hold drink or crops.

Bottom left: A wooden figurine's head.

Bottom right: A bronze *ding*, an ancient Chinese cauldron, found at the site.

Jiang Dong / China Daily



"As a result of the new excavation, we have fresh insight, and it solves some long-standing confusion, so it is of great academic significance."

Xu Lianggao, researcher, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

either oxygen or water. "This means the tomb was well built and sealed," says Gong Decai, a professor at the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei, Anhui.

As archaeologists prioritize the protection of fragile artifacts, their primary focus has been on safely transferring these treasures to laboratories. Consequently, the initial items have predominantly been a large quantity of lacquerware artifacts. These include figurines, lac-

quer basins, plates, and even statues of tomb-guardian beasts.

Every minute is precious when it comes to recovering these artifacts, and there is a plan to relocate all the most important items to laboratories before the arrival of summer's scorching heat since the high temperatures could harm the relics. The aim is to complete the entire project by the end of this year, with plans to create an archaeological park on the site in future, Gong Xicheng says.

Evolving from a remote barbarian regime to one of the seven leading states of the Warring States Period, at their zenith, the Chu ruled a vast area along the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

The influential state endured for nearly 800 years until its defeat by the Qin state in 223 BC. Just two years later, the Qin founded China's first unified dynasty.

According to Zhang Changping, an archaeology professor at Wuhan University, the tomb exhibits distinctive features commonly found in Chu tombs. "During the Warring States Period, different states had different cultural practices. Chu tombs possess their own unique features," Zhang says. "For instance, the tombs of ordinary people are often laid together, while those of the nobility are typically arranged in an independent manner."

The professor also highlights similarities between the tombs of nobles. "The tombs are commonly aligned in an east-west direction and have a tomb passage and multiple steps," he says.

"They often consist of several chambers, multiple coffins, and an abundance of funerary objects. Notably, they frequently include bronze artifacts in the style of the Western Zhou Dynasty, indicating the continuation of ritual systems from that era."

Significance

The Chu features of the Wuwangdun tomb show the continuity of Chu culture, which is part of the Chinese civilization, according to Zhang.

He says the Chu tomb in the last Chu capital of Shouchun has features borrowed from the Jiangling area in Jingzhou, Hubei province, the area the Chu originally occupied, where a large number of tombs have been discovered. This means that although the Chu moved their capital eastward to Shouchun, more than 600 km from Jiangling, cultural inheritance wasn't interrupted.

Moreover, Zhang says that the Chu helped the Qin unify China, as their influence shaped and united the culture of the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, which paved the way for the Qin to absorb the area more easily, as part of its unification of the country.

According to Xu, archaeologists have excavated nearly 10,000 Chu tombs so far, belonging to almost every level of official and aristocracy, but none of them reached the level of the Wuwangdun Site.

They have found tombs that probably belong to Chu kings but have

not excavated them. For instance, the Xiongjiazhong Site in Jingzhou is believed to be one, but only the chariot pits have been excavated, not the main tomb itself. As a result, Xu says that Wuwangdun is the highest-level Chu tomb excavated to date.

The Lisangudui Site near Wuwangdun was plundered and damaged in the 1930s. From the artifacts retrieved, archaeologists were able to determine the identity of the tomb's occupant, but were unable to uncover more detailed information about the damaged tomb. This led to a great deal of debate over the tomb and its construction.

Now, some of those mysteries may hopefully have been answered. For example, according to witnesses in the 1930s, the Lisangudui Site had nine burial chambers, but after they were destroyed, archaeologists could only debate how the chambers might have been arranged, Xu says. Some believed they might have formed a nine-box grid, but others had different opinions. Now the Wuwangdun tomb offers a plausible answer, he adds.

"As a result of the new excavation, we have fresh insight, and it solves some long-standing confusion, so it is of great academic significance," Xu says.

An experts' symposium on May 14 revealed that, judging from scale, structure, unearthed written materials and historical literature, the owner of the tomb is probably King Kaolie of Chu.

In 241 BC, King Kaolie moved the Chu capital eastward to Shouchun to distance the state from the rising Qin state to the west. However, 18 years later, Shouchun was conquered by the Qin.

"We generally believed the relocation of the Chu capital was a sign they were weakening," says Xu. "But the scale, type, building style and rich funerary objects at the Wuwangdun Site indicate the Chu still possessed significant strength in Shouchun, thanks to its long-standing history as a major state. This enhances our understanding of the wider political landscape just before the establishment of the Qin Dynasty."

Zhang says the large number of bronze vessels unearthed show that Chu was still economically well-off, even in its last days.

"The vessels show the Chu still had plenty of bronze, a very important strategic resource at that time. This means Chu was still rich at the end of the Warring States Period," he says.

The understanding of the Wuwangdun Site is the culmination of decades of archaeological work on tombs and studies of Chu culture.

"We first started to excavate Chu tombs in Changsha, Hunan province, in the 1950s; the Jinan city ruins in Jingzhou, an important Chu capital during the early stage of the Warring States Period, in the 1970s; and the Shouchun city ruins in the 1980s. They all deepened our understanding of Chu tombs," Zhang says.

"Each individual archaeological endeavor provides us with a fragment of historical information. It is our responsibility to connect these fragments from different periods into a comprehensive framework, to re-create the social landscapes of ancient times."

Contact the writer at wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

LIFE

From caves to the stage

A new musical takes the Mogao Grottoes as its setting and subject, innovatively blending genres, cultures and eras, as well as myth with reality, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.



Above: The *Flying Apsaras* musical premiered at Beijing's Poly Theatre from April 25 to 27. **Below:** The story is set in the 1930s and centers on two main characters dedicated to the preservation of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Northwest China's Gansu province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Several years ago, stage musical producer Li Dun spent seven days visiting the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Northwest China's Gansu province, admiring the murals and learning about the Buddhist stories depicted.

One of the Jataka tales in Buddhist legends — that of Prince Sattva sacrificing himself to feed hungry tigers — moved him to tears. After a long time of gazing at the mural in an almost trance-like state, Li thought of producing a musical centered on the heritage site and those who devote their lives to its preservation.

"The tale of Prince Sattva embodies sacrifice and the great love of humanity. Following this thought, the idea for the theme song to be titled *Sacrifice* emerged," Li says.

"Sacrifice holds great significance for human societies. If we could all show a bit of humility and make some sacrifices, the world would be more peaceful and society would be infused with a touch of warmth."

Li contacted composer San Bao and playwright Guan Shan, with whom he had collaborated in 2007 on the acclaimed musical *Butterflies*. They had promised to work together again.

The show's development also involved such veteran theater practitioners as director Chen Shizheng, dance director Jiang Yang and lighting designer Ren Dongsheng, as well as performers from theater troupes as the China Oriental Performing Arts Group. The production crew made field trips to Dunhuang 10 times since the project's conception in 2016.

"All three of us take it extremely seriously. San Bao jokingly said that the first script that Guan Shan wrote would take more than three months to perform. I suggested that we need only to capture the essence and cut down on the script," Li says.

Titled *Flying Apsaras*, the musical hosted concerts in 2023, presenting 14 original songs. And from April 25 to 27, the production premiered at Beijing's Poly Theatre in its full splendor.

Beginning from May 1 to 12, it was staged at the Dunhuang Grand Theater and then at the Lanzhou Concert Hall from May 15 to Sunday in Gansu's capital. It is also scheduled to run at the upcoming 18th Daegu International Musical Festival in South Korea and tour 13 Chinese cities with 50 performances starting from August.

The story is set in the 1930s and centers on two main characters — the guardian, who safeguards the murals from both natural disasters and human threats, and the traveler, who chances across a catalog of Dunhuang murals and decides to devote himself to the site's preservation.

These characters are based on and pay tribute to the generations of experts who've dedicated their lives to the protection of Dunhuang culture, epitomized by the founding director of the Dunhuang Academy, Chang Shuhong (1904-94).

The academy dedicated to the preservation and research of Dunhuang's ancient grottoes is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year.



Clockwise from middle left: The musical uses digital art and projection technology to present the different phases of the murals' restoration. Four representative Jataka tales depicted in the murals are merged into the production. The character of the traveler chances across a catalog of Dunhuang murals and decides to devote himself to the preservation cause.

Back in 1935, Chang was studying oil painting in Paris, where he stumbled upon a photo collection of Dunhuang murals and statues. He was awed by their artistry and concerned about their protection, so he went to Dunhuang where he spent four decades working to preserve its heritage.

According to the musical's director, Chen Shizheng, the show's core lies in exploring the brilliance of human nature and magnitude of human emotions.

"The guardian remains at the caves out of her love for Dunhuang and the traveler rushes from Paris to pursue Dunhuang's art. Both are chasing their dreams, which is an intangible concept," Chen says.

The production extensively employs digital art and projection technology to convey this. Some scenes feature projections from three angles to generate a sense of perspective and depict the murals before, during and after restoration.

"For example, the guardian lives in one of the caves. Through the use of projection, the audience can see the cave, the mural, the scaffolding set up to restore it, and the oil lamp and makeshift bed where she sleeps," Chen says.

"This contrasts the toil of the preservers with the sublimity of the murals, allowing the audience to understand the relationship between art and humanity."

Including the Prince Sattva story, the musical incorporates four representative Jataka tales that intertwine with the main storyline that demonstrate Dunhuang culture and promote the virtue of benevolence.

"Guan Shan ingeniously integrates four Jataka tales by having the male and female protagonists play the roles within these tales, so that the destinies of the traveler and the guardian are closely connected with the characters on Dunhuang murals. It's a contemporary way of presenting ancient myths," Chen says.

The choreography merges dance styles from various regions and eras, as Dunhuang was a pivotal interchange on the ancient Silk Road, serving as a hub for commerce and cultural exchanges between the East and the West.

"Because this musical is about the authenticity, goodness and beauty found in our profound Chinese traditional culture, I drew inspiration from tradition and incorporated the expressive movements of traditional dance styles, such as the gestures of the flying apsaras. But I innovated upon them by also integrating contemporary genres, including ballet and tap," dance director Jiang Yang says.

"Every member of our production crew hopes that this musical is something different — something brand new — that can serve as a valuable addition to China's original musicals and that audiences from all over the world can feel the depth and scope of traditional Chinese culture from it."

Contact the writer at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

Scientists cultivate 'tree of life' for plants

Scientists have recently revealed a vast DNA "tree of life" for flowering plants, which represents a pioneering step for illuminating Darwin's "Abominable Mystery".

The study, jointly conducted by an international team of researchers from Kew Gardens, the British Royal Botanic Gardens, the Kunming Institute of Botany of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and other institutions and universities, has been published in the journal *Nature*.

The flowering plant tree of life, much like the family tree of humans, can help demonstrate how different species are related to each other. The tree of life is revealed by comparing DNA sequences between different species to identify changes that accumulate over time, much like a molecular fossil record.

Researchers recently achieved a vast DNA tree of life by bringing open access DNA sequences of more than 9,500 flowering plants together, enabling them to answer key questions about modern plant life and to delve into its origins.

One key advantage of this approach is its ability to sequence a wide range of plant material, both old and new, even in cases where the DNA is badly damaged. The vast treasure troves of dried plant material in the world's herbarium collections, which include nearly 400 million scientific plant specimens, can now be studied genetically.

Using such specimens, the researchers sequenced a sandwort specimen (*Arenaria globiflora*) collected nearly 200 years ago in Nepal and, despite the poor quality of its DNA, were able to place it in the tree of life.

They even analyzed extinct plants, such as the Guadalupe Island olive (*Hesperelaea palmieri*), which has not been seen alive since 1875. In fact, 511 of the species sequenced are already facing the threat of extinction, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List, including three more like *Hesperelaea* that are already extinct.

Of the 9,506 species sequenced for this study, over 3,400 were derived from material sourced from 163 herbaria in 48 countries, with additional material from plant collections around the world, such as DNA banks, seeds and living collections.

Among the species sequenced, more than 800 had never had their DNA sequenced before. This sequencing was essential to fill in important knowledge gaps and shed new light on the evolutionary history of flowering plants. The researchers also benefited from publicly available data for more than 1,900 species, highlighting the value of the open science approach to future genomic research.

Flowering plants originated over 140 million years ago, after which they rapidly overtook other vascular plants. Darwin was puzzled by the seemingly sudden appearance of such diversity in the fossil record and wrote: "The rapid development, as far as we can judge, of all the higher plants within recent geological times, is an abominable mystery."

Using 200 fossils, the researchers traced their tree of life back in time to show how flowering plants evolved over geological time. They found that early flowering plants did indeed explode in diversity, as Darwin noted. The rapid development of these plants gave rise, shortly after their origin, to over 80 percent of the major lineages that exist today.

However, this trend then declined to a more stable rate for the next 100 million years, until another surge in diversification occurred about 40 million years ago, coinciding with a global drop in temperature.

These new findings would have fascinated Darwin and will surely help today's scientists as they grapple with the challenges of understanding how and why species diversify.

The flowering plant tree of life has enormous potential for biodiversity research. This is because, just as one can predict the properties of an element based on its position in the periodic table, the location of a species in the tree of life allows researchers to predict its properties. The new data will therefore be invaluable in advancing many areas of science and beyond.

To make this possible, the tree and all its underlying data have been made openly and freely available to both the public and the scientific community, including through the Kew Tree of Life Explorer. The researchers believe that such open access is key to democratizing access to scientific data around the world.

Open access will also help scientists fully harness the potential of the data. For instance, they can combine it with AI to predict which plant species may contain molecules with medicinal potential. Similarly, the tree of life can be used to better understand and predict how pests and diseases will affect plants in the future.

Ultimately, the researchers note, the applications of this data will be driven by the ingenuity of the scientists who access it.

XINHUA

LIFE

After graduating from Tsinghua University's Academy of Arts and Design, Hua Yong arrived in Nantong, Jiangsu province, in 2008 to follow her passion for traditional Chinese handicrafts by studying woodworking.

There, she learned hands-on skills from veteran artisans and visited collectors of wooden furniture, delving deeper into the structures of antique pieces and the wisdom behind traditional Chinese woodworking craftsmanship.

"For ancient Chinese, objects were considered carriers of wisdom. Because the users would constantly interact with them, the selection of materials followed a certain pattern, allowing the objects to exhibit vitality over time," Hua says.

"Wood, for example, can develop patina over time, resulting in a fine, smooth texture when it's touched, which can instantly bring people and objects closer to each other."

The 41-year-old artisan now owns a woodworking brand that aims to bring traditional Chinese furniture back as a part of contemporary life — a quiet companion for everyday use, with philosophical connotations that nurture people from afar.

Her efforts were recognized on April 20 with the Hand of Wisdom prize, a Sino-French crafts exchange program.

Founded in 2019 by the Golden Phoenix Science and Art Fund, and Yishu 8 Association, an art platform that boosts Sino-French cultural exchange, and sponsored by French cognac brand Hennessy since 2020, the program annually highlights a genre of craftsmanship and selects a Chinese artisan as the winner.

Following the previous years' themes of felt, metal and lacquer, this year's program highlighted woodworking. The nomination and selection process began in January, with 19 nominated artists and three short-listed by a jury comprised of Chinese and French art experts and professors.

"I like the idea of a cultural route between China and France having mutual enrichment. There is no better way to learn than by immersing yourself in a different culture — that's naturally how we began sponsoring the Yishu 8," says Laurent Boillot, CEO of Hennessy.

"We are not selecting the themes of the program. We follow Yishu 8's decisions. But I think we'll cover all the handicrafts that exist in China one after another. I hope to see great works in other forms and that the program will continue to feature the bridge between craftsmanship and creation."

Hua says that at the award ceremony on April 20, when Boillot announced that she won, she felt a bit dazed.

"On the 60th anniversary of China-France diplomatic ties, as an artisan of the new era, I'm very honored to be granted the Hand of Wisdom prize," she says.

"I look forward to seeing new vitality injected into traditional Chinese craftsmanship, embodied by the medium of wood, through Sino-French exchanges. I also hope that handicrafts, as a language unrestrained by borders, will translate ancient Eastern wisdom into contemporary life through design."



Woodworking artisan strengthens cultural ties

Hua Yong wins recognition with Sino-French crafts exchange program award, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.



Top: A toast is raised at the 2024 award ceremony of Hand of Wisdom, a Sino-French handicraft exchange program, held on April 20. **Above:** A chair from Hua Yong's New-Chi furniture series centers around octagonal shapes. **Right:** The World via a Fish-Eye standing cabinet by Hua adopts the eggshell inlay technique. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



"I look forward to seeing new vitality injected into traditional Chinese craftsmanship, embodied by the medium of wood, through Sino-French exchanges."

Hua Yong, woodworking artist

In 2016, Hua visited straw marquetry, lacquer and fine wood furniture workshops in Paris. She was amazed by the French artisans' application of design and color, as well as the seamless integration of craftsmanship with contemporary lifestyles.

Inspired by her observations, she has adopted diverse materials and intangible cultural heritage techniques into her woodworking designs to create an interplay of colors and textures, breaking away from the stereotypical solemn impression of traditional mahogany furniture among the younger generation.

According to the exchange program's regulations, the award-winners are granted a prize and a two-month residency at the artist-in-residence complex, the International City of the Arts in Paris, and one week in Cognac, southwestern France.

During their stay in Paris, they will host a studio open day or salon exhibition and later will host a solo exhibition at the Yishu 8 space in Beijing.

"I believe the residency will be a journey of endless possibilities. I hope to visit sculptors and architects who will enlighten me to think and create from a broader perspective, and transform philosophical thinking into tangible usage," Hua adds.

"For my solo exhibition, I will experiment with more geometric expressions but still incorporate the essence of traditional Chinese culture into the details. In addition to wooden furniture and furnishings, I'd like to explore my interest in creating everyday ornaments."

Contact the writer at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

Tanzania promotes heritage, beauty to attract Chinese tourists

By YANG FEIYUE
yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

A gala featuring traditional Tanzanian music, dancing and acrobatics, along with a tourism documentary, impressed an audience that packed the China National Opera House in Beijing on May 15.

The gala opened the 2024 China-Tanzania Culture and Tourism Year, and celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries.

Sun Yeli, China's minister of culture and tourism, Angellah Kairuki, Tanzania's minister of natural resources and tourism, and Khamis Omar, Tanzanian ambassador to China, attended the opening ceremony and delivered speeches.

"These have been six wonderful decades, strengthening the bonds between the two friendly countries," Omar said at the event.

In 2022, President Xi Jinping and Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan — in China for a state visit — jointly announced the upgrading of the countries' ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership to boost all-around cooperation and set an

example for China-Africa relations in the new era.

"They also decided that with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, 2024 is the year of culture and tourism between China and Tanzania," Omar says.

In addition to the singing and dancing that highlighted distinctive Tanzanian culture and history, as well as friendly exchanges between the two countries, the premiere of the 25-minute documentary, *Amazing Tanzania*, gave the audience an insight into the beauty of the East African country known for its vast natural and cultural heritage, aiming to promote Tanzanian tourism resources to Chinese audiences.

Under the guidance of Tanzanian President Hassan and Zanzibar President Hussein Mwinyi, renowned Chinese actor Jin Dong embarked on a captivating journey exploring the diverse attractions of Tanzania, including the pristine Zanzibar Island, Africa's highest mountain Kilimanjaro and the thriving wildlife of Serengeti National Park.

"I would like to invite Chinese tourists to Tanzania, so they can



Tanzanian artists perform at the opening of the China-Tanzania Culture and Tourism Year in Beijing on May 15. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

experience the rich and diverse landscapes in Tanzania," Kairuki says.

In addition to natural wonders, she says Chinese visitors will be in for a treat from the friendliness of

Tanzanian people and the fascinating culture.

Joseph Barnabas Munanka started his tourism business two years ago and has received hundreds of Chinese travelers to Tanzania.

"They love the culture, nature and animals there," he says.

He was exporting Chinese goods to Tanzania and many of his Chinese customers started to inquire about traveling to Tanzania.

"That was when I sensed the opportunities," he says.

He expects the number of his customers to double and even triple this year, driven by the bilateral culture and tourism year.

Before the opening ceremony, Kairuki led a delegation to the Beijing-based China CYTS Tours and talked to Xu Xi, a senior official with the tour company.

Both sides had in-depth discussions on further deepening cultural and tourism cooperation between China and Tanzania.

Xu says Tanzania's rich tourism resources and friendship with China have made it a popular destination among Chinese travelers.

He stresses that tourism, as an important means of public diplomacy, plays a significant role in international communication and cultural exchange. He proposes that cooperation in fields such as smart tourism with Tanzania should be strengthened and efforts

be stepped up to develop Tanzanian cultural and tourism products for more consumers.

Kairuki says that the Chinese market is vast, and the Tanzanian side is looking forward to strengthening cooperation with China's tourism enterprises.

She expects more cooperation with CYTS in areas such as exhibition services, hotel investment, comprehensive tourism services, product design and entertainment.

Last year, Tanzanian authorities announced that they had identified China as one of the country's new strategic tourism markets.

With the newly identified markets, Tanzania is likely to meet its target of attracting 5 million international tourists by 2025, according to Thereza Mugobi, director of tourism at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism.

According to Kairuki, the Tanzanian government is taking measures aimed at promoting Tanzania's tourism industry on the global map.

The tourism industry in Tanzania contributes 25 percent of foreign exchange earnings and 17.5 percent of gross domestic product, according to her.