

Jumbo endeavor

Residents of Yunnan province advised on elephant awareness

GOING GREEN, PAGE 6



Market cheers new regulation on stake cuts

BUSINESS, PAGE 14



Brushstrokes of brilliance

Fine tip of writing tool helped form the ideograms that shaped Chinese culture

THE HANDS OF TIME, PAGES 8-9

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2024

Making a statement



Premier Li Qiang (right), South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol (center) and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida meet the media on Monday in Seoul after attending the Ninth Trilateral Summit Meeting. SHEN HONG / XINHUA See more, page 3

Energizing of central region highlighted

Political Bureau also reviews measures to help prevent, defuse financial risks

By XU WEI xuwei@chinadaily.com.cn

A meeting of the Communist Party of China's leadership called on Monday for new breakthroughs in propelling the rise of the nation's central region, pledging tailored approaches to cultivate new quality productive forces, expedite the establishment of a modern industrial system and fortify the real economy.

The meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, the Party's core leadership, also reviewed a pilot regulation concerning accountability for failing to prevent and defuse financial risks.

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the meeting.

The meeting was held two months after Xi made a fact-finding trip to Changsha, Hunan province, where he presided over a high-level symposium on energizing the central region, comprising Shanxi, Henan, Anhui, Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the central region's GDP grew 4.9 percent year-on-year to 26.99 trillion yuan (\$3.75 trillion) in 2023, accounting for 21.4 percent of the national total. The region's growth rate was lower than last year's national average of 5.2 percent.

Participants in the meeting on Monday underscored the pivotal role of the central region as a hub for food production, energy resources, modern manufacturing, high-tech industries and comprehensive transportation networks.

They called for authorities to fully leverage the strengths of the region in scientific and educational resources to drive innovation and bolster original technological breakthroughs.

It is important to make coordinated efforts in transforming and upgrading traditional sectors, foster and build up emerging industries, and plan the development of future industries, said a summary of the meeting.

Modernizing the transportation infrastructure was deemed essential to facilitate the efficient and seamless flow of production elements and to enable the region to better integrate into the new development paradigm. The meeting called for coordinated efforts on environmental protection and ecological preservation, as well as green and low-carbon development, as part of broader efforts to construct a beautiful central region.

Moreover, the participants underscored the imperative of rural-urban integration and steadfast progress in the comprehensive vitalization of rural areas, calling for the region to bolster its capacity in ensuring food and energy resource security.

As for the prevention and defusing of financial risks, the meeting underlined work in this regard as essential to national security, the nation's overall development and the safety of people's assets.

The rollout of the pilot regulation is intended to spur officials at various levels to establish a correct view on how to evaluate their performance and ensure they can strengthen oversight, prevent and resolve risks, and promote high-quality development in the financial sector.

To ensure the implementation of the regulation, the meeting stressed a no-nonsense approach, signaling a commitment to strict oversight and accountability, and enabling financial regulation to truly "have teeth and thorns".

This entails establishing and perpetuating a climate in the financial sector characterized by strictness in tone, measures and atmosphere, the meeting's summary said.

China, Arab countries to seek end of Gaza conflict

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Arab nations are expected to issue a joint call for bringing an end to the Gaza conflict as soon as possible and urging the international community to implement the two-state solution, at a key China-Arab meeting that will be convened on Thursday in Beijing.

Noting that the raging conflict in the Gaza Strip has killed or wounded more than 100,000 civilians, Vice-Foreign Minister Deng Li said on Monday that the Chinese and Arab foreign ministers will have an in-depth discussion on the Palestinian issue to form a common voice during the 10th ministerial conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum.

"As a responsible major country, China believes that it is necessary for us to do our part in promoting peace in the Middle East and to shoulder our responsibilities in alleviating the humanitarian crisis," Deng said at a news briefing in Beijing ahead of the conference.

"At this moment, the international community should act with fairness and justice for peace in the Middle East," Deng added. Meanwhile, he dismissed the claim that China is filling the so-called power vacuum in the region left by the United States, saying that the Middle East is a land of its own people and its issues should be resolved by regional countries and their peoples through negotiations.

As a responsible major country, China believes that it is necessary for us to do our part in promoting peace in the Middle East and to shoulder our responsibilities in alleviating the humanitarian crisis.

Deng Li, vice-foreign minister

ness and justice for peace in the Middle East," Deng added.

Meanwhile, he dismissed the claim that China is filling the so-called power vacuum in the region left by the United States, saying that the Middle East is a land of its own people and its issues should be resolved by regional countries and their peoples through negotiations.

"You noticed recently that China's diplomatic activities in the Middle East are more active. In fact, our efforts in promoting peace in the

region have never been absent," Deng told reporters, noting that China has been firmly supporting the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring its legitimate rights and supporting the two-state solution since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Thursday's meeting, with the participation of President Xi Jinping and a number of Arab leaders at its opening ceremony, will point the way forward for relations as well as cooperation between China and Arab states, experts said.

According to the Foreign Ministry, King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Tunisian President Kais Saied and President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, are scheduled to attend the opening ceremony at Xi's invitation. They will also make state visits to China from Tuesday to Saturday.

"The attendance of the four Arab heads of state at the opening ceremony fully demonstrates the solidarity and cooperation between China and Arab countries, as well as their shared desire to continuously elevate ties to new heights," Deng said.

Deng said that the ministerial conference, co-chaired by Foreign

Minister Wang Yi and his Mauritanian counterpart Mohamed Salem Ould Merzouk, will study the specific measures to implement the consensus reached by leaders, expand China-Arab cooperation in various fields and promote the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future.

"The conference will be a new milestone for China-Arab relations as well as for China's bilateral ties with all Arab countries," he said.

Tang Zhichao, a researcher on Middle East studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the ministerial conference will play a pivotal role as a platform in guiding the future of China-Arab cooperation based on its past achievements.

"It is hoped that China will announce at the meeting a series of moves that point out key priorities for future China-Arab cooperation," he said, adding that China and Arab countries are expected to reach consensus on promoting modernization, among other issues.

Tang also said that as more countries are recognizing a Palestinian state, an appeal for justice on the Palestinian issue is what the international community urgently needs.

Goal is to close gap in relative prosperity

WORLD WATCH By Michael Dunford

China's progress in multiple ways. In 2018 the US started a trade war imposing high tariffs on Chinese imports. In 2019 it embarked on a technology war — often 'justified' in security terms — to curb the development of Chinese science and technology, placing some 150 Chinese companies on a sanctioned entity list and seeking to force the sale of Chinese technologies to US interests. The US banned Huawei from its networks and pressured other countries to do the same. Companies were banned from supplying software and components to Huawei and other Chinese companies. Just recently, in the light of the remarkable recovery of Huawei, the US revoked export licenses for several US semiconductor firms supplying Huawei.

See Economics, page 3

EXHIBITION EXPOUNDS ON 'VISION AND VERSE' IN CHINESE ART

Importance of poetry in painting displayed in 90 artworks at The Met

By ZHAO XU zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn

As there happened to be a volume of Du Fu's poetry on the table, I selected one suitable couplet for inscription on each of my landscapes," wrote Wang Jian, a much celebrated painter living in 17th-century China, on the final page of an album of pictures he painted for a longtime friend.

Du also wrote he had genuinely enjoyed the friendship since the days "when we were young and vigorous".

For Joseph Dolberg, an expert on ancient Chinese painting from New York's Metropolitan Museum

In-depth

of Art, the painted album, with each page in the style of an old master that had come before Wang, is a priceless item of art.

It is also a testament to the friendship between two deeply cultured men who shared not only a passion for art, but also pain and suffering.

Moreover, it provides a partial understanding of a phenomenon in Chinese art history.

See Art, page 2

Soccer diplomacy



French President Emmanuel Macron (left) and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier play table soccer on Tuesday while attending the Festival of Democracy in Berlin, Germany. The French president is on a three-day state visit to Germany until Tuesday. The festival celebrates the 75th anniversary of Germany's Basic Law. LUDOVIC MARIN / AFP

INSIDE Favorable policies alleviate pressure on foreign investment Global Views, page 13

www.chinadailyglobal.com A member of ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Newsstand prices: US \$1 Canada C\$1; UK £1.50 EU €1; Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling; Asia Pacific: Thailand 120 THB; Philippines 120 PHP; Myanmar 2000 Kyat; Japan 210 Yen; Dubai 10 Dirham; Pakistan 300 Rupee

PAGE TWO



Wangchuan Villa, by an unidentified artist, is on exhibition at The Met Fifth Avenue galleries in New York. It depicts China's eighth-century poet and painter Wang Wei's country estate in Lantian county, Shaanxi province. PHOTOS OF PAINTINGS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From page 1

"When painters sat down to paint in ancient China, why were they so often painting poetic themes?" asked Dolberg, who has attempted to answer that question through an exhibition titled *Vision and Verse: The Poetry of Chinese Painting*. The exhibition is on at The Met Fifth Avenue galleries in New York and features 90 works drawn almost entirely from The Met's collection.

Although Wang made his choice of poems sound purely accidental, in reality this may not be the case, said Dolberg.

"Based on my unscientific observation of Chinese painting history, Du Fu (712-770) is the most often inscribed poet from the Tang Dynasty (618-907)," he said, referring to an era in Chinese history when poetry writing is believed to have reached an artistic pinnacle.

Around 1,150 poems attributed to Du that have survived to this day offer proof to the immensity of his *oeuvre*, which a latter-day painter could "go to and grab whatever he wanted ... to deepen and expand his viewer's pictorial experience and imagination," to quote Dolberg.

But that number alone can't explain it all. "The prestige of Du Fu the poet started to grow posthumously, during the final century of the Tang Dynasty," said Zhang Yanan from the National Library of China who specializes in ancient Chinese poetry.

"It reached such a height in the succeeding Song Dynasty (960-1279) that Du Fu became a cult in himself, commonly worshipped by educated members of society, some of whom, Su Shi included, had used brushes to write and paint," said Zhang, referring to the Song Dynasty polymath who was in turn immortalized by his own words.

This was despite — some might say because of — the fact that for a large part of his life, Du had endured, if not outright anonymity, then repeated rejection and constant poverty. "Du's personal travails had certainly struck a strong chord with those who were subjected to similar experiences at one point or another, and who constituted the bulk of the literati group in pre-modern China," Zhang said.

In another painting on view at the museum, a speck of a figure stands atop a low cliff facing the magnitude of nature. The painter, from the 17th century, adorned his fanned-out work with two lines from a Du poem that goes: "The emerald cliff catches the breeze, a lone cloud thin; Red maples, their backs to the sun, ten thousand trees dense."

Familiar solitude

For Dolberg, the sense of solitude permeating the painting is all too familiar. Within the same gallery, a not-so-distant echo is sent by another painting, done during the 12th century, which depicts a man hurrying through a bare-branched winter forest on the back of a donkey. A boy attendant runs head of him, suggesting that the protagonist was a scholar, albeit a slightly woeful one who, seeking warmth, has clasped his hands inside the opposite sleeves. It seems that his broad-rimmed hat is hardly a shield against the chilly blast, as his boy companion offers little consolation.

The painting doesn't identify the man, but Dolberg believes he is Du's contemporary Meng Haoran (689-740) who, by the time of the Song Dynasty, had already come to embody what the curator calls "the visual iconography of the donkey

rider", providing Chinese art history with the image of a suffering poet-intellectual.

"These days we see paintings of travelers in forests, and scholars sitting by waterfalls that don't have a specific title. Yet we have to be aware of the fact that a painter from the 12th century was painting for a very different audience than the one coming into The Met Museum in 2024," said Dolberg. "Those were people who were constantly reading and writing poems. And to speak to that level of scholarship, a painting, rather than being generic, was more likely to have depicted a famous poet or poem that was very much on the minds of people in pre-modern China."

In talking about "scholars sitting by waterfalls", the curator was thinking about one man — Li Bai, Du's hedonistic friend who famously wrote, probably after some good drinking, "A cascade plunges a sheer three thousand feet, as if the Milky Way is tumbling down from the sky."

Both Du and Li had once been associated with the image of a donkey rider. But Meng clinched the deal partly thanks to his poet-painter friend Wang Wei (693-761), "one of the first famous Chinese poets who also painted", to use the words of Dolberg.

For any student of Chinese art history, Wang Wei's far-reaching influence on Chinese art is best summed up in his own words — "Poetry and painting share the same source."

"What Wang Wei was trying to express is very similar to the idea embedded in the ancient Latin phrase 'Ut pictura poesis', meaning 'as is painting, so is poetry,'" said Dolberg. "It appears to me that in both China and the Classical Mediterranean World and Europe, intellectuals and artists had been thinking deeply about the close relationship between these companion arts for some 2,000 years."

For more than a millennium, legend had been growing around poems and paintings Wang Wei had created depicting his country estate in modern-day Lantian county, Shaanxi province. While the poems have survived, the paintings — like all other ones traceable to Wang Wei — today exist only in copies including rub-

Art: Exploring connection between poetry, painting



Azure Cliff with Red Maples by Ming Dynasty painter Wu Bin. This scene of human encounter with nature is accompanied by a verse by Tang-Dynasty poet Du Fu inscribed by the painter.



This landscape painting of an album by Wang Jian was made in response to a line of poetry by Du Fu.



Visitors appreciate the artworks of the exhibition *Vision and Verse: The Poetry of Chinese Painting* at the Met Fifth Avenue galleries in New York. SU QIANG / CHINA DAILY

paintings that were not explicitly based on poems could sometimes evoke famous verses in the minds of their viewers.

"It was really during the Song Dynasty that Wang Wei's idea of painting and poetry sharing the same source had started to blossom," said Dolberg, who believes that the delay was due to a strong tendency among the educated elite to view poetry writing as a much nobler pursuit than painting.

One man who certainly did not think that way was Su Shi (1037-1101), the Song-dynasty polymath who was equally celebrated for his poetry and prose, painting and calligraphy.

"A picture resides in every piece of (his) poetry and vice versa" is Su's accolade for Wang Wei, an idea he "not only upheld but also revolutionized," to quote Dolberg.

"He did that by going back to how simple and beautiful the idea is. Through poetry, you can express what's in your heart; through painting, you can do it too," said the curator.

Two of the master's paintings arguably exist today, and both depict simple subjects as a grotesquely-shaped stone and tree. "They are more evocative than descriptive — a poem instead of a long essay," said Dolberg.

Literati painting

Self-expression, filtered through literary sensibilities, was at the heart of a unique Chinese art phenomenon known as "the literati painting", of which Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322) was a powerful exponent.

Zhao came up with the idea that "calligraphy and painting share the same source", which may sound to some like Wang Wei's take on the relationship between poetry and painting. "It's more like an homage that represented another key development in the creation and acceptance of the concept of literati painting," said Dolberg.

"Zhao probably had started reading poetry since (the age of) three. And the idea that he wasn't aware of most of Wang Wei's writings is just not credible," he continued.

"So he was trying to add to Wang's idea by saying that painting can't just be painting — it has to be like poetry, it has to be like calligraphy, otherwise it's not suited to a gentleman who's a member of the literati."

And for a painting to live up to that standard, it naturally had to include poetry and calligraphy which, together with painting itself, made up for the so-called "three perfections" required of a literati painter.

"The idea of a painter writing his own poem rendered in his own calligraphy to create this kind of total artwork had fundamentally changed the landscape of Chinese art for the next 600 years," said the curator. "That's why we need to take a deep look into the poetry of Chinese painting, not just as a way to gauge feelings and emotions, but also as a resource for understanding what it means to be part of the Chinese culture."

That being said, the feelings and emotions, even concealed in allegorical images or a landscape inspired by a nature vignette composed by Wang Wei or Du Fu, had never failed to resonate with a listening heart.

"When we were young and vigorous, we flew about in high spirits ... In our old age, both of us have suffered disappointments: once again we were alike," wrote Wang Jian of himself and his friend, for whom his album of Du Fu poetry-inspired landscape paintings was intended.

"I leave this album with him so that even while reclining, he may still go wandering."

blings by later artists.

Drenched in the master's signature bucolic idealism, the poems have collectively spawned, throughout history, the biggest number of painterly reinterpretations, one of which Dolberg has included in the current exhibition.

In another work on view, the 14th-century painter Tang Di wrote in his inscription that his painting was inspired by a Wang Wei poem, but stopped short of specifying which one. "Tang was likely to have played a game with his knowing audience," said the curator, who himself willingly took up the challenge.

"I walk to the place where the water ends; and sit and watch the time when clouds rise. Those are the lines from Wang Wei that I believe Tang had in mind," said Dolberg, who described the painting as having been executed in the "strength and grandeur of the northern school (of Chinese painting)" while capturing the "light meditative mood" of Wang Wei, the reputed founder of the southern school.

Utmost respect

Then there's the friendship between Wang Wei and Meng Haoran.

"Stay inebriated with rustic wine, read ancient books in mirth," was the poetic advice from Wang to a disillusioned Meng who, having failed to find fame and a position in the Tang Dynasty capital, was heading back home for a sequestered life.

Judging by all evidence, Wang had always treated his friend with the utmost respect. "As graceful as Meng Haoran was in a Wang Wei painting," was how a renowned Song-dynasty calligrapher described a painting by early-Song artist Li Cheng (919-967) that shows a scholar and his boy attendant traveling in a wintry forest.

The one on view at the Met Museum, once attributed to Li Cheng, is believed to be a 12th-century copy of the original painting.

Mining the legacy of the Tang Dynasty, the greatest era of Chinese poetry, the Song painters produced misty landscapes that "matched the dreamy quality of the poems", to quote Dolberg. In other cases, even

TOP NEWS

ANC faces stiff contest in South Africa elections

By NDUMISO MLIL in Johannesburg
For China Daily

South Africa's long-ruling African National Congress party is expected to face serious challenges in the upcoming elections, the most fiercely contested poll in 30 years, with the public calling for massive reforms to address a range of problems plaguing the country, including a sluggish economy, high unemployment rate and corruption.

Wednesday's national and provincial elections "would be the most highly contested elections since 1994. This is the first time that more than two former senior leaders of the African National Congress are challenging the ANC," said Sethulego Matebesi, an associate professor and head of the department of sociology at the University of the Free State, in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

The ANC won a majority in all previous elections in South Africa since it came into power in 1994 after the end of apartheid. In the 2019 election, the party got 57.5 percent of the votes. The main opposition parties include the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters party.

Matebesi said that people will expect whoever wins to prioritize provision of clean water and electricity, combating crime and corruption and creation of jobs. The current unemployment rate in South Africa is around 33 percent, one of the highest in the world.

Gideon Chitanga, a researcher from the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Africa-China Studies, said the 2024 elections could see the ANC's dominance being put to test for the first time. He said the elections will see a major challenge to the 30-year ANC rule. While South Africa has made huge progress in democratic consolidation, economic growth has been less than robust because of local and international factors, he added.

He said the paradox of South Africa is that while progress has been made in democratic consolidation, political freedom and building institutions of democracy, there are few economic opportunities. South Africa has been recording an average of less than 1 percent per annum economic growth, while the country's economic blueprint, the National Development Plan, targets an annual economic growth rate of 5 percent

to match the growing population.

"The opinion polls suggest that there will be some coalition governments ... I think the ANC will win with a slight majority," he said. "The country should work with its international partners like China and the United States to attract more capital to address unemployment, inequality and poverty. More needs to be done to address the challenges of weak economic growth, crime, corruption and governance."

Nombuso Khumalo, a 40-year-old resident of Johannesburg, said she is ready to vote for the party of her choice. The party that will win must create job opportunities, ensure there is water and electricity and show commitment in fighting social ills like drug abuse, said Khumalo. She said she registered to vote and promised to wake up early on voting day.

The past weekend saw most of the political parties canvassing for votes across the country. ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed supporters in Johannesburg where he promised to rule with integrity when his party is elected to power. He promised economic growth and an end to unemployment. Democratic Alliance leader John Steenhuisen addressed party supporters in Western Cape where he promised to "save South Africa." He promised to tackle corruption, grow the economy and create jobs.

Enock Kavindele, head of Southern African Development Community Electoral Observation, said the organization will observe the campaigns and actual voting process including the counting to ensure that these elections are conducted in a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible manner.

Busisiwe Mavuso, CEO of Business Leadership South Africa, an association of South Africa's major corporations, told China Daily that elections raise the risk premium of the country, which is expected to dissipate after the elections. Some investors usually have a "wait and see" attitude till the election results are announced. Mavuso pointed out that it is important for South Africa to make the environment conducive for investment with steps such as friendly immigration policies, tackling crime and removing red tape.

The author is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



Cyclone havoc

Vehicles move through a waterlogged street in Kolkata, India, on Monday after tropical cyclone Remal made landfall near the country's border with Bangladesh. The cyclone killed at least 10 people in Bangladesh and six in India.

BIKAS DAS / AP

Trilateral efforts sought for regional prosperity

Three countries agree to boost economic ties among key players

By CAO DESHENG in Seoul
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Premier Li Qiang has underlined the need for China, Japan and the Republic of Korea to accelerate trilateral cooperation to embark on a new journey of all-around development and make greater contributions to regional prosperity and stability.

Li made the remarks on Monday while addressing the ninth China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting in Seoul. Boosting economic ties among the key regional players topped the meeting agenda.

During the meeting, Li, together with ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, revived the trilateral dialogue that had been suspended for over four years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and dis-

putes among the Asian neighbors.

While jointly addressing the media with the other two Asian leaders after the meeting, Premier Li said the three countries need to enhance economic and trade connectivity, strengthen cooperation on regional industrial and supply chains, and work for the restart of negotiations on a trilateral free trade agreement.

He also said the three countries need to deepen scientific and technological cooperation and step up cooperation in frontier areas, such as artificial intelligence, the digital economy and the green economy.

"It is important that the three countries properly handle sensitive issues, differences and disagreements, accommodate one another's core interests and major concerns, and practice true multilateralism, to jointly safeguard security and stability in Northeast Asia and to promote peace and tranquility in the region

and beyond," the premier added.

China is the largest trading partner of the ROK and Japan, with the trade volume with each of them exceeding more than \$300 billion in 2023. Together, the three countries make up about 25 percent of global GDP and 20 percent of global trade.

While calling for strengthening collaborative innovation and cooperation in frontier areas, Li said that China will establish a China-Japan-ROK Innovation Cooperation Center to support the three countries in accelerating the cultivation of new innovation drivers.

He called on the three countries to make good use of their respective development advantages, actively respond to the needs of Association of Southeast Asian Nations member countries and other nations in the region, and create new engines of regional cooperation.

Regarding tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the premier urged all par-

ties to play a constructive role, stay committed to easing tension, work for early resumption of dialogue, push forward the process for a political settlement of the issue, and uphold regional peace and stability.

The three countries released the Joint Declaration of the Ninth China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting, the Joint Statement on a 10-Year Vision for Trilateral Intellectual Property Cooperation, and the Joint Statement on Future Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response.

The leaders reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the steadiness and continuity of the trilateral cooperation, and they agreed to deepen partnership in areas such as cultural and people-to-people exchanges, sustainable development, economy and trade, public health, science and technology, and disaster relief.

They pledged to resume the trilateral negotiations on a free trade agreement, jointly promote East Asian cooperation, work together to tackle climate change and other global issues, and promote the steady growth of relations among China, Japan and the ROK.

The three countries also agreed to designate 2025-26 as the China-Japan-ROK Years of Cultural Exchange.

Jiang Xueqing in Tokyo and Yang Han in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

China, Japan, ROK urged to boost trade exchanges

By CAO DESHENG in Seoul
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Premier Li Qiang has urged China, Japan and the Republic of Korea to reject external disruptions and stay committed to harmonious coexistence and mutual support.

Li made the remark on Monday when addressing the 8th China-Japan-ROK Business Summit in Seoul on the sidelines of the Trilateral Summit Meeting among the three Asian neighbors.

He underlined the need for the three countries to consider one another as partners and important opportunities on the path of development and to achieve a higher level of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The premier also called on entrepreneurs to play a crucial role in promoting economic and trade exchanges and cooperation among China, Japan and the ROK.

It is hoped that entrepreneurs will be the defenders of stable global industrial and supply chains, he said. ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also attended the event.

They commended the achievements in trilateral economic and trade cooperation, emphasizing its role in promoting global economic development.

They called for strengthening cooperation with Global South countries through the model of

"China-Japan-ROK Plus X", jointly addressing global challenges such as climate change, and making contributions to the economic growth of the three countries as well as the world.

Approximately 240 representatives from the business and government sectors of the three countries attended the summit, which focused on economic revitalization and sustainable development.

The business summit adopted a joint statement in which the business communities of the three nations pledged to cooperate on the facilitation of the digital transition, stimulation of trade, and stabilization of supply chains, as well as on the fostering of cutting-edge indus-

tries and industrial digitalization as key economic growth engines.

They also pledged to cooperate on the green transition, responses to aging populations, and healthcare. To promote sustainable development, the business communities of China, Japan and the ROK will work together on the development of carbon reduction technologies and the resolution of regional environmental issues, and jointly respond to climate change.

A working group for trilateral dialogue among the business communities of the three countries will be set up for joint research on private-sector economic cooperation and the discussion of current issues, according to the statement.

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. Aditional 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

3001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

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

Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 - No. 1339

Economies: Claims about overproduction are simply not true

From page 1

Recently it has offered 'economic advice' and made 'economic demands' that China curb its production capabilities on the grounds that it is engaged in overproduction, which, if China complied, would actually stall its economic and social progress, amounting to economic suicide.

The US has a past record of maintaining its economic leadership by suppressing the development of potential rivals. In the 1960s, it slowed the growth of Germany once it had nearly restored its position as the largest and most influential economy in the world; in the 1980s Japan's real GDP per head reached that of the US but its growth was stalled after the Plaza Accords and trade restrictions; in the 1990s, the Asian financial crisis slowed the growth of East Asian economies (which, however, posed no challenge to the position of the US) and forced them into distressed asset sales. While the US could make Japan or Germany

or South Korea comply, it has been unable to impose compliance on China. The impact of its actions are of course significant, but the US has not managed to prevent China from making progress economically and in the industries of the future.

In the years since 1949, through capital investment and productivity improvements, China has lifted itself from its position as one of the very poorest countries in the world to the status of a middle income country. Further progress depends not only upon continued productivity growth (innovation and its translation into new investment), but also addressing climate, development, security and other global challenges.

China has chosen a path involving the development of new productive forces and investing in green and digital industries including electric vehicle, solar energy, wind turbines, robotics, artificial intelligence and 5G communications. As a result of its chosen course, China has achieved signif-

icant improvements in productivity, considerably cheapening products that will help address the climate crisis and improve quality of life.

After some 500 years in which Europe and subsequently the US have dominated the world, their goal is to retain global leadership. And yet the investment record of these countries is very poor, and their economies are dominated by consumer services. As a result, their productivity growth has slowed and their own industries are uncompetitive in many of the emerging industries.

The claims about overproduction are spurious. In general, production capacity can exceed potential sales (at prices that cover costs). In China, capacity utilization rates are around 76 percent compared with 78 percent in the US. It is clear that the objection arises from the cost competitiveness of Chinese products. Producers in western countries cannot match Chinese costs and prices. This is not because of subsidies but because of differences in pro-

ductivity and investment and the presence in China in almost the entire supply chain. China's automated plants can produce 1,000 electric vehicles per day or thousands of 5G base stations. Moreover, Chinese products sell for much higher prices outside China than they do in China. From the point of view of the people who purchase these goods, their cheapness and price-quality ratios are important advantages. It seems clear that buyers are placing orders for Chinese made goods. If they could not sell them, they would not order and stock them, and Chinese enterprises would not produce items that generate, in anything less than the very short term, less revenue than they cost to make. In this situation, the onus is on rich countries to invest and improve their own productivity.

It is important to remember that on the expenditure side, Gross Domestic Product (Gross Domestic Expenditure) is equal to investment plus consumption plus net exports. In the world economy,

exports as a share of world GDP have fallen. China is addressing this issue through a strategy of dual circulation and by reorienting its trade toward the Global South and East. (China's exports to the Global South and East doubled in the last three years and now exceed those to developed country markets). The fact that China is increasing productivity and reducing costs and that some of these products play an important role in a zero-carbon transition makes these strategies increasingly attractive, especially if matched by development finance, and means they have considerable merit.

But China has also chosen to increase investment. The western countries insist that China should invest less and spend more on consumption. To do so would reduce China's medium-term rate of growth and reduce its capacity to innovate and grow through the diffusion of innovations, even though consumption may indirectly stimulate investment. Investment in any case creates incomes — wages and

orders and orders themselves result in wages which are spent in part on consumption. In any case China's critics should realize that in spite of an emphasis on investment — decades of relying on an investment-driven growth model in the words of the Financial Times — Chinese domestic consumption of Chinese manufactured goods has grown faster than the output of the Chinese manufacturing sector for nearly two decades.

Given however that China's per capita income is still far behind that of developed countries, China should certainly not abandon its GDP growth targets to serve the selfish interests of the Collective West, fundamentally of its elites whose incredible wealth should be invested to improve the quality of life of their people rather than telling China to forego its own economic progress.

The author is an emeritus professor at the University of Sussex and visiting professor at the Institute of Geographical Sciences and Natural Resources Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

NATIONAL VISION, LOCAL ACTION

Innovation drives growth in Hohhot

The city aims to foster high-tech industries for better development

By YUAN HUI in Hohhot and ZOU SHUO

Hohhot, capital of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, aims to take the lead in fostering new quality productive forces, according to He Haidong, mayor of the city.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, he said Hohhot has the conditions to spur new quality productive forces, as it has, for example, 70 percent of the higher education institutions in Inner Mongolia, 50 percent of its academic institutes and 30 percent of new and high-tech enterprises.

The region has six pillar industrial clusters: dairy, electronic information and technology, biomedicine, new materials and equipment manufacturing, new energy, and modern chemical industries, he said.

According to the local government work report, the total revenue of the dairy industry in Hohhot exceeded 256 billion yuan (\$36.5 billion) last year, up 14 percent year-on-year.

The city also ranked 15th in the country in terms of computing capacity and successfully held the China Green Computing Conference last year.

"Industrial development in Hohhot has followed a more high-end, intelligent and green path in recent years, as it is putting more attention on futuristic industries such as artificial intelligence, commercial aerospace, semiconductors and bioengineering," the mayor said.

He said the city has made efforts to introduce high-end talent,

Industrial development in Hohhot has followed a more high-end, intelligent and green path in recent years."

He Haidong, mayor of Hohhot

experts and academicians to work in the city, with about 100 arriving in Hohhot every year.

Meanwhile, 53,000 college graduates stayed to work in the city last year, and it hopes to attract 50,000 more this year, he said.

He said the city will offer high-quality jobs, create favorable conditions for entrepreneurship and build "youth residential communities" with high quality and low costs for college graduates so they can stay for the long term and contribute to the building of the city.

Meanwhile, the city has established funds for the development of the six pillar industries, and innovation investment funds to support the development of emerging, futuristic and innovation-driven industries, he said.

It has built a market-oriented and international business environment based on the rule of law and is actively building itself into a model city for the social credit system, the mayor said.

He said the city will also accelerate the building of a new international airport, and plans to increase the number of China-Europe and China-Central Asia freight trains this year, and boost friendly exchanges with sister cities in countries such as Mongolia, Russia and the United States.

Contact the writers at zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn



Staff members of the Yili Group, a major dairy producer, monitor production of a dairy factory in real-time at a digital center in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, in 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shenzhou XVIII crew to conduct spacewalks

Shenzhou XVIII crew members on board China's space station will conduct their first extravehicular activities in the next few days, the China Manned Space Agency announced on Monday.

The astronauts, who have been in the space station for 32 days, have accomplished a rotation with the Shenzhou XVII crew, attended to the maintenance and upkeep of the space station platform, ensured the upkeep of its life and health support system, conducted inspections and tests on extravehicular activity suits, and prepared for spacewalks.

They have also engaged in sys-

tem-wide pressure emergency drills, medical rescue exercises and other in-orbit training programs.

They have embarked on an array of space science experiments, and completed the second installation of material exposure experiment apparatus outside the space module, the agency said.

It said the Shenzhou XVIII crew is in good health, and the space station is operating smoothly, presenting good conditions for conducting extravehicular activities.

XINHUA

Panda party



Left: Visitors celebrate giant panda Ya Ji's birthday at Jinan Zoo in Shandong's provincial capital on Sunday. Right: Ya Ji prepares to eat her birthday cake, made mainly of bamboo shoots, at the zoo on Sunday. To celebrate Ya Ji's 10th birthday, the zoo also carefully crafted 10 toys including bamboo tubes, bamboo airplanes, bamboo swords and wind chimes for her to play with. HUANG ZHONGMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Warm winter pushes down this year's litchi output, leading to a price hike

By ZHENG CAIXIONG and LI WENFANG in Guangzhou and CHEN BOWEN in Haikou

The output of litchi in Guangdong province, one of its major production bases, is predicted to hit 876,400 metric tons this year, down 51 percent year-on-year.

That has led to a price hike in markets in the western part of Guangdong.

Litchi prices in the city of Maoming have risen by between 30 percent and more than 100 percent compared with last year.

Litchi from western Guangdong usually ripens earlier than fruit from other places.

Chen Houbin, a chief scientist with the National Litchi Longan Industrial Technology System, said the predicted output of litchi across the country this year will be 1.78 million tons, down 42.5 percent from the previous year.

The Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region is projected to harvest about 410,000 tons of litchi this year, a year-on-year reduction of 59 percent, while Hainan province is expected to produce about 200,000 tons, a year-on-year drop of 15 percent.

Chen, also a researcher at South China Agricultural University, attributed the reduction to a warm winter, which prevented mid- to late-maturing varieties from flowering properly.

Continuous extreme weather, including storms, hailstorms and tornadoes, also affected the harvest, he said.

Guangdong enjoyed a bumper litchi harvest last year, causing the litchi trees to become weak, and their vigor has yet to return to its optimal state. And litchi harvests typically occur in alternating years of high and low yields, Chen said.

He urged related departments to rely on technology to promote high-quality development of the litchi industry.

"More litchi varieties with better temperature requirements should be cultivated through seed selection, hybridization and biotechnology methods," he said.

Targeted measures should be taken to strengthen the trees, and manage nutrition and plant protection, while promoting soil improvement technology, nutrition diagnosis guidance, and modern agricultural equipment in litchi orchards, he added.

Earlier this month, the Litchi Meteorological Service Center was launched by the Guangdong Meteorological Service and Guangdong Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, providing special meteorological services to local orchards and litchi growers.

Zeng Zong, deputy director of the Guangdong Meteorological Service, said the center will accelerate

the automation of litchi meteorological observation, the digitization and intelligence of services, and the integration of scientific research and business services, to enhance the scientific and technological capabilities of meteorological support for the high-quality development of the industry.

Huang Yun, a litchi grower in Lingshui, Hainan, said a good harvest would not be achieved without good planting management.

Litchi trees often bear fruit in the rainy season, and disease and insect prevention, as well as drainage, are particularly important for a good harvest, said Huang, adding that he usually uses organic fertilizers to improve soil quality and builds ditches to ensure good drainage before the rainy season arrives.

Lin Changzhen, director of the Caixianyuan Fruit and Vegetable Cooperative in Gaozhou, Guangdong, said her cooperative has been using multiple methods, including expanding e-commerce platform channels, training professional talent and enhancing industrial technology to help expand litchi sales, stabilize the market and increase income growth.

Logistics and services are also important, as litchi is a highly seasonal fruit, she added.

Contact the writers at zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Traditional border trade points reopen

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQIONG in Lhasa

Following a four-year suspension, the reopening of the traditional border trade point between China and Nepal in Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, over the weekend was a significant milestone in economic collaboration between the nations.

Sonam Nyima, deputy chairman of the autonomous region, and Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Nepal's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, announced its formal reopening at a ceremony in the town of Chentang, in Shigatse's Dinggye county, on Saturday.

The occasion was witnessed by government officials, leaders from both sides and over 300 border residents.

"We will steadfastly implement the Chinese government's friendly policies toward Nepal, continue to pursue an open strategy of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, and deepen practical cooperation in areas such as border trade infrastructure construction, customs clearance capacity enhancement and project implementation to continuously create a bright future for China-Nepal relations," Sonam Nyima said.

Shrestha said that Nepal and Xizang have enormous potential for cooperation in trade and investment, Nepal looks forward to more Chinese investment and welcomes Chinese tourists to visit to appreciate the country's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

At the Chentang Traditional Border Trade Point, 110 Chinese merchants and 47 Nepalese merchants engaged in transactions encompassing more than 50 types of goods including daily necessities, construction materials, food and beverage, agricultural products and Nepalese handicrafts.

Other traditional trade points between China and Nepal in Shigatse — in Mayum, Drongba county; Tubarong, Saga county; Zonga, Gyirong county; Zhashigang, Nyalam county; Rongshar, Dingri county; and Ri'og, Dinggye county — also reopened the same day.

Several hosted reopening ceremonies with the participation of Nepalese and local government officials and border residents, underscoring a spirit of unity and cooperation.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional border trade between China and Nepal was temporarily suspended. The Xizang government introduced trial management measures for traditional trade points last month, with departments at all levels in the region cooperating to advance various tasks related to their reopening.

Contact the writers at palden_nyima@chinadaily.com.cn

Criminal cases see a drop nationwide

By YANG ZEKUN yanzhekun@chinadaily.com.cn

China is a country with one of the lowest crime rates, lowest homicide rates and fewest gun and explosion incidents, according to data released on Monday by the Ministry of Public Security.

Last year, the number of criminal cases filed nationwide decreased by 12.9 percent compared with 2019, ministry spokesman Li Guozhong said at a news conference in Beijing.

Data showed that the number of serious violent crimes in eight categories, including homicide and explosion, dropped 10.7 percent, with the homicide rate as low as 0.46 per 100,000 people. At the same time, the nationwide homicide case solving rate reached 99.9 percent, the highest level in the nation's history.

Li said that specialized operations targeting violent terrorist activities have resulted in no terrorist incidents across China in over seven years, adding that authorities have also rigorously cracked down on cult practices and carried out extensive education as well as transformation of individuals involved with cults.

Over the past five years, efforts have been intensified to improve mechanisms to prevent economic crimes affecting large sections of the population and avert financial

risks, leading to nearly 400,000 economic crime cases being solved and over 230 billion yuan (\$32 billion) in direct losses being recovered, the spokesman said.

In addition, measures for network security protection, critical information infrastructure security and data security have been strengthened through continuous campaigns, Li said.

These efforts focused on tackling online issues such as infringement of personal information, cyber rumors, cyber violence, paid internet trolls and businesses supporting online crimes, resulting in the investigation of 453,000 cybercrime cases, he said.

"Efforts have been made to study the characteristics and patterns of crimes under new circumstances, improve measures for combating and preventing crimes, and strive to solve major cases more swiftly and minor cases more frequently, while maintaining better control over crime rates," Li said.

Regular campaigns against organized crimes have been promoted, with rigorous actions taken against prominent offenses such as prostitution, gambling, theft, robbery and fraud, particularly telecom and online fraud, he said.

Over the past five years, more than 5,200 mafia-like criminal organizations have been dismantled, and over 1,600 fugitives involved in organized crimes have been appre-

hended at home and abroad, according to the ministry.

Nearly 1.95 million telecom fraud cases have been resolved, and about 49,000 Chinese telecom fraud suspects in Myanmar have been handed over to Chinese authorities, data showed.

Compared with 2019, the number of theft, robbery and fraud cases filed in 2023 decreased 31.4 percent and the number of abduction cases plummeted 66.6 percent.

The ministry has also continued to carry out special campaigns targeting crimes in the food, drug, environmental and intellectual property sectors, solving 354,000 cases.

Efforts to combat illegal fishing in the Yangtze River basin have persisted, resulting in a two-level improvement in the biological integrity index of the river's main stream since 2018.

Li said China's public security authorities have actively implemented the Global Security Initiative, achieving significant results in international law enforcement cooperation and contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions to global security governance.

China has also reached numerous agreements with other countries on practical cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism, anti-drug efforts, fugitive apprehension and asset recovery, and the protection of overseas interests, he said.

CHINA

Perseverance of man with hemophilia inspires others

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Despite standing 1.7 meters tall, Xiao Tan, from Changsha in Hunan province, tries to maintain a weight of around 40 kilograms.

This is not because he has an eating disorder, but because he has a rare condition known as hemophilia, which means his blood doesn't possess the needed proteins for clotting.

While a small cut is not an issue for most people, for those with hemophilia it can be potentially life-threatening.

Tan, who wishes to only use his family name for privacy reasons, keeps his weight so low to limit the amount of medicine he requires, as his treatment is expensive despite being partially covered by insurance.

It is estimated that the prevalence of hemophilia in China is about 3.6 per 100,000 people.

Despite some misunderstanding among some members of the community, hemophilia is not contagious, and is usually the result of an inherited mutated gene.

The 25-year-old was diagnosed with the condition when he was 3 years old.

However, back then Tan's family, living in Chaling county at the time, didn't have the financial means or medical knowledge to get him injected with clotting factor — blood plasma involved in the clotting process.

Therefore, whenever there was internal bleeding, he could only lie in bed, suffering great pain and waiting for the bleeding to stop.

"I'm told the pain can be even worse than when women give birth. And if the bleeding is not stopped, it means severe pain for a long time," he said.

Upon being diagnosed with hemophilia, his father blamed his mother as the mutation for the condition is usually passed from mother to son through the X chromosome.

He would argue with her and even physically beat her. After a while, his father left the family.

Tan began taking traditional Chinese medicine for the disease at an early age.

Whenever there was severe pain, his mother would put a hot towel on his joints and massage him to alleviate the pain.

When he was 10 years old, he almost died from severe internal bleeding.

The local TV station and newspaper ran stories about his plight, and many people donated money to help him get treatment and clotting factor from a hospital in Changsha.

"I have used all kinds of medicine, borrowed some from fellow patients with the condition and even used clotting factor that was out of date," he said.

"When there is bleeding, any medicine can be lifesaving, and expired medicine or even those for clinical trials are better than no medicine."

Since then, he has had clotting factor replacement therapy to treat bleeding episodes. Since 2022, the replacement therapy has been given regularly at home to help prevent bleeding episodes.

Tan graduated from the Hunan University of Chinese Medicine with a degree in acupuncture and massage in 2022.

Medical insurance in Changsha covers up to 300,000 yuan (\$41,468) annually for medical bills associated with hemophilia.

He said he chose to study medicine because he was inspired by his many experiences with doc-

tors over the years. He started documenting his daily life on social media platform Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, without revealing his condition at first.

In April 2022, due to a particularly painful period of constant bleeding, he posted a video on Douyin revealing his condition and that he feared it might take his life.

The post provoked an outpouring of compassion and encouragement, with some commenters sharing their own stories of their struggles with different illnesses.

"I was a very timid person and did not want to tell other people about my illness, yet the warm words from unknown strangers online were like sunlight shining through the darkness, helping me get through the dark days," he said.

Since then, Tan has been more open about telling his stories of battling the disease.

He has posted videos of him injecting himself with plasma and receiving treatment from doctors.

Many of his fans are also hemophilia patients or have family members with the condition. Tan gives suggestions on getting treatment while also offering them psychological support.

Due to the excessive internal bleeding he has experienced over the years, Tan's knees, ankles and pelvis have all been damaged.

Despite this, he was still able to travel to the Xizang autonomous region by himself in April.

"I have been bedridden for most of my life, and I really wanted to visit Xizang. The view was so mesmerizing and even better than I have seen on TV and online," he said.

"Although my legs hurt every step I take, I still want to encourage my fans so that they can also travel and see the bigger world if they take regular preventive therapy."

Tan now has more than 290,000 followers on Douyin, but despite his family being in debt to cover his medical bills, he said he is reluctant to monetize his account.

"There are many possible emergencies accompanying the disease, and someday I might die if there is a hemorrhage from sudden injuries, but I still want people around me and my fans to be happy every day," he said.

"I do not hate or blame the disease. I have accepted it. It has become a part of me."

Someday, there might be a cure for the disease, he said. He is still hopeful, as people can move forward when there is hope.

"If it's possible, I want people to know me not because I have the disease. And a healthy me can become a doctor to save others from disease."

Ma Danyi, 19, from Changshu, Jiangsu province, is a fan of Tan on Douyin.

She said Tan's videos have helped her greatly with her depression and bipolar disorder.

"I like him because although he is in a dire place, he still helps others find light in life," Ma said. "I want him to not lose hope as he is in a better condition than before."

Wen Ying, 40, from Taizhou, Zhejiang province, is another fan of Tan on Douyin.

She came across his videos in September and felt compassion for him. She said she first learned about the disease from his videos and livestreams.

"He is a very nice person and lives his life positively despite so much suffering. He deserves to get better and be happier," Wen said.



An area that was once part of the Horqin Sandy Land has been transformed into a lush meadow by Hou Gui in Zhangwu county, Liaoning province. PHOTOS BY YAN DONGJIE / CHINA DAILY

Dedicated digger plants forests to stave off sand

Hou Gui has spent decades protecting the farmland of his village in Liaoning

By YAN DONGJIE

in Fuxin, Liaoning
yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

Over the past 24 years, Hou Gui has tirelessly dedicated himself to planting trees and protecting the forests up in the mountains, living in a simple house in the woods and rarely even looking at his phone.

If outsiders want to contact him, they have to call his wife first.

"The trees behind the fence are the ones I planted years ago," said Hou, pointing at a row of pines. "Even if the wind picks up, it's not going to move much sand anymore."

Hou, 73, is from Liuji village in Zhangwu county, Liaoning province. The area is located on the southern edge of the Horqin Sandy Land, which has been plagued by sandstorms historically.

In the spring of 1999, just after the villagers had finished planting, a sandstorm swept through and buried every single sapling. The sight of the spoiled crops deeply saddened Hou.

Responding to the national call to resist the spread of shifting sands, something that can decimate arable land, he pledged to his fellow villagers that he'd take up the mantle of planting trees around the village to

control the sand and protect the farmland.

Hou resigned from his position as the village committee director, pooled his savings with his family and took on the contract to take over an area of shifting sands at Sihecheng Forest Farm.

The Horqin Sandy Land is one of the closest sources of sand and dust to Beijing. Decades ago, there were vast shifting sand dunes in the area.

Hou recalled what life was like at that time. "Sometimes the sandstorms would blow all night long, and in the morning, we couldn't even push our doors open because they'd been blocked by the sand blown in."

There is a local saying: "Wind comes only once a year, but lasts from spring to winter."

At the beginning of his afforestation efforts, Hou was repeatedly troubled by sandstorms.

Planting trees on sandy land is a difficult task within itself, and with frequent strong winds, the first batch of saplings planted were quickly submerged in sand.

After several further setbacks, Hou set about employing methods such as creating grass grids, persisting for years, gaining experience and gaining success one step at a



Hou Gui at the Zhangwu Sand Control Spirit Cadre School.

Zhangwu to control sand. Only by passing on the torch from one generation to the next can we do this job well and solidly."

The hundreds of hectares of forests planted by Hou in Sihecheng town have now become a live teaching site for the Zhangwu Sand Control Spirit Cadre School. Students can participate in voluntary tree planting here and get involved firsthand in sand control and afforestation efforts.

Liaoning's sand control practice is an important part of China's Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program.

The program was launched in the late 1970s, covering more than 4.3 million square kilometers of land across 13 provinces. After decades of effort, the forest coverage in the Three-North region has increased from 5.05 percent in 1977 to 13.84 percent today. With the protection of the "Green Great Wall", sand and dust weather in northern regions has been decreasing.

Jiang Shengwei, deputy director of the Forestry and Grassland Administration of Liaoning Province, said that last year, Liaoning formulated the "Liaoning Province Horqin Sandy Land Annihilation Battle and Desertification Comprehensive Control Action Plan", proposing that by 2030, the vegetation coverage of existing sandy land in the province should reach over 80 percent.

time. In the past 20 years, he has planted over 200,000 trees such as Mongolian Scot pines and red pines on 160 hectares of sandy land.

Today, the once-shifting sand dunes have been transformed into lush artificial pine forests. Due to his dedication to afforestation and sand control, Hou was honored with the title of "National Outstanding Communist Party Member".

In 2021, he was invited as a representative to attend the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China at Tian'anmen Square in Beijing.

"It's really not easy for us in

China's 'bridge capital' a popular crossing among tourists

CHONGQING — As night falls, more than 1,000 sets of lights on the Chongqing Baijusi Yangtze River Bridge illuminate, dazzling tourists in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality.

The bridge, which has gained popularity on multiple social platforms due to its unique sci-fi look, attracted tourists from all over the country during the recent May Day holiday.

Chongqing Baijusi Yangtze River Bridge is 1,384 meters long, connecting the districts of Dadukou and Banan in the city. The main tower of the bridge is 236 meters high, which is equivalent to the height of an 84-story building. It is the tallest bridge tower in the central urban area of Chongqing. The bottom of the bridge tower is designed as a transparent circle, evoking the image of a science fiction movie under the play of light and shadow.

In April this year, a news conference titled "This is Chongqing — China's bridge capital" was held under the Chongqing Baijusi Yangtze River Bridge. According to the conference, there are more than 20,000 bridges in Chongqing, including 105 ultra-large bridges across the Yangtze River and Jialing River.

Xi Hong, deputy director of the Chongqing Municipal Commission of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, said that the Yangtze River, Jialing River, Wujiang River and other rivers divide Chongqing into



People enjoy the night view of the Chongqing Baijusi Yangtze River Bridge. FAN YONGGEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

many parts. As a result, bridges have become important transport arteries in the city.

In 2005, the bridge committee of the Peking Mao Yi-sheng science and technology education foundation selected Chongqing as China's bridge capital at its annual meeting.

"Chongqing's bridges have witnessed the rapid rise of China's construction," Xi Hong said, noting that Chongqing's bridge construction has contributed experience to the world and is a milestone in the history of bridges.

She added that 60 percent of Chongqing citizens have to cross more than two bridges every day during their daily commute.

"It used to take at least 30 minutes to drive from Babin Road to Dadukou on the opposite side, but the time has been reduced to five minutes since the Baijusi Yangtze River Bridge opened to traffic," said Liu Gongfeng, deputy head of Banan district.

Liu said that the bridge has changed people's lives. In particular, the local government has seized the opportunity presented by the bridge's popularity to build infrastructure such as viewing trails, viewing platforms, convenience service points and public toilets in response to the needs of citizens and tourists.

According to statistics, since the

beginning of this year, driven by the Baijusi Yangtze River Bridge, the passenger flow of several key business areas in Banan district has increased significantly. It has attracted more than 900,000 tourists and stimulated tourism revenue exceeding 270 million yuan (\$37.3 million).

During this year's May Day holiday, in order to improve the tourist experience, the Chongqing Qiansimen Jialing River Bridge was closed to traffic. This provided tourists with a chance to stroll across the bridge and safely take in the beauty of Chongqing.

In recent years, Chongqing has upgraded the space under the bridge, building all kinds of convenience facilities and slow traffic systems.

The vibrant Jiulongtan Square lies under the E'gongyan Bridge, which spans the Yangtze River. Citizens can use solar-powered fitness facilities in the 1,000-square-meter smart fitness area. They can also use three connected riverside walks.

"A few years ago, there was only an abandoned quay under the bridge, and it was overgrown with weeds, which made it difficult to walk, so we hardly went to the riverside to play," said Wu Feng, a local resident. "Now the space under the bridge has been transformed, and we have another place close to nature."



From left: Xiao Tan poses at different tourist sites while traveling in the country. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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.



Clockwise from top: A group of Asian elephants forage for food at a rice field in Jiangcheng county, Yunnan province, in July. CHEN XINBO / XINHUA
Zhao Huaidong, an expert in ecology of Xishuangbanna in Yunnan, gives a lecture during a training session held in Mengla on March 10.
CHEN LIANG / CHINA DAILY Ma Chenyue and Chen Meng shake hands for a cooperative project in Mengla on March 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Locals in Yunnan trained on Asian elephant awareness

Residents advised on how to deal with mammals if they enter inhabited areas

By CHEN LIANG in Mengla, Yunnan
chenliang@chinadaily.com.cn

On just the second day after arriving in Mengla county in the Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, Ma Chenyue and her colleagues received word that a group of 43 wild Asian elephants had been sighted near a village some 60 kilometers from Mengla's county seat. These majestic animals, the largest land mammals in Asia, were spotted foraging in corn fields.

Ma, program manager of the International Fund for Animal Welfare China, and her team were eager to witness firsthand the elephants' expansion into areas inhabited by humans.

After reaching the location of the sighting the following morning, however, the conservationists found that the elephants had already completed their nocturnal feast and retreated into the forest to rest beneath the canopy.

"What we saw was just a field of 'harvested' corn," Ma said.

Cao Dafan, program officer at IFAW China's Asian elephant protection program, estimated the field to be over 2 hectares, or four soccer pitches. "It took the herd of elephants just a single night to clear the corn from this plot," Cao said.

Ma and Cao journeyed to Mengla to participate in the launch of a collaborative project between the county forestry and grassland bureau and IFAW China on May 10. The initiative, named the Human-Elephant Conflict Prevention Community Ranger Network, aims to further enhance the capabilities of local personnel engaged in Asian elephant monitoring.

Another goal is to increase awareness of safe behavior among locals who are faced with elephants coming into the areas in which they live.

As many as 50 people took part in the inaugural training session, including 16 dedicated wild Asian elephant watchers.

"By monitoring the movements of Asian elephants around the clock seven days a week, they stand at the forefront of conservation efforts and are both the targets and operators of our project," Ma said.

Since 2000, IFAW China has been

actively involved in the protection of Asian elephants in Yunnan. In 2020, a collaboration with the forestry and grassland bureau in Jinghong city, Xishuangbanna, led to the inception of the Human-Elephant Conflict Prevention Community Ranger Network project. Mengla now serves as the project's second base in Xishuangbanna.

Why Mengla?

Mengla county is one of the most important habitats for Asian elephants in the country, according to Ma, with approximately 130 wild Asian elephants populated there.

"The population of wild Asian elephants has increased from about 80 in the 1980s," said Chen Meng, director of Mengla's forestry and grassland bureau's nature reserve administrative department.

Due to improved conservation efforts over the years and an increased environmental consciousness among the populace, Chen said the elephants' population has continued to grow, the range of their activities is expanding and many communities that had never experienced elephant activities before are now faced with having to deal with roaming herds.

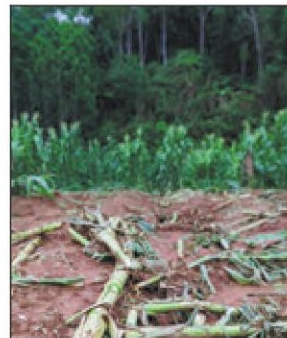
Asian elephants can grow up to 9 feet tall and weigh 5 metric tons.

Many of the animals have grown accustomed to human presence and encounters, leading to heightened conflicts between the two.

To significantly reduce safety incidents and conflict between elephants and humans, he said the local government established an Asian elephant monitoring team in December 2019. Comprising 16 members, the team is tasked with monitoring the activities of wild Asian elephants across the six townships in the county where elephants are present.

The team operates in subgroups, with two members partnering up to utilize drones for continuous surveillance of wild elephant movements.

Data on the elephants, including their locations, group sizes and behaviors, is relayed to the bureau. Subsequently, the information is disseminated to local communities and residents through various channels such as radio, loudspeakers or mobile messaging. A centralized warning system is under construction, he said.



A patch of corn field destroyed by wild elephants in Mengla on March 11. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Living with elephants

Through training, according to Ma, the primary objective is to heighten the awareness of Asian elephant conservation and biodiversity among members of the monitoring team.

"By empowering these elephant watchers, we intend to encourage them to bring up-to-date information on elephants and safety protocols to local communities," she said. "We expect that it will foster community acceptance of the information and facilitate the acquisition of essential knowledge. By imparting skills that help villagers avoid encounters with elephant herds, we anticipate an improvement in the safety of the local people."

Over the past 20 years since IFAW China initiated its Asian Elephant Protection project, Cao said the main strategies implemented include establishing an elephant activity monitoring and warning system to alleviate human-elephant conflicts; conducting scientific research to formulate elephant population protection strategies; mobilizing local communities to increase their adaptability and tolerance toward elephants; supporting local communities in adopting sustainable development practices to enhance their resilience to economic losses caused by elephant activities; and conducting environmental education to enhance community awareness of elephant conservation.

Cao said 540 publicity activities in 186 villages, farms, tea processing plants and communities in Jinghong have involved 13,571 residents so far.

The project has so far produced and distributed 40,000 copies of the Asian Elephant Safety Manual.

Since 2021, IFAW China has given 70 sets of field equipment to the elephant watchers in Jinghong. The donation has significantly bolstered their safety and protection while carrying out fieldwork.

At the launch ceremony in Mengla, the nonprofit donated 15 sets of field equipment such as hiking boots and garments to the monitoring team members.

"We hope that this equipment will improve and enhance the efficiency of their fieldwork," Ma said.

Trackers ensure public remains aware of risks

By CHEN LIANG

In Mengla county, within Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture of Yunnan province, few people face a job as demanding as that of Luo Chenhou and Yan Guan. Tasked with using drones equipped with infrared cameras to monitor the activities of wild Asian elephants around the clock seven days a week, their commitment is unwavering.

"We often find ourselves aligning our schedules with the elephants," Luo, 31, told China Daily in the office of the Mengla forestry and grassland bureau in the county seat. "Beginning our day in the wilderness around 8 to 9 in the morning, our work typically extends until the early hours of the following day, around 1 or 2 in the morning. Our break only comes when the elephants choose to rest in the forest."

As members of Mengla's Asian elephant monitoring team, Luo and Yan are part of a dedicated group of 16 individuals entrusted with overseeing the activities of over 120 wild elephants in the county. Their responsibilities include documenting essential information about elephant herds such as their whereabouts, group sizes and behaviors. The data is then relayed to the bureau, which disseminates it to local communities and residents through various communication channels such as radio broadcasts, loudspeakers or mobile messaging.

Living in the county seat, Luo and two of his colleagues form a subgroup that alternates shifts to journey to the elephant activity sites. Their departures are guided by information provided by local communities or estimations derived from the previous day's surveillance efforts.

When the elephants venture into

the fields to forage, Luo said, he and his team employ a drone to maintain continuous surveillance of their movements.

"If the elephants return to the forest, away from villages and people, we don't bother them and can have a break," he said.

In the scenario where the elephants enter a rubber plantation, Luo and his team must take immediate action. "The harvest season has started this month, and villagers are preoccupied in the rubber tree forests," Luo said. "The likelihood of them encountering the elephants at close quarters is increasing. We must alert the villagers before such incidents occur to ensure their safety and prevent potential conflicts."

"Sometimes villagers will gather to watch the elephants," he said. "We will persuade the people to leave at once."

Yan, a 25-year-old from the local Dai ethnic group, joined the team four years ago. He and another team member are responsible for monitoring a herd of 16 elephants mainly found in and around the county's Mengman township.

He said that the local people have become familiar with the elephants' existence in their lives and will usually follow their suggestions to keep a distance from the animals.

The elephants are smart, too, he said. "Except during the mating season, they are mild and tolerant to people's appearance," Yan said.

As a result, he said, he has never met any real danger while working in the field.

From their monitoring work, Luo and Yan earn 3,000 yuan a month.

"It's truly important work," Luo said. "It can help people avoid potential dangers while encountering wild Asian elephants."



Cao Dafan (middle) talks with two members of the Asian Elephant Safety Warning Monitoring Team in Mengla county, Yunnan province, on May 11. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Delicate balance needed for animals, humans

By CHEN LIANG

Asian elephants, once widely distributed in tropical and subtropical regions of Asia, are an iconic species with significant ecological value. At present, the global population of wild Asian elephants is around 50,000, with their habitats scattered across 13 countries. The International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List categorizes the Asian elephant as an endangered species.

In Yunnan province, there are nearly 300 wild Asian elephants in Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Pu'er city and Lincang prefecture. Since 1988, the animals have been classified as first-class protected species in the country.

The number of Asian elephants in China has increased from over 180 individuals in the 1990s to around 300 at present.

With the strengthening of conservation efforts and the improvement of people's awareness of protection, the elephant population continues to grow, and the range of their activities is expanding.

The overlap of elephant activity areas with the living and production areas of surrounding human populations restricts the development of some areas, making it an important goal of current conservation efforts to alleviate this conflict.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare initiated an Asian elephant protection project in 2000.

The project aims to achieve harmonious coexistence between humans and elephants, said Ma Chenyue, program manager of IFAW China.

Between 2009 and 2014, the project collaborated with the forestry and grassland administration of Pu'er city to launch the first village-level warning monitoring system in China, establishing a long-term and efficient public safety prevention mechanism. This warning system covers more than 40 communities in four townships. In the same period, Ma said there were no safety incidents caused by direct conflicts between local villagers and elephant herds in these areas.

In recent years, as elephant activity areas have expanded into previously unexplored territories, human-elephant conflict zones have also expanded. In response, the project has provided technical support and equipment to the Asian Elephant Warning Monitoring Center in Menghai county, Xishuangbanna, including equipping 20 patrollers with monitoring devices to enhance their capabilities.

"The monitoring system covered over 50 villages where Asian elephants frequent in Menghai, benefiting more than 50,000 local residents," she said.

"As of May 2019, the monitoring system had successfully prevented about 57 incidents of human-elephant conflicts, according to the local government.

WORLD US

Editor's note: The United States has announced that new tariffs will soon be imposed on Chinese imports such as electric vehicles. China Daily examines experts' concerns over the adverse effects such action may have on US consumers and others, and on climate change objectives.

Tariffs on electric cars and batteries criticized

Experts see US actions as failed policy that is likely to backfire

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco and YIEAN XU in Washington

Steep tariff rises by the US on Chinese electric vehicles and batteries are likely to backfire, hurting consumers and companies and hampering climate goals, experts say, even though the stated goal is to protect US manufacturing jobs.

On May 14, US President Joe Biden directed the office of the US Trade Representative to increase tariffs on \$18 billion worth of Chinese goods, including electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, semiconductors, solar cells, medical supplies and certain critical minerals and metal products, after reviewing existing tariffs under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. The office announced last week that the changes will take effect on Aug 1.

The greatest increase applies to Chinese-made EVs, with tariffs rising from 25 percent to 100 percent. However, the practical immediate impact of this measure is minimal because there are few Chinese EVs in the US market.

More concerning for the industry is an increase in tariffs on Chinese EV batteries and parts, from 7.5 percent to 25 percent. This directly affects US EV makers such as Tesla and Ford, who rely on Chinese lithium iron phosphate batteries for some models.

The tariffs are likely to result in higher prices for EVs and batteries for US consumers, said Soody Tronson, an IP law expert in Silicon Valley, California, with a focus on the energy sector.

"The lack of competition will likely result in price increases. We have to consider how these tariffs affect everyday Americans."

Tronson pointed to the potential negative impact on Biden's climate goals. The administration has said EVs are central to its climate change strategy, and restricting access to EV battery technologies, in which China leads the world, may slow the US



Visitors to the Xiaomi Automobile flagship store look at the Xiaomi SU7 electric car on display in Beijing on Tuesday. NG HAN GUAN / AP

transition to clean energy.

Tronson highlighted the technology to extract metals such as lithium, cobalt, manganese and nickel from old EV batteries and recycle them into new EV batteries.

China has more than half the world's battery and production scrap and leads in preprocessing and material recovery capacity, a recent Bloomberg report said, citing the consultancy Circular Energy Storage in London.

China has been able to produce electric cars with recycled batteries at scale and dominates in battery recycling, thus making them doubly green.

Gordon Johnson, the founder of GLJ Research in New York, called the 100 percent tariff on Chinese EVs

"purely political".

"There are virtually no Chinese EV cars imported into the US, so the tariffs on Chinese EVs are clearly, simply virtue signaling from Biden to try to look tough on China in an election year. I liken it to throwing a paper towel into the ocean to try to dry it out."

Some academics have also expressed frustration over the White House action.

"All the evidence is very clear that the tariffs hurt American businesses and American consumers," said Anthony Moretti, head and an associate professor in the Department of Communication and Organizational Leadership of Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.

Mounting frustrations

"And the frustration that I have, and I'm not alone in this, but the frustration that I have with this is that it's a policy that does not work. And so why continue?"

The Biden administration has made it clear that it wants more and more people to drive electric vehicles to reduce the use of fossil fuels and to help in the fight against climate change, Moretti said, and now "the best affordable EVs on the market come from China."

"It seems incompatible to, on the one hand, say we want people to drive electric cars but to then turn around and say we're going to deny them access to some of the most affordable ones. I think it's a failed policy," Moretti added.

Gernot Wagner and Conor Walsh, economists in the Business School at Columbia University in New York, echoed this view. They suggested in an article in The New York Times that despite the official justification of protecting US manufacturers, the real aim is to appeal to voters in states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that will be critical in the presidential election in November.

However, the tariffs will ultimately hurt middle-class consumers by limiting access to affordable EVs, they said.

"With more cash and better credit, wealthy Americans are the only ones who can afford the electric vehicles currently on the market, which cost more than \$55,000 on average. Middle-class Americans should have access to these cars, and because of



The lack of competition will likely result in price increases. We have to consider how these tariffs affect everyday Americans."

Soody Tronson, IP law expert in Silicon Valley, California xxxxx

these tariffs they will remain a luxury, available mainly to the rich."

Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-American Studies in Washington, echoed the view that the move is for election purposes.

The US made the review findings of Section 301 public "this late" because their aim is political, he said.

"Only bad news was going to come out of the process."

Adding another layer of controversy is the potential violation of World Trade Organization rules, said Donald Lewis, an international trade law expert and a nonresident research fellow with the Center for China and Globalization.

"Governments should abide by their tariff bindings under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, so you cannot raise tariffs above a particular level once the tariffs are set and each government agrees."

"Unfortunately, since the (Donald) Trump administration there have been massive violations of the treaty, and the Biden administration has followed suit. This is in violation of WTO law, which was established by the United States."

Moretti said that given the current political climate in Washington, "it is safe to continue to appear to be strong by doing something that hurts America" for the Biden administration.

"Ultimately, protectionism is a policy not of acting out of strength, but acting out of weakness."

Contact the writers at lizhu@chinadailyusa.com.

Chinese EVs wow on social media

By HENG WEILI in New York
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

While Chinese electric vehicles aren't popular with Washington politicians, social media users are raving about them, with some posting stunning videos of the EVs' capabilities.

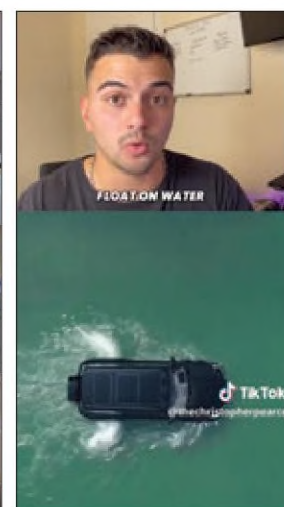
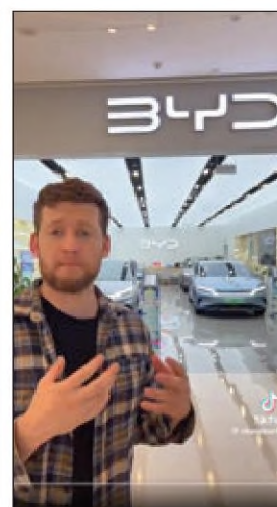
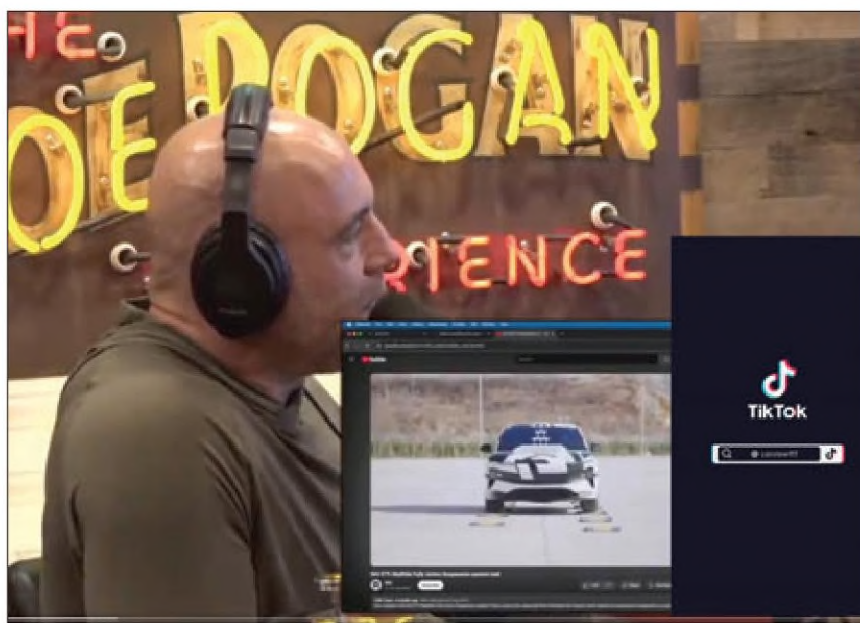
Joe Rogan, a famous US podcaster whose *The Joe Rogan Experience* podcast is the most popular in the world, said on May 18: "China is like really innovating right now in the field of electric cars. ... Their electric cars have made massive leaps. Just a few years ago ... Elon (US-EV maker Tesla CEO Elon Musk) dismissed a lot of their electric cars. But now he's like, 'No, no, no,' these are really legitimate."

Rogan said: "China has the most advanced electric-car suspension that I have ever even heard of. It's so good, that you could drive over speed bumps and have glasses balance on the hood," he said, referring to the NIO ET9. "These things go over everything, and they stay flat. They don't feel anything. The car just stays flat as it's riding over all these bumps."

The podcast also included a video of "China's Rolls Royce", which he called "insane" for its features. "Oh my God, this car's (the Hongqi L5) incredible. You can't even get them in America," he said.

On May 14, the Biden administration announced it was raising tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles from 25 percent to 100 percent.

And the US Commerce Department is considering more restrictions on the vehicles in the fall, focused on data and cybersecurity, Bloomberg reported.



(Left) Joe Rogan discusses the "amazing" suspension of a Chinese electric vehicle on his podcast; auto executive Chace Barber (center) says on TikTok that North American automakers aren't investing enough in innovation; "DYOptions" (right) posted on X about the floating Yangwang U8, seen in a TikTok video.



The truth is the United States is subsidizing their electric vehicles way more than China is."

Chace Barber, founder and CEO of Edison Motors, a maker of electric semi trucks in Canada

"Underlying all the rhetoric is a basic economic threat to American automakers, whose cars cost about five times as much as Chinese vehicles," the website reported.

US politicians have argued that Chinese EVs are overly subsidized by Beijing.

"The US government subsidized Tesla with \$34 billion; BYD was subsidized by the Chinese government for \$3.7 billion. So the American company got subsidized 10 times more than the Chinese company," posted "@chacebarber" on TikTok, where he has more than 833,000 followers.

Chace Barber is founder and CEO of Edison Motors, a privately owned, Canadian clean technology company that makes electric semi trucks.

"The truth is the United States is subsidizing their electric vehicles way more than China is," he said. "I've got a theory why we're (North America) subsidizing electric vehicles and not getting the results or the price of these ones (Chinese EVs). I think it's that North American companies are doing stupid stuff like \$10 billion in share buybacks," he said, referring to a GM stock buyback in the fourth quarter of 2023.

"The money isn't going to innovation like it should; the money seems to go to these bloated, bureaucratic corporations where they take the money, give it to shareholders or give it to executive bonuses or management teams that don't know how to build a car, get so complicated, convoluted, that they just can't do business competitively anymore," he said, concluding with the US "just put a 100 percent tariff on anyone that can outcompete them."

"DYOptions" posted on X on May 16

that "Chinese EVs can swim. \$TSLA is in trouble."

He linked to a TikTok video by "@thechristopherpearce", which detailed a hybrid SUV — the Yangwang U8 — the brand's largest and most expensive SUV, which can float like a boat.

"Chinese car maker BYD made a car that can literally cross a body of water like a boat. ... This car comes with something called float mode. When activated, the combustion engine shuts down, the suspension gets raised to its maximum height, windows close, AC gets turned to internal circulation, and the sun roof opens."

He said the car can float for up to a half-hour, and the wheels can be used to propel the car forward and make "tank" turns in the water.

S.L. Kanthan wrote to 137,000 followers on X: Xpeng G6 is the new Chinese EV model that might present a serious challenge for Tesla Model Y. Some key features: 755 km (469 miles) of driving range with a full charge; 10 minutes of charging the battery = 300 km of driving!; 480 horsepower; meets the highest safety

standards in North America and Europe; starts at \$35,000; minimalist interior and aerodynamic exterior."

Another popular feature on Chinese EVs is the "crab walk."

The crabwalk function allows the vehicles' wheels to turn to a 90-degree angle and move side to side in a straight line.

Automotive Journalist Greg Kable posted on X in March, along with a video: "Latest 'must have' in China: a crab walk function. IM Motors, a brand run by SAIC, Alibaba and Zhangjiang Hi-Tech, is making it available on its L6 sedan as part of an upgraded vehicle motion control system."

Dravidian Insights posted a video of the Z9 GT by Denza, a subsidiary of BYD in partnership with Mercedes, adding, "Chinese EV car industry is killing it, Tech and Design have improved exponentially."

In a May 18 post on X with accompanying video, "realbillionaire" wrote: "Behold this beauty, China's SAIC's Rising Auto F7 EV. Starting at \$21,000, it comes with swappable batteries and a massive 43-inch screen similar to those in \$100,000 Mercedes EQE, EQS."

THE HANDS OF TIME



ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Editor's note:

Traditional arts and crafts are supreme samples of Chinese cultural heritage. China Daily is running this series to show how master artisans are using dedication and innovation to inject new life into heritage. In this installment, we find out why the Four Treasures of the Study are not merely tools used by literati but also carriers of Chinese heritage.

BRUSHING UP ON A LEGACY

The fine tip of the writing tool has helped to form the ideograms that continue to shape Chinese culture, **Yang Yang** reports.

A short soft brush connected to a long hard handle, both vigorous and gentle — a simple Chinese writing brush can describe the most sophisticated idea. Achieving both technical excellence and spiritual freedom in writing, a good brush allows for unrestrained creativity and endless variation.

A brush can reveal a dot, a line, the sun, the moon, mountains, rivers, wind and everything people can sense in the world, slender or thick, big or small, concrete or abstract.

Perhaps it is one of the few tools invented by humans that is so practical yet so rich in symbolic meanings over millennia. It not only conveyed common people's care and emotions, but also recorded history, narrated thoughts, and created the most refined art and literature of this culture, thus greatly influencing the development path of Chinese civilization.

In his book *Huzhou Writing Brush and Chinese Culture* published by Peking University Press in 2010, scholar Ma Qingyun quotes Zhou Ruchang (1918-2012), a prestigious scholar, poet and calligrapher, as saying that: "Without the writing brush, Chinese characters could not have undergone their evolution, not to mention the painting art. Their forms, structures, writing methods, functions and artistic effects would not have arrived at the current situation. Ultimately, the writing brush determines the various forms of documents, such as scrolls, books, records, letters and files."

In the late 1950s, archaeologists unearthed a writing brush in Xinyang of Henan province. Dating to the early Warring States Period (475-221 BC), this brush is the oldest one ever discovered in China, much earlier than Meng's mythical "invention".

In another tomb of the middle Warring States Period discovered in Changsha, Hunan province, a writing brush made of good-quality hare fur and an 18.5-centimeter bamboo handle was found. The brush tip was 2.5 cm long. It was an epitome of the writing tool in early times.

In the next more than 2,000 years, writing brushes underwent a significant evolution alongside the advancement of writing mediums — from oracle bones, bamboo slips and silk to different types of paper. Also, changes in writing postures due to the increase in furniture height, especially starting from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and the growth of distinct schools of painting and calligraphy all played pivotal roles in shaping the evolution of writing brushes.

For him, the diverse temperaments, personalities, wills, spiritual worlds, attitudes toward life, external grace, internal beauty, and cultivation of the Chinese people all flow from the tip of that brush, Ma says.

"So, the writing brush is not only a representative of Chinese culture, but also the creator of Chinese culture," he adds.

Supple fur

Legend has it that one day in 223 BC, as Meng Tian, a great general of the Qin state, who later oversaw the construction of the Great Wall, was out hunting. At some point, he saw the tail of an unlucky hare had led a trail of blood on the ground, which inspired him to make the first Chinese writing brush in history.

Meng first got some hare fur, inserted it into a bamboo stick, and tried to use it to write. However, the fur of the hare was so sleek that the brush failed to absorb ink. After trying several times in vain, he casually threw the brush into a lime pit outside a window.

Several days later, Meng came across the abandoned brush and picked it up, finding that the fur had become supple. He dipped it into ink and wrote several characters very smoothly. Unintentionally, the lime wash had degreased the fur. Lime is still applied today.

In another version of the legend, instead of hare fur and bamboo stick, Meng used a wooden stick, harder deer fur in the middle and softer goat wool on the outside, a method also still employed today.

Archaeological discoveries have long refuted the legends about Meng inventing the Chinese writing brush. Archaeological evidence shows that more than 6,000 years ago, people living in the Banpo site, 10 kilometers east of today's Xi'an, Shaanxi province, used brushes to draw patterns and lines on the surface of pottery. However, compared with pottery or oracle bones, brushes are difficult to preserve and thus rarely seen in ancient ruins.

In the following thousands of years before Meng's time, brush traces are also shown on the oracle bones and pottery from the Shang Dynasty

(c. 16th century-11th century BC). It is believed that the inscriptions were engraved on the oracle bones after being written with a brush. Among the inscriptions, there is a character, *yu*, that means a writing brush. It vividly depicts a hand holding a brush.

In the late 1950s, archaeologists unearthed a writing brush in Xinyang of Henan province. Dating to the early Warring States Period (475-221 BC), this brush is the oldest one ever discovered in China, much earlier than Meng's mythical "invention".

In another tomb of the middle Warring States Period discovered in Changsha, Hunan province, a writing brush made of good-quality hare fur and an 18.5-centimeter bamboo handle was found. The brush tip was 2.5 cm long. It was an epitome of the writing tool in early times.

In the next more than 2,000 years, writing brushes underwent a significant evolution alongside the advancement of writing mediums — from oracle bones, bamboo slips and silk to different types of paper. Also, changes in writing postures due to the increase in furniture height, especially starting from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and the growth of distinct schools of painting and calligraphy all played pivotal roles in shaping the evolution of writing brushes.

For him, the diverse temperaments, personalities, wills, spiritual worlds, attitudes toward life, external grace, internal beauty, and cultivation of the Chinese people all flow from the tip of that brush, Ma says.

Supple fur

Legend has it that one day in 223 BC, as Meng Tian, a great general of the Qin state, who later oversaw the construction of the Great Wall, was out hunting. At some point, he saw the tail of an unlucky hare had led a trail of blood on the ground, which inspired him to make the first Chinese writing brush in history.

Meng first got some hare fur, inserted it into a bamboo stick, and tried to use it to write. However, the fur of the hare was so sleek that the brush failed to absorb ink. After trying several times in vain, he casually threw the brush into a lime pit outside a window.

Several days later, Meng came across the abandoned brush and picked it up, finding that the fur had become supple. He dipped it into ink and wrote several characters very smoothly. Unintentionally, the lime wash had degreased the fur. Lime is still applied today.

In another version of the legend, instead of hare fur and bamboo stick, Meng used a wooden stick, harder deer fur in the middle and softer goat wool on the outside, a method also still employed today.

Archaeological discoveries have long refuted the legends about Meng inventing the Chinese writing brush. Archaeological evidence shows that more than 6,000 years ago, people living in the Banpo site, 10 kilometers east of today's Xi'an, Shaanxi province, used brushes to draw patterns and lines on the surface of pottery. However, compared with pottery or oracle bones, brushes are difficult to preserve and thus rarely seen in ancient ruins.

In the following thousands of years before Meng's time, brush traces are also shown on the oracle bones and pottery from the Shang Dynasty

(c. 16th century-11th century BC). It is believed that the inscriptions were engraved on the oracle bones after being written with a brush. Among the inscriptions, there is a character, *yu*, that means a writing brush. It vividly depicts a hand holding a brush.

In the late 1950s, archaeologists unearthed a writing brush in Xinyang of Henan province. Dating to the early Warring States Period (475-221 BC), this brush is the oldest one ever discovered in China, much earlier than Meng's mythical "invention".

In another tomb of the middle Warring States Period discovered in Changsha, Hunan province, a writing brush made of good-quality hare fur and an 18.5-centimeter bamboo handle was found. The brush tip was 2.5 cm long. It was an epitome of the writing tool in early times.

In the next more than 2,000 years, writing brushes underwent a significant evolution alongside the advancement of writing mediums — from oracle bones, bamboo slips and silk to different types of paper. Also, changes in writing postures due to the increase in furniture height, especially starting from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and the growth of distinct schools of painting and calligraphy all played pivotal roles in shaping the evolution of writing brushes.

For him, the diverse temperaments, personalities, wills, spiritual worlds, attitudes toward life, external grace, internal beauty, and cultivation of the Chinese people all flow from the tip of that brush, Ma says.

Supple fur

Legend has it that one day in 223 BC, as Meng Tian, a great general of the Qin state, who later oversaw the construction of the Great Wall, was out hunting. At some point, he saw the tail of an unlucky hare had led a trail of blood on the ground, which inspired him to make the first Chinese writing brush in history.

Meng first got some hare fur, inserted it into a bamboo stick, and tried to use it to write. However, the fur of the hare was so sleek that the brush failed to absorb ink. After trying several times in vain, he casually threw the brush into a lime pit outside a window.

Several days later, Meng came across the abandoned brush and picked it up, finding that the fur had become supple. He dipped it into ink and wrote several characters very smoothly. Unintentionally, the lime wash had degreased the fur. Lime is still applied today.

In another version of the legend, instead of hare fur and bamboo stick, Meng used a wooden stick, harder deer fur in the middle and softer goat wool on the outside, a method also still employed today.

Archaeological discoveries have long refuted the legends about Meng inventing the Chinese writing brush. Archaeological evidence shows that more than 6,000 years ago, people living in the Banpo site, 10 kilometers east of today's Xi'an, Shaanxi province, used brushes to draw patterns and lines on the surface of pottery. However, compared with pottery or oracle bones, brushes are difficult to preserve and thus rarely seen in ancient ruins.

In the following thousands of years before Meng's time, brush traces are also shown on the oracle bones and pottery from the Shang Dynasty

(c. 16th century-11th century BC). It is believed that the inscriptions were engraved on the oracle bones after being written with a brush. Among the inscriptions, there is a character, *yu*, that means a writing brush. It vividly depicts a hand holding a brush.

In the late 1950s, archaeologists unearthed a writing brush in Xinyang of Henan province. Dating to the early Warring States Period (475-221 BC), this brush is the oldest one ever discovered in China, much earlier than Meng's mythical "invention".

In another tomb of the middle Warring States Period discovered in Changsha, Hunan province, a writing brush made of good-quality hare fur and an 18.5-centimeter bamboo handle was found. The brush tip was 2.5 cm long. It was an epitome of the writing tool in early times.

In the next more than 2,000 years, writing brushes underwent a significant evolution alongside the advancement of writing mediums — from oracle bones, bamboo slips and silk to different types of paper. Also, changes in writing postures due to the increase in furniture height, especially starting from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and the growth of distinct schools of painting and calligraphy all played pivotal roles in shaping the evolution of writing brushes.

For him, the diverse temperaments, personalities, wills, spiritual worlds, attitudes toward life, external grace, internal beauty, and cultivation of the Chinese people all flow from the tip of that brush, Ma says.

Supple fur

Legend has it that one day in 223 BC, as Meng Tian, a great general of the Qin state, who later oversaw the construction of the Great Wall, was out hunting. At some point, he saw the tail of an unlucky hare had led a trail of blood on the ground, which inspired him to make the first Chinese writing brush in history.

Meng first got some hare fur, inserted it into a bamboo stick, and tried to use it to write. However, the fur of the hare was so sleek that the brush failed to absorb ink. After trying several times in vain, he casually threw the brush into a lime pit outside a window.

Several days later, Meng came across the abandoned brush and picked it up, finding that the fur had become supple. He dipped it into ink and wrote several characters very smoothly. Unintentionally, the lime wash had degreased the fur. Lime is still applied today.

In another version of the legend, instead of hare fur and bamboo stick, Meng used a wooden stick, harder deer fur in the middle and softer goat wool on the outside, a method also still employed today.

Archaeological discoveries have long refuted the legends about Meng inventing the Chinese writing brush. Archaeological evidence shows that more than 6,000 years ago, people living in the Banpo site, 10 kilometers east of today's Xi'an, Shaanxi province, used brushes to draw patterns and lines on the surface of pottery. However, compared with pottery or oracle bones, brushes are difficult to preserve and thus rarely seen in ancient ruins.

In the following thousands of years before Meng's time, brush traces are also shown on the oracle bones and pottery from the Shang Dynasty

(c. 16th century-11th century BC). It is believed that the inscriptions were engraved on the oracle bones after being written with a brush. Among the inscriptions, there is a character, *yu*, that means a writing brush. It vividly depicts a hand holding a brush.

In the late 1950s, archaeologists unearthed a writing brush in Xinyang of Henan province. Dating to the early Warring States Period (475-221 BC), this brush is the oldest one ever discovered in China, much earlier than Meng's mythical "invention".

In another tomb of the middle Warring States Period discovered in Changsha, Hunan province, a writing brush made of good-quality hare fur and an 18.5-centimeter bamboo handle was found. The brush tip was 2.5 cm long. It was an epitome of the writing tool in early times.

In the next more than 2,000 years, writing brushes underwent a significant evolution alongside the advancement of writing mediums — from oracle bones, bamboo slips and silk to different types of paper. Also, changes in writing postures due to the increase in furniture height, especially starting from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and the growth of distinct schools of painting and calligraphy all played pivotal roles in shaping the evolution of writing brushes.

For him, the diverse temperaments, personalities, wills, spiritual worlds, attitudes toward life, external grace, internal beauty, and cultivation of the Chinese people all flow from the tip of that brush, Ma says.

Supple fur

Legend has it that one day in 223 BC, as Meng Tian, a great general of the Qin state, who later oversaw the construction of the Great Wall, was out hunting. At some point, he saw the tail of an unlucky hare had led a trail of blood on the ground, which inspired him to make the first Chinese writing brush in history.

Meng first got some hare fur, inserted it into a bamboo stick, and tried to use it to write. However, the fur of the hare was so sleek that the brush failed to absorb ink. After trying several times in vain, he casually threw the brush into a lime pit outside a window.

Several days later, Meng came across the abandoned brush and picked it up, finding that the fur had become supple. He dipped it into ink and wrote several characters very smoothly. Unintentionally, the lime wash had degreased the fur. Lime is still applied today.

In another version of the legend, instead of hare fur and bamboo stick, Meng used a wooden stick, harder deer fur in the middle and softer goat wool on the outside, a method also still employed today.

Archaeological discoveries have long refuted the legends about Meng inventing the Chinese writing brush. Archaeological evidence shows that more than 6,000 years ago, people living in the Banpo site, 10 kilometers east of today's Xi'an, Shaanxi province, used brushes to draw patterns and lines on the surface of pottery. However, compared with pottery or oracle bones, brushes are difficult to preserve and thus rarely seen in ancient ruins.

In the following thousands of years before Meng's time, brush traces are also shown on the oracle bones and pottery from the Shang Dynasty

(c. 16th century-11th century BC). It is believed that the inscriptions were engraved on the oracle bones after being written with a brush. Among the inscriptions, there is a character, *yu*, that means a writing brush. It vividly depicts a hand holding a brush.

In the late 1950s, archaeologists unearthed a writing brush in Xinyang of Henan province. Dating to the early Warring States Period (475-221 BC), this brush is the oldest one ever discovered in China, much earlier than Meng's mythical "invention".

In another tomb of the middle Warring States Period discovered in Changsha, Hunan province, a writing brush made of good-quality hare fur and an 18.5-centimeter bamboo handle was found. The brush tip was 2.5 cm long. It was an epitome of the writing tool in early times.

In the next more than 2,000 years, writing brushes underwent a significant evolution alongside the advancement of writing mediums — from oracle bones, bamboo slips and silk to different types of paper. Also, changes in writing postures due to the increase in furniture height, especially starting from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and the growth of distinct schools of painting and calligraphy all played pivotal roles in shaping the evolution of writing brushes.

For him, the diverse temperaments, personalities, wills, spiritual worlds, attitudes toward life, external grace, internal beauty, and cultivation of the Chinese people all flow from the tip of that brush, Ma says.

Supple fur

Legend has it that one day in 223 BC, as Meng Tian, a great general of the Qin state, who later oversaw the construction of the Great Wall, was out hunting. At some point, he saw the tail of an unlucky hare had led a trail of blood on the ground, which inspired him to make the first Chinese writing brush in history.

Meng first got some hare fur, inserted it into a bamboo stick, and tried to use it to write. However, the fur of the hare was so sleek that the brush failed to absorb ink. After trying several times in vain, he casually threw the brush into a lime pit outside a window.

Several days later, Meng came across the abandoned brush and picked it up, finding that the fur had become supple. He dipped it into ink and wrote several characters very smoothly. Unintentionally, the lime wash had degreased the fur. Lime is still applied today.

In another version of the legend, instead of hare fur and bamboo stick, Meng used a wooden stick, harder deer fur in the middle and softer goat wool on the outside, a method also still employed today.

Archaeological discoveries have long refuted the legends about Meng inventing the Chinese writing brush. Archaeological evidence shows that more than 6,000 years ago, people living in the Banpo site, 10 kilometers east of today's Xi'an, Shaanxi province, used brushes to draw patterns and lines on the surface of pottery. However, compared with pottery or oracle bones, brushes are difficult to preserve and thus rarely seen in ancient ruins.

In the following thousands of years before Meng's time, brush traces are also shown on the oracle bones and pottery from the Shang Dynasty

the most reassuring place for me. I've spent more time here than at home. It has become an important part of my life," she says.

When Wang Xiaohua fully mastered the skills, she understood more about writing brushes.

"It's not only a writing tool, but also closely connects with the entire history and culture of China," she says.

"It also served as a cultural bridge in global exchanges in the 1980s and '90s. The writing brush perfectly showcases the wisdom of ancient Chinese people."

In the water basin procedure, artisans dip wool in cold water, and after washing, sorting, combing and shaping, they process the wool into semifinished brushes.

After steps such as drying, bundling and inserting the brush into the hallowed end of a handle, it is Qiu's job to polish the brush, removing all standard wool so that the brush becomes smooth and white.

The outline of a good brush should resemble that of a bamboo leaf or a bamboo shoot, depending on its size, Qiu says.

The key procedures require artisans to be extremely patient as they need to sit there for hours every day. "Not to mention that if you want to become an excellent artisan, you need to have an intuitive understanding of the work," he says.

After a seven-year apprenticeship, Qiu was able to polish goat-wool brushes of all grades. In the 1980s, he started taking apprentices. However, as the work is hard and salary low, half of his apprentices quit. Even if his apprentices did the job until retirement, they did not take any apprentice themselves, he says.

At its peak time in the 1960s and '70s, the factory saw 500 to 600 artisans producing 1.2 million writing brushes a year, most of which were exported to Japan, but now there are only 50 to 60 artisans, says 63-year-old Ma Zhiliang, head of the factory.

Now, few young people are willing to do the work, Qiu says, which is the major challenge they face about how to pass on this precious craft.

Yet, he sees hope in his apprentice, 30-year-old Yang Wen.

In September 2018, after graduating from university, Yang, who's from Gansu province, visited Shanlian, the hometown of his girlfriend, Yao Yulin. The trip kindled the young man's interest in the craft.

Besides, Yao Yulin's family owns a brush-making workshop, and her mother and grandmother are both artisans. At the suggestion of her father, the young couple decided to continue the family's brush-making business.

Later that year, after a traditional ceremony, Yang became Qiu's 11th apprentice.

"Now, the craftsmanship of Huzhou writing brushes has peaked. If we don't pass on our skills to the coming generations, the craft will not improve but only decline," Qiu says.

In addition to taking apprentices, Wang Xiaohua says that they want to get the interest of more young people through livestreams and by holding events at schools.

In terms of innovating on writing brushes, she says they are trying to mix different materials to meet different writers' needs.

Besides, the factory has become a tourist attraction for people to learn how to make a brush by visiting the workshops and polishing brushes themselves. "Sometimes, we receive as many as 150 people at a time," Wang Xiaohua says.

Contact the writer at yangyangs@chinadaily.com.cn

Online Watch the video by scanning the code.



Items made of Xuan paper are popular tourist souvenirs in Jingxian county, Anhui province. BAI YING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tracing the characters of a civilization's story

By YANG YANG

In the realm of Chinese culture, the "Four Treasures of the Study", which are ink, paper, ink stone and brush, are not merely tools used by literati but also carriers of Chinese heritage.

For centuries, these treasures have been intricately intertwined with history, culture and the literati, influencing and enriching each other in profound ways.

Chinese ink, a fundamental element in calligraphy and painting, comes in two main varieties: pine soot and oil soot.

Pine soot ink, made from soot derived from pine trees, is characterized by its deep black hue, subtle sheen, lightweight texture, and suitability for calligraphy.

Oil soot ink, which is often produced from animal or plant oils, boasts a glossy, rich black color that's ideal for painting. Raw materials for ink production include tung oil, vegetable oil, soybean oil, lard and pine wood.

The process of making ink varies among artisans, and ingredients are often kept secret. Common components include egg whites, fish glue, spices, medicinal herbs like cloves, purple grass, Chinese sumac, sandalwood and benzoin. There are over 1,000 ingredients in total.

Before the late Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), the ink stone is meticulously crafted from materials like slate or soapstone, serving as the surface for grinding ink sticks with water for writing and painting.

Among the Four Treasures of the Study, paper easily turns to ash, brushes wear out quickly, and ink is prone to degrade. Only the ink stone remains durable and can be passed down through the ages.

Hence, there is a saying: "For a scholar, an ink stone is like a beauty having a mirror; it is the closest companion throughout one's life."

Originating in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), the ink stone is meticulously crafted from materials like slate or soapstone, serving as the surface for grinding ink sticks with water for writing and painting.

Among the distinguished ink stones in China, She ink stones stand out as exemplars of excellence. Hailing from Shezhou in today's southern part of Anhui province, these stones derive their name from their birthplace and boast a history of over 1,200 years.

The creation of a She ink stone involves material selection, design, carving, polishing, maintenance and packaging.

Coupled with ingenious designs and masterful carving, She ink stones embody a fusion of various arts, including poetry, calligraphy, painting, seal engraving, epigraphy, sculpture and literature. This makes them highly valued not only for their practical utility but also for their aesthetic and collectible significance, earning the admiration of scholars.

In 2006, the traditional production of She ink stones, Hui ink and Xuan paper were included in the national intangible cultural heritage list.

With a history of more than 1,500 years, Xuan paper is an exceptional example of China's traditional handmade paper and one of the Four Treasures of the Study.

Even today in Jingxian county, Anhui province, artisans still adhere to the 108 manual processes that have been passed down since the prosperous periods of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties for the production of Xuan paper.

As a staple in Chinese calligraphy and painting, Xuan paper is celebrated for its supple and resilient texture, its exquisite grain, and distinct layers that enhance artistic expression, strong strokes and effortless long-term preservation.

Without Xuan paper, it would have been difficult for a vast amount of Chinese documents, classical texts, Buddhist and Taoist scriptures, and precious artworks to survive through the centuries.

Among the Four Treasures of the Study, paper easily turns to ash, brushes wear out quickly, and ink is prone to degrade. Only the ink stone remains durable and can be passed down through the ages.

Hence, there is a saying: "For a scholar, an ink stone is like a beauty having a mirror; it is the closest companion throughout one's life."

Originating in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), the ink stone is meticulously crafted from materials like slate or soapstone, serving as the surface for grinding ink sticks with water for writing and painting.

Among the distinguished ink stones in China, She ink stones stand out as exemplars of excellence. Hailing from Shezhou in today's southern part of Anhui province, these stones derive their name from their birthplace and boast a history of over 1,200 years.

The creation of a She ink stone involves material selection, design, carving, polishing, maintenance and packaging.

Coupled with ingenious designs and masterful carving, She ink stones embody a fusion of various arts, including poetry, calligraphy, painting, seal engraving, epigraphy, sculpture and literature. This makes them highly valued not only for their practical utility but also for their aesthetic and collectible significance, earning the admiration of scholars.

In 2006, the traditional production of She ink stones, Hui ink and Xuan paper were included in the national intangible cultural heritage list.

With a history of more than 1,500 years, Xuan paper is an exceptional example of China's traditional handmade paper and one of the Four Treasures of the Study.

Even today in Jingxian county, Anhui province, artisans still adhere to the 108 manual processes that have been passed down since the prosperous periods of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties for the production of Xuan paper.

As a staple in Chinese calligraphy and painting, Xuan paper is celebrated for its supple and resilient texture, its exquisite grain, and distinct layers that enhance artistic expression, strong strokes and effortless long-term preservation.

Without Xuan paper, it would have been difficult for a vast amount of Chinese documents, classical texts, Buddhist and Taoist scriptures, and precious artworks to survive through the centuries.

Among the Four Treasures of the Study, paper easily turns to ash, brushes wear out quickly, and ink is prone to degrade. Only the ink stone remains durable and can be passed down through the ages.

Hence, there is a saying: "For a scholar, an ink stone is like a beauty having a mirror; it is the closest companion throughout one's life."

Originating in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), the ink stone is meticulously crafted from materials like slate or soapstone, serving as the surface for grinding ink sticks with water for writing and painting.

Among the distinguished ink stones in China, She ink stones stand out as exemplars of excellence. Hailing from Shezhou in today's southern part of Anhui province, these stones derive their name from their birthplace and boast a history of over 1,200 years.

The creation of a She ink stone involves material selection, design, carving, polishing, maintenance and packaging.

Coupled with ingenious designs and masterful carving, She ink stones embody a fusion of various arts, including poetry, calligraphy, painting, seal engraving, epigraphy, sculpture and literature. This makes them highly valued not only for their practical utility but also for their aesthetic and collectible significance, earning the admiration of scholars.

In 2006, the traditional production of She ink stones, Hui ink and Xuan paper were included in the national intangible cultural heritage list.

With a history of more than 1,500 years, Xuan paper is an exceptional example of China's traditional handmade paper and one of the Four Treasures of the Study.

LIFE



Peking Opera joins industrial era

Performance centers on port operations and brings new vitality to traditional art form, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

At Qingdao Port in Shandong province, there are numerous containers being loaded, discharged or transported day and night, yet normally no one is in sight.

The modern Peking Opera production *Nongchao* (Riding the Tides) sheds light on the port, which is the first fully automated container terminal in Asia, and Zhang Liangang and his Liangang Innovation Team, who made it come true.

Coproduced by the port's owner, the Shandong Port Group, and the Qingdao Performing Arts Group, and performed by the Qingdao Peking Opera Theater, the production graced the stage of the China National Opera House in Beijing on May 18.

The storyline revolves around Zhang, a senior expert of the port group and a key figure in the development and construction of the automated terminal. Back in 2013, Zhang took on the challenge of leading a team to build an automated terminal, despite undergoing lung cancer surgery five years previously.

At the time, the crucial technologies were dominated by industrial giants of developed countries. Without any resources, experience or external support, Zhang led a team of 25 in a pioneering effort to develop their own solutions.

After countless meetings, plans and tests, the team completed a detailed terminal design in just 15 months, and the terminal was put into service in 2017, with world-leading operational efficiency.

Zhang's inspiring story and unwavering commitment led to the Peking Opera production. After the performing arts project was initiated, the production crew, led by Lu Ang, chief director and professor at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, embarked on a field trip to the port to gain insight into its construction and operation.

"I went on the trip with more than 20 questions prepared, during which many things moved us deeply. In fact, many stories on stage now are based on the real experiences of real individuals," Lu says.

Apart from how Zhang Liangang led the team through challenges while personally battling adverse health conditions, Lu found the experiences of the other members from the Liangang Innovation Team touching, pioneering and inspiring.

Examples of these real stories include that of team member Xu Yongning, who works at the port construction project during the day and looks after his ill wife at the hospital at night, or that of Li Yongcui, the only female engineer of the



From top: The cast of modern Peking Opera *Nongchao* (Riding the Tides) takes a curtain call at the China National Opera House in Beijing on May 18; the production centers on Zhang Liangang, a senior expert at the Shandong Port Group, and his Liangang Innovation Team; and a digital set design enhances the story's contemporary industrial setting. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

team, who leads a sub-team in the development of the equipment control system.

Entering the team's work environment also gave the production crew a sneak peek into the harshness of working conditions. Scriptwriter Wang Yong, who is director of the National Peking Opera Co, says that even ascending the tower crane was a petrifying experience, let alone working on one, especially when the crane shakes during windy or rainy weather.

"When we truly walked in their footsteps, we found so many moments that stirred emotions within us. China's port industry is indeed the dream of several generations, and this is what we have always wanted to convey in our subsequent creation process — it's not just about one individual, but about teamwork," Lu says.

As it is a modern Peking Opera production, one of the greatest challenges in the creation process is how to retain the essence of Peking Opera, including its vocal techniques and acting skills, while

presenting a contemporary story taking place in an industrial high-tech setting, according to Lu.

The production's composition and vocal design are undertaken by Zhu Shaoyu, a national-level inheritor of the Peking Opera intangible cultural heritage project.

To ensure efficiency and high quality, Zhu worked closely with the director and scriptwriter at every stage. Often, when a segment of lyrics was written, Zhu would immediately begin working on the composition, making adjustments as needed, rather than waiting for the entire script to be finalized.

"Within the character types of Peking Opera, I made sure that three of them, *sheng* (dignified male role), *dan* (dignified female role) and *jing* (male role with face paint), had their own solo passages to cater to the preferences of Peking Opera fans," Zhu says.

"In terms of music, we aimed for a modern, experimental approach, because the production centers on a contemporary subject. We boldly

incorporated a choir, a symphony orchestra, and even elements of electronic music."

As the story is set against an industrialized port backdrop, Jin Sa, the production's stage designer and a professor from the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, decided to adopt primarily digital projection, instead of traditional stage settings, to present the dynamics of the contemporary industry, as well as to highlight the narrative.

First initiated in 2022, the production made its premiere in April 2023, under the title *Oriental Grand Port*, and was honored as an excellent production at the 10th Chinese Peking Opera Arts Festival last year. The crew continued to make refinements to the production and the performers kept honing their acting and singing.

At a roundtable discussion on May 19, the production received critical acclaim from performing arts experts and scholars.

"Seeing its polished version this year, I believe that this production has achieved a pioneering fusion of Peking Opera, industrial themes and performing arts expressions. Especially in the field of Peking Opera, it is very difficult to make such a breakthrough," says Cui Wei, former secretary-general of the China Theatre Association.

"My greatest takeaway is that through artistic expression, the production presents the philosophy behind the construction of Qingdao's automated port and the dedication of technical and industrial workers. Only those who innovate can progress and succeed. This embodies the spirit and vitality of China."

For the production's future performances, apart from making improvements, Lu has a vision that it can become a resident production in Qingdao in the long term.

"During our last field trip, we arrived at the old port of Qingdao near the city center. There, we saw several former granary buildings, which were being renovated into cultural venues, and I asked whether we could reserve one of the buildings as a theater," Lu says.

"Qingdao is a tourist city, and Qingdao Port is a significant cultural emblem of the city. We hope that this production, after making further refinements, could be performed on-site at the port. This would allow visitors from home and abroad to learn about the specific history of Qingdao's port construction."

Contact the writer at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

Rural areas cash in with rustic appeal

Yu Zhiliang, a 66-year-old villager from Wuyuan county in East China's Jiangxi province, has returned to his hometown after living in the bustling southern metropolis of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, for more than three decades.

Amid local efforts to unlock the tourism potential of the county, Yu rebuilt his ancestral mansion and converted it into a rustic homestay earlier this year, retaining the charm of classic Huizhou-style architecture in the process.

As China endeavors to revitalize its rural areas, many forgotten cultural traditions, particularly in small counties and villages, are being revived, leading to a trend known as "county travel".

Visible nostalgia

Yu's cottage showcases authentic Huizhou architectural features, seamlessly blending ancient cultural elements such as a stone archway, figure brick carvings and an indoor patio with modern touches like floor-to-ceiling windows and an elevator.

"In the past, villagers had to go far away to make money. Now, they can earn their living at home," Yu says, while enjoying a cup of tea made with leaves picked from a garden in the village. During the first three days of the five-day May Day holiday this year, every homestay in the village was fully booked, according to villagers.

In recent years, the ancient villages and buildings in Wuyuan are undergoing renovation, thanks to private investments and local initiatives. Many historical buildings now serve as exhibition spaces, featuring artworks and cultural and creative products.

The county, known as the "most beautiful countryside" in China, saw a total of 570,000 visits during the five-day holiday, marking an increase of 10.5 percent compared to the previous year, official statistics showed.

The data testifies to a boom in countryside tourism. On Ctrip, a leading travel platform in China, the number of newly added scenic spots in county-level areas has reached nearly 1,000 this year.

Not only popular destinations like Wuyuan, but also many lesser-known rural areas in China, are benefiting from cultural revitalization.

One such example is Xihe village in Central China's Henan province, which suffered from a decline in population and has many dilapidated buildings. However, after being included in a local tourism initiative, the centuries-old village, tucked away in the Dabie Mountains, has been turned into a popular tourist attraction with homestay and cafes, while retaining its ancient allure.

Reviving cultural heritage

Huangling village in Wuyuan is renowned for its breathtaking expanse of rapeseed flowers. This ancient village has earned a coveted spot on the Best Tourism Villages list of the United Nations World Tourism Organization. Beyond its spectacular rural landscapes, intangible cultural heritage is becoming another major attraction.

The making of the Jialu oilpaper umbrella is a national-level intangible cultural heritage that boasts a history of over 800 years. These traditional handcrafted umbrellas have now become sought-after

fashion items among visitors at this iconic destination.

Cao Wenjuan, the proprietor of a local umbrella shop, frequently showcases the art of Jialu umbrella-making in her establishment, which is not far from a KFC restaurant. According to Cao, her shop is able to sell over 100 paper umbrellas per day during the peak season, generating income well beyond what she earned when she worked in the city of Wenzhou in East China's Zhejiang province.

Currently, several forms of intangible cultural heritage, which also include local wine brewing, the making of green tea, inkstone, as well as wood carving and stone carving, are evident in major tourist attractions in Wuyuan.

Intangible cultural heritage not only offers visitors a unique selection of souvenirs, but can also present them with a captivating visual spectacle.

For example, during a water sprinkling carnival in a district of Nanning, capital city of South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, the main attraction was the dazzling sparks emitted by red-hot iron.

Along with the molten iron fireworks show, which holds the distinction of being a national-level intangible cultural heritage, about 500 drones created various shapes in the sky, showcasing a fusion of intangible cultural heritage and modern technology.

Embracing local customs

Hosting folk shows in scenic areas allows tourists to experience unique local culture while immersing themselves in a lively festive atmosphere, says Ding Yunjuan, deputy marketing manager of a scenic area in Central China's Hunan province.

During this year's May Day holiday, the annual "Monihei" Carnival in Cangyuan Va autonomous county, located in Southwest China's Yunnan province, captured the attention of tourists from all over the country. In this county, people of the Va ethnic group traditionally throw and smear muddy water on one another to express their wishes for health and happiness during the carnival.

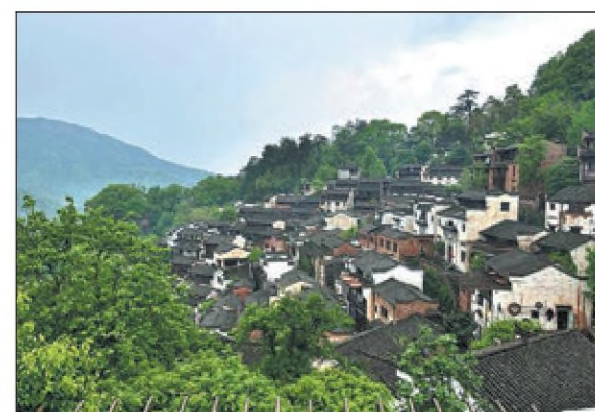
The carnival, also featuring lively traditional performances such as drum beating and "shaking hair" dancing, demonstrated the tremendous allure of traditional culture.

By offering such special experiences, the county attracted a total of 97,400 visitors during the five-day holiday, generating tourism spending of 78 million yuan (\$10.8 million). This represented notable increases of 33.3 percent and 41 percent, respectively, compared to the same period in 2023.

In a village of the city of Guilin in Guangxi, local farmers diligently tended to the terraced fields as they commemorated the start of the plowing season in early May. This traditional practice, which involves plowing, digging and weeding, has become a captivating sight for both domestic and international tourists.

Dai Bin, head of the China Tourism Academy, says that it is essential to recognize such a new tourism trend, which not only expands into lower-tier regions but also highlights the demand for more upgraded experiences beyond just scenery.

XINHUA



Residential houses and rustic homestays in Huangling village, Wuyuan county, Jiangxi province, a popular tourist destination. CHEN YUSHAN / XINHUA

COMMENT

Editorials

Goodwill should be turned into actions for trilateral cooperation and exchanges

Even those trying to sow discord among the three neighbors in recent years cannot deny the fruitful outcomes of the first Trilateral Summit Meeting of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea in five years that concluded in Seoul on Monday.

Attended by Premier Li Qiang, ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, the meeting demonstrated the shared willingness of the three countries to expand common interests, if not a more mature model to get along with each other featuring more tolerance toward disputes and differences than before. The three parties issued not only a joint declaration of the meeting, but also several joint statements on their cooperation in different fields over the coming decade, and agreed to designate 2025-26 as the China-Japan-ROK Year of Cultural Exchange. In doing so, the three neighbors showed they are taking the initiative to repair their ties that have been damaged by the divisive efforts of Washington.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of their trilateral cooperation mechanism, which had stalled since December 2019. The three neighbors need to firmly stand by the shared commitment that gave birth to this mechanism of cooperation, and uphold openness, inclusiveness, mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit and mutual learning. Drawing on their experiences, the three countries need to build on past achievements, and regitalize and accelerate their trilateral cooperation. The proposals Li put forward in the meeting to deepen the trilateral cooperation are all pertinent to removing the obstacles hindering regional cooperation.

A prerequisite is that the three countries need to uphold strategic autonomy and resist external interference, so that they can respect each other's core interests and major concerns, and fully unleash the potential of trilateral cooperation. To this end, they should nurture new areas of cooperation and make their bilateral relations and trilateral cooperation mutually reinforcing. That requires the three countries to keep the industry and supply chains among them stable and unimpeded, and restart and complete negotiations on a China-Japan-ROK Free Trade Agreement as soon as possible to prevent the protectionism and geopolitical games of the United States from hijacking their agenda.

Meanwhile, the three countries should strengthen their commitment to collaborative innovation and cooperation in frontier areas. To provide a platform to synergize these endeavors, China will establish a China-Japan-ROK Innovation Cooperation Center, which will help the three countries accelerate the cultivation of new innovation drivers.

As major economies in the world — together they account for about 25 percent of global gross domestic product — the three countries are key players in the global green transition. By stepping up their exchanges and boosting their cooperation, as well as exploring and implementing more China-Japan-ROK+X Cooperation projects, the three countries can work together to advance low-carbon initiatives and address the challenges of climate change, aging societies and better respond to epidemics.

As Li said, the three countries should make good use of their respective development advantages, actively respond to the needs of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other countries in the region, and create new engines of regional cooperation.

That the leaders of the ROK and Japan said they hope that the three countries will take this trilateral summit meeting as a new starting point to deepen their cooperation across the board and jointly promote East Asian cooperation is hopefully a positive indication that they want to lessen the frictions that have developed and reduce the trust deficit that has grown between them and China.

If the goodwill displayed by the three leaders and the outcomes of their meeting can be transformed into concrete actions, projects and results, it will certainly promote more stable and amicable relations among the ROK, Japan and China than has been evinced in recent years. That will not only deliver more benefits to their people but also help stabilize the regional and global situations. But for that to happen, Seoul and Tokyo must not let Washington dictate their relations with Beijing.

US destabilizing factor in Asia-Pacific

Threats to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific are increasing as a result of the United States expanding its military presence in the region and persuading its allies to join it in its attempt to contain China.

The provocative steps the US has taken include staging more frequent and increasingly sophisticated military exercises in the South China Sea and its incessant efforts to meddle in the Taiwan question, with the secessionist forces on the island being willing pawns in its games. Just a day prior to the People's Liberation Army starting naval exercises in the waters around Taiwan in a show of its resolve in response to the separatism-inflected inauguration speech of the island's new leader, the US and the Dutch navies conducted bilateral operations in the South China Sea. They claimed the joint exercises were aimed at "maintaining stability and free use of vital sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific".

The joint operations were held shortly after US and Filipino forces launched their largest combat exercises in years last month. Running until early May, they involved more than 16,000 of their military personnel, with another 250 French and Australian personnel also taking part in them. In particular, the deployment of a US ground-launched missile system to the northern Philippines as part of the exercises has raised concerns about escalating tensions in the region and the growing risk of misjudgment and miscalculation among regional countries.

US "Indo-Pacific" Commander Admiral Samuel Paparo tried to pin the blame for the escalating tensions in the region on China, when he assumed office earlier this month, disingenuously claiming, "We must be ready to answer the PRC's increasingly intrusive and expansionist claims in the 'Indo-Pacific' region." This cannot but raise worries about what lies ahead in terms of Sino-US rivalry in the region, given that the US is upping its ante in challenging China's core interests concerning the Taiwan question and the South China Sea issues in the name of countering the alleged aggression from Beijing.

The acts of attempted intimidation that are unsettling the region are initiated by the US, not China, whose actions are necessary responses to the US' attempted coercion and bullying. China will not be cowed by the strong-arm muscle flexing of the US no matter how big a stick it wields.

And it is wielding a big stick. About 29 nations, 40 surface ships, 3 submarines, 14 national land forces, and more than 25,000 personnel will participate in the upcoming biennial Rim of the Pacific exercise the US has organized, which is scheduled to last from June 26 to Aug 2. Some China hawks in Washington and separatists in Taiwan have coluded to try to include the Chinese island's armed forces in the maritime drill. The National Defense Authorization Act, which US President Joe Biden signed into law in 2022, has already opened the possibility of inviting Taiwan to the RIMPAC exercises. Although Taiwan is yet to be invited, such a step, once taken, would undoubtedly draw a strong response from Beijing. Even without that provocative move, the naval exercises clearly do not have "inclusivity at its core", as the US Navy has claimed. If that was true, China would have been invited to participate, as it has been previously.

The increasing frequency, scale and complexity of the US-orchestrated military exercises in the Asia-Pacific indicate that the US would have no hesitation in taking more extreme and risky actions in pursuit of its geopolitical goal of containing China.

It is therefore to be hoped that the scheduled meeting between US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore this week will be taken as the opportunity for listening as well as talking. It is essential that the US realizes that its so-called competition with China, when manifested in the form of encircling military muscle, is a recipe for mishap, and thus misfortune, for all in the region.

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 8599 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

China-Arab states' forum a platform for deepening ties for shared future

Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Tunisia's President Kais Saied, and the United Arab Emirates' President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan will pay state visits to China from Tuesday to Saturday and attend the opening ceremony of the 10th Ministerial Conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, due to be held in Beijing on Thursday.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. In December 2022, the top Chinese leader and Arab leaders jointly attended the first China-Arab States Summit, drawing up a comprehensive blueprint for the development of China-Arab relations and agreeing to build a China-Arab community with a shared future for the new era. Since then, China has established comprehensive strategic partnerships with 14 Arab countries and the League of Arab States. The league was the first regional organization to launch

a data security cooperation initiative with China, and to issue a joint statement on implementing the Global Civilization Initiative. Within the framework of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, 19 mechanisms covering various fields have been established and 85 outcome documents of various kinds have been issued.

China and Arab countries have always firmly supported each other, with Arab states firmly abiding by the one-China principle and supporting China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity. China firmly supports Arab countries in strengthening strategic independence, unity and self-reliance and pursuing development paths suited to their national conditions. It has brokered the resumption of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, leading to a "wave of reconciliation" in the Middle East. China also supports restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and has always been committed to

a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue.

China has signed Belt and Road Initiative cooperation documents with all 22 Arab countries and the Arab League. China remains the largest trading partner of Arab countries, with bilateral trade increasing from \$36.7 billion in 2004 to \$398 billion in 2023, and the stock of two-way direct investment exceeding \$30 billion. The Belt and Road Initiative now serves as an important platform for both sides to achieve mutual benefit and win-win cooperation with broader and more promising prospects.

Hopefully, China and the Arab states will take the upcoming event as an opportunity to carry forward the spirit of traditional friendship, enrich and deepen their all-round, multilevel and wide-ranging cooperation, and pool strength for building a higher-level China-Arab community with a shared future.

— WUYIXUE, CHINA DAILY

Not much changed in a promised 'changed world'

A nonprofit organization held a rally in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Friday to commemorate George Floyd, an African American man who died from asphyxiation when a policeman in Minneapolis pinned him down to the ground by kneeling on his neck. The mayor of Minneapolis and many other local officials participated in the event marking the fourth anniversary of Floyd's death.

US President Joe Biden also gave a moving tribute. Biden recalled Floyd's funeral, saying: "We mark this solemn day" and "there is no doubt that he has (changed the world)". However, Biden's speech a year ago consisted of the same keywords such as

"changed the world". But the fact remains that not much has changed.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act was readied within weeks of Floyd's death, but it is still waiting to be voted into a law in the Senate. Until it becomes a law, the police in the United States are still empowered to use excess violence against suspects, particularly people of color, the way they did against Floyd.

It happened again on Jan 7, 2023, when the police in Memphis, Tennessee, detained Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old African American, for reckless driving and beat him up with a baton and a stun gun for about three minutes. He died three

days later, but even that did not prompt US lawmakers to pass the bill.

US lawmakers have too many vested interests and, also, they are so divided. It's always easy for those in Capitol Hill to show sympathy for Floyd and his family, but they do no more. It's difficult for them to vote on even a plan aimed at police reforms in the US.

Remembrance of Floyd is a good thing, but merely paying lip service and uttering words such as "he changed the world" while not pushing for any actual reform on the ground will mean there will be more Floyds waiting to happen in the US.

— ZHANGZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Biden's electioneering may put brake on Israel

Hours after Hamas fired a barrage of rockets into Israel from Gaza, which set off air raid sirens as far away as Tel Aviv for the first time in months, Israel bombed refugee camps in the southern Gaza city of Rafah on Sunday killing at least 35 people, mostly women and children, according to Palestinian sources.

Although the latest bombing of Rafah was a retaliation against Hamas' earlier attack, all signs clearly show that,

despite the wide opposition of the international community, the Israeli government is set on carrying out its war plan in Gaza to the end, in a bid to eliminate Hamas in Gaza and make the Palestinian enclave a buffer zone for the security of Israel.

Yet in doing so, it risks losing the support of the US, as US President Joe

Biden will not want the civilian death toll in Gaza to continue rising as the presidential election draws near.

Biden told the media earlier this month that if Israel goes into Rafah, "we're not going to supply the weapons and artillery shells used", due to concerns about the well-being of the more than 1 million civilians sheltering there.

Israel has relied on the support of the US for its military operation to eliminate Hamas in Gaza, with Washington happy to oblige as it is using Israel as its hatchet man to eliminate hostile forces supported by Iran, its archenemy in the region.

Yet for all the Biden administration's virtue signaling, it must have given Tel Aviv its endorsement to label the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as a terrorist organization.

Knesset, Israel's parliament, is set to hold a preliminary vote in which it is

expected to designate the UNRWA as such.

That speaks volumes of the US' hypocrisy regarding the suffering of the Palestinians in the region, as the UNRWA is the main relief service provider for the 5.9 Palestinian refugees in the Middle East.

Last week, waves swept away a US floating pier newly installed on the Gaza coast to transfer aid to the strip zone. The construction of the floating pier cost \$320 million and was completed about two weeks ago.

If the US really cared about the humanitarian concerns in Gaza, it should have long stopped providing offensive weapons to Israel and pressed it to open all land crossings to Gaza and to secure aid trucks going in.

The floating pier easily destroyed by waves is nothing but an irony exposing the callousness of the US.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Liu Qiang

Dirty money talks drive the US 'Taiwan card'

The inauguration speech of the new Taiwan island administrative head Lai Ching-te on May 20 exposed his true color as a propagator of "Taiwan independence". Lai has also made it clear that he hopes to achieve his nefarious goal by soliciting the help of the United States.

Some other Western powers, too, have tried to use the Taiwan question, a purely internal affair of China, as a bargaining chip against China. "Internationalizing" the Taiwan question and claiming that Beijing could soon use force to realize the reunification of Taiwan with the motherland are the two plays the Western powers use to hype up the "China threat" theory.

By doing so, they have been trying to mislead some Taiwan residents into believing that seeking "Taiwan independence" is the only way to achieve a better future. On his part, Lai, even before being sworn in as Taiwan island's administrative head on May 20, had been seeking US help to realize "Taiwan independence". However, Beijing will not allow that to happen, as it has both the means and the determination to prevent the separation of the island from the motherland and achieve national reunification.

Also, by claiming that the Chinese mainland could soon use force to resolve the Taiwan question, the US has been compelling the island to buy more arms and military equipment from American companies. An

But in these turbulent times, there is a possibility that Lai could deviate from the track, and prompt the mainland to use force to realize national reunification. In such an eventuality, the Western powers will regret misleading Taiwan.

article published in the US Naval Institute magazine, titled "The War That Never Was", said the mainland could use force to reunify Taiwan with the motherland. And the commander of the US Pacific Fleet, Samuel Paparo, said in February that since Beijing could use force to realize national reunification in 2027, "constant vigil" should be maintained to prevent Beijing from achieving its goal.

Besides, the fact that the Joe Biden administration has approved 13 rounds of arms sales to the island, and has been conducting joint military drills with some other countries in the Asia-Pacific shows the US doesn't give a hoot about the one-China principle or the three joint Sino-US communiqués it has signed with Beijing.

Worse, US Secretary of State Antony

Blinken publicly congratulated Lai on his inauguration speech even though it was peppered with pro-independence rhetoric, thereby violating the promise he made during his visit to China in April that the US would abide by the one-China principle and is opposed to "Taiwan independence".

The Chinese government has always been clear on the Taiwan question — that it is the country's internal affair and it will not tolerate any external interference in it.

At the same time, the mainland has made it clear that it reserves the option of using all necessary means, which does not target compatriots in Taiwan, to achieve national reunification. But despite that, if the separatist forces on the island or other anti-China foreign entities try to cross the red line, Beijing will have to take resolute measures to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Some Western countries are happy to see political disorder in the Asia-Pacific region. That's why they have been fueling tensions in the region, in order to impede the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question, thereby sending the wrong signals to "Taiwan independence" forces on the island to intensify their "pro-independence" activities.

Military industries and arms dealers love war, because it helps them make more profits. In some Western countries, weapons' manufacturers and arms dealers have joined hands with the military and politi-

cians to create trouble in some regions or trigger conflicts between countries so they can sell more arms to the rival parties and make some fast money. The West's military-industrial complex can even manipulate the defense policy of certain countries or regions.

In fact, some Western powers, especially the US, have been fueling tensions across the Taiwan Strait, so they can coerce Taiwan to purchase more weapons and military equipment from Western military enterprises to "strengthen its security" and thus help the latter make more profits.

Lai may not necessarily pursue the risky "legal Taiwan independence" course and continue following his "pragmatic Taiwan independence" agenda in the short term under the guidance of the US. But in these turbulent times, there is a possibility that Lai could deviate from the track, and prompt the mainland to use force to realize national reunification. In such an eventuality, the Western powers will regret misleading Taiwan.

Therefore, the Western powers should stop sending the wrong signals to Taiwan and, instead, make sincere efforts to promote cross-strait relations.

The author is the director of the Academic Council and a senior research fellow at the Shanghai Center for RimPac Strategic and International Studies. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

The author is former deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily. kangbing@chinadaily.com.cn

Anti-corruption fight will not spare even the 'small flies'

The Communist Party of China is currently carrying out a nationwide Party discipline education campaign, showcasing that rigorous self-governance is continuously in progress.

In fact, several times each year, the leaders of the Communist Party of China hold meetings to study the report of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection on how anti-corruption operations were conducted in the previous months and to chart the course of the corruption watchdog's work in the coming months.

The frequent, high-profile discussions show the great importance the CPC attaches to the efforts to combat intra-Party corruption, and these efforts will continue till corruption is rooted out from the Party. Besides the targets of "big tigers" and "foxes", "swatting the flies" has also been attached increasing importance.

The Chinese people know that "big tigers" mean corrupt high-ranking officials, "foxes" refer to corrupt officials and criminal suspects who flee to other countries and regions to escape punishment, and "flies" mean lower-level officials and workers who force common folks to pay bribes to get things done.

The corruption cases and unhealthy practices exposed at the lower level last year should be carefully studied.

The CCDI statistics released earlier this year show that about 610,000 officials were punished for violating Party discipline last year. Among them, 49 were officials above the vice-minister/governor level while 3,144 were above the bureau level.

For the past eight years, the "fox hunting campaign" has helped bring a few thousand criminal suspects back to China to be tried in court and punished for their crimes.

Of the lower-level officials punished last year, more than 61,000 were reportedly rural grassroots cadres. Many can decide how much a family can get from government subsidies for growing crops, and housing and healthcare. The fact that in land acquisition deals hundreds of millions of yuan change hands shows that without effective supervision, a big portion of the money can go into the pocket of corrupt rural grassroots cadres.

One of the officials punished last year was the head of a city's medical emergency service center in Xi'an of Shaanxi province. He not only took bribes worth thousands of yuan but also neglected his duty at a time when the entire society was mobilized to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The smallest "fly" caught last year could be a social worker at the community level in Tianjin. He was put under investigation by the local supervision department for serious breach of laws and regulations. As a contract employee of a local residential community, the man is assumed to have taken a huge amount of bribes.

Data also show that 17,000 people were among those who were investigated and punished last year, indicating that the supervisors now consider bribing a serious violation of law. Earlier, those giving bribes were usually considered victims and thus subjected to light punishment. But the CCDI's new rules have made bribing a corrupt practice too.

The corruption cases and unhealthy practices exposed at the lower level last year should be carefully studied. By dissecting the cases, we can find loopholes in the governance mechanism, which can help the authorities to plug them and build a solid network that will protect the people against not only the "big tigers" and "foxes" but also the "flies".



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

PilSoo Choi

China catalyst in improving development financing

In the realm of global development aid and financing, the emergence of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative has brought about significant changes, reshaping traditional practices and principles. The Belt and Road Initiative's expansive scale and rapid implementation have not only stimulated China's sustained approach to fostering economic growth in developing countries, particularly through infrastructure development, but also prompted a re-evaluation of strategies by Western economies toward a more pragmatic direction.

The assimilation of Chinese and Western practices in development financing signifies a pivotal shift that is poised to cause substantial changes among developing countries and a myriad of stakeholders, encompassing sovereign entities and commercial players alike.

As we delve into the nuances of this evolving landscape, we can see that key organizations such as the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have played a crucial role in shaping the norms and recommendations governing the terms and conditions for aid.

The DAC's emphasis on "untiedness" as articulated in the "Revised DAC Recommendation on Terms and Conditions of Aid



The influence of Chinese practices, the evolving strategies of Western nations, and the emergence of collaborative initiatives signal a dynamic shift in the realm of development financing and aid.

(1978)" and the "2001 DAC Recommendation on Untying ODA to the Least Developed Countries" underscores the importance of separating aid provisions from execution, particularly by the business units of donor countries. This departure from previous practices where aid was associated with exports and specific conditions has been instrumental in fostering a more transparent and efficient aid framework.

Even before the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed in 2013, China had been implementing its unique practices in overseas projects, such as the "Aid Contracting Nexus" and the "Trade-Aid-Investment Nexus". These approaches often involved tied and conditioned development financing, showcasing a blend of economic incentives and strategic interests.

In response to the changing dynamics, the Western economies have identified weaknesses in their existing practices. Western donors' tendency to be selective in choosing politically acceptable recipients has led to a shift in focus toward more reliable economies. The inefficiencies within the Western aid frameworks, as highlighted by scholars such as Erik Myxter-Iino, have underscored the need for a more streamlined and effective approach to development financing.

Also, initiatives such as the "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment" proposed by the US to the other G7 member states in 2022 aim to address the infrastructure needs of developing countries through transformative projects. The PGI's focus on value, efficiency and transparency aligns with the broader goal of creating new opportunities for both workers and enterprises in the United States and its ally countries.

Similarly, the European Committee of the Region's "Global Gateway" initiative, announced in December 2021, underscores the importance of democratic values, high standards, good governance, transparency and green initiatives in infrastructure development. And through initiatives such as the Team Europe Initiatives, the European Union seeks to foster cooperation among member countries, financial institutions, civil society and partners in developing countries to drive sustainable development projects.

As we navigate this evolving landscape, it is imperative that stakeholders effectively collaborate to address the diverse needs of developing countries and promote sustainable development. The influence of Chinese practices, the evolving strategies of Western nations, and the emergence of collaborative initiatives signal a dynamic shift in the realm of development financing and aid. By embracing innovation, inclusivity and transparency, we can pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

The author is a professor and researcher in the Department of Chinese Trade and Commerce, Sejong University, the Republic of Korea. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

GUO YINGFENG

Hold fast

Thanks to introduction of favorable policies, the pressure on foreign investment has been alleviated

Opening to the outside world is a fundamental national policy for China, of which a primary task is to effectively utilize foreign investment. Since the launch of reform and opening-up, especially after joining the World Trade Organization, foreign-invested companies have become an integral part of China's economy, playing a crucial role in China's rapid integration into the global value chain.



However, foreign investment flows into China are under short-term pressure due to uncertainties in the external environment, including in-depth restructuring of the global value chain, supply-demand imbalances, and high financing costs.

During the global economic downturn, industry chain changes driven by nearshoring and friendshoring have had a negative impact on China's foreign investment and trade. Global supply-demand imbalances are mainly caused by tariff barriers and supply chain disruptions, rooted in international trade frictions and geopolitical risks.

Due to the US Federal Reserve's frequent and aggressive interest rate hikes, financing costs have been pushed up on a global scope. In response, major world economies have been forced into a cycle of rate rises, resulting in global financial market volatility and a lack of investor confidence, which in turn has reduced cross-border investment and consumption.

These adverse factors have led to a negative market outlook for foreign investment. 2023 saw sluggish global cross-border direct investment, with a nine percent drop in flows to emerging markets and developing countries.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, the actual use of foreign direct investment in China fell by 8 percent in 2023, and by 26.1 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024. It is expected that foreign investment flows into China will remain under pressure this year.

In response to this situation, China has been consistently releasing favorable policies and has taken strong measures to stabilize foreign investment. The effects of the efforts are showing: foreign investment is stabilizing in quantity and improving in quality, and the short-term pressure has been alleviated.

In August 2023, the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued Opinions on Further Optimizing the Foreign Investment Environment and Increasing Efforts to Attract Foreign Invest-

ment, (referred to as the "24-point guidelines"), which includes 59 measures in 24 areas. Six months on, more than 60 percent of the specific measures have been implemented or have made significant progress in implementation, contributing to the stabilization of foreign investment.

Since the beginning of this year, China has continued to release favorable foreign investment policies. In this year's government work report, the Chinese government calls for further shortening the negative list for foreign investment and abolishing all market access restrictions on foreign investment in manufacturing, as well as expanding the Catalog of Encouraged Industries for Foreign Investment.

On March 19, the State Council issued the Action Plan for Steadily Advancing High-level Opening up and Making Greater Efforts to Attract and Utilize Foreign Investment, which outlines 24 measures in five areas to address specific obstacles and issues faced by foreign investors seeking to integrate into China's new development pattern, providing further policy support for stabilizing and improving the quality of foreign investment in China.

With these policies, the quality of foreign investment inflows in China is higher and higher, manifested in some emerging industries and advanced technology sectors.

First, the share of high-tech investment in total actual use of FDI has significantly increased. In 2023, foreign investment in manufacturing grew by 20.5 percent year-on-year, in which high-tech manufacturing investment was up 40.6 percent. Investment in high-tech sectors accounted for 34.7 percent of total. In the first quarter of 2024, the share of investment in the manufacturing and high-tech manufacturing sectors rose by 2.3 and 2.2 percentage points, respectively, compared to the same period last year.

Second, more and more foreign investment projects feature cutting-edge technological innovation. Major foreign companies such as BASF, ExxonMobil and Siemens have established innovation and research and development centers in Guangdong province. These are great examples of win-win cooperation, which are made possible by the pro-innovation environment in the region and the multinational giants' willingness to grow along with China's high-quality development.

Additionally, many foreign companies in Jiangsu province are actively reinvesting their retained earnings in China, targeting high-tech industries such as photovoltaics, special vessels, automobile manufacturing, and elec-

tronic component manufacturing.

Third, China's high quality economic development has provided strong support for the high quality foreign investment inflows. China has the world's largest and most complete industrial system as well as a huge talent pool. China is also continuously optimizing its business environment and developing relevant regulatory frameworks, manifested in rises in the World Bank's global business climate rankings.

As the world's second-largest consumer market with the world's largest middle-income group, China has enormous potential in consumer spending and is seeing a continuous upgrade in consumer spending structure. As the world's second-largest economy, China is systemically important for the world economy and its global economic supply-demand balance.

Apart from its high quality, the quantity of foreign investment is also showing a stable trend.

First, historical data show that the scale of FDI inflows into China remains at a relatively high level. The actual use of FDI declined in 2023 due to uncertainties in the external environment and the negative market expectations for foreign investment, but historically it was only behind 2021 and 2022. The decline in the first quarter of 2024 is mainly because of the high base of the first quarter of 2023, which recorded the largest foreign investment inflow in history.

Second, the number of newly established foreign-invested companies is surging, laying a foundation for the recovery of FDI inflows in China. The number of newly established foreign companies in China soared by 39.7 percent in 2023, and by 20.7 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024.

Third, China is seeing net inflows of FDI. According to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, China achieved a net inflow of FDI in the fourth quarter of 2023, a rapid turnaround from the net outflow in the third quarter.

In terms of FDI structure, a net total of \$62.1 billion in equity-based FDI flowed into China in 2023, and \$19 billion in the first quarter of 2024, showing a growing trend of investing in China and owning renminbi assets.

The author is an associate researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

SUN CHENGHAO AND ZHANG XUEYU

Keeping the genie bottled

China and the US should build sustainable regular dialogue mechanisms and strive to forge a consensus on AI cooperation

China and the United States had an in-depth, professional and constructive exchange of views on the governance and risks of artificial intelligence technology at the first intergovernmental dialogue between the two countries on AI held in Geneva, Switzerland, on May 14.

The meeting was aimed at implementing the consensus reached by the two heads of state in San Francisco in November, and was a key measure to maintain communication and control risks.

A comparison between the two states' approach to AI governance reveals divergences between them in the focus of application and perception of risks.

Regarding application, the US attaches great importance to AI's use in fields such as the military and cybersecurity. In social application scenarios, AI is also used in the country's healthcare, information technology and manufacturing sectors.

While advancing the development of AI, the US has not lost sight of the risks associated with the emerging technology. The US National AI Advisory Committee has listed the misuse and abuse of AI, disruptions to economy and society, interventions in the democratic process, and uncontrollable weapons as the main risks and challenges.

In October 2022, the Joe Biden administration issued the Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights, which laid out the principles of safe and secure AI systems, algorithmic discrimination protections, data privacy, and notice and explanation. In January 2023, the National Institute of Standards and Technology developed the AI Risk Management Framework, outlining the characteristics of trustworthy AI systems, which include being valid and reliable, secure, accountable and transparent, explainable, privacy enhanced, and fair with their harmful biases managed.

By comparison, China places more importance on AI's role in promoting socioeconomic development, and is cautious about its military use.

In 2017, China issued a development plan for new-genera-

In addition, China and the US should further promote cooperation in areas where the two sides have reached consensus, including climate governance, narcotics control, cross-border crime monitoring, and remote medical care.

tion AI, underscoring its potential to become a new economic engine, and a tool to improve livelihoods. As part of efforts to boost industrial innovation and develop new quality productive forces at a faster pace, China announced the launch of the AI Plus initiative at this year's government work report.

At the Global AI Governance Initiative unveiled in 2023, China called for major countries to be cautious about the development and application of AI for military uses.

As for the risks, China stressed the importance of safeguarding national security and social stability in the era of AI.

At the national level, AI has the potential to serve as a shield for national security; however, it also carries the risk of being weaponized in information warfare, potentially resulting in the leakage of national intelligence. At the societal level, AI may cause data leaks of enterprises or dissemination of false or harmful information, threatening people's health, information safety, and intellectual property rights.

Meanwhile, China and the US face multiple challenges in AI governance cooperation.

First, in the context of the US' strategic competition against China, the Biden administration is building "small yards with high fences" to suppress China's tech progress. AI is a key area of US' suppression against China, and its export controls on AI technology will not be loosened in the short term.

Second, the US is building a tech alliance against China, and trying to gain the high moral ground by touting "differences in values". In its National Security Strategy released in 2022, the Biden administration said the US will work in lockstep with its allies to compete against China. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken admitted that the US' zero-sum competition with China will force countries to pick sides between the two nations,

and said that the US will not loosen its tech restrictions on China.

Third, as AI technology develops fast across the world, regulation and governance of the sector lags behind. AI technology may bring challenges and risks in different application scenarios, making it difficult for one country to work out an in-time and comprehensive regulatory approach.

Looking forward, China and the US enhancing their dialogue on AI will not only help stabilize bilateral ties, but also set a good example for global AI governance.

Therefore, the two countries should explore the direction of cooperation in the next stage with the recent summit as a starting point, promote more dialogues at the global level, and encourage communication on AI issues at multiple levels, through various channels, engaging diverse stakeholders. It is suggested the two sides first pilot small-scale cooperation in areas of common concern.

Given the implications of the US presidential election, China and the US should build sustainable regular mechanisms of dialogue and strive to forge consensus between the two parties on AI cooperation with China. At the same time, the two countries could learn risk control experiences from other areas, and explore building risk assessment and management teams to avoid uncontrollable risks.

In addition, China and the US should further promote cooperation in areas where the two sides have reached consensus, including climate governance, narcotics control, cross-border crime monitoring, and remote medical care. The two countries could consider including AI governance into their existing dialogue mechanisms, and strengthen interactions between the two working teams on different issues, thereby expanding consensus on AI governance, and paving the way for further dialogue and cooperation.

Sun Chenghao is a fellow and head of the US-Europe Program at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University. Zhang Xueyu is an assistant fellow of the US-Europe Program at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

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

Market cheers new regulation on stake cuts

Mavens say measures will bring more stability, protect investor interests

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

China's stock market on Monday gave the thumbs up to Friday's new regulation comprising 31 measures to streamline major shareholders' reductions in their equity holdings, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index gaining 1.14 percent to close at 3124.04 points.

The Shenzhen Component Index and technology-focused ChiNext in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, added 0.88 percent and 0.68 percent, respectively. Market mavens said the new regulation is expected to bring more stability to the A-share market.

On Friday, the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, promulgated the new regulation with immediate effect to address frequently occurring problems in the A-share market.

Major shareholders should not cut their equity stakes via restricted shares through fake divorce, short-selling or unregulated ways, the CSRC said.

Consequent to the new regulation, major shareholders cannot reduce their holdings through block trades or centralized bidding when the share price falls below net asset value per share, or fails to meet dividend standards.

The total number of shares sold by major shareholders in any period of three months should not exceed 1 percent of the company's total number of shares.

Meanwhile, major shareholders are required to pre-disclose cuts to their shareholdings. Illegal shareholding reductions will be ordered for repurchase and payment of the difference to the listed company, the new regulation states.

Shareholders holding a 5 percent stake in the listed company, actual controllers, board members, supervisors and senior executives should all abide by the new regulation in the context of paring their stakes, said the CSRC.

Independent financial analyst Guo Shiliang deemed the new regulation "most stringent" of the kind, "addressing almost all the previous loopholes regarding cuts to stakes". Going forward, more attention should be paid to companies' market value management.

"The other side of the story is a shareholder's long-term position in his or her own company, which is key to boosting the confidence of A-share investors," he said.

Tian Lihui, director of the Institute of Finance and Development at Nankai University, said that the new regulation steps up the crackdown on illegal shareholding reductions or reductions in a roundabout way. It is of great importance to safeguard the stability of the secondary market, protect the rights of individual investors and create a sound stock-market ecosystem, he said.

The central regulators' resolution and efforts to crack down on violations and illegal activities have helped build a healthier A-share market, said Liu Chenming, chief strategist of GF Securities.

Against that backdrop, investors have come to regard industry-leading companies and companies with core competitiveness as worthy of long-term investment and larger exposure.

Chen Guo, chief strategist at China Securities, said that investors can be strategically optimistic about the A-share market, given the recent regulatory moves on stake reductions and resuming IPO revisions.

International investors' confidence in A shares has also been rising mainly because of the 9.3 percent average annual business income increase reported by companies included in the MSCI China Index, said Wendy Liu, JPMorgan's chief Asia and China equity strategist, citing latest annual financial reports.

Listed companies from the internet, telecommunications, medicine and power supply sectors have led the business improvement, she said.



A vessel carrying Chinese-made NEVs departs from Wuhu, Anhui province, bound for export markets. WANG YUSHI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Expert: Tariff hike 'stupid' move by US

By MA SI
masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Washington's decision to hike tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and automotive batteries is politically motivated and does not align with World Trade Organization rules or the realities of the US market, an industry expert in China's automotive battery sector said.

"It is stupid, stupid and stupid for the US government to exert tariff spikes on Chinese EVs and batteries. Such tariffs are ineffective and counterproductive to the US EV industry's development," Dong Yang, president of the China Automotive Battery Innovation Alliance, told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

Dong's comments came after the US Trade Representative's office said some of the steep tariff increases on an array of Chinese imports will take effect on Aug 1, including quadrupling import duties on Chinese electric vehicles to over 100 percent and an increase in the tariff rate on lithium-ion batteries used in EVs from 7.5 percent to 25 percent.

According to Dong, China's EV exports to the US are minimal now, so a 100 percent tariff is more of a political gesture, but "the nature of this move is alarmingly damaging, and it is a complete deviation from the market economy which the US has always claimed to be a staunch supporter of".

"The US electric vehicle industry's primary challenge is its lack of a robust domestic battery industry, which contributes to higher costs and insufficient charging infrastructure," Dong, who is also vice-

president of China EV 100, a key auto industry think tank in the country, added.

According to him, US companies were pioneers in some automotive battery technologies, but they subsequently fell behind their Chinese counterparts due to missteps and strategic errors.

"Now, as the US seeks to establish its own battery industry, it faces higher costs compared to leveraging Chinese expertise and production capabilities. China's battery industry is highly advanced and cost-efficient to lead globally," Dong said.

The United States has been the largest destination for China's lithium-ion battery exports for four consecutive years, from 2020 to 2023.

In 2023, the value of lithium-ion batteries exported from China to the US reached \$13.54 billion, accounting for 20.8 percent of the total export value of China's lithium-ion batteries, data from the General Administration of Customs of China showed.

"For China's automotive battery industry, participating in the US market is an added benefit rather than a necessity. The Chinese battery industry will continue to thrive regardless of US policies. However, for the US, excluding Chinese batteries will lead to significantly higher costs, impacting the overall competitiveness of its EV market. This situation is a clear example of political decisions undermining economic logic," Dong added.

"Now, the US government wants to rely on Japanese and South Korean suppliers to build its domestic EV battery industry. Such

attempts are undoubtedly misguided and will add to costs, because Japan and South Korea have less efficient battery supply chains than China's," Dong said.

Ding Yuqian, head of China Autos Research at HSBC Qianhai Securities Ltd, said the nation has the world's most competitive EV battery supply chain.

Noting that the most expensive single element of an EV is its battery, she said that carmakers partnering with China have access to high-quality batteries produced relatively cheaply, with manufacturers continuously improving the technology, Ding said.

Elon Musk, CEO of US EV maker Tesla, said he opposed US tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, and neither Tesla nor he had sought such tariffs.

He was responding to audience questions via video link during an annual technology conference dedicated to innovation and startups in Paris last week.

Despite the US government's antagonistic stance, Chinese EV battery companies like CATL and BYD remain open to collaboration. They are willing to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships. "This contrasts with Washington's approach, which politicizes economic and social issues to an extreme degree. This politicization harms both economies and slows technological progress," Dong said.

"The US automotive industry has historically benefited from collaboration with China. For the global automotive sector to thrive, increased cooperation, rather than political decoupling, is essential," Dong added.

Forum stresses ties among economies

By LIU ZHIHUA
and LIU ZIZHENG

All economies need to work together to promote financial stability and economic globalization while addressing common challenges facing the global economy like high inflation, rising protectionism and climate change, said experts and central bank governors at a global forum on Monday.

They also said that China's high-quality development will inject more positive energy into global economic growth. They said the world should reduce reliance on the US dollar-centered global financial system, as the United States tends to weaponize the greenback amid rising geopolitical tensions.

They made the remarks at the two-day 2024 Tsinghua PBCSF Global Finance Forum that kicked off on Monday in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Zhu Min, founder of the Global Economic Governance 50 Forum and former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, warned that geopolitical tensions are escalating, populism is gaining ground, economic growth is decelerating and the process of globalization is slowing further.

"Looking ahead, we need a new 'Bretton Woods system', one that will benefit all nations by providing financial stability and supporting economic growth for the future of all humanity," Zhu said.

Marc Uzan, executive director of the Reinventing Bretton Woods Committee, said that economies around the world need to figure out the fundamental way that can ensure financial stability and build an economic governance system that is in line with new conditions of the 21st century.

The world should cooperate to realize the low-carbon transition and fight climate change, which has caused extreme weather events and loss of biodiversity, Uzan said.

He stressed efforts to adapt the global economy to future technological advances and the emergence of digital currencies. Efficient infrastructure and platforms for digital transactions are needed to ensure interoperability among different systems, he said.

Massimiliano Castelli, managing director, head of Strategy & Advice at Global Sovereign Markets of UBS Asset Management, said that from both theoretical and practical standpoints, the world needs a financial system that is not overly reliant on the US dollar.

An increasing number of emerging market countries are reducing their US dollar reserves, and this is not solely a consequence of US sanctions against Russia. Rather, it reflects a growing trend among emerging markets to decrease their dependence on the dollar, he said.

If global geopolitical fluctuations intensify, countries may need to reduce their reliance on the dollar even further, he said.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Michael Spence stressed that powerful technologies can be used to reverse the slowdown in productivity. The Chinese economy, he said, will overcome difficulties to remain an important source of sustainable global growth.

Jiao Jie, chief financial officer of Tsinghua University and dean of Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance, said that the Chinese economy has shifted to a phase of high-quality development, and by deepening reforms and expanding opening-up, China will build new economic advantages and boost growth momentum, thus driving global economic progress.

As global governance undergoes key changes, China is actively participating in global financial governance and policy coordination, engaging in multilateral cooperation and steering economic globalization toward greater openness, inclusiveness, balance and win-win results, Jiao said.

Briefly

CDB hikes support for sci-tech firms

China Development Bank, a major policy bank, has stepped up its medium and long-term financing support for science and technology enterprises. From January to April, CDB issued science and tech loans worth 40.6 billion yuan (\$5.7 billion), among which 16.5 billion yuan went to supporting the development of integrated circuits, mechanical equipment and industrial automation, basic materials, new energy technology applications, biomedicine and other fields. Since 2021, CDB has set up special loans for scientific and technological innovation and basic research.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281.3 million) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Monday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's Bank of China said in a statement. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Data management key to smart city success

By FAN FEIFEI and
HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou

China's emphasis on promoting the development of smart cities and urban digital transformation is expected to bolster the innovative growth of the digital economy, help foster new quality productive forces and push forward the modernization of urban governance systems and capacity, officials and experts said.

Noting that data serve as the foundation and core element of the digital economy, they called for more efforts to promote the exploitation and opening up of data, as well as the efficient circulation and use of data elements, while expanding the application scenarios for data in more key fields.

Liu Lihong, head of the National Data Administration, said more efforts are needed to support urban areas to accelerate the implementation of basic systems for data that cover data property rights, circulation and trading, revenue distribution and security governance in light of their own conditions, and build dynamic, classified and graded data management systems so as to unleash the value of data resources.

Liu made the remarks at a subforum of the 7th Digital China Summit, which ended on Saturday in Fuzhou, Fujian province.

Liu highlighted that accelerating the digital transformation of cities is key to advancing the building of a "Digital China".

He said China will make greater efforts to establish multilayered industrial internet platforms, achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields including big data and artificial intelligence, nurture future-oriented industries and build digital industrial clusters with international competitiveness.

Liu stressed the significance of bolstering the digital transformation of cities, building basic infrastructure for data circulation and utilization, as well as pressing ahead with the construction of urban computing power networks, in a bid to boost the efficient allocation of data elements and lay a solid foundation for the development of an urban digital economy.

By 2027, China expects to see significant progress in the digital transformation of urban areas, and to have built a number of livable, resilient and smart cities, according to a document released by the NDA and several other government departments.

Guo Tao, deputy head of the China Electronic Commerce Expert Service Center, said data have been regarded as an important force to promote the development of the digital economy, and the newly launched guideline will be



An AI robot writes Chinese characters like a calligrapher during the 7th Digital China Summit in Fuzhou. LIN SHANCHUAN / XINHUA

conducive to establishing a national integrated big data system for government affairs and formulating unified data standards.

The move is also expected to facilitate the exchange, sharing, circulation and utilization of data among different systems and platforms, bolster the construction of data infrastructure and improve the innovative management model for data elements, Guo said.

Computing power and data elements have played a vital role in underpinning the development of the digital economy, said Zeng Zhenyu, vice-president of Alibaba Cloud Intelligence, the cloud computing unit of Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group.

Zeng said the company has

ramped up efforts to build computing power infrastructure across the globe, and boost the intelligent and digital transformation of a wide range of fields by applying its innovative digital technologies, such as cloud computing, big data and artificial intelligence-powered large language models.

Liu Yong, vice-president of Tencent Holdings Ltd, said the company is doubling down on the burgeoning industrial internet sector in a move to bolster the integration of digital technologies with various industries, and improve the operational efficiency of enterprises and reduce costs.

Contact the writers at
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Contact the writers at
liuzhihua@chinadaily.com.cn

BUSINESS

VF Corp eyes China as its 'biggest' market

Company CEO: Strong economic growth, rising middle-income group key to biz

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

US-based apparel, footwear and accessories company VF Corp will develop China into its biggest market, its top executive said, spurred by the country's strong economic growth, rising middle-income group and higher demand for an active and healthy lifestyle from consumers.

"It (China) has always been important and it's getting more important every day... It is our No 2 market in the world (after the United States) and is the fastest growing," said Bracken Darrell, president and CEO of VF Corp, during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

Operating more than 1,500 monobrand stores under seven brands, including The North Face, Vans and Timberland, in the country, Darrell said China currently contributes about 10 percent of the company's global business, with a faster pace of growth than that of the rest of the world.

"We'll see one day, I think China will pass," the CEO said.

"I wouldn't give a year... but I think over time it's inevitable with the number of people here, this will become our biggest market in the world."

The confidence, according to Darrell, comes from the China market's

promising outlook and its ever-growing middle-income group.

"I think the overall GDP of China is predicted to grow 5 percent this year. And that's already one of the strongest in the world... We are very, very optimistic about the China market for almost all of our brands," said Darrell.

Meanwhile, the number of China's growing middle-income group is believed to surpass that of the US and create a gigantic market for the company, Darrell added.

The number of middle-income earners in China has surpassed 400 million and created hyperscale market demand, wrote Huang Hanquan, president and researcher of the Academy of Macroeconomic Research, a research institute affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission, in an article for the China Economic Times.

Huang said China's retail sales of consumer goods exceeded 47 trillion yuan (\$6.49 trillion) in 2023, making it the world's second-largest, as well as the market with the greatest potential.

"All of our brands are benefiting from the rise of the strong middle-income group and even the upper end, who really expect higher quality and better innovation," said Darrell.

In the meantime, its brands are also benefiting from China's national strategies including promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

According to Darrell, the overall strategy of fast adaptation, and continued investment in technology have advanced the standard of living of people throughout China.

"That definitely benefits a company like us that plays in the apparel

and footwear market. We're offering and generating premium experiences for premium prices. And the growing strength of the middle-income group is certainly going to feed our long-term growth," he said.

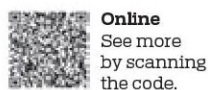
"I think that effort by the Chinese government, the general trends around the world, those two combined should continue to drive very strong growth in China," Darrell said.

China's outdoor sports industry will reach 3 trillion yuan by 2025, following an action plan to promote outdoor sports facilities and services jointly released by government departments including the NDRC and the General Administration of Sport of China.

Backed by multiple factors including market demand and favorable policies, China's outdoor products industry is projected to grow from 197.1 billion yuan in 2022 to 240 billion yuan in 2025, Xinhua reported, citing a report on China's outdoor sports industry.

"I think every indication is that China will continue to encourage people to be outdoors, to be active, to be healthy. It's so aligned with what our company is all about. And so we intend to keep investing here, because I believe that China will continue to be one of the strongest markets in the world partly for that reason," said Darrell.

"Our strategy over the next 3-5 years is to continue to invest. We're going to be investing aggressively in outdoor and active."



Online
See more
by scanning
the code.

New special bonds to fund infra flurry

By ZHUANG QIANG
zhuangqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

China is stepping up its infrastructure efforts, which are boosted by the nation's bond issuance efforts, such as the release of new special bonds and launch of ultra-long-term special national bonds, experts said.

This move aims to provide ample financial backing for the country's infrastructure investments, ensuring a stable growth rate and sound macroeconomic operations, they added.

"The faster pace of bond issuances indicates increased funding demand for construction projects and offers strong support for economic stability. It helps maintain the positive growth momentum seen in the first quarter and ensures the continuity and stability of economic growth," said Long Chaocan, an investment consultant with China Galaxy Securities Co Ltd.

The National Development and Reform Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, recently completed the selection process for local government special bond projects for this year. Some 38,000 projects were approved, with an estimated demand for special bonds at around 5.9 trillion yuan (\$810 billion), which analysts said indicates a likely acceleration in the issuance of new special bonds moving forward.

As the impact of new treasury bond issuances wanes, the issuance of local bonds, particularly new special bonds, is expected to pick up pace in the second quarter, said Lian Ping, president of China Chief Economist Forum.

As of late April, local governments have disclosed plans to issue over 2.2 trillion yuan in local bonds in the second quarter, with 1.2 trillion yuan earmarked for special bonds.

This strategic issuance of bonds is a critical measure to secure financial resources for ongoing and new infrastructure projects, reinforcing China's efforts to stabilize and sustain its economic growth trajectory.

Transportation projects have been stepped up nationwide,



A tunnel on the Hangzhou-Wenzhou High-speed Railway in Zhejiang province. Built by China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, the HSR has started joint testing, marking countdown to its full operation. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

reflected by progress reports revealed by major contractors and buoyed by the still strong infrastructure investment into the sector, which remained at a high level of 712.5 billion yuan in the first quarter, said the Ministry of Transport.

China's railway investment has picked up pace since the beginning of the year, the country's railway operator said.

Fixed-asset investment in the country's railway sector reached 184.9 billion yuan in the first four months, marking a 10.5 percent increase from the same period a year ago, according to China State Railway Group.

With the high-quality and efficient manner of building railways, the country is expediting the construction of a modern rail infrastructure system, the company said.

China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, a unit of major railway builder China Railway Construction Corp, said its team in Zhejiang province completed digging the Jiangxia Tunnel on the Wenling-Yuhuan High-speed Railway last week.

Located in Wenling, Zhejiang, the 1.58-kilometer tunnel, which has a maximum depth of 157 meters, is being built with two high-speed rails, allowing trains to journey at speeds of 350 kilometers per hour.

Despite challenging geological conditions, the project team employed advanced techniques to ensure safety and progress. Pre-construction drone surveys and precise rock clearing were conducted to secure the environment, said Di Mingjun, project manager with CR24.

The project is a major infrastructure undertaking in Zhejiang and aims to improve regional connectivity, integrating more regions isolated from HSR service into the Yangtze River Delta's transport network, Di said.

Another HSR in Zhejiang, the Hangzhou-Wenzhou High-Speed Railway entered joint testing work, with a test train departing from Tonglu East Railway Station recently, marking the countdown to the railway's full operation.

The train will journey through nine stations before reaching its destination at Wenzhou South Railway Station. When railway construction is completed, joint testing work will be arranged to evaluate and examine the project quality, as a move to ensure compliance with design standards.

The railway, which is also an undertaking built by CR24, spans approximately 260 km with a design speed of 350 km/h.

The project team has "gone the whole hog" on safety with faster and more efficient progress seen on the HSR, as it will enhance links between the two major cities and provide faster transportation choices for passengers, Di said.

Zhejiang is also strengthening its railway network to promote trade. State builders, including CR24, are helping the province build the Yiwu hub port railway line project to facilitate trade-related rail links.

The project reached a crucial phase last week as construction workers placed a 32.6-meter T-beam on a major bridge on the container special line, a milestone signifying the project's transition to its final construction phase.

"To ensure successful installation, the project team conducted rounds of safety checks and technical briefings, with construction plans focusing on efficiency and safety," a staff member with CR24 said.

The project aims to enhance logistics between the regions of Jinhua and Yiwu, and Ningbo-Zhoushan Port, and streamline Customs processes, the builder said.



Farmers harvest radishes at a plantation in Taizhou, Jiangsu province, on May 9. TANG DEHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Local govts boosting specialty sectors

By LIU ZIZHENG
liuzizheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China's local governments have put in place advanced technologies and stepped up efforts to promote specialty industries, in order to inject fresh impetus into the country's rural revitalization initiative.

At a factory of Yihao Industrial Co Ltd, workers are busy carving jade with the help of computer-controlled smart equipment.

Bai Zhen, head of the company, said Yihao Industrial is one of more than 20,000 jade jewelry manufacturers based in Zhenping county, in Central China's Henan province.

Known as "the hometown of Chinese jade carvings", Zhenping has a history of more than 4,000 years in jade processing.

"In the past, we could only carve jade by hand, but nowadays things are quite different," Bai said.

The tasks of cutting, polishing and waxing jade are all undertaken by smart equipment now, he added.

"Traditional carving techniques brought a lot of trouble to quality control, while smart equipment can not only boost our productivity, but also significantly contribute to local industrial transformation," Bai said.

He also said smart equipment had brought in a surge in demand for electricity.

As a result, the State Grid Corp of China, a State-owned electric utility

firm, has actively advanced the upgrading of the local power grid in recent years, thus ensuring stable and reliable power supply.

As the scale of the jade industry continues to expand, Zhenping is home to 12 jade jewelry markets and more than 40,000 jade jewelry stores, both online and offline, offering jobs to nearly 400,000 residents.

Besides, its jade carvers are gradually turning to new fields such as materials selection, marketing, jewelry appreciation, and management, which has largely extended the local industrial chain.

Currently, the jade industry in Zhenping has reached an overall output value of 100 billion yuan (\$13.8 billion) and its sales account for more than 40 percent of the national total.

Meanwhile, in Zhongwei, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, farmers are leveraging an agro-industrial park to experiment with the latest growing techniques and develop specialty agriculture.

Huang Faguo, owner of a greenhouse located in the park, said he introduced a series of new techniques last year to grow strawberries.

Huang said he utilizes advanced devices to filter the water before irrigation, which has enhanced the size and taste of strawberries. The ripening of the fruit has also been greatly advanced.

Huang said the output value of the greenhouse is expected to

more than triple this year, hitting 400,000 yuan.

According to Huang, the agro-industrial park, jointly built by 11 villages in 2020 and involving a total investment of 18 million yuan, has successfully nurtured several specialty industries, from cold-tolerant vegetable growing to facility cultivation agriculture.

The State Grid has also contributed to the success of the park by regularly dispatching staff to inspect the advanced agricultural equipment and promptly address any electrical hazards.

Their moves came after China released the No 1 Central Document in February, which stressed further efforts to build a modern industrial system in rural areas by developing specialty industries and cultivating famous brands.

The document also said China will provide more support for agriculture in terms of technology. It will advance the construction of major innovation platforms and encourage more high-tech talent to work in rural areas.

Wei Houkai, director of the Rural Development Institute, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the country should foster a better environment for rural industries to thrive.

Meanwhile, rural areas should continue to build more industrial clusters based on local characteristics and promote the integration of primary, secondary and tertiary industries, said Wei.

Wanderlust returns as tourism booms

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Visa applications in China are expected to witness a robust recovery this year, fueled by the increase in international flight capacity and eased visa policies for Chinese tourists, said VFS Global, the world's leading visa application outsourcing and technology services provider.

VFS Global said visa application volumes in the first four months have already reached 73 percent of pre-COVID levels, driven by strong travel demand. This year, the figure is projected to be about 70 percent of the level in 2019.

Demand for Schengen visas has always been high, with Germany and Italy being frequent preferences. Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States are also very popular destinations for Chinese residents, said Kishen Singh, chief operating officer for the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Mongolia of VFS Global.

The number of visa applications for the UK and Canada among Chinese travelers between January and April has almost recovered to about 98 percent and 92 percent, almost equal to levels seen in the same period in 2019, while Germany has exceeded this level by 16 percent, he said.

Except for long holidays such as May Day holiday and National Day holiday, summer is still the peak period for visa applications due to summer vacations and overseas students preparing to go abroad, Singh said, adding that he is optimistic about the prospects of the recovery of outbound tourism this year.

At present, VFS Global has more



Kishen Singh

than 400 visa application centers across 15 cities in China, serving 34 client governments. It manages the nonjudgmental and administrative tasks for visa and passport applications as well as consular services for the governments it serves, but plays no role in the decisionmaking process of granting or refusing visas.

The company has intensified its investments in China for visa application centers' refurbishment and expansion across different cities to meet the growing demand of international travel.

Singh noted that before the pandemic, group tours mainly focused on large groups, but nowadays there are smaller groups, and people aspire to experience more diverse destinations and enjoy higher-quality services.

Moreover, personalized value-added visa application services such as "visa at your doorstep" and "VIP lounge services" are increasingly gaining popularity among applicants.

The most visa applications originated from Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou in Guangdong province, and there is rising demand in smaller cities, he added. "From the perspective of visa services, Chinese travelers are increasingly willing to pay for personalized, customized and convenient services."

According to the Civil Aviation Administration of China, scheduled international passenger flights have resumed to approximately 73 percent of their pre-pandemic levels.

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

Singh said that with the resumption of international flights and opening-up of visa appointments, Chinese citizens have a strong desire to travel to European countries and spend on luxury travel.

He emphasized the young Chinese generation now tends to value "purpose" more than "destination" in terms of outbound travel, and wants to experience different cultures.

Vacations, concerts, sporting events and medical or healthcare services are combined together to become the purpose of their outbound tourism, he said, suggesting that applicants should apply for their visas in advance to avoid visa processing delays during peak seasons.

The country's outbound travel has seen a strong recovery since the beginning of the year, and Chinese tourists' consumption during outbound travel this year will be more diversified, experts said.

They added that the booming outbound travel rush is a testament to China's bolstering consumption, which plays a vital role in expanding domestic demand and promoting overall economic growth.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, said China's outbound trip segment is expected to see a robust recovery this year, which will inject strong impetus into the prosperity of the country's tourism sector. He added that Chinese travelers' enthusiasm for outbound trips has unleashed a surge in visa applications.

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Restaurant chain serves special dish for success

Chef Fei a hit not only among Hunan residents, but also diners all over the country

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Stir-fried pork with fresh chili peppers is one of the most well-known dishes commonly seen in Hunan province.

The taste of this delectable dish, which has both the spicy flavor of chili peppers and the succulent tenderness of pork, is unique to each family even if they use exactly the same ingredients.

Local people in Hunan, in fact, say that the best stir-fried pork with chili is the one made by their mothers.

The dish dates back to more than 2,000 years as depicted in the *Songs of Chu*, an anthology of ancient Chinese poetry, which records that Hunan people ate chilies to warm the body.

The dish is also what has made Chef Fei one of the most popular Hunan restaurant chains nationwide.

Chef Fei sold more than 5 million servings of chili stir-fried pork last year, with total sales revenue exceeding 1 billion yuan (\$138 million), according to the company.

Founded in 2003 in Hengyang, Hunan, Chef Fei has expanded to over 100 branches in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Suzhou, Jiangsu province, as well as in Hunan itself.

Its signature dish, fried pork with chili, has become a hit not only among Hunan residents, but customers all over the country.

In 2018, the first Chef Fei restaurant outside Hunan opened in Shenzhen, which is jokingly referred to as the provincial capital of Hunan province because of the large number of Hunan natives working in the city due to its geological proximity.

The restaurant chain expanded to Shanghai in 2021, Beijing in 2022 and Guangzhou last year. The average wait time at its restaurants in Beijing exceeds two hours.

When the brand opened its first outlet in Guangzhou last year, there were long lines to get in from 10 am to 10 pm, according to Lu Wenwei, the PR manager at Chef Fei.

Lu attributes the brand's popularity to its fastidiousness in ensuring that each dish is freshly prepared. Meanwhile, more youngsters have fallen in love with spicy food, which has become popular nationwide, he said.

Despite its popularity, the company does not offer delivery services as it wants customers to taste the freshly made food at its restaurants, he said.



Customers line up at the entrance of a Chef Fei restaurant in Minhang district of Shanghai on May 1. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

It has also not opened any franchises as it would be hard to control the quality of food and service at such restaurants, he added.

Chef Fei's chili stir-fried pork has been ranked the top dish in Changsha, capital of Hunan, for six consecutive years, Lu said.

"We have the most certified master chefs of Hunan cuisine among all local restaurant brands."

The chili stir-fried pork is the top dish and a representative of Hunan cuisine, he said.

"We carefully select our ingredients. For chili stir-fried pork, we only use Kurobuta pork and make sure that only master chefs can cook the dish."

Despite the high cost of labor and ingredients, the company has managed to control the price of its dishes in first-tier cities. Customers on average spend just over 100 yuan at its restaurant for a meal, which is affordable for white-collar workers in big cities.

Meanwhile, the company has not raised funds from investors and is not seeking a public listing on the stock markets, Lu added.

"All of our stores are making profits, though not much, and we are not in a rush to expand rapidly," he said.

However, to cope with popular demand, the company plans to open dozens of new restaurants in Bei-



A chef slices pork in the kitchen of a Chef Fei chain restaurant in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in December. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

jing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Suzhou, and Changsha. Its first venue in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, will open on June 2.

In Changsha, its restaurants have also become a must-visit destination for travelers from all over the country.

Wang Bing, head of Chef Fei's restaurant at Huangxing Square in Changsha, said during the Labor Day holiday, National Day holiday and summer vacation, the eatery welcomed 2,000-3,000 customers every day.

About 90 percent of its customers order stir-fried pork with chili pepper, its signature dish. Meanwhile, to cope with strong demand, the store has extended its service time by one hour to 11 pm, he said.

Chen Jie, 26, traveled to Changsha

from Beijing recently with friends and tried out one of Chef Fei's restaurants in the city.

"It is very famous and the waiting time in Beijing is too long, so I told myself I must try it out in Changsha," he said.

It is not too spicy and perfect for someone from northern China who wants to try spicy food but is unable to tolerate the strong flavor, he said.

Xie Jiahui and her friend went to Chef Fei's restaurant in Changsha before heading back home to Shaanxi province.

It was the second time that they were visiting Changsha and having a meal at the restaurant. "I like the city and its food very much and I find local people are very happy and lead relaxed lives," she said.

Lu, the PR manager of Chef Fei, said although Hunan cuisine has been well-received in the country, there has not been a well-known brand representing its local cuisine. "We want to make the brand recognized nationwide. We are making progress in bringing Hunan cuisine to more people, so they can experience its appeal."



Online
See more by
scanning the
code.

Supersized snack store nets super-happy customers

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha

For snack lovers, the mega-munchies offered by chain store Lingshi Henmang have made it into a must-visit destination, and the perfect place to spend some leisure time and post pictures on social media platforms.

Supersized Lay's potato chips packaged in 1.5-meter-tall boxes and Oreo cookies that are seemingly too big to carry — these are some of the unique products that have made the Lingshi Henmang stores popular with youngsters.

Hashtags about these have garnered millions of views on social media platforms, with armies of enthusiastic consumers heading to the stores in Changsha, Hunan province.

Pictures of customers carrying the snack-filled boxes generate a sizable number of online views and draw questions from netizens about where to buy them.

The brand opened its first store selling these big snacks in Changsha in January. After being flooded by customer queries, it opened another branch in the city in March.

The supersized snacks, which typically sell for around 100 yuan

(\$13.84), contain a dozen packs of normal-sized munchies as well as other side products from the companies.

For example, a supersized Oreo cookie package contains 14 smaller packs weighing 97 grams each, plus a random gift. With Gonzo potato chips, which sell for 78 yuan, you get a gift plus 15 packs of chips weighing 35 grams each.

During the Labor Day holiday, the two stores brought in 7.15 million yuan from the novel snacks, with the highest daily sales volume topping 910,000 yuan, the company said. Customers usually have to wait for more than two hours to enter the store.

Chen Zhiyang, head of the Super Lingshi Henmang store, said it did not expect so many visitors during the holiday. "Many people came to take pictures from all over the country," he said. "There were also deliverymen waiting outside the store to help customers from other cities carry the snacks back home."

Yuan Xiang, from Anhua county, Hunan, bought more than 600 yuan worth of snacks from the store.

However, these were not meant for eating, but for decorating her

sports training company for children.

"They love to see the snacks in big boxes, so the snacks can bring us more business," she said.

Seventeen-year-old high school student He Zeyang took a leave from school to visit the store. He also brought his cousin, a kindergarten pupil. After taking pictures, they bought several types of large snacks.

"The snacks are very novel and also unconventional, (they) give me a sense of fulfillment. No kid can leave the store empty-handed."

Founded in 2017 in Hunan, Lingshi Henmang operates more than 5,000 franchised snack stores nationwide, which received more than 340 million visitors last year, said Xie Hai, who works at the company's public relations department.

Aiming to become a "people's snack store", the company sells snacks at rates cheaper than those offered by ordinary convenience stores and tries to entice customers to buy in bulk with competitive prices, he said.

Meanwhile, the company only has brick-and-mortar stores and has not yet engaged in e-commerce.

All of its stores are decorated in bright and warm yellow hues with a large storefront to attract the attention of customers, he said.

"Even with the prevalence of online shopping in China, we still want to make people buy snacks at physical stores," he said. "When they come to our stores and see well-arranged snacks in large numbers — many of which kindle sweet childhood memories — they cannot resist buying them, and shopping becomes a happy experience."

To meet the demand for large-sized snacks, the company plans to open a third supersized store selling snacks in Changsha by the end of this month.

It currently sells more than 120 types of supersized snacks and is working with other snack companies to expand choices, he said.

Yi Lijun, PR manager at the company, said the success of Lingshi Henmang could not have been possible without the support of the local government and its efforts to build Changsha into a popular travel destination across social media platforms.

Hunan has many snack companies, which are major suppliers of products sold at its stores, he said.



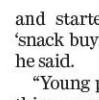
Consumers form a huge line in front of a Lingshi Henmang store in Changsha, Hunan province, during this year's May Day holiday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The local government has also issued many favorable policies for new consumption companies and created a great business environment for the company, he said.

Jiang Jianxin, 40, buys supersized snacks for customers from other regions who find it too troublesome to travel to Changsha.

He sells the snacks at higher prices than the store and forwards them to customers via convenient delivery services.

"We saw the business opportunity as there are no official online stores



and started to work full-time as 'snack buying agents' since March," he said. "Young people like new, big-sized things and the catchy snacks are perfect to post on social media. I believe and hope the stores stay popular for a long time, so I can also make some money from it."



Online
See more by
scanning the
code.