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CHINA DAILY

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China, Equatorial Guinea elevate ties

Decision made to inject lasting momentum into traditional relations

By MO JINGXI
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China and Equatorial Guinea decided on Tuesday to upgrade their bilateral relationship to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, in order to consolidate political mutual trust and deepen and expand practical cooperation in all areas.

The decision was announced after President Xi Jinping held talks in Beijing with Equatorial Guinean President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Obiang is making a state visit to China from Monday to Friday, his 11th trip to the country as president since he first came in 1984.

"China highly values developing its relations with Equatorial Guinea and is willing to strengthen exchanges on governance experience and deepen friendly cooperation in different sectors," Xi told his guest, vowing to use the elevation of ties as an opportunity to inject lasting momentum into the two countries' traditional friendship.

Since Xi and Obiang elevated bilateral ties to an all-around partnership featuring equality, mutual trust and win-win cooperation in 2015, the China-Equatorial Guinea relationship has enjoyed robust growth, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the two countries demonstrated their profound friendship and solidarity in a time of adversity.

Xi said that consolidating and developing China-Equatorial Guinea ties meets the fundamental interests of the two countries and the shared aspirations of the people of the two countries.

China supports the African country's socioeconomic development, encourages capable Chinese enterprises to invest and do business there, and is willing to share with it the development experiences in agriculture and rural areas, he said.

Xi also said that China will deepen exchanges and cooperation with Equatorial Guinea in areas such as healthcare, education and culture, to pass down their traditional friendship through generations and deliver more benefits to the people of both countries.

Since 1971, China has sent 33



President Xi Jinping welcomes President of Equatorial Guinea Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who is on a state visit to China, in Beijing on Tuesday. After the ceremony, Xi held talks with Obiang at the Great Hall of the People. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

medical teams with over 600 professionals to provide medical care in Equatorial Guinea, making significant contributions to the improvement of local well-being.

Highlighting the urgent need for developing countries to strengthen solidarity and cooperation amid unprecedented challenges, Xi said that China is willing to work with Equatorial Guinea and other developing countries to safeguard their common interests and uphold international fairness and justice.

President Xi also expressed China's readiness to make the new edition of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation a success and to open a new chapter of building a

“China highly values developing its relations with Equatorial Guinea and is willing to strengthen exchanges on governance experience and deepen friendly cooperation in different sectors.”

President Xi Jinping

China-Africa community with a shared future.

Strengthening solidarity and cooperation with African countries will always be an important cornerstone of China's foreign policies, he said.

President Obiang hailed China as his country's good brother and reliable strategic partner, saying the bilateral relationship is now at its best in history. Projects such as the China-Equatorial Guinea Friendship Hospital, which began operation in 2023, have brought benefits to local people and become symbols of Africa-China friendship, he said.

Obiang said that Equatorial Guinea welcomes Chinese invest-

ment to assist in the African country's economic diversification and industrialization, and to help it sustain healthy development.

He also said that his country firmly uphold the one-China principle, believes that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, opposes any form of "Taiwan independence", and supports the Chinese government's efforts to realize complete reunification.

After their talks, the two heads of state witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents in areas such as investment, economic development, the digital economy, green development and the implementation of the China-proposed Global Development Initiative.

WORLD WATCH

By Aabis Saykhum

NATO just perpetuates narrative of militarization

The commemoration of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's 75th anniversary this year has sparked contemplation regarding its contentious legacy.

Born from Cold War tensions, NATO's continuation defies logic, serving primarily as a tool for US hegemony. Moreover, NATO's actions contribute to global destabilization, heightening nuclear risks and fostering confrontation in Asia. As the alliance persists, it perpetuates a narrative of militarization and division, rather than fostering genuine peace and cooperation.

In recent decades, a discernible trend has emerged with the United States and NATO steadily expanding their influence across the globe, particularly in regions such as the Far East and the Asia-Pacific. This expansionist agenda appears directed toward the East, encroaching upon territories that include Russia, the Caspian Sea and the Middle East. Such maneuvers raise concerns about the geopolitical balance and security dynamics in these regions.

NATO's recent shift in rhetoric toward China, as outlined in Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's Annual Report released on March 14, underscores a concerning trend in global geopolitics. The narrative propagated by these entities portrays China as a "systemic challenge" and Russia as a malign influence, yet this rhetoric belies their own shortcomings and reluctance to confront present realities. Rather than embracing equality and cooperation, they cling to outdated paradigms, resisting the inevitability of a more inclusive global order.

While NATO traditionally focused on Russia as its primary adversary, the alliance's pivot toward China reflects a broader strategy of finding or fabricating external threats to justify its continued existence and expansion. This trend poses significant risks to global security and peace.

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CHINESE, US STUDENTS PLANT ROOTS OF FRIENDSHIP, UNDERSTANDING

Teenagers from Iowa form strong bonds, experience local culture on exchange trip

By ZHANG YUNBI
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More than a month ago, high school students from China and Iowa in the United States' Midwest inaugurated and planted the first batch of trees for the China-US Friendship Youth Woods in Hebei province's Zhengding county, where President Xi Jinping worked as a senior local official from 1982 to 1985. Zhou Yitian, a senior high student from Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School, planted a tree with her new friend, Grace Zorich from Muscatine High School. "This is the first time I've planted a tree as big (as this), but I planted a

In-depth

tree before ... a very little, little one," said Zorich. Her horticultural skills, including her proficiency with a shovel, impressed her Chinese teenage peers.

Zhou said: "I hope the tree grows robustly alongside our friendship. Of course, I'll be back someday to revisit these trees."

The woods, which feature species such as the North American red maple, are lush and thriving, and are expected to welcome more US students.

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INSIDE China and the US can work together to reduce methane emissions Global Views, page 13

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Shenzhou XVIII astronauts conduct first spacewalk, complete assignments

By ZHAO LEI
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The Shenzhou XVIII astronauts conducted their first spacewalk outside the Tiangong space station on Tuesday, completing several assignments, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

Mission commander Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu and crew member Lieutenant Colonel Li Guangsu returned to the Wentian science module at 6:58 pm after floating outside the colossal orbital station for nearly eight-and-a-half hours, the agency said in a news release. The third crew member, Lieutenant Colonel Li Cong, stayed inside Tiangong to provide support, it said.

With cooperation and assistance from ground controllers and the space station's robotic arm, the team completed all its assigned tasks, including installing space debris shields and checking the condition of extra-



Shenzhou XVIII mission commander Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu carries out tasks outside the Tiangong space station on Tuesday in this photo of a screen at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center. XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY

vehicular equipment, the agency said.

This was the 16th spacewalk carried out by Chinese astronauts, and

also marked the second spacewalk by Ye and the first by Li Guangsu.

See *Mission*, page 3

PAGE TWO

Chinese and US students hold plush toys during a visit to a zoo in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, on April 21. LIU ZUNSHUAN / XINHUA



Students: Foundation cemented for stronger ties



From page 1

In San Francisco last November, President Xi proposed an ambitious program to invite a total of 50,000 American youths to visit China for exchanges over the next five years.

Hebei and Iowa are natural choices for boosting subnational bonds as they have enjoyed a sister relationship since 1983 and have had ongoing exchanges in the agricultural sector.

Two delegations from Muscatine High School have traveled to China and Hebei this year. The second delegation of 32 students and eight teachers stayed in Hebei from April 19 to 22 at the invitation of the Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School, one of the leading middle schools in the province.

It was the first time any of the US high school students had visited the country beyond the Pacific Ocean. They arrived in Beijing first, and then traveled to Hebei before heading to Shanghai to end the tour.

During the trip, students from both countries, such as Zhou and Zorich, were paired together.

Versed in culture

Liu Feng, vice-principal of Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School, which is affiliated with the main school, said they arranged for the US students to take part in calligraphy and paper-cutting classes so they "can have a taste of Chinese teenagers' school life".

They consulted the visitors in advance over the trip's arrangement, agenda, and itinerary to ensure adequate communication between students from both sides during the limited time they had together over four days.

The US students said they wanted to take Mandarin lessons with Chinese students.

Liu's school selected an ancient

Chinese poem "Rural Life" as the centerpiece of the lesson:

"Over green grass orioles fly in vernal sky / The mist intoxicates the willow trees. / Back early after school, the children try / To fly the kites in eastern breeze."

Kristina Devries, one of the US students, admitted that the poem was a bit difficult for her. "It's mainly the tones," she said.

Yet after the class, most students could read the poem properly in Mandarin.

Observing that the poem echoed the then season of spring, Jasmine Montes, another US student, said, "It is really pretty and I like it."

When asked if US children fly kites these days like people did decades ago, Ryan Castle, principal of Muscatine High School, said: "Not as much any more. We used to. With phones and iPads, it's hard to get kids to fly kites."

Lyu Fei, an English teacher at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language Primary School, was involved in the special class for the guests and she had no language difficulties when talking to the US students. Her recipe for successful communication included body gestures and the use of humor.

"They are real quick learners," she said, saying the visitors mastered the poetry faster than she had expected.

"So, we had some extra minutes to review and practice more. I'm so proud!" she laughed.

Another first for the trip was the host school arranging a musical performance that involved collaboration between the Chinese students and their foreign guests.



A student of Muscatine High School takes part in an ethnic dance during a visit to the High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University on April 18 in Beijing. LIU ZUNSHUAN / XINHUA

The US students split up and went to several classrooms to be taught how to play the *hulusi*, or gourd flute, an easy-to-learn Chinese folk music instrument.

Later that afternoon, they joined the Chinese students on stage and together they played the song *Auld Lang Syne* using the *hulusi*. The performers received warm applause from the audience.

Stronger together

As a key promoter of the China tours, Sarah Lande is one of Xi's "old friends" from Iowa who hosted Xi in Muscatine when he first visited the US in 1985 as a county-level official.

After a reunion with the president in San Francisco in November, Lande wrote to Xi and expressed her hope that the Muscatine High School students could join the youth exchange program.

In January, Xi replied that he welcomed the school's students participating in the program.

When talking about what the US students could learn from the trip, Lande said she expected them to "appreciate China through their own eyes, how they are growing, how we are together, how we are similar, and then how we are different."

"There's so many opportunities to work and cooperate with students and learn from them all over the world," she said in a video message prerecorded for the trip.

Lande also had a welcome message for the exchange students from China. "We want to share our culture with you, our music, our environment, and show you our friendship," she said.

"So please come so we can share with you what you've been sharing

with us, and build the foundation between our countries even stronger," she added.

During the latest exchange, the Chinese hosts learned more about the US as the delegation promoted their local culture through gifts they had prepared. Among them were colorful, delicate pearl buttons, as the Mississippi River town of Muscatine produces a large number of them.

Another intriguing gift was a badge promoting Iowa Corn, with a corn pattern on it.

"This is from our Iowa Corn Growers Association. We just want to make sure everybody is aware that Iowa corn is our top export," said Castle, the school principal.

At a local performing arts center, the guests from Iowa were overwhelmed by a multimedia musical performance called *China Impression*, which was choreographed and created by teachers and students from the host school.

The hour-long show featured the school's classical orchestra and its Chinese traditional orchestra on the same stage.

Dressed in costumes, the student performers presented examples of Chinese cultural heritage, such as poetry from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), conveyed through songs and readings.

In the school's gym, it was the Chinese students' turn to be amazed by their US peers who showed great proficiency at a table tennis practice session.

All the students also enjoyed a master class given by Lu Yuansheng, a former head coach of China's national women's table tennis team.

While table tennis is popular in China, there are fewer opportunities

for US teenagers to get to love the sport, Lu said. "Some of the kids are just beginners, so I just taught them some ABCs and how to get some practice going at home, such as tossing and catching the ball against a wall," he told China Daily. "It's quite a fun sport, and it has great benefits for their eyesight, too."

Warm home visit

Visits to the homes of ordinary Chinese families added a deeper personal touch to the US students' trip.

Brynn Castle, who is due to start studying at college soon, was invited to visit the home of Zhang Xinyi, the Chinese student she was partnered with, the night before leaving Hebei.

"It was a really cool experience to see how their home is laid out and the similarities and differences between their house and my home," Castle said. "In my home (in Iowa),

we have a lot of decorations, but they're more gifts from other people or family photos."

She said one of the main differences was that the decorations in the Chinese home had deep cultural symbolism.

"They had a lot of symbolism for good fortune. A lot of the symbols are red," she said, adding there were fish images on the wall and other omens for good fortune in the coming year.

The family members she met were "so kind" and "very welcoming," Castle said.

Before going to the apartment, Zhang's mother and cousin joined the pair and showed the US student around the neighborhood near their apartment.

They dined out, and Castle was impressed by the hot pot, as well as lamb served with a peanut sauce she had chosen.

They then went to the family home. In Zhang's room, the two girls quickly found they shared a lot more interests and had a great deal to talk about.

In the sitting room, Castle and the family members enjoyed tea and snacks, browsed photo albums and shared interesting stories about each other's families. They even exchanged tips on keeping pets.

"I didn't get to talk to them as much (directly), as the language barrier is a little difficult. But my partner translated for me, so I talked to them as much as I could," Castle said.

As they said goodbye late in the night, Zhang gave a Chinese history book and a persimmon-shaped memento to Castle as gifts. In Mandarin, the pronunciation of persimmon is similar to part of an auspicious phrase — "all things go well."

"May it bring you good luck and light your way forward," Zhang told her US friend.

Castle called it "an emotional night" and one for which she was very grateful. "If she comes to America, I would love to show her my home and show her Iowa," Castle said.

At Yuerong Park in Hebei's Xiong'an New Area, the students from both countries attended the last scheduled event of the exchange trip — a relaxed stroll around the park after lunch.

Four of the US female students were intrigued when they saw older women dancing in a meadow and decided to join in.

When it was time to say a final goodbye, many of the students who were paired together exchanged gifts, signed notes and writing pads for one another, and tightly embraced.

One of the male students from Iowa gave his Chinese friend a brand-new \$20 bank note as a present.

"Go find a girl and buy her some flowers," he said in a sincere voice with a big, sheepish smile.



Teachers and students of Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School celebrate the birthday of Tony Joseph from Muscatine-China Initiatives Committee on April 20 in Shijiazhuang. ZHANG YUNBI / CHINA DAILY



Chinese and US students pose for a group photo after learning table tennis skills at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School on April 20. ZHANG YUNBI / CHINA DAILY



US students inspect a kite used as a teaching aid at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School on April 20. ZHANG YUNBI / CHINA DAILY



Chinese and US students learn to make dumplings at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School on April 20. ZHANG CAN / XINHUA

TOP NEWS

Hotels told not to turn away foreign guests

By YANG ZEKUN and CHENG SI

The Chinese authorities have emphasized that domestic hotels cannot turn away foreign nationals on the grounds of being unable to process related paperwork.

The authorities were responding to online complaints by foreigners about the inconvenience they face in finding hotel accommodation in the Chinese mainland.

On Friday, a post on the central government's website said that people from Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Pakistan and some other countries had reported being turned away from some hotels that said they lacked "foreign-related qualifications" or "did not know how to enter information into the system".

It said the issue is particularly prevalent in small cities and budget hotels, and causes significant inconvenience.

The Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce and the National Immigration Administration replied to the complaints forwarded by the website.

The Ministry of Public Security and the National Immigration Administration said they are working with the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other industry regulatory departments to study related measures and find suitable solutions.

The Ministry of Commerce has asked the China Hospitality Association to facilitate accommodation of foreign nationals, focusing on strengthening the study of laws and regulations by hotels, improving reception, and enhancing staff training to offer better foreigner-related services and provide more convenience for foreigners visiting China or living in the country.

According to regulations, hotels need to apply for a license from the local public security organ to prove that it has the necessary qualifications and conditions to receive foreigners.

If the hotel plans to host foreign tour groups, it also needs to apply for a license from the local tourism office. This certificate proves that the hotel is qualified to provide services for foreign tour groups. The hotel is also required to purchase relevant insurance to ensure that the risks and contingencies that may arise during the stay of foreign guests are properly handled.

The hotel also needs to provide

other facilities such as international long-distance calls, international television channels, menus and signages written in Chinese and English, as well as employees who can converse in English.

Meanwhile, the authorities are also coordinating with online platforms to offer hotel employees English courses, free language training for registration and booking and other related skills.

The Ministry of Public Security said public security organs across the nation will further optimize the management and service work related to the accommodation registration of foreign nationals.

According to China's Exit and Entry Administration Law, when foreigners stay in hotels, the hotels have to handle the registration of accommodation for them in accordance with relevant regulations and report their registration information to the local public security authorities.

The regulations on public security administration of the hospitality industry stipulate that hotel operators must register the guests' stay and verify their identification documents. When accommodating foreign guests, they have to submit the registration forms to the local public security authorities within 24 hours.

Over the past decade, China has eased quality review and license-issuing procedures for hotels receiving international travelers.

The Chongming district in Shanghai has taken steps to optimize hotel services for international travelers. In a notice issued last month, the district's public security bureau said that homestays can apply to the local police station in order to receive international travelers, and the immigration department will offer training and review the quality of services for the purpose.

The number of foreigners coming to China in the first quarter of this year increased by more than threefold compared with the same period in 2023. A total of 466,000 visas were issued to foreigners, up 118.8 percent year-on-year. Additionally, nearly 1.99 million foreigners entered China visa-free, a year-on-year increase of 266.1 percent, according to the data released by China's National Immigration Administration on April 18.

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Foreign tourists wander along Jiuqu Bridge in Shanghai's Yu Yuan Garden, on May 20, 2024. Targeted measures have been announced to address the difficulties foreigners visiting China face and provide more convenience for them. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Mission: Astronauts carry out host of tasks

From page 1

The Shenzhou XVIII astronauts — the seventh group of inhabitants of the Chinese space station — were launched on April 25 by a Long March 2F carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China. They arrived at the Tiangong space station the next morning to take over from their Shenzhou XVII peers.

As a member of the country's second generation of astronauts, Ye was part of the Shenzhou XIII mission, which took place from October 2021 to April 2022, and made his first spacewalk during the six-month flight.

The Shenzhou XVIII is the first spaceflight for Li Cong and Li Guangsu, both of whom belong to China's third generation of astronauts.

The three astronauts are scheduled to work onboard Tiangong until late October and then hand over the orbital outpost to the Shenzhou XIX crew.

As of Tuesday, Ye and his team have stayed in space for 33 days and fulfilled a host of tasks such as equipment maintenance, examinations and tests on spacewalk suits, emergency response exercises and medical aid drills.

They also engaged in an array of space science experiments and mounted the second set of material exposure experimental apparatus, the agency said.

Over the remaining period of their stay, the astronauts will carry out many scientific experiments and technological tests, and will conduct multiple spacewalks and payload deployment operations, it added.

Summer colors



An auto-rickshaw driver covers his face with a scarf on Monday to avoid the dry, hot air during a sweltering summer day in Mohenjodaro, Pakistan. Temperatures rose to above 52 C in the region as a heat wave swept across South Asia. AKHTAR SOOMRO / REUTERS

Washington urged to end all provocations

Maritime talks viewed as step forward in helping manage any crisis

By ZHANG YUNBI
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Washington's provocative moves in the waters off China's doorstep were among the top concerns raised by Beijing at the recently concluded second round of China-US consultations on maritime affairs.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Tuesday that the meeting was held via video link on Friday.

Analysts noted that the meeting was among a number of recent significant official dialogues between Beijing and Washington, including the first meeting of the China-US Intergovernmental Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence earlier this month in Geneva.

Such talks are helpful in minimizing miscalculations and for rolling out necessary crisis management measures on sensitive topics or aspects, such as the Taiwan question and the South China Sea issue, they added.

The co-chairs of the maritime dialogue were Hong Liang, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's

“While China sincerely looks to stabilize its US ties, we have also seen the twofold approach of the US. The perpetuation of such an approach is not conducive to the stabilization of China-US relations and will bring more potential harm”

Diao Daming, professor of US studies at Renmin University of China's School of International Relations

Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, and Mark Baxter Lambert, the US State Department's China coordinator and deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

“The two sides exchanged views on the maritime situation and ocean-related issues”, and the two countries agreed to “carry forward dialogue and communication, avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation, and manage and control risks at sea”, the ministry said.

China voiced its solemn concern over the US violating China's rights and the US' provocative acts in waters around China.

It urged the US to “seriously respect China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, and refrain from meddling in maritime disputes between China and its neighbors”, the statement said.

Beijing asked Washington not to gang up with allies to contain China using the oceans, and not to undermine the peace and stability of the region.

On the Taiwan question, China emphasized that the one-China principle is the political foundation of China-US relations and an important basis for dialogue between the two sides on maritime issues.

Beijing stressed that so-called

“Taiwan independence” activities are the biggest threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

The US should immediately stop supporting and condoning the forces of “Taiwan independence” and put into practice its commitment to not supporting “Taiwan independence”, it said.

Diao Daming, a professor of US studies at Renmin University of China's School of International Relations, noted that although China-US ties have stopped their free fall, as the two sides have rolled out cooperation in some areas, “this does not necessarily mean that China can live with the US' suppression and containment moves in some other areas”.

“While China sincerely looks to stabilize its US ties, we have also seen the twofold approach of the US”, he said. “The perpetuation of such an approach is not conducive to the stabilization of China-US relations and will bring more potential harm”.

The two nations held the first round of maritime affairs consultations in Beijing in November.

Last month, Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Beijing, and the two sides reached a five-point consensus that included the convening of the second round of consultations on maritime affairs.

Also last month, the two countries' militaries held the annual working group meeting of the China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement mechanism in Hawaii.

Hostility: NATO expansion threatens new global order

From page 1

NATO's evolving stance toward China has become a focal point of geopolitical analysis, with political analysts cautioning against what they perceive as a dangerous trend toward targeting Beijing as an external enemy.

However, not all NATO members share the same level of hostility toward China. Many European members prioritize economic concerns over global power struggles and are less inclined to engage extensively in the Asia-Pacific militarily. As such, the anti-China sentiment within NATO does not necessarily represent a consensus among member states.

The portrayal of China as a looming threat by NATO appears to be driven largely by the US' selfish intent to protect and safeguard American strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific, especially in the South China Sea, rather than genuine concerns shared by all member states. Any potential friction between China

and NATO is often instigated by the US through its increased military activities and interference in matters affecting China's sovereignty and national security, such as the South China Sea and Taiwan.

Many European member states maintain deep and interconnected relationships with China, leading to divergent views on the alliance's approach toward Beijing. Attempts by the United States to pivot NATO's focus toward Asia-Pacific cooperation to counter China are met with internal dissent, particularly from European members who prioritize maintaining the alliance's traditional focus on European affairs. As NATO's “ambition” takes on a new guise—a sprawling, digitally-enhanced alliance strategically positioned to confront a perceived threat—China. Yet, this vision seems more a manifestation of US hegemony than a collective European endeavor.

Looking ahead, European leaders grapple with the looming shadow of the US election in November.

At the same time, considering the current drive to expand NATO into Asia, it's essential to discern the true motivations at play.

Europe's security interests are not threatened by a peaceful, prosperous China integrated into the global economy. Rather, Europe should focus on nurturing trade and investment ties with China and East Asia to harness its economic dynamism. The push for NATO's presence in Asia only serves the interests of the United States and its military-industrial complex.

This expanded NATO would tighten US grip on Europe, Australia, Japan and South Korea, prioritizing the purchase of US military equipment and extracting more funds from member states. Such a move risks further de-industrializing these nations, eroding their autonomy and alienating them from their regional counterparts.

The relentless pursuit of expansion and dominance by a minority of Western nations, spearheaded by the US, poses a significant hur-

dle to the vision of a new global order founded on principles of sovereign equality and non-interference. These nations appear oblivious to the evolving dynamics of a multipolar world, clinging to the illusion that they can thwart or reverse historical trends through force, even resorting to nuclear means. Such doctrines pose grave threats to global peace and development, endangering the very fabric of humanity.

It is imperative to challenge and counteract these dangerous ideologies, advocating instead for cooperation, mutual respect and adherence to international law. Only through collective efforts to uphold the principles of equality and non-interference can we hope to navigate the complexities of our interconnected world and foster a more harmonious and prosperous future for all.

The author is a geostrategist and political analyst based in Lahore, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Flood control enhanced ahead of rainy season

Ministry boosts forecasting accuracy and resilience against inundation

By LI MENGHAN
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Facing a busy flood season, the Ministry of Water Resources has bolstered flood resilience in small and medium-sized rivers, and leveraged advanced technology to improve the accuracy of forecasts. This year has witnessed an earlier-than-usual flood season, starting April 1, and many places in China will gradually enter the main flood season from June through August, featuring more

frequent, intense and widespread extreme events, with a high probability of disastrous impacts, the ministry said.

Due to persistent heavy rainfall, rivers in regions such as the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Guangdong province in the Pearl River basin, Anhui province in the Huaihe River basin, and Sichuan province in the Yangtze River basin have witnessed rising water levels over the past week, with reports of some small and medium-sized rivers exceeding

their flood warning levels.

It is estimated that strong rain will hit areas including Guangxi and the provinces of Guangdong, Anhui, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guizhou, Jiangxi and Hubei from Tuesday through Saturday, with accumulated precipitation of between 30 and 60 millimeters.

Water levels are expected to rise in the Pearl, Yangtze and Taihu river basins, with potential for flooding.

South China is now experiencing the "dragon boat rain" period, a time characterized by the most frequent and concentrated rainfall in the pre-flood season around the Dragon Boat Festival.

The impact of this year's dragon boat rain is expected to be more severe than in normal years, and the Xijiang, Beijiang, Dongjiang and Hanjiang rivers in the Pearl River basin are at risk of flooding, Xu Shuang, director of the flood and drought disaster prevention department at the Pearl River Water Conservancy Department, told People's Daily.

In mid to late June, East China will enter the plum rain season. Warm air from Southeast Asia will trigger a rain belt circulating around the Yangtze River basin, leading to rainy days for several weeks.

The Haihe, Liaohe, Huaihe,

Songhuajiang and Yellow river basins are also predicted to have increased rainfall.

Li Chenliang, from the Ministry of Water Resources' flood and drought disaster prevention department, said the basins of small and medium-sized rivers, which feature expansive areas, represent a weak link in flood control, People's Daily reported.

Li said that rivers in mountainous regions pose a heightened risk of flooding due to their swift convergence and abrupt fluctuations. To bolster flood control and disaster mitigation capabilities, the ministry is implementing measures like dredging river channels,

embankment construction and reinforcing water conservancy projects.

In addition, the ministry has established a comprehensive forecasting and early warning system, incorporating radars and hydro-metric stations to obtain more precise and real-time data on rainfall and water conditions. A predictive model is also under development to extend the lead time for forecasts and enhance accuracy.

The lead time for national rainfall has been extended to 30 days, with forecast accuracy exceeding 90 percent during critical periods along major rivers.

Exhibition sparks consumption boom

By HUANG ZHILING
and PENG CHAO in Chengdu

The ongoing International Horticultural Exhibition 2024 Chengdu has sparked a tourism and consumption boom in the host city and neighboring areas with its diverse horticultural wonders and unique cultural experiences.

Data from leading Chinese online platforms Meituan and Dianping show that online searches for "international horticultural exhibition" have risen sharply since the expo kicked off on April 26 in Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province.

The 186-day event showcases more than 500 distinctive plant species from five continents and over 60 local plant species, as well as gardening styles from 32 countries and regions.

The expo's main venue in the Chengdu Eastern New Area not only offers visitors a rich experience for shopping, entertainment, culture and food, but also hosts more than 2,000 all-ages-friendly events throughout its duration.

Liu Dan, a visitor from the neighboring city of Mianyang, said the expo fulfilled her and her family's desire to travel the world in just one day.

"The expo not only displays flowers and gardening styles from around the world, but also provides opportunities for us to learn about the vibrant and diverse exotic cultures," she said.

Xue Zhen, owner of a gardening store at the expo's sub-venue in Chengdu's Pidu district, said she sells almost 2,000 pots of flowers a day.

"I have never seen so many customers in previous years. I am too busy to have my lunch," she said, holding a bowl of food that had turned cold.

Statistics from Pidu district show that Spring Garden Wonderland, which serves as the core exhibition area of the Pidu sub-venue, received 647,900 visits from April 26 to May 25, generating sales revenue of 161 million yuan (\$22.2 million) from April 26 to May 24.

As one of the largest flower and plant distribution centers in western China, the Spring Garden Wonderland boasts a floral market covering 130,000 square meters and houses more than 600 stores that sell over 30,000

"I have never seen so many customers in previous years. I am too busy to have my lunch."

Xue Zhen, owner of a gardening store at the horticultural expo

product categories.

Zeng Kaicheng, deputy director of the district's flower and nursery association and promotion ambassador for the expo, said people used to attend horticultural exhibitions to view flowers, but now they go for outdoor tourism.

"The trend of deep integration between the flower industry and other sectors, such as culture, tourism, healthcare and education is becoming increasingly evident, which is expected to have a positive impact on the local consumption economy," he said.

At the sub-venue in Chengdu's Xinjin district, visitors are also showing great interest in agricultural experiences such as harvesting rapeseed, planting rice seedlings and catching fish in paddy fields.

A landscape art creation event held at the China Tianfu Agricultural Expo Park in Xinjin district on May 18 to 19 attracted the participation of more than 10,000 parents and children. They planted vast areas of rice seedlings in the paddy fields, which will gradually reveal landscapes such as musical notes and strings as they grow.

Wang Qianyi, an executive from the China Tianfu Agricultural Expo Park, said the park will organize agricultural experience activities throughout different farming seasons, allowing more young people to get close to the fields and nature.

Visitors can also learn about smart agriculture projects, including a photovoltaic power generation system combined with a fish farm, an LED-lit plant factory, and a smart pig-raising farm that uses AI to estimate weight.

The expo is expected to attract 5 million visitors, according to organizers.

Contact the writers at pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn



In with a shout

Senior students participate in a shouting activity at Hainan Overseas Chinese Middle School in Haikou, Hainan province, on Tuesday. They yelled their dreams from a campus building bedecked with red banners inscribed with various blessings. The activity is held to cheer the seniors up and relieve their stress ahead of next month's national college entrance exam.

SU BIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Former investment company GM sentenced to death

By CAO YIN
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Bai Tianhui, former general manager of China Huarong International Holdings, has been sentenced to death for accepting bribes of more than 1.1 billion yuan (\$152 million), a court in Tianjin said on Tuesday.

Bai was also deprived of political rights for life, with confiscation of all his personal assets, according to the ruling announced by the Tianjin No 2 Intermediate People's Court.

In addition, the court ordered that the illicit gains that Bai made and the interest earned from them

be turned over to the national treasury.

From 2014 to 2018, Bai was found to have taken advantage of his various posts in the investment company, including capital operations director, assistant general manager and general manager, to seek profits for various entities in matters such as project acquisition and corporate financing, taking bribes worth over 1.1 billion yuan in return, the court said.

"Bai's behavior has constituted the crime of bribery in line with the Criminal Law. He should be given the death penalty in line with the law, as the amount of his bribes was extremely huge and the

circumstance of his offense was extremely severe, which has brought great negative effects to society and caused extremely large losses to the country and the people," it said.

"Although he exposed major criminal activities of others and provided important clues that helped solve other cases, it is not sufficient to punish him leniently due to the harm of his offense."

In China, a death sentence handed down by lower courts must be submitted for review to the Supreme People's Court, the country's top court. The sentence can be carried out only after the top court approves it.

Lai Xiaomin, former chairman of China Huarong Asset Management, was executed for corruption in January 2021 after his death sentence was approved by the top court.

Lai was convicted of bribery, embezzlement and bigamy, and given the death penalty for using various posts to provide benefits to others and then accepting gifts and money worth over 1.78 billion yuan in return.

Lai was also discovered to have made use of his positions to embezzle and extort more than 25.1 million yuan in public funds. He had also been living in a bigamous relationship for an extended period.

Global warming increases allergy risks

By CHEN MEILING
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Vigorous growth of allergenic plants due to global warming is increasing airborne pollen concentrations and prolonging the allergy season, according to Zhang Luo, president of Beijing Tongren Hospital.

He told a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday that global warming has also caused pollen belts to expand and migrate northward in China over the past 30 years.

Allergic diseases are triggered by environmental allergens, and climate change can increase exposure to them, Zhang said.

About 250 million people in China suffer from allergic rhinitis, with the average prevalence rate rising from 11.1 percent in 2005 to 17.6 percent in 2011.

In northern China, springtime temperatures and humidity are low, causing allergic symptoms and increasing the number of patients with allergic rhinitis, Zhang said, while increased humidity reduces outpatient visits.

His findings were published in the new China issue of Allergy, the world's top journal in the field of allergy science and immunology.

"Allergic diseases affect a population of over 2 billion globally, including around 400 million patients with allergic rhinitis,

300 million patients with asthma and 200 million patients with food allergies," he said.

Over the past 60 years, the prevalence of allergic diseases has been increasing year by year, with factors such as climate change, environmental pollution and changes in lifestyle playing important roles, he wrote in an editorial.

Air pollutants serve as irritants and toxins to amplify the effect of allergens. The fact that more people prefer to stay indoors and use more chemicals in daily life also contributes to an imbalance of microorganisms in the human body, Zhang said.

Allergic diseases are related to many other diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, head and neck tumors, glaucoma, sexual dysfunction and mental illnesses, which will have a significant impact on quality of life.

The potential annual direct and indirect costs could exceed hundreds of billions of yuan, leading to a substantial social and economic burden.

Since 2020, Beijing Tongren Hospital has partnered with Weather China to release a national pollen index. They broadcast daily pollen concentrations in 37 cities, providing guidance to people suffering from pollen allergies.

"With the monitoring system,

asthma patients receive a short message on their phone before a thunderstorm, to remind them to avoid going out and to bring drugs along if necessary," Zhang said. "Hospitals will also be better prepared for possible growth of asthma outpatient visits."

Allergy is the official journal of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. The latest China issue, the fourth since 2021, includes 20 articles focusing on the latest research by Chinese scientists in the fields of allergies, rhinology, pulmonology and dermatology.

Zhao Zhuohui, from the School of Public Health at Shanghai Medical College of Fudan University, the corresponding author of an article published in the issue, shared her team's latest findings at the news conference. It has been found that a decreased prevalence of childhood asthma in Shanghai is associated with an improvement in ambient air quality.

Its survey, from 2011 to 2019, found that the prevalence of asthma among preschool children in Shanghai was decreasing, with six other cities showing the same trend.

"We found the improved air quality in these cities was significantly associated with lower prevalence of children's respiratory health problems, which was inspiring," she said.

Briefly

4 killed, 1 injured in Anhui building collapse

Four people were killed and another is receiving intensive medical treatment after a residential building partially collapsed on Monday afternoon in Tongling, Anhui province, local authorities said. The western side of the five-story building, in Datong township in the city's Jiaoqu district, collapsed at around 1:40 pm on Monday. An initial investigation suggested five people were unaccounted for. Following a thorough search and rescue operation, all five missing individuals were found by 1:28 am on Tuesday. Four were confirmed dead, while a 12-year-old girl is receiving intensive medical treatment.

Giant panda born in S. Korea to meet public

Giant panda Fu Bao, who has returned from South Korea and is adapting to life in Sichuan province, will be on public show next month, China Central Television reported on Tuesday. In 2020, Fu Bao became the first giant panda born in South Korea. Her parents are Ai Bao and Le Bao, who were leased to South Korea by China in 2016. Fu Bao returned to Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital, on April 3 and finished a month of quarantine at the China Conservation and Research Center for Giant Panda's Shenshuoping giant panda base on May 4.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

Mighty melon



Xie Zhengjiang shows off his "Watermelon King", which was awarded the title for weighing 89 kilograms at the Beijing Daxing Watermelon Festival in Beijing on Monday. WU YIBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

POLICY REVIEW

Efforts to save water ramped up

Regulations aim to promote conservation, boost development

By YANG ZEKUN
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China has further intensified policy incentives and constraints to continuously promote water conservation and enhance water use efficiency across various sectors, according to a series of newly adopted regulations.

The State Council, China's Cabinet, recently issued the first national-level regulations on water conservation, which took effect on May 1, to shift from extensive to efficient and intensive water usage practices.

The regulations, comprising six chapters and 52 articles, introduced a rigid water resource constraint system and created a water conservation mechanism led by the government with cooperation from the public, market regulator and various parties.

The regulations require improved management of water use, the development of water-saving agriculture, the adoption of suitable water-saving technologies and enhanced guarantees through subsidies, incentive mechanisms and supervision in the evaluation of water-saving policies.

Zhang Yaobo, director of the Ministry of Justice's Fourth Bureau of Legislation, stressed that the regulations aim to promote water conservation across society, ensure national water security, advance the nation's goals to create an ecological civilization and drive high-quality development.

"The core focus of the regulations is to enhance rigid constraints on water resources, ensuring that population and urban and industrial development align with the capacity of water resources," Zhang said.

The regulations also aim to build a scientifically sound and comprehensive water-saving institutional system, aligning with existing laws such as the Water Law, the Yangtze River Protection Law and the Yellow River Protection Law to form a synergy for water conservation, he said.

Progress made

Li Liangsheng, vice-minister of water resources, noted that China faces a basic water scarcity challenge due to its large population and uneven water resource distribution. Although China ranks sixth globally in total water resources, its per capita water resources are only 35 percent of the world average, with nearly two-thirds of its cities experiencing water shortages. Water conservation is the fundamental solution to this scarcity.

Though China's GDP last year was double what it was in 2014, its total water consumption remained stable at around 610 billion cubic meters. Also last year, water consumption per unit of GDP and per unit of industrial added value decreased by 41.7 percent and 55.1 percent, respectively, compared to 2014.

However, challenges remain, including inefficient and wasteful water use and the need for improved water management, conservation measures, incentive policies and supervision, Li said.

In 2019, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Water Resources issued the National Water Conservation Action Plan, setting control targets for national water consumption, water consumption per unit of GDP and water consumption per unit of industrial added value for 2022, with long-term goals for 2035. The targets were achieved by 2022.

"Progress has been made in agricultural, industrial and urban water-saving and loss reduction. For example, the water reuse rate in industries above a designated size has reached over 93 percent," Li said.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The Ministry of Water Resources, in collaboration with 20 other departments, has established an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism for water conservation, has implemented and improved water-saving tax incentive policies and has encouraged financial institutions to support water-saving projects, he said.

Urban use
Hu Zijian, head of the urban construction department of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, noted significant achievements in promoting water-saving cities and improving urban water use efficiency. A series of systems, including urban water-saving planning, planned water use, quota management and water-saving statistics, has been formulated.

Urban use

Hu Zijian, head of the urban construction department of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, noted significant achievements in promoting water-saving cities and improving urban water use efficiency. A series of systems, including urban water-saving planning, planned water use, quota management and water-saving statistics, has been formulated.

A total of 145 national water-saving cities have been established, with urban wastewater reuse promoted, pilot projects for reclaimed water utilization carried out in 116 cities and a reuse rate of 29 percent.

In addition, "sponge city" construction — which emphasizes flood management through green infrastructure rather than just relying on drainage systems — has been promoted in 90 cities since 2015, achieving natural purification of rainwater and enhancing local rainwater resource utilization, he said.

Hu noted that many water-scarce cities have now adopted reclaimed water as a critical secondary water source. Apart from urban drainage and sewage treatment regulations issued in 2013, the new regulations also include provisions for wastewater reuse, providing legal support for the development of wastewater reuse.

Industry development

Niu Bo, an official from the NDRC,

said the commission is continuously promoting the efficient and intensive use of water resources.

In September last year, the NDRC and multiple departments issued the "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Conservation and Intensive Use of Water Resources", outlining measures for enhancing water conservation in agriculture, industry, urban areas and ecological landscapes, promoting the use of unconventional water sources and developing the water-saving industry.

The industry focuses on manufacturing water conservation products, researching water-saving technologies, modifying conservation processes and providing water-saving consulting services. The NDRC is researching and formulating guidance on accelerating the development of the water-saving industry, he said.

Additionally, the NDRC considers the utilization of unconventional water sources as a vital measure for

both conserving and augmenting water resources. Together with relevant departments, the NDRC has issued policies and guidelines to promote the resourceful use of wastewater, seawater desalination and the protection and utilization of mine water.

The NDRC, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the Ministry of Water Resources are organizing a three-year action plan to enhance the use of reclaimed water in key cities, aiming to gradually increase the utilization rate of reclaimed water.

"We will also support the ongoing large-scale equipment upgrading and the trade-in program for consumer goods, encouraging the renewal of equipment in water conservation and water treatment fields, promoting the trade-in of key water-using products to continuously improve water use efficiency in industry, agriculture and urban living," he said.

socioeconomic development is promoted under the premise of sustainable water resource use.

"This water-resource-based development model requires all levels of government and water users to strictly adhere to the constraints of water resource carrying capacity in planning, construction and production activities, promoting the rational allocation and efficient use of water resources," he said.

Water conservation involves all sectors of society, including government, enterprises and the public, requiring active participation from every individual and organization. The regulations will effectively guide and promote a positive social environment for water conservation, he said.

Policy Digest

Rules to help better ensure data security

China's top industry regulator released a set of implementation rules for data security risk assessment in the industry and information technology sectors on Friday as part of the country's latest efforts to enhance its ability to ensure data security.

The rules, which will take effect on June 1, require important and core data processors to complete a data security risk assessment every year and create an assessment report, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said.

The report should include information such as whether the data is processed in a legitimate, just and necessary way, and the possible adverse impact on data security caused by changes in the security status of important and core data.

It is stipulated that important and core data processors may appoint a third party to conduct the assessments, and the processors should promptly take appropriate measures to eliminate or mitigate any data security risks and vulnerabilities identified.

According to the guidelines for data management in the industry and information technology fields which took into effect on Jan 1, 2023, data is classified into three levels — general data, important data and core data — based on the potential degree of harm caused to national security, public interests or the legitimate rights and interests of individuals and organizations if leaked.

NHC says headway made in medical reform

Learning from the experiences of Sanming, Fujian province, in medical reform, county-level regions across the country have found their own ways to offer affordable medical care while ensuring that doctors and other medical personnel aren't losing out, an official with the National Health Commission said on Thursday.

Xue Haining, an official with the NHC, said at a news briefing in Beijing that as a result, the country is making headway in developing closely integrated medical and health consortia at the county level that can provide consistent healthcare services for the people.

In 2019, the commission launched a medical consortia pilot program that aims to establish a triage system led by county-level hospitals and improve the capacity of medical and health institutions at the township and village levels.

The goal is to ensure that common diseases are treated at the city or county level while routine health concerns are managed at the grassroots level, according to the NHC.

Ministry announces 19 new professions

China's human resources authority made public a list of 19 new professions on Friday.

The new professions include network anchor, generative AI system application specialist, cultural and creative product planning and operations engineer, intelligent manufacturing system operations and maintenance administrator, and bioengineering technician, according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

The ministry also unveiled 29 newly classified types of work, including mobile operating system application designer.

The recognition of these occupations can enhance the sense of belonging felt by people in these positions in the workplace, and these professionals can now also enjoy related national policy benefits, according to a ministry official.

In October last year, the ministry publicly solicited information on new occupations and received more than 430 proposals, more than twice the number seen in 2021.

The new occupation applications mainly involved fields such as business services, manufacturing and information technology, according to the ministry.

Measures to address supply-demand imbalance

By YANG ZEKUN

China's first national-level regulations on water conservation took effect on May 1, posing more detailed measures and strict requirements for water saving.

Zhang Linwei, head of the China Urban Water Association, said that the introduction of the regulations is a practical necessity to address the supply-demand imbalance of urban water resources in China, further promoting the conservation and sustainable use of water resources.

Cities are the main hubs of China's economy and population. Last

year, the urbanization rate in China exceeded 66 percent, making the contradiction between water supply and demand even more pronounced, he said.

"Water conservation is essential for adapting to the national water resource situation, overcoming bottlenecks, solving complex water issues and ensuring national water security. It is also a crucial step toward the realization of an urban ecological civilization and sustainable urban development," he said.

The regulations provide legal assurance for urban water conservation efforts, further promoting the institutionalization and stan-

dardization of urban water conservation work, he said.

In recent years, various regions and departments have introduced a series of management policies and regularly carried out urban water conservation efforts. However, issues with the adequacy of higher-level legislation and the completeness of the policy system in urban water conservation still exist, which indicates a gap between the current situation and the requirement of both the construction of an urban ecological civilization and overall high-quality development.

Wang Jianhua, deputy head of the China Institute of Water Resources

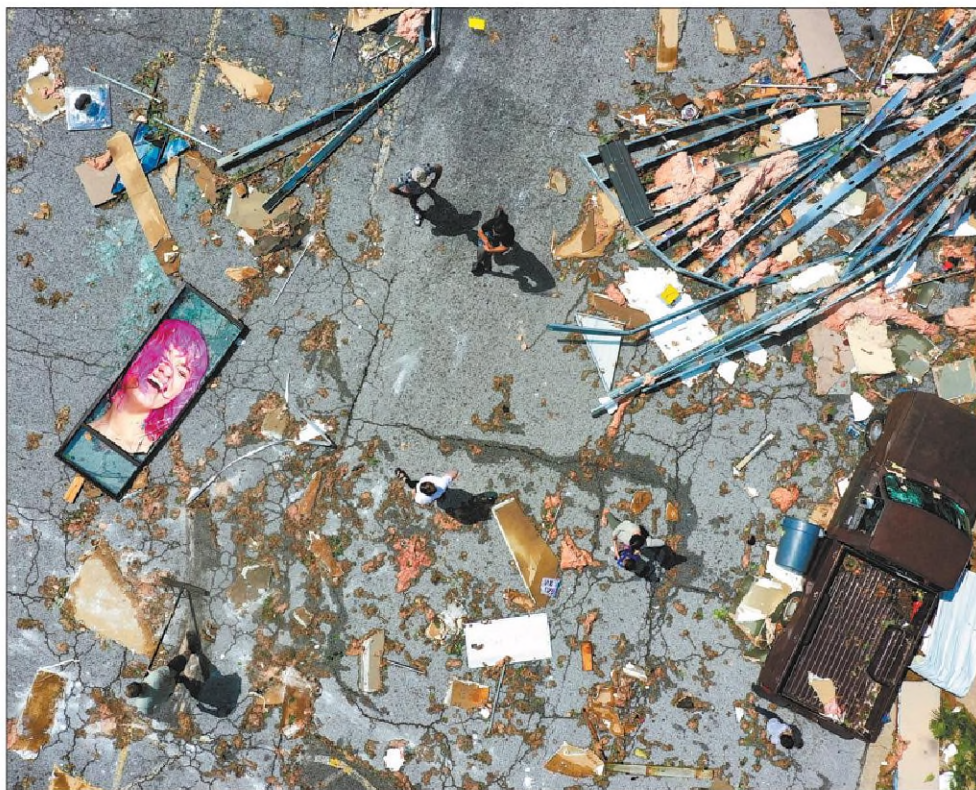
and Hydropower Research, said that the regulations prioritized water conservation at the administrative level and the integration of water conservation management requirements throughout the entire water use process. It also suggested implementing comprehensive water-saving measures across all fields, placing a strong emphasis on the development of the water-saving industry.

Wang noted that the regulations proposed a rigid water resource constraint system, treating the carrying capacity of water resources as the basic boundary for national and regional development. This ensures

WORLDUS

Storm damage

A storm causes extensive damage to a shopping center on West Walnut Avenue in Rogers, Arkansas, on Sunday. A series of powerful storms swept over the central and southern US over the Memorial Day holiday weekend, killing at least 22 people and leaving a trail of destroyed homes, businesses and power outages. CHARLIE KALJO / THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE VIA AP



China's EVs find favor with Indonesians

JAKARTA — Adinda Ratna Riana, 32, is excited because she will have her first electric car this year, with the Chinese-made four-seater Wuling Cloud EV being her choice.

What made her opt for a Chinese EV was its attractive price and design. She also wanted to bid farewell to her fuel-powered car.

"Chinese EVs are very cute in terms of design and color. The Cloud EV I am buying is relatively smaller, which is suitable for a married person with no kids like me. Even if I have a kid later, the car will still suit us," said Riana, who owns a clothing business in Tangerang, Banten Province.

"Also, I think Chinese EVs offer competitive prices that the middle class can afford," she said on Saturday.

Like Riana, Stefano Adrianus, 29, opted for an electric car. He bought his first EV, the Chinese Wuling Air EV, in April. He said he didn't consider any non-Chinese electric cars because they were "unreasonably pricey".

"I only consider Chinese cars because they come with affordable prices but have good quality," Adrianus said.

He said his Wuling Air EV was suitable for daily mobility because of its compact size, practicality, efficiency, ease of use, and advanced features. "Not to mention, it has a unique and futuristic design. Other EVs (brands) offer luxurious designs, but who needs the luxury that we cannot afford?" Adrianus



Chinese vehicle brand Wuling displays its electric vehicle during the Indonesia International Motor Show at the Jakarta International Expo on Feb 24. YASUYOSHI CHIBA / AFP

told Xinhua.

Indonesia has seen a surge in the number of people opting for electric cars. In recent years, EVs have proliferated on the streets, facilitating everyday transportation needs. Chinese EV brands, in particular, have become increasingly popular among urbanites, especially the younger generation.

According to the Association of Indonesia Automotive Industries, the demand for electric cars in Indonesia continues to increase, thanks to the availability of several EV models at affordable prices.

The 2024 Periklindo Electric Vehicle Show, or PEVS, held from April 30 to May 5 in the capital Jakarta,

recorded sales in excess of 400 billion rupiahs (\$24.9 million).

The association's figures have shown that in April, Chinese EVs topped the charts, with Cloud EV emerging as the best-selling model, followed by Omoda E5 and Binguo EV. A total of 597 Cloud EV cars were sold that month.

Cloud EV and Binguo EV are manufactured by China-based Wuling Motors, with prices ranging from 350 million to 400 million rupiahs per unit, while the Omoda E5 is produced by Chery, another leading Chinese automaker.

Most popular choice

Wuling's Air EV became the most

popular choice for young buyers in the first quarter of this year. With an estimated price of 200 million rupiahs, it accounted for about 64 percent of the electric vehicle sales in Indonesia, exceeding 5,000 units.

Wuling Motors public relations manager Brian Gongom said Wuling focused on producing EVs that could win the hearts of Indonesia's younger generation. "It can be seen from our compact designs that provide comfort in mobility while protecting the environment," he said.

Among the latest Chinese EV brands coming to Indonesia is NETA, especially the NETA V-II series, which cost an affordable 299 million rupiahs.

"Competition among electric cars in Indonesia will be stiffer because consumers will have more choices of models and prices," Jongkie Sugiarto, chairman of the Association of Indonesia Automotive Industries, said.

Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto said recently that the government wants to make the country an EV production hub in the Southeast Asia region. He invited EV makers to invest in Indonesia, which is known for its rich reserves of nickel ore, the main component for making EV batteries.

"We encourage electric car manufacturers to immediately deepen the structures and make Indonesia a production base in ASEAN, in addition to encouraging the domestic market to continue to grow," Hartarto said.

XINHUA

IMF: China's growth to stay 'resilient' at 5%

First-quarter data, policy measures lead to 0.4% rise over fund's April economic outlook

By ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington
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China's economic growth is projected to "remain resilient" at 5 percent this year, driven by its strong first-quarter data and recent policy measures, the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday after its team concluded a visit to the country.

That forecast reflects an upward revision of 0.4 percentage point, compared with the IMF's World Economic Outlook 2024 projections released in April.

For next year, the world's second-largest economy is expected to grow at 4.5 percent, also a 0.4 percentage point-higher revision, the IMF team said in its preliminary findings issued at the end of the 2024 Article IV Consultation trip to China, led by Sonali Jain-Chandra, IMF's China mission chief.

The consultation, based on Article IV of the IMF's Articles of Agreement, usually involves bilateral discussions between the IMF and a member to assess the latter's economic health and financial risks.

"China's economic development over the past few decades has been remarkable, driven by market-oriented reforms, trade liberalization and integration into global supply chains," IMF First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said in a statement.

Gopinath joined the policy discussions and met with Chinese government and banking officials during the consultation.

She said that China's achievements have been accompanied by "imbalances and rising vulnerabilities", and headwinds to growth have emerged.

"Recognizing these challenges, the authorities have focused on achieving high-quality growth by supporting innovation, especially in green and high-tech sectors, upgrading financial sector regulations and introducing some policies to mitigate property and local government risks," she said.

However, a more comprehensive and balanced policy approach would help China navigate headwinds facing the economy, she added.

In the statement, the IMF noted that China's inflation is expected to rise but stay low as output remains below potential, with core inflation increasing only gradually to average 1 percent in 2024.

It said that over the medium term, growth is expected to decelerate to 3.3 percent by 2029 due to aging and slower productivity growth.

Furthermore, the risks to growth are tilted to the downside, including a greater or longer-than-expected property sector adjustment and increasing fragmentation pressures, according to the statement.

Gopinath said that the ongoing housing market correction, which is necessary for steering the sector toward a more sustainable path, should continue.

She said China's authorities have implemented various "welcome" measures to guide the property market transition, including recent policy announcements regarding lending support for affordable housing.

"A more comprehensive policy package would facilitate an efficient and less costly transition while safeguarding against downside risks," she said.

The IMF statement also noted that China faces "significant" fiscal challenges, especially for local governments.

"To tackle elevated financial stability risks, the authorities have appropriately focused on addressing vulnerabilities in the property sector, local government debt and smaller financial institutions," Gopinath said.

Strengthening the bank resolution framework and strictly applying prudential standards will help enhance financial stability and mitigate risks, she added.

She also said that achieving high-quality growth will require structural reforms to counter headwinds and address underlying imbalances.

Key priorities include rebalancing the economy toward consumption by strengthening the social safety net and liberalizing the services sector to enable it to boost growth potential and create jobs, according to Gopinath.

Domestic consumption contributed 73.7 percent to China's economic growth in the first quarter, which expanded overall by 5.3 percent year-on-year, following 5.2 percent GDP growth recorded in the fourth quarter of last year, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

The figures are above the annual growth target of around 5 percent set for this year, indicating the fundamentals of China's macroeconomy remained solid, according to Wang Guanhua, spokesperson for the National Bureau of Statistics.

Following China's robust first-quarter performance, a group of organizations, such as Goldman Sachs, Citigroup and Bank of America, have all raised their outlook for the country's full-year GDP growth to 5 percent.

Actor's slaying linked to persistent car-theft issue in US

By HENG WELLI in New York
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The tragic slaying of an actor in Los Angeles involved another pervasive criminal activity in the United States — the theft of automobile catalytic converters.

Johnny Wactor, 37, an actor who formerly appeared on the long-running American soap opera *General Hospital*, was shot and killed when he interrupted thieves stealing his car's catalytic converter, his family said Sunday.

The shooting occurred after 3 am Saturday, when the victim approached three men in downtown LA, according to the Los Angeles Police Department.

His mother, Scarlett Wactor, told ABC 7 that her son had left work at a rooftop bar with a co-worker when he saw someone at his car and thought it was being towed. Media reports said that the actor, who was walking out with the female co-worker, stood in front of her to protect her.

A mask-wearing suspect opened fire, Wactor's mother said. Three suspects drove away from the scene, police said. The actor was rushed to a hospital, where he died of his injuries. There have been no arrests yet.

Catalytic converters, which control auto-exhaust emissions, are

usually located underneath a vehicle. They include precious metals such as rhodium, palladium and platinum. Car thieves look to cash in on the stolen parts at auto salvage yards or parts suppliers, where they can be melted down, and the metals extracted.

The illicit-market price for catalytic converters can be more than \$1,000 each, depending on the type of vehicle and what state it is from, according to the US Department of Justice (DOJ), which says the parts can be stolen in under a minute.

The devices often lack unique identifying numbers, which makes them hard to trace to the actual owner.

In California, converter thefts soared during the pandemic, which led to state laws that make it illegal for recyclers to buy the parts from anyone other than the legal owner or a licensed dealer, the Los Angeles Times reported.

In November 2022, the DOJ conducted a nationwide takedown of leaders and associates of a national network for their alleged roles in conspiracies involving stolen catalytic converters sold to a metal refinery for tens of millions of dollars.

The arrests, searches and seizures occurred in California, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Virginia

and Wyoming. Twenty-one people in five states were arrested and/or charged. "With California's higher emission standards, our community has become a hot bed for catalytic converter theft," said US Attorney Phillip A. Talbert for the Eastern District of California, in a DOJ statement. "Last year (2021) approximately 1,600 catalytic converters were reportedly stolen in California each month, and California accounts for 37 percent of all catalytic converter theft claims nationwide."

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, "more than 2,000 catalytic converters were stolen in the past year (2022)," said US Attorney Clint Johnson for the Northern District of Oklahoma. "Organized criminal activity,

including the large-scale theft of catalytic converters, is costly to victims and too often places citizens and law enforcement in danger."

The thefts of the devices, however, did decline significantly in 2023, as the price of the metals in the converters tumbled, with rhodium falling to one-sixth of its peak in 2021, USA Today reported. Only one state, New Jersey, reported an increase — 25 percent.

According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, in 2023, 21 states introduced bills targeting the converter thefts, with 19 others introducing similar legislation, NBC News reported.

In Ohio, House Bill 328 would make a catalytic converter a special purpose article, holding scrap metal dealers to more requirements, reported WKYC-TV, an NBC affiliate in Cleveland. It also would increase penalties for stolen catalytic converters and create a catalytic converter theft task force.

"If a person shows up and says, 'I've got a catalytic converter', what our bill would say is you have to prove to us where you got it," said state Representative Bill Roemer. "Do you have a repair bill from a muffler shop? Do you have an auto title or something like that? So you have to have proof that you legally own that catalytic converter," the

station reported.

Staten Island District Attorney Michael McMahon has called the theft of catalytic converters a "plague" being fought locally on a number of fronts, reported the Staten Island Advance.

Thefts of catalytic converters jumped 670 percent on the New York City borough, the newspaper reported.

David Shaul, the agent for the slain actor, who also had a role in the drama *Siberia*, said he was "a real moral example to everyone who knew him".

"In the highs and lows of a challenging profession he always kept his chin up and kept striving for the best he could be," Shaul said in a statement Sunday. "Our time with Johnny was a privilege we would wish on everyone. He would literally give you the shirt off his back."

On social media, actress Tonja Walker wrote on X: "I feel furious. Crime is so bad in LA, that no police were there to prevent or catch these murderers! A horrible tragedy for a catalytic converter!"

Allen Farmer posted on X: "The man was killed by thieves trying to steal the catalytic converter off of his vehicle. How do people have so little regard for human life?"

Agencies contributed to this story.

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WORLD

Editor's note: As Spain, Ireland and Norway formally recognize the State of Palestine, China Daily looks at the impact it could have on the Gaza conflict as well as the plight of the Palestinians in light of continued Israeli attacks.

Spain, Norway, Ireland endorse Palestine state

Pressure mounts on Israel as two-state solution sought in resolving conflict

By JAN YUMUL and MIKE GU in Hong Kong

Spain, Norway and Ireland formally recognized the State of Palestine on Tuesday in a coordinated effort by the three western European nations designed to mount international pressure on Israel, which slammed the diplomatic move that will have no immediate impact on its assaults in Gaza.

With the number of European countries recognizing the State of Palestine continuing to grow, Israel and its staunch ally, the United States, are becoming more isolated than ever in the face of increasing acceptance of a two-state solution as the only route to peace.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told his nation in a televised address from Madrid that "this is a historic decision that has a single goal, and that is to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve peace."

Ireland and Norway joined Spain in formalizing a decision they had jointly announced the previous week.

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz quickly lashed out at Spain on X, saying Sanchez's government was "being complicit in inciting genocide against Jews and war crimes."

Last week's announcement by Spain, Ireland and Norway triggered an angry response from Israel, which summoned the nations' ambassadors in Tel Aviv to the foreign ministry.

Several other European countries, including Malta and Slovenia, have also signaled their intent to recognize a Palestinian state. Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said last week that Belgium was waiting for the "right moment".

Slovenia's Prime Minister Robert Golob said on Monday his government will decide on the recognition of a Palestinian state on Thursday and forward its decision to parliament for final approval. The Associated Press reported.

Shada Islam, a Brussels-based commentator on EU affairs, suggested that the recognition by Nor-

way, Ireland, and Spain is "almost certainly" going to be followed by Belgium, Malta and Slovenia in the coming weeks, Xinhua reported.

"The move by Spain, Ireland and Norway will further isolate Israel in the UN ... Their decision sends a strong message to Palestinian people that at least some EU member states have retained their moral compass," Islam told Xinhua.

In March, Slovenia and Malta signed a statement with Spain and Ireland expressing their willingness to recognize a Palestinian state.

Awni Khattab, a displaced Gazan, said he hoped the recognition would lead to territorial sovereignty for Palestinians. "We hope this decision will be implemented and that a Palestinian state will be established along the (June) 1967 borders," he told Agence France-Presse.

Increasingly isolated

Despite angry reactions from Israel, which has found itself increasingly isolated after more than seven months of conflict in Gaza, calls are growing louder for a two-state solution to the crisis in the Middle East.

The two-state solution and the establishment of a "credible Palestinian state" will serve "not just the interest of the Palestinians that delivers their right to self-determination", said Saudi Arabian Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, who was in Brussels.

The two-state solution adopted in UN resolutions has met resistance from Israel and the US for decades. The White House said on May 22 that US President Joe Biden believes a Palestinian state should be achieved through negotiations, rather than unilateral recognition, Reuters reported. The Palestinian Authority has slammed the US for its blind support of Israel.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to the story.

Contact the writers at jan@chinadailyapac.com.



Foreign ministers of Ireland, Spain and Norway pose for a photo during a news conference in Brussels on Monday. GEERT VANDEN WIJNGAERT / AP

Houthi attack 3 ships in Red Sea, Indian Ocean

SANAA — A military spokesman for Yemen's Houthi group announced on Monday that the group had launched attacks on three ships in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

"The first (attack) targeted the American ship *Larego Desert* in the Indian Ocean, the second targeted the Israeli ship *MSC Mechela* in the Indian Ocean. The third targeted the ship *Minerva Lisa* in the Red Sea," Yahya Sarea said in a statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV.

Sarea said his group also launched drone attacks against "two US warships in the Red Sea, and the hits were accurate", vowing to continue attacks until Israel stops its war in the Gaza Strip.

There was no immediate confirmation from shipping companies or the US military of any attacks in those areas.

Online tracker Marine Traffic

showed *Minerva Lisa* was a crude oil tanker located in the Red Sea earlier in the day.

On Friday, the Houthi group claimed they launched a missile attack against Israeli ship *Essex* in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Houthis began last November to launch anti-ship ballistic missiles and drones targeting what they said were Israeli-linked ships transiting the Red Sea, to show solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

In response, the US-British naval coalition stationed in the waters has since January conducted air raids and missile strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen to deter the group, but that only led to an expansion of Houthi attacks to include US and British commercial vessels and naval ships.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Aid groups demand declaration of famine in Gaza

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong jan@chinadailyapac.com

More than 50 international rights groups have called for an official declaration of famine in Gaza, blaming Israel's alleged use of starvation as a "weapon", which contravenes international law.

They made their demand on Sunday in a collective statement published on the website of the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, a nonprofit organization for the protection of human rights.

The statement said food insecurity is increasing throughout Gaza due to Israel's "crimes of starvation", which are being used as a weapon against the Palestinians and are "part of a larger crime of genocide".

It said food security levels have significantly declined "as a result of the Israeli army's ground operation in Rafah", which began on May 7. Israel blocked the entry of humanitarian aid trucks at the southern city's border crossing with Egypt on May 6.

According to the United Nations, starvation of the civilian population is illegal under International Humanitarian Law and in direct breach of UNSC Resolution 2417. When the UN General Assembly adopted The Right to Food Resolution on Dec 16, 2021, with 186 yay and two nay votes — Israel and the United States were the only ones against it.

About 80 percent of Gaza's 2.3 million people have fled their homes. Severe hunger is widespread, and UN officials said parts of the territory are experiencing famine.

"Israel must be pressured to act immediately to implement the precautionary measures announced by the International Court of Justice regarding the opening of the Rafah crossing," the statement read.

The ICJ on Friday ordered Israel to stop its military offensive in Rafah with immediate effect, not-



Displaced Palestinians grieve over Israeli strikes in Rafah, Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. JEHAD ALSHRAFI / AP

ing that the situation had deteriorated since its previous rulings on Jan 26 and March 28, where Israel had been asked to take all measures to prevent genocidal acts and ensure unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance to Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government said in response to the ruling: "The charges of genocide brought by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague are false, outrageous and morally repugnant."

In a post on X, Israel's Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories said 360 trucks were transferred to Gaza on Sunday, including 124 aid trucks that arrived at the Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem border crossing from Egypt. It also said 37 pallets of aid were air-

dropped over Gaza and six tankers of fuel entered the territory.

The joint statement also noted that the majority of goods entering Gaza through the Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem crossing are for merchants and that the people living there — the majority of whom have lost their means of support — must pay for them.

'Not enough'

"This means that even with the very limited aid that Israel has provided, the amount of relief needed to address the growing number of displaced people in the south is insufficient," the statement said.

The goods are "completely blocked" from getting to areas north of the Gaza Valley, including Gaza City and North Gaza governorates, where people are experi-

encing a severe shortage of vegetables, meat and other foods.

The aid groups blamed Israel for leading Gaza to this "catastrophic humanitarian and food crisis".

Ahmad Ghouri, a senior lecturer in the School of Law, Politics and Sociology at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom, said Israel "has not fulfilled its obligations".

It "has failed and, in fact, refused to comply with the ICJ orders leading to ongoing violations of human rights", he told China Daily.

On Tuesday, 19 NGOs, including ActionAid and Oxfam, demanded that all permanent and elected members of the Security Council enforce the ICJ's orders on Israel's actions in Rafah and return to talks with Palestine for peace.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Rafah strikes decried as Netanyahu admits 'mistake'

RAFAH/CAIRO — Israel faced a wave of international condemnation on Monday over airstrikes on tents housing displaced civilians in northwest Rafah of the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the deaths of at least 45 Palestinians and injuries to numerous others.

The attack on Sunday evening targeted tents in a newly-established camp for the displaced civilians in the southernmost Gaza city, the Palestinian official news agency Wafa reported. Local security sources said the area was supposed to be safe based on the classification by the Israeli army.

In response to the attack, Hamas informed mediators that it will not participate in any negotiation for a cease-fire in Gaza or a prisoner exchange deal, a source in the movement said on Monday.

Israel's military said it launched an investigation into the incident, which was trenchantly criticized by several nations and organizations.

Israeli tanks reached the center of Rafah for the first time on Tuesday. The tanks were spotted near Al-Awda mosque, a central Rafah landmark, Reuters reported.

Dozens were reportedly killed on Tuesday in Israeli bombardments in the Al-Mawasi area in Rafah.

The UN Security Council called an emergency meeting on the Rafah strike and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned what he called an attack

that "killed scores of innocent civilians who were only seeking shelter from this deadly conflict".

"There is no safe place in Gaza. This horror must stop," Guterres added in a social media post. Other UN officials called for a thorough investigation into the incident.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday, "Despite our utmost efforts not to harm innocent civilians, last night, there was a tragic mistake."

Sunday attack, which appeared to be one of the war's deadliest, helped push the Palestinian death toll in the conflict to at least 36,096, according to the Gaza Health Ministry on Tuesday. About 1,200 people were killed in Hamas' Oct 7 attack in Israel, according to Israeli figures.

International criticism

The strike added to the surging international criticism Israel has faced in the Gaza conflict. Israel insists it adheres to international law even as it faces scrutiny in the world's top courts, one of which last week demanded that it halt the offensive in Rafah.

China said on Tuesday it is seriously concerned by Israel's military operations against Rafah, and "strongly" calls on Israel to stop attacking the area.

"China is opposed to any action that violates international law, including international humanitarian law," Chinese Foreign Minis-



Children light candles in Beirut, Lebanon, on Monday during a march in solidarity with Palestinians. HASSAN AMMAR / AP

try spokeswoman Mao Ning said, urging all parties involved to protect civilians and civilian facilities.

Noting that last week the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to halt its military offensive in Rafah, Mao said the order reflects the international community's urgent hope for a cease-fire, and that the order should be implemented as soon as possible.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said he was "horrified by the news coming out of Rafah on Israeli strikes killing dozens of displaced persons, including small children".

Meanwhile, about 10,000 people took part in a demonstration near the Israeli embassy in Paris on Mon-

day against Israel's shelling of Rafah.

The attack prompted a wave of condemnation, with Palestinians and many Arab countries calling it a "massacre".

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday called the deadly strike in Rafah a "massacre". The Organization of Islamic Cooperation said that "the attack was a crime against humanity and systemized state terrorism requiring accountability by international criminal law".

Wang Qingyun in Beijing contributed to this story.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

'We have nothing,' say families struggling to live

DEIR AL-BALAH/RAFAH, Gaza Strip — The tent camps stretch for more than 16 kilometers along Gaza's coast, filling the beach and sprawling into empty lots, fields and town streets.

Families dig trenches to use as toilets. Fathers search for food and water, while children look through garbage and wrecked buildings for scraps of wood or cardboard for their mothers to burn for cooking.

Over the past three weeks, Israel's offensive in Rafah has sent nearly a million Palestinians fleeing the southern Gaza city and scattering across a wide area. Most have already been displaced multiple times during the conflict in Gaza.

Men cleared away the charred

debris of shelters and children salvaged food in Rafah on Monday after an Israeli strike torched a camp for displaced Palestinians.

"People were not just injured or killed, but charred," 24-year-old Mohammed Hamad told Agence France-Presse in the aftermath of the strike that killed at least 45 people.

"My cousin's daughter, a child no more than 13, was among the martyrs. She had no features at all because shrapnel tore off her face."

Patients were transferred to nearby field hospitals after being stabilized, said Samuel Johann, emergency coordinator of the medical charity Doctors Without Borders. But "the health system was decimated and no health facility in Gaza

can currently cope with an event with this many casualties," he said.

The situation has been worsened by a dramatic plunge in the amount of food, fuel and other supplies reaching the United Nations and other aid groups to distribute to the population. Palestinians have largely been on their own to resettle their families and find basic essentials for survival.

Lack of necessities

"The situation is tragic. You have 20 people in the tent, with no clean water, no electricity. We have nothing," Mohammad Abu Radwan, a schoolteacher in a tent with his wife, six children and other extended family, told The Associated Press.

"All of this destroys us mentally,"

Families usually have to buy wood and tarps for their tents, which can run up to \$500, not counting ropes, nails and the cost of transporting material, humanitarian group Mercy Corps said.

Tamer Saeed Abu'l Kheir said he goes out at 6 am every day to find water, usually returning around noon to the tent outside Khan Younis where he and his relatives live.

"Wood costs money, water costs money, everything costs money," his wife Leena Abu'l Kheir said. "I'm afraid I'll wake up one day and I've lost my children, my mother, my husband, my family."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

BUSINESS

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Six banks to invest in big way in IC fund

\$16b move part of nation's efforts to bolster self-reliance in sci-tech fields

By LIU ZHIHUA and MA SI

Six major State-owned commercial lenders in China have decided to invest big time in the third-phase State semiconductor investment fund, as Chinese financial institutions ramp up efforts to bolster sci-tech innovations.

The move is seen as part of China's overall push to increase self-reliance in science and technology.

On Monday, the six banks announced their intention to invest in the third phase of the China Integrated Circuit Industry Investment Fund, also known as the Big Fund.

Their planned investments total 114 billion yuan (\$15.73 billion), or nearly one-third of the fund, which was officially established on Friday with a registered capital of 344 billion yuan, according to the National Enterprise Credit Information Publicity System, a government-run credit information agency.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Agricultural Bank of China, Bank of China and China Construction Bank plan to contribute 21.5 billion yuan each to the fund within 10 years from its establishment, which will give them a 6.25 percent share each.

Bank of Communications plans to invest 20 billion yuan while Postal Savings Bank of China is looking to invest 8 billion yuan. The six banks will make up 33.14 percent of the fund's total capital.

Zeng Shengjun, a senior researcher at the Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based Greater Bay Area Financial Research Institute of Bank of China, said the move indicates major State-owned lenders are expected to play a bigger role in fostering new quality productive forces.

"The banks will likely intensify financial support while offering a range of financing services such as technology innovation loans and industrial chain finance to support specific projects," Zeng said.

"They can also leverage on their expertise in risk assessment for high-tech industries, to assist the fund better, preventing and managing project risks. In addition, they can help attract high-quality investment and introduce advanced technologies from overseas."

The banks said that all the capital for this investment will come from their own financial resources. This investment represents a

strategic deployment that is in line with the nation's key policies for the development of the integrated circuit industry, their own development strategies and available business resources, they said.

Zhang Xin, a former official from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, will serve as the fund's legal representative.

Industry sources said the third-generation semiconductors requiring materials like silicon carbide and gallium nitride are likely to be an investment focus for the third phase of the Big Fund.

In February 2023, Zhang, then working with the MIIT, visited Shunyi district in Beijing to guide the development of third-generation semiconductor technologies, the sources said.

Zhang Yi, CEO of iiMedia Research, said the third phase of the fund has diversified its investment areas. These areas not only include equity investments and asset management, but extend to venture capital fund management services.

"This change means that the Big Fund will invest across a broader scope, significantly enhancing the flexibility and diversity of its investment strategies," Zhang said.

China Fortune Securities said in a research report that the main investment targets of the first two phases of the Big Fund focused on semiconductor equipment and materials, laying a solid foundation for the initial development of China's chip industry.

With the vigorous development of the digital economy and the artificial intelligence sector, AI chips and memory chips are becoming key parts in the industrial chain. The third phase of the Big Fund is likely to focus on high-value-added DRAM chips, in addition to continuing its support for semiconductor equipment and materials, China Fortune Securities said.

DRAM chips refer to dynamic random access memory chips, which are flash memory semiconductors widely used in smartphones, personal computers and servers.

The first phase of the Big Fund was established in 2014 with a registered capital of 138.7 billion yuan and the second phase followed in 2019 with 204 billion yuan.

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A property construction site in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Experts: Curbs on homebuyers may go

By ZHOU LANXU and LIU ZIZHENG

Relaxations of home buying restrictions in Shanghai and Guangzhou, Guangdong province, point to broader easing across China's largest cities soon and potentially a full removal of such barriers, experts said on Tuesday.

It is now of immediate urgency for local authorities to abolish these restrictions as the recent policy rescue package may not fully address the property downturn, while delaying easing moves could weaken policy effectiveness, they said.

"I think all (homebuying) restrictions should be abolished immediately and Shanghai is showing the way," said Hong Hao, chief economist at GROW Investment Group.

They made the comments after Shanghai relaxed a series of rules on buying residential properties in the megacity on Monday, reducing the number of years that nonlocals were required to live in Shanghai before they could buy homes.

Purchasers only need to have resided in the city and paid taxes there for three years, instead of five previously. Families with more than one child are allowed to buy an additional home in Shanghai.

Credit policy was also eased as Shanghai lowered down payment ratios for first-time buyers to 20 percent from 30 percent, and to 35 percent from 50 percent for those buying second homes in core areas.

Guangzhou followed suit on

Tuesday by allowing nonlocals who have paid taxes for six consecutive months in the provincial capital to purchase properties in core areas while lowering down payment ratios and removing mortgage loan interest rate minimums for first-time buyers.

Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institute, said the other first-tier cities in China — Beijing and Guangdong's Shenzhen — are also likely to relax more restrictions on homebuying activity within the next week or two.

First-tier cities should accelerate their pace in adjusting home purchase policies, Yan said, as the destocking of housing inventories there has encountered new problems, while better addressing the situation would set an example for other cities around the country.

Shanghai's move follows Hangzhou, Zhejiang province and Xi'an, Shaanxi province, both of which fully removed homebuying restrictions early this month as official data showed that the year-on-year slump in home sales nationwide widened in April.

On May 17, the central government also rolled out a series of significant supportive policies, including lifting the national lower limit for personal mortgage loan interest rates and encouraging State-owned enterprises to buy up vacant real estate for affordable housing purposes.

"Despite the supportive meas-

ures on May 17, cautious sentiment regarding the real estate market has not been fully dispelled, meaning that the property downturn could continue, further affect investment and economic growth, and potentially even destabilize the financial sector," said Yang Haiping, a researcher at the Central University of Finance and Economics' Institute of Securities and Futures.

With recent policy moves having shown policymakers' clear intentions to improve property market sentiment, Yang said easing or even removing restrictions on homebuying in first-tier cities may be the most potent policy to achieve such an outcome.

"Let the market decide who should buy what. The housing sector will benefit from it," Hong said. He added that it remains to be seen whether recent measures to shore up the property market will be enough to reverse the trend.

"It's still early days," Hong said. As the latest policy signal to prevent any systemic risks arising from the real estate sector, the National Financial Regulatory Administration said on Tuesday that it will further leverage the coordination mechanism for property financing to meet the reasonable financing needs of enterprises in the sector.

Wang Ying in Shanghai contributed to this story.

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Briefly

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281.29 million) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Tuesday. 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.

Express delivery sector expands

China's courier sector saw dou-

ble-digit growth in both business volume and revenue during the first four months amid a domestic consumption boom, said the State Post Bureau. Express delivery firms nationwide handled 50.81 billion parcels during the period, soaring 24.5 percent year-on-year.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

China's EVs, renewables buoy automotive chipmaker Infineon

By MA SI masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Infineon Technologies AG, the world's top automotive chipmaker, is optimistic about growth opportunities in China's rapidly developing markets, particularly in electric vehicles, wind and solar power, according to a senior company executive.

David Poon, senior vice-president of Infineon Technologies and president of Infineon Greater China Region, said the next decade will be an era driven by decarbonization and digitalization.

Amid the green and low-carbon transition, third-generation semiconductors, represented by silicon carbide and gallium nitride, present significant market opportunities and are increasingly applied in new energy, EVs, charging stations and energy storage.

"Infineon is continually innovating and strategically positioning itself to meet the growing demand for higher efficiency and more envi-

ronmentally friendly semiconductor products," Poon said.

According to the company, China is one of the largest and most dynamic regional markets for Infineon. For nearly 30 years, Infineon has established an integrated innovation ecosystem that includes industry, academia, research and applications in China.

Poon said Infineon has introduced many localized initiatives in China to deeply understand customer needs. For example, aligning with the current trends of low-carbon and digital development, Infineon has upgraded its logistics center in Shanghai to a smart, low-carbon warehouse, providing more efficient and convenient supply chain services.

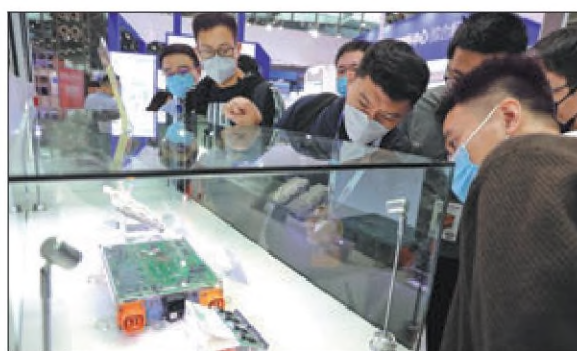
Additionally, a new sales entity of Infineon started operating in Shanghai earlier this year to further expand its local business network, offering customized logistics services tailored to the local market, thereby better responding to and meeting customer needs.

In optimizing the local supply chain, Infineon's factory in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, fully supports the production needs of its major sales segments: automotive, industrial and infrastructure, and consumer, computing and communication.

Earlier this month, Infineon said it will provide a broad range of products including silicon carbide power modules to Xiaomi's SU7 smart electric vehicle until 2027.

Huang Zhenyu, vice-president of Xiaomi EV and general manager of the supply chain department, said: "Infineon is an important partner with leading technologies and resilient manufacturing capabilities in power semiconductors as well as a highly scalable micro-controller product portfolio.

"The cooperation between the two companies will not only help stabilize the supply of silicon carbide for Xiaomi EV, but also help us build a high-performance, safe and reliable luxury car with leading-edge features



A view of Infineon's booth during an expo in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

for our customers," Huang said.

China's automotive industry has been experiencing rapid growth and transformation. According to data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, China's auto production and sales exceeded 30 million units in 2023, a historic high.

China has been the world's largest NEV market for nine consecutive years. Latest data show that in April, the production of NEVs reached 870,000 units and sales touched 850,000 units, up 35.9 percent and 33.5 percent year-on-year,

respectively, the CAAM added.

In the fiscal year 2023, Infineon achieved a record global revenue of 16.3 billion euros (\$17.7 billion), marking a year-on-year increase of 15 percent, driven by a focus on low-carbon and digital development, which provided long-term structural growth momentum.

According to market research company TechInsights, Infineon maintained its top position in the automotive semiconductor market with a 13.7 percent market share in 2023.

Rise of local NEVs helps global tool makers

By LIU YUKUN liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

The growing overseas footprint of Chinese companies that make new energy vehicles and auto parts is offering substantial opportunities for global machine tool makers, said a corporate executive.

Chinese NEV makers' rise mirrors the growth patterns in other economies. Their international presence also addresses rising demand from foreign automakers seeking improved supply chain security amid deglobalization and geopolitical tensions, said Norbert Wiest, general manager of SW China, a Suzhou, Jiangsu province-based multinational corporation specializing in machine tools.

The remarks follow recent claims by some Western politicians and media outlets that China is allegedly creating excess capacity in the new energy sector and distorting market dynamics abroad by dumping products at low prices, thus damaging other economies.

"In industrial history, every rapidly growing and significant economy has gone global," Wiest said. "Japan expanded globally when its automotive industry was growing. Despite initial challenges, Japan succeeded in its second attempt due to improved performance, technology and cost reduction through mass production, similar to China's experience. German OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) were also very successful in exporting parts to China."

"It is logical for China's car industry to go global, especially in the electric car market where China has an advantage in technology, production capability and costs."

Wiest noted that Chinese NEV and auto part makers' price advantage stem from technological advancements and large-scale production. He highlighted that long-term market strategies and good services are also important reasons behind the overseas success.

"Many of SW's customers in China are tier 1 suppliers directly serving OEMs. Their main reasons for overseas expansion include following global customers such as Tesla in Europe and North America. These innovative enterprises also contributed to the global technical development in the field of electric cars and benefited companies involved in the supply chain," Wiest said.

SW's Hungary branch saw its business boom in the last two years, largely due to orders from Chinese auto part maker establishing production bases there. Halms Hungary KFT, the overseas branch of Zhejiang Huashuo Technology Co Ltd, as well as Nanjing Chervon-Auto Precision Technology Co Ltd, are key clients.

On reasons behind Halms' overseas venture, Zhang Taixin, its director, said that in the current climate of deglobalization and geopolitical conflicts, automakers prioritize supply chain security over cost cuts. This shift favors suppliers capable of producing auto parts near automakers' production sites to ensure timely delivery despite geopolitical uncertainties.

Shi Jiaqi, director of overseas projects at Chervon-Auto, echoed this sentiment. "We've noticed strong demand from our foreign clients who favor suppliers capable of auto part production near their sites to avoid instability from deglobalization and geopolitical conflicts, which is also an important reason for us to set up overseas branches."

The Shanghai-listed automotive component maker invested around 60 million euros (\$64.77 million) in 2021, and finished factory construction in 2023.

Stefan Weber, chief technology officer of SW Germany, said the company is stepping up efforts to support Chinese vehicle and auto part brands to go overseas by expanding its presence in Hungary and Mexico to better serve its Chinese clients.

"It's a win-win cooperation. Our customer base grew significantly with big demand for machines and our business with Chinese clients saw impressive growth."

BUSINESS

Freight hikes force shippers to get creative

Major companies impose peak season surcharges on some significant routes

By ZHONG NAN
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Following recent announcements by multiple global shipping companies about rising fees for container transportation, Chinese exporters have quickly adapted to these changes and anticipate this trend will continue into the third quarter.

Major players like France's CMA CGM Group, Germany's Hapag-Lloyd AG and Denmark's Maersk Line have all reported substantial rate increases, with some hikes reaching up to \$2,000 and several routes experiencing over 50 percent rises. These adjustments span numerous routes connecting Asia with Europe, North America and South America.

For example, CMA CGM announced that starting May 15, the rate for a 20-foot equivalent unit (TEU) on the Asia to North Europe route would be adjusted to \$2,700, and the rate for a 40-foot container (FEU) will increase to \$5,000, which represent increases of \$500 and \$1,000, respectively, compared with rates implemented on May 1.

Maersk will impose a peak season surcharge on routes from Asia to the west coast of South America, Central America and the Caribbean from June 1. The surcharge will be \$1,000 for a TEU and \$2,000 for an FEU.

Amid rising geopolitical tensions, a rebound in global market demand and shifts in trade patterns, many Chinese exporters are postponing shipments, switching their transportation strategies, or preemptively handling orders for the second half of the year to proactively address rising costs.

Despite a significant uptick in orders from Europe and the Middle East, Rollmax Shutter Component Co Ltd, a roller shutter component maker based in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, has delayed the shipment of several containers this month due to a nearly 50 percent surge in ocean freight costs compared to last year, coupled with challenges in securing container space.

Ding Yandong, the company's president, said the cost of shipping a 40-foot container to Saudi Arabia has risen from around \$3,500 earlier this year to between \$5,500 and \$6,500 this month.

To cope with the increasing ocean freight costs, he has advised clients to consider alternatives such as cargo freight and the China-Europe freight train services.

To ensure timely delivery, some foreign trade companies have also started shipping orders for the second half of this year as early as in May and June.

"Previously, we primarily used fast sea freight services, but now we

"This situation will last for another two or three months. July and August are the traditional peak season for shipments, and August and September are the peak season for e-commerce businesses across the world."

Tang Qianjia, vice-president of Shenzhen Tiantu Tongxun Supply Chain Co Ltd

are opting for slower conventional ships, extending the cargo turnover cycle to reduce costs," said Luo Qian, head of operations at Shenzhen Hanlin International Trade Co Ltd, a Guangdong province-based exporter of electronic and household products.

"We are also taking necessary measures to cut expenses by planning shipments one to two months in advance," said Luo.

Since 2024, product demand in Europe and North America has improved marginally, providing fundamental support for the increase in prices in maritime shipping in China's foreign trade sector, said Yuan Qian, an associate researcher at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research.

Affected by expected uncertainty of trade policies with the US general election later this year, together with expectations of peak season price increases, many US retailers and businesses from other sectors have initiated front-loading of inventories, further boosting demand for maritime shipping, said Yuan.

From the supply side, ongoing tensions in the Red Sea region have led to cargo ships being rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, significantly increasing the distance and days of navigation, and also driving up prices for shipping containers, he added.

"This situation will last for another two or three months. July and August are the traditional peak season for shipments, and August and September are the peak season for e-commerce businesses across the world," said Tang Qianjia, vice-president of Shenzhen Tiantu Tongxun Supply Chain Co Ltd, a freight forwarder in Guangdong province.

It's like a dream



An employee from Lin'an power supply service branch under State Grid Hangzhou Electric Power Co tucks a student in during noon break at a primary school in Zhejiang province. The State-owned power supplier has been helping students in rural areas by revamping schools, including renovating classrooms. So far, the move has benefited 1,768 rural students in eight primary schools in Lin'an and Longyou. WU CHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY



An LNG vessel is berthed at a port in Tangshan, Hebei province, in November. YANG SHIYAO / XINHUA

LNG imports may hit record in 2024

By ZHENG XIN
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Fueled by strong demand from the industrial sector amid an economic recovery and industrial decarbonization, China's liquefied natural gas imports could hit a record in 2024, company executives and experts said.

China, the world's top importer of the super-chilled fuel, is on course to import around 80 million metric tons of LNG this year, driven by increased demand from the industrial and commercial sectors, said Zhang Yaoyu, global head of LNG and new energies for PetroChina International under China National Petroleum Corporation.

China's LNG imports rose 12.6 percent year-on-year in 2023 to 71.32 million tons, overtaking Japan as the world's largest LNG importer. This was a significant rise compared to 63.44 million tons of LNG imported in 2022.

China has shipped nearly 20 million tons of LNG already during the first three months, with the chemicals, paper, steel and cement industries driving growth in demand, making the estimated 80 million tons achievable, said Zhang.

Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF, said China has become the dominant force in LNG worldwide amid the country's energy transition.

Chinese currency moves closer to fuller usage, internationalization

By ZHOU LANXU
and OUYANG SHIJI

The renminbi has further emerged as an international currency, with widespread usage of the currency seen in cross-border trade settlements, yet the process still faces prominent challenges of trading partners' reluctance to accept the Chinese currency and policy complexity, a think tank said in a report.

The report, released by the International Monetary Institute at Renmin University of China on Monday, surveyed 1,657 Chinese and foreign companies and found that more than 70 percent of polled respondents have used the renminbi in trade settlements.

Nearly 60 percent of them have made renminbi foreign exchange transactions, said the report, titled "RMB Quarterly", which was co-produced by Bank of Communications.

"The widespread usage of the renminbi in cross-border transactions has indicated fruits of the internationalization of the renminbi from a micro perspective," the report said.

It added that usage scenarios of the Chinese currency are expanding as about 19.18 percent of polled enterprises have used the renminbi in trade financing while 16.98 percent have engaged in cross-border renminbi cash management.

Data from global financial messaging platform Swift also showed on Thursday that the renminbi has been the world's fourth-biggest payment currency for the sixth month in a row as of April, accounting for 4.52 percent of global payments by value, com-

"China is likely to dominate LNG demand growth this decade as its industry seeks to cut carbon emissions by switching from coal to gas."

Steve Hill, executive vice-president for Shell Energy

Gas consumption in the transport sector, seen as a relatively clean bridge fuel, is projected to experience the fastest growth due to the cost-effectiveness of natural gas commercial vehicles, she said.

The country's State-owned enterprises have also led China's expansion of its capacity to handle LNG, while private companies are playing an increasingly active role in building LNG terminals, she said.

About 60 percent of the LNG facilities under construction are by State-owned enterprises and the rest by private domestic companies, she said.

BloombergNEF said it expects China's base-case natural gas demand in 2024 to increase 8 percent year-on-year to 421 billion

cubic meters, while LNG imports are estimated to rise 17 percent annually to 81 million tons this year.

The transportation sector is expected to see the largest increase in gas consumption during the warmer months (April to September) due to the good economics of natural gas commercial vehicles, it said.

Chinese companies are on course to buy more LNG on a long-term basis than any single nation, as it is looking to sign more deals to avoid possible shortages and reduce dependence on spot deliveries. Of all global long-term liquefied natural gas volumes last year, 33 percent is going to China, according to Bloomberg.

According to Shell's LNG Outlook 2024, the global LNG market will continue to grow into the 2040s, mostly driven by China's industrial decarbonization.

The development of China's gas infrastructure has been accelerating in recent years and the long-term gas and LNG demand outlook in China remains strong as the country has been also diversifying its import destinations, it said.

"China is likely to dominate LNG demand growth this decade as its industry seeks to cut carbon emissions by switching from coal to gas," said Steve Hill, executive vice-president for Shell Energy.

Guangdong steps up for low-altitude upper hand

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
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An action plan for promoting the high-quality development of the low-altitude economy in Guangdong province, an economic powerhouse in South China, will help speed up the commercial use of low-altitude aircraft in the near future, according to companies involved in the industry.

The plan, stretching from this year to 2026, proposes to build a world-leading low-altitude economy hub in the province within three years, with the economic scale exceeding 300 billion yuan (\$41.4 billion).

"The low-altitude economy is not an industry that can be developed overnight, and the plan issued by the local government, covering aspects from airspace management to infrastructure construction, expanding urban scenarios to industrial innovation capabilities, is crucial for the industry's development," said He Tianxing, vice-president of EHang Holdings Ltd, one of the leading urban air mobility technology companies in the world.

The plan, which was issued by the provincial government early last week, aims to establish a low-altitude industrial pattern featuring coordinated development between three key cities — Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai.

Guangdong will nurture a number of leading enterprises and specialized innovative companies in the low-altitude economy by supporting the development of the industry through government investment funds and establishing special funds through market-oriented approaches to guide more funds into key areas of the low-altitude economy.

"As a representative enterprise in the industry, we will work together with all parties to promote the high-quality development of the low-altitude economy by accelerating commercial use of our electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft and infrastructural development for takeoff and landing," said He.

Chinese companies engaged in the low-altitude industry have geared up to prepare for the commercial use of low-altitude aircraft, as the plan encourages the use of helicopters and eVTOLs to explore and expand new low-altitude formats including air commuting, business travel, aerial shuttles and cross-border flights, and more.

The plan also proposes to explore and open low-altitude air routes between Guangdong and Hainan provinces.

EHang, based in Guangzhou, has launched demo flights for its eVTOLs in carrying passengers, logistics, smart city management and air lighting shows.

Its EH216-S has obtained the world's first Type Certificate, production certificate and standard airworthiness certificate for passenger-carrying pilotless eVTOL aircraft issued by the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

Type Certificate is an approval of the design of civil aviation products including civil aircraft, aircraft engines or propellers, issued by the CAAC in accordance with regulations governing the quality of civil aviation products and parts.

Xpeng Aeroht, the flying car unit of Chinese electric vehicle maker Xpeng Motors, also had its Type Certificate application accepted by the CAAC for its air module of the company's latest modular flying car with ground and air modules.

"The true arrival of flying cars in urban air mobility may take some time. But the modular flying car targeting individual users will be able to fly in the next five years because the land module can be driven and the air module can fly in some specific areas," said Qiu Mingquan, vice-president of Xpeng Aeroht.

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BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Tech giants embracing humanoid robots

Unitree, UBTech among local firms wedding AI with lifelike androids

By MASI
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In a market accustomed to eye-catching innovations from the likes of Tesla's Optimus and Boston Dynamics' Atlas, the global humanoid robotics industry was recently wowed by a new product from Chinese startup Unitree Robotics.

Its surprisingly low price is what sets it apart: 99,000 yuan (\$13,700) for its latest G1 humanoid robot. While many robots from other companies are priced from 150,000 to 200,000 yuan, or even into the millions, Unitree Robotics is positioning itself as a very strong competitor in terms of both price and performance, the company said.

Last year, Elon Musk suggested that the price of Tesla's Optimus would be around \$20,000, claiming that only at this price point could such robots achieve widespread use in the real world.

Jensen Huang, CEO of US chip giant Nvidia, recently said in an interview that the future cost of humanoid robots could range between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

According to Unitree Robotics, G1 is about 127 centimeters tall and boasts impressive stability and flexibility, such as 180-degree body rotation and the ability to crack walnuts "barehanded".

Despite its smaller size compared to Unitree H1 — a 1.8-meter, 47-kilogram laser-radar-equipped humanoid the company unveiled last year — the G1 is also equipped with advanced technologies, including LiDAR, depth cameras and dexterous hands. Driven by the self-developed large language model UnifoLM, G1 possesses powerful motor capabilities and intelligent learning abilities, allowing for precise object manipulation, Unitree Robotics said.

The story behind Unitree Robotics' ability to offer such low prices traces back to its years of experience in developing quadruped robots and its self-developed electric drive technology.

"The core components of the G1 joint unit, including the servo motor, reducer and controller, are all independently developed and produced by Unitree," said Wang Qixin, who is in charge of marketing at Unitree Robotics.

The development of the G1 took about three months from project initiation to launch — half the time it took to develop the H1 — primarily due to Unitree Robotics' self-developed technology. However, Wang also acknowledged that the reduced size contributed to the lower price.

Driven by technological advancements in AI, humanoid robots like Unitree G1 are the hottest topic in the intelligent robotics industry today amid a growing number of Chinese companies that are scrambling to establish a beachhead in the emerging sector.



Visitors check out a humanoid robot of Chinese tech startup Unitree Robotics during an expo in Beijing in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

According to a guideline unveiled by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China aims to build an innovation system for humanoid robots by 2025, with breakthroughs to be made in key technologies to ensure the safe and effective supply of core components.

The guideline said it aims to cultivate two to three globally influential humanoid robotics enterprises, and a group of specialized small and medium-sized enterprises by 2025.

By 2027, China will see a secure and reliable industrial and supply chain system, and related products will be deeply integrated into the real economy, the guideline said.

"Currently, new technologies, products and formats represented by humanoid robots and general artificial intelligence are thriving and becoming the pinnacle of global technological innovation, a new track for future industries and a new engine for economic growth," said Xu Xiaolan, former vice-minister of industry and information technology and a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee.

Breakthroughs in AI, she said, have provided an important driving force for the innovative development of humanoid robots, and the world is experiencing a wave of integration between humanoid robots and general AI.

General AI refers to AI's versatility in doing multiple tasks such as writing essays, checking program bugs and making business plans. This dif-



A humanoid robot demonstrates electro-welding skills. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ferentiates it from previous narrow AI projects that excel in only one area.

Chen Jia, a researcher at the International Monetary Institute of Renmin University of China, said, "Humanoid robots will be an industry field with great growth potential in the next decade, driven by the latest technological advancements in AI."

The worldwide market for humanoid robots is forecast to be bigger than analysts in Goldman Sachs Research expected even a year ago. The prospects for

machines that help with everything from folding laundry to handling hazardous waste have improved as progress in AI accelerates and investment in the sector grows faster than anticipated, Goldman Sachs Research said in a report published in February.

The total addressable market for humanoid robots is projected to reach \$38 billion by 2035, up more than sixfold from a previous projection of \$6 billion, said Jacqueline Du, head of China Industrial Tech-

nology research and an analyst at Goldman Sachs Research. The estimate for robot shipments increased fourfold, to 1.4 million units, over the same time frame, with a much faster path to profitability amid an expected 40 percent reduction in material costs.

The China Institute of Electronics also expects the Chinese market for humanoid robots to reach about 870 billion yuan by 2030.

"AI progress surprised us the most," Du said, referring to advan-

ces such as robotic large language models — a key reason for the forecast change. Goldman Sachs Research points out that there has been significant progress in end-to-end AI, through which models can train themselves, removing the need for a human engineer to code everything by hand. That's speeding up robot development, allowing these devices to do more tasks and adapt to new situations, such as working outside of factories, more quickly.

There are signs that robot components, from high-precision gears to actuators, could also cost less than previously expected, leading to faster commercialization. That's mainly because cheaper components are now available, there are more supply chain options, and designs and manufacturing techniques have improved. In turn, this could speed up the timeline to factory applications by a year, and to consumer applications by two to four years, compared with Goldman Sachs Research's prior estimates.

Robotics is considered the "crown jewel of manufacturing", with humanoid robots being the ultimate goal for many across the industry. Compared with industrial robots that are valued for their specialized mechanical capabilities, the main challenge in developing humanoid robots is how to perfectly simulate human processes of perception, cognition, decision-making and execution under various scenarios, experts said.

Sensing the opportunities and challenges, both established Chinese tech companies and startups are working to strengthen their R&D capabilities in humanoid robots.

"In the past six to eight months, a large number of new humanoid robots companies have emerged, indicating the public's recognition of this industrial segment," said Fu Chunjiang, vice-president of UBTech Robotics, a Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based AI and humanoid robotics company.

Humanoid robots, Fu said, can provide positive feedback and form a flywheel effect with general AI, promoting faster development of the sector.

Xiaomi Corp has also showcased its emotion-detecting humanoid robot CyberOne.

Measuring 170 cm and weighing 52 kg, CyberOne supports up to 21 degrees of freedom of motion and achieves a real-time response speed that allows full human movement simulation.

"CyberOne's AI and mechanical capabilities are all self-developed by Xiaomi Robotics Lab. We have invested heavily in R&D spanning various areas, including software, hardware and algorithms innovation," said Lei Jun, founder and chairman of Xiaomi.

"With AI at its core and a full-size humanoid frame as its vessel, this is an exploration of possibilities of Xiaomi's future technological ecosystem and a new breakthrough for the company," Lei said, adding that it will use CyberOne in its smart manufacturing in the future.

Factory automation looking more like us

By MASI

In an auto factory, a humanoid robot effortlessly inspects car door locks, tests seat belts, examines headlamp covers and even affixes car emblems, further blurring the distinctions between humans and machines.

The robot, Walker S, is produced by Chinese AI and humanoid robotics company UBTech Robotics. This is not the first time that the company's humanoid robots have created an internet sensation, as it works hard to commercialize the cutting-edge technology into more sectors for wider adoption.

In December, for the first time in its 132-year history, the Hong Kong Stock Exchange's opening bell was rung by UBTech Robotics' humanoid robot, floating the Shenzhen-based firm on the bourse for its final initial public offering of 2023.

Said by many to be "China's first humanoid robot stock", UBTech

Robotics raised more than HK\$1 billion (\$128 million) on that day, as many domestic companies race to commercialize their humanoid robots.

Zhou Jian, chairman and CEO of UBTech Robotics, said, "After going public, we will continue to improve the technological capabilities of humanoid robots, and use innovative technologies to solve major social problems."

Zhou said the company focuses on three major application scenarios for humanoid robots — manufacturing, commercial services and home companions.

The global humanoid robot market is expected to grow at a rate of 52.8 percent annually from 2023 to 2030, according to market research company ReportLinker.

However, humanoid robots are still in their very early stages of development. There are shortcomings in the design of humanoid robots, and their functionalities are not fully in line with customer needs. Technological hurdles and cost

challenges also exist, experts said.

"As a manufactured product, humanoids can only have a solid market when costs are lowered to an acceptable level," said Guo Qianqian, an analyst at Essence Securities.

But using the technology available today, Goldman Sachs Research forecasts significant demand for humanoid robots in structured environments like manufacturing in the future. That could include use cases such as electric vehicle assembly and component sorting. Industry research indicates that about 70 percent of manufacturing in China is already done by machinery and automation. Since humanoids are more flexible and capable of adapting to complex terrains, Goldman Sachs analysts believe they can expand the market for industrial automation.

Humanoids are particularly appealing for tasks that are "dangerous, dirty, and dull", Goldman Sachs Research said, adding that there would be potential demand for

robots in mining, disaster rescue, nuclear reactor maintenance, and chemicals manufacturing.

Customers may be willing to pay a higher price for robots that can do dangerous jobs that people are reluctant to do. Importantly, robots could also provide labor in sectors that don't have enough workers, Goldman Sachs added.

Labor is still indispensable in the era of industrial automation. However, going forward, humanoid robots can collaborate with traditional automation equipment to solve complex scenarios of flexible unmanned operations, and independently complete difficult tasks, such as torque tightening and material handling, Zhou from UBTech Robotics said.

The company is exploring the application of humanoid robots in industrial scenarios, such as new energy vehicles and smart logistics, with leading domestic enterprises. Meanwhile, it is only a matter of time before humanoid robots enter the home, as they



A humanoid robot of UBTech Robotics works at an automobile factory in Hefei, Anhui province, this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

become more intelligent and provide more services to people, Zhou added.

UBTech Robotics has also unveiled a smart healthcare strategy with a string of products and strategic cooperation agreements with companies such as Medical Care Service Co Inc, which is better known as MCS, from Japan.

The move also comes as UBTech Robotics eyes serving China's growing population of senior citizens.

UBTech Robotics said it now serves 900 corporate clients from more than 50 countries, focusing on artificial intelligence education, smart logistics, eldercare and commercial services.

COMMENT

Editorials

Malevolent US lawmakers out to cause trouble selfishly putting lives at risk with their games

The rhetoric of war surrounding the Taiwan Strait has reached new heights these days with Taiwan's new leader, Lai Ching-te, making his radical secessionist stance clear to all.

Despite this, the risk of conflict is still manageable should he bear in mind the devastating consequences of crossing Beijing's redline.

All the talk about war mainly comes from third parties. It remains a disfavored option for both sides which are aware it will have ruinous consequences.

Nonetheless, the clouds of war keep darkening over the Taiwan Strait, primarily because anti-China forces in the United States are intent on pushing the two sides of the strait into war in the belief that it will be advantageous to the US. Their warmongering is the biggest threat to peace across the strait, which threatens to throw cross-strait interactions into a death loop.

The visit to Taiwan by a bipartisan delegation of the US Congress this week, shortly after Lai's inauguration, is only the most recent instance of Washington's malign designs. Michael McCaul, who led the six-member delegation, was straightforward about the purpose of their trip — to show that the US government stood in lockstep with Lai and Taiwan. Andy Barr, co-chair of the Taiwan caucus in the US Congress, declared the US is fully committed to

supporting Taiwan militarily, diplomatically and economically.

This is naked violation of the China-US joint communiques, in which Washington promised to not develop official ties with Taiwan. Let alone the proclaimed purpose of demonstrating support for the island's "pro-independence" leader, which contradicts Washington's claim that it still adheres to the one-China principle, a fact clearly set out in UN resolutions and international law and that brooks no misinterpretation.

These are not the first batch of US Congress members to visit Taiwan. But what makes their presence more provocative, and potentially more damaging, is that they seem to be intentionally underscoring the "official" nature of their trip.

Beijing has urged the US lawmakers to "stop playing the Taiwan card, and stop supporting and condoning Taiwan separatist forces". But this is hardly likely to deter what McCaul described as "routine visits" by US politicians.

Such messages of "solidarity" with the separatists on the island is maliciousness that is callously ill-conceived. They are intended to encourage further provocations from the Lai authorities in the hope that such actions precipitate a cross-strait conflict. That, as shown in other theaters of war where the US has employed such a tactic, will only produce disastrous consequences for all.

Sino-Arab spirit of solidarity will carry forward

China and Arab states enjoy a long history of friendly exchanges. But their relations are now the best they have ever been, the two sides having nurtured a friendly partnership featuring solidarity and mutual assistance, equality and mutual benefit, and inclusiveness and mutual learning.

China has been the largest trading partner of Arab countries for many years in a row, and it has signed cooperation documents on the Belt and Road Initiative with all 22 Arab countries and the Arab League. The two sides have implemented more than 200 large-scale cooperation projects under the BRI framework, benefiting people on both sides.

In December 2022, the two sides held their first summit and agreed to make every effort to build a China-Arab community with a shared future, and planned the blueprint for the development of China-Arab relations. The upcoming 10th ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum that opens in Beijing on Thursday is of great significance, as it is the first since the China-Arab Summit two years ago.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. Over the past 20 years, the forum has sought to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the two sides for the purpose of promoting peace and development.

In an increasingly turbulent world, the two sides,

which share similar views on regional and global issues, have supported each other on their respective development paths and sought to work together to jointly safeguard the common interests of the Global South. Hence, it can be expected that the upcoming gathering will not only help expand new horizons for China-Arab cooperation in a wide range of fields but also facilitate communication and forge consensus on issues of mutual concern.

With the Gaza conflict raging and wreaking havoc in the Middle East, it is anticipated that the two sides will voice a joint stance on the Palestine issue.

In stark contrast to the United States which has been the source of trouble and strife in the Middle East, China has always been committed to building peace and stability in the region and resolving differences and defusing conflicts through dialogues and negotiations.

It is expected that at their meeting in Beijing this week, the two sides will enhance their communication and exchanges and carry forward the spirit of China-Arab friendship by strengthening their solidarity.

The Palestine issue is fundamental to peace and stability in the Middle East. The injustices done to the Palestinian people should end immediately and their demand for an independent state should be met. It is to be hoped that the meeting in Beijing will help give greater momentum to the efforts to end the ongoing conflict in Gaza and build long-term stability in the Middle East.

Warmongering Stoltenberg still stoking crisis

Five months away from his delayed retirement from the post, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has called on the alliance's members to ease the prohibition on Kyiv using weapons they supply to it to strike military targets in Russia, showing his intention of stoking the crisis as a legacy to his successor.

In an interview with *The Economist* on Friday, the warmongering NATO chief said that Ukrainians have the right to defend themselves and that denying them the possibility of using Western-provided weapons "against legitimate military targets on Russian territory makes it very hard" for them to do so.

The strong opposition to his remarks, even from within the transatlantic security alliance, should serve to remind the NATO chief that his aggressive worldview is not shared by all. "Stoltenberg should either retract his statement, apologize, or resign," said Deputy Prime Minister of Italy Matteo Salvini. "NATO cannot force us to kill in Russia, nor can anyone compel us to send Italian soldiers to fight or die in Ukraine."

That rebuke is fully justified, as the move urged by Stoltenberg, if taken, will instantly expand the Ukraine crisis to the rest of Europe. Moscow has warned the West that it is risking a global war over Ukraine and that a direct conflict between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would mean the planet is one step away from "World War III".

That is why even the Joe Biden administration, which has demonstrated it has no qualms about starting and prolonging conflicts, has always been cautious about the reckless proposal Stoltenberg has put forward.

Stoltenberg, who saw NATO suspend all its cooperation with Russia shortly after taking office in 2014, and

swell its ranks four times since then — Montenegro joining in 2017, North Macedonia in 2020, Finland in 2023 and Sweden this year — is in a better position than most others to know that the ongoing Ukraine crisis is to a large extent attributable to the actions of the organization he is the belligerent head of.

Instead of looking to worsen the crisis, Stoltenberg should reflect on why the so-called defensive security organization he heads has made the region where 30 out of its 32 members are located an increasingly dangerous place to live. As a stooge of the US, he has allowed NATO to become overbearing, expansionist and interventionist, and not only in Europe as the organization now has its sights set on the Asia-Pacific and other new frontiers such as cyberspace and outer space.

The Ukraine crisis can only be resolved by political means. The tragedy should spur the European countries to weigh the gains and losses of their security strategies over the past 10 years. During that period of time, NATO was turned from an organization whose purpose was collective defense into a de facto gang of ruffians doing Washington's bidding.

Stoltenberg will be remembered as a key figure in this process. And as a key agent for the shattering of the postwar security mechanism for Europe, as a result of its surrendering its strategic autonomy to the US.

Instead of shooting off his mouth, he should act with due prudence and avoid saying anything that might further escalate the tensions. It is to be hoped his successor will recognize that the organization has become the largest obstacle to Europe building a balanced, effective and lasting security architecture and make corresponding adjustments to correct that.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Time for central region to seize chances to boost competitiveness

The authorities held a top-level meeting on Monday, calling for new steps to trigger the development of the central region, and pledging tailored approaches to cultivate new quality productive forces and expedite the establishment of a modern industrial system.

The meeting was held two months after the top leader made a fact-finding trip to Changsha, Hunan province, where he presided over a high-level symposium on energizing the central region.

Afterwards, the authorities worked out a document, rolling out measures to accelerate the development of the central region, fully demonstrating its important strategic position in China's modernization drive, and injecting strong impetus into its development. The central region, comprising Shanxi, Henan, Anhui, Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces, holds strategic significance in China's regional development pattern, and promoting its development is an inevitable requirement for China's regional coordinated development.

Over the past decade, the top leadership has supported a new

development pattern with the goal of allowing the central region to transform its geographical and resource advantages into development advantages. The central region has indeed taken the initiative to integrate itself to the development strategies of other regions, strengthen cooperation with other regions, actively introduce industrial innovation resources, and strengthen its driving role in the development of the western region.

Driven by innovation, the central region has seen major scientific research achievements such as the Jiuzhang quantum computer, the rapid formation of state-level advanced manufacturing clusters such as rail transit equipment. With the continuous improvement of the ecological environment, the accelerated green and low-carbon transformation of the economy and society, and a faster pace of reform and opening-up, the central region is seeing greater growth momentum and a rising status in the country's regional development landscape.

During the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-20), the economy of

the central region grew at an average annual rate of 8.6 percent, ranking first among eastern, central, western and northeastern regions, and achieving a transition from "following" to "leading". In 2023, its GDP reached 26.99 trillion yuan (\$3.72 trillion), accounting for more than one-fifth of the country's total, with the economic aggregate of Henan, Hubei and Hunan ranking among the "top 10" provinces in terms of GDP size.

Standing at a higher starting point, the central region should continue to leverage its advantages and seize the opportunities brought about by the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, so as to promote its overall strength and competitiveness to a higher level. It needs to pursue innovation-driven development, develop new quality productive forces in light of local conditions, coordinate the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries while fostering and strengthening emerging industries, and plan for the development of future industries.

— BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

Discounting not good for authors, publishers

Eight publishing houses based in Beijing and 46 in Shanghai have jointly issued two statements claiming they are not cooperating with domestic e-commerce platform JD.com in its plan to sell books at a 70, or even 80, percent discount.

Though they did not spell it out, the cost of a book, which includes copyright royalty for the author, salaries for the editing team and the cost of printing, cannot possibly be less than 30 percent of the marked price. A discount of 70 per-

cent would mean almost zero profit for publishers. The publishing industry is such that readers do not benefit in the long run by buying books cheap. If so, publishers will stop making profits, they will not be able to provide royalty to authors on time, or pay the editors.

Already, the annual financial report for 2023 of 28 domestic publishing houses, publicized in April, shows 17 of them made moderate profits, nine of them made less than 100 million yuan (\$13.80 million) in

profit while two of them registered losses. If the publishing houses give in to the competitive price competition among e-commerce platforms, the situation will only get worse.

Yet the fact that only a small number of the over 500 publishing houses nationwide are rejecting the platform's initiative shows how heavily the sector relies on the platform for sales. After all, more people buy books online than from bookstores.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Commitment to one-China principle unshakable

The World Health Assembly, the highest decision-making body of the World Health Organization, has not included on its agenda a proposal that Taiwan be allowed to participate in the annual assembly as an observer.

This is the eighth year in a row that the WHA has rejected such a proposal concerning Taiwan. Both United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1, which recognize that Taiwan is part of China and that representatives of the People's Republic of China are the only legitimate representatives of China to the UN, are the legal foundations for these proposals to be rejected.

It rests with Beijing to decide whether to grant the island approval to participate in the WHA. The local administration on the island upholding of the one-China principle is a prerequisite for Beijing to

give a green light to its participation in the meeting, which it did before 2016 when the island's authorities upheld the 1992 Consensus on the one-China principle.

The central government attaches great importance to the health and well-being of residents on the island, and Taiwan's medical and health experts can participate in WHO technical meetings under the prerequisite that the one-China principle is upheld.

The proposal that was rejected by the WHA on Monday, as well as those of the past seven years, was submitted for the purpose of creating a fait accompli of "one China and one Taiwan" in international organizations, rather than for the public health of Taiwan residents.

Playing the Taiwan card in this way is an integral part of the US' strategy to contain the Chinese mainland, despite its stated com-

mitment to the one-China principle, which the US administration has repeatedly said it recognizes. Yet at the same time, the US administration smears the mainland's efforts to realize national reunification with the island as "bullying, coercion and threats".

By putting forward the Taiwan-related proposal each year at the WHA, the US and its allies have in effect distracted the WHO's attention from its due focus on the WHA meeting, wasted the valuable time and energy of the other participants and tried to divide the world health body.

Over 100 countries explicitly expressed support for China's position by writing to the WHO director-general and through other means. This fully demonstrates that the one-China principle is recognized as an incontrovertible historical truth.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Mei Zhengqing

US should stop interfering in Taiwan question

During a recent House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the US' policy toward Taiwan, a senior US State Department official in charge of Sino-US relations trumpeted the role of the "Taiwan Relations Act" while detailing the "achievements" of the relationship between the US and Taiwan island during the Joe Biden administration, including the "official exchanges" between the US administration and Taiwan authorities, US arms sale to Taiwan, Washington-Taipei "military ties", and the US' efforts to help Taiwan expand its so-called international space.

According to the US Congress's Rules of Procedure, government officials must "speak the truth" at Congress hearings, or face "contempt of Congress" charges. Assuming, therefore, that the State Department official spoke the truth, it is worth analyzing what he said, especially because his statements highlight the US' wrongdoings which have seriously violated not only the one-China principle and the three Sino-US joint communiqués, but also international law and basic norms of international relations. And all the US' actions have been aimed at undermining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The US official's testimony can also be seen as a "confession" of US interference in the Taiwan question, which is purely an internal affair of China. The official claimed that the relationship between the United States and Taiwan "is stronger than ever" because the "Taiwan Relations Act" has "given us (the) tools that we need to pursue our overall objective of maintaining peace and stability".

The fact is, the so-called Taiwan Relations Act was hastily concocted by pro-Taiwan and anti-Beijing US lawmakers soon after the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic relations in 1979 — the act was drafted, deliberated and passed in a record 41 days. And right from the very beginning, Beijing has been opposing the

Forty-five years later, the importance of the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués remains unchanged, so has the importance of the Taiwan question as the first redline in Sino-US relations that should not be crossed.

act, saying it is illegal and invalid.

In particular, the act is aimed at hollowing out the one-China principle that the US government had just days ago promised to abide by in the Shanghai Communiqué and the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and the US.

On April 19, 1979, when late leader Deng Xiaoping met with the first US congressional delegation to Beijing after the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic ties, he emphasized that Beijing was not happy with the US Congress for passing the "Taiwan Relations Act". The fundamental problem with the act is that it does not recognize that there is only one China.

The US, however, implemented the "Taiwan Relations Act" using the excuse of "separation of powers" embedded in its political system, thus over-riding international law and the basic norms of international relations.

The US government made a commitment in the August 17 Communiqué (one of three Sino-US joint communiqués) that it "does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United

States and China", and that it intends to gradually "reduce its sale of arms to Taiwan, leading, over a period of time, to a final resolution".

More than 40 years later, the US has not only failed to honor its promise to stop selling arms to Taiwan, and that too in larger volumes and higher value (cumulatively worth \$70 billion). Worse, the US has been selling not only defensive weapons and equipment to the Chinese island but also advanced and sophisticated weapons including F-16 fighter jets, Abrams main battle tanks, land-based Harpoon launchers and MQ-9 reapers.

The State Department official also admitted that the Biden administration has notified Congress of more than \$6.2 billion worth of arms sales to Taiwan. Breaking its own promises, saying one thing while doing the exact opposite, and instead of feeling ashamed, projecting it as a big achievement is not how a superpower should behave. The US official's testimony makes it clear that the US is out to challenge the postwar world order and expand Taiwan's "international space".

The Cairo Declaration of 1943 and the Potsdam Declaration of 1945 clearly stipulate that the island of Taiwan is part of China that was occupied by Japan. Furthermore, UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 in 1971 resolved once and for all the questions relating to representation of China, Taiwan province included, in the UN.

But the US has turned a blind eye to these cold facts and, instead, has been trying to facilitate Taiwan's "meaningful participation in international organizations and multilateral forums", which is a blatant violation of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758.

The US has also deliberately blurred the boundaries of the "unofficial relations" between the US and Taiwan, thus shaking the political foundation of the Sino-US relationship. In the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplo-

matic Relations between China and the US, the US recognizes that the government of the PRC is the sole legal government of China, and the people of the US will maintain cultural, commercial and other unofficial relations with Taiwan residents within this context.

In January 2021, the US State Department lifted the restrictions on US-Taiwan interactions, which forbid representatives of the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office" from entering State Department facilities, and prohibited the raising of Taiwan "flag" at Twin Oaks (property of "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office") and on US government property.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Washington based on three China-US joint communiqués. Although the landmark occasion has not been commemorated by US Congress, Congress has held multiple commemorative events to mark the 45th anniversary of the passing of the "Taiwan Relations Act". This indicates separatist forces on Taiwan island are being encouraged by the US to intensify their anti-mainland and anti-reunification activities.

Forty-five years ago, the key to establishing Sino-US diplomatic ties was the proper handling of the Taiwan question by both sides, and the US government's explicit recognition that "the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government of China" and that "there is only one China, and that Taiwan is a part of China". Forty-five years later, the importance of the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués remains unchanged, so has the importance of the Taiwan question as the first redline in Sino-US relations that should not be crossed.

The author is an international affairs observer. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Francisco José Leandro

Let peaceful coexistence be guiding force of world order

The debate on the architecture of the international order should be shifted to the responsibilities vested in those states that are ascending to the highest power status: the global powers. Indeed, global powers are defined not only by the nature and reach of their interests, but also by their attitude toward global cooperation based on principles and common responsibilities arising from their deeds.

China is an emerging global power that has been pursuing its goal of building a global community with a shared future with restraint, responsibility and regard for common good.

The then premier Zhou Enlai put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence during a diplomatic engagement with the Indian government in 1953. A year later, in 1954, China issued two joint statements respectively with India and Myanmar, confirming their commitment to these Five Principles in conducting their mutual relations and their respective relations with other countries in Asia and the world.

In 1955, during the Bandung Conference, a set of 10 principles to promote peace and cooperation were adopted, including the original five of 1953. And in 1970, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2625, which included the content of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, thus making them widely acceptable to the international community.

China has been making efforts to build communities with a shared future in multiple forms and domains, and at multiple levels.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and their global evolution have had a huge impact on the development of diplomatic relations between China and a number of countries, namely those new sovereign states that gained independence from colonial rule in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The five principles are still regarded as a pillar of diplomatic relations between China and the nine Portuguese-speaking countries. Yet new connotations need to be incorporated in the context of contemporary international relations to make the principles more effective.

Six decades later, capitalizing on the global significance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, countries have been pursuing development, unity, coexistence and win-win cooperation. In this vein, win-win cooperation is preferred to the zero-sum games, and represents a commitment to collective action with collective gains and shared values and principles.

The concept of a global community with a shared future for mankind promoted by President Xi Jinping is becoming a hallmark of China, as it reflects the extended common interests of all societies and sets a vision for all major areas associated with global governance to follow. "To meet our common challenges and create a better future for all, we look to culture and civilization to play their role, which is as important as the role of economy, science and technology".

China has been making efforts to build communities with a shared future in multiple forms and domains, and at multiple levels.

These communities embrace and embody the spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the extended vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, as shown in their practices, participation in global initiatives, and trade and cultural exchanges. Bearing in mind Macao's role as a platform that can help bring China and the Portuguese-speaking countries closer, it is possible to build a new community with a shared future with all the nine Portuguese-speaking countries.

The creation of such a platform will not only be a practical inspiration for building a closer and stronger relationship between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, but more importantly will send a message to the rest of the world that it is possible to establish informal "spatial oasis" of principled sovereign relations even when there is no contiguity of land borders, therefore fostering a new type of international relations.

The author is an associate professor at the University of Macau. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Chi Fulin

Building RCEP region into a big market

In the two years since the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement came into effect, a new regional cooperation architecture featuring shared dividends and common development has taken preliminary shape. Building the RCEP trade area into a big and high-level regional market will not only help boost regional and global economic growth but also stabilize the global economy which faces increasing uncertainties.

The past two years have seen significant growth in trade and investment among the RCEP member countries, which has helped further integrate the industry and supply chains, thus accelerating overall regional economic integration.

By boosting regional trade, promoting intra-regional investment and further integrating the regional industry and supply chains, the RCEP has unleashed significant trade and investment dividends and bolstered regional economic growth. The RCEP, in fact, has the potential to greatly boost trade and investment growth in the future.

By focusing on helping less-developed economies to participate more conveniently in the regional market so they can enhance their economic competitiveness, the RCEP has been vitalizing the regional market. For example, in 2022, Laos and Myanmar increased their intra-region trade volume by 28.13 percent and 13.68 percent year-on-year respectively, which contributed to 2.7 percent and 3.8 percent of their respective GDP growth.

Besides, the rapid growth of trade and investment between China and ASEAN member states is the biggest highlight of trade and economic exchanges under the framework of the RCEP. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has been the leading player in the RCEP, with China being the most important promoter of the regional free trade agreement. The trade volume between China and ASEAN in 2023 increased by 4.9 percent compared with that in 2021 — the year before the RCEP came into effect. It can be hoped therefore that the continuous release of RCEP dividends will help further integrate China-ASEAN industry and supply chains and expedite the regional economic integration process.

Objectively speaking, since some member states are yet to implement all the RCEP rules, there is a need to ensure they do so, in order to further enhance the vitality of RCEP's large regional market. There is also a need to improve the imple-



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Furthermore, China is advancing its high-level opening-up, injecting new impetus into the regional economy and boosting the RCEP's large market.

mentation of rules of origin, so as to unleash more RCEP dividends.

The next five to 10 years will be a period of rapid economic growth for ASEAN and an important period for the structural transformation and upgrading of the Chinese economy. To fully unleash their growth potential, it is necessary that China and ASEAN work together to eliminate non-tariff barriers and ensure their enterprises implement the RCEP rules.

The huge market size of the RCEP region, combined with its institutional arrangements for trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, will contin-

ue to unleash tremendous economic growth momentum. In fact, the International Monetary Fund has predicted that the RCEP region's GDP could grow by \$10.9 trillion from 2023 to 2029, about 1.4 times and 2.6 times the GDP growth of the United States and the European Union during the same period.

Focusing on the future and surpassing traditional free trade agreements, the RCEP could build its trade area into the largest regional market by helping further integrate the member states' industry, supply and value chains, aligning the rules and standards with those of the member states and increasing people-to-people exchanges. This in turn will accelerate regional economic integration and build the world's largest high-level free trade area.

Jointly building a region with the most dynamic growth in the world requires the sincere implementation — as well as upgrading — of RCEP rules. For instance, RCEP rules of origin should be upgraded from "partial accumulation" to "full accumulation", and "national tariff reduction" to "unified tariff reduction".

Since the RCEP agreement emphasizes the need to be "open for accession by any country or any separate customs territory", the accession of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to the free trade agreement can play a unique role in expanding and benefiting the RCEP regional market. And following the principle of openness, research and communication issues that India had raised should be improved, and renewed efforts made to persuade India to rejoin the RCEP.

Furthermore, China is advancing its high-level opening-up, injecting new impetus into the regional economy and boosting the RCEP's large market. Despite facing challenges including some Western economies' sanctions and their efforts to "decouple" from the Chinese economy, China has continued to integrate in the global industry and supply chains, and make great efforts to maintain free trade. In the next 10 to 15 years, China's transformation will create a huge market space, which will inject new vitality into the regional economy, promoting regional growth and strengthening the RCEP market.

The author is president of China Institute for Reform and Development. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

FAN SHENGGEN AND ZHANG YUMEI

United by common challenges

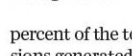
China and the US can work together to reduce methane emissions while ensuring global food security

To limit global warming, it is essential to curb methane emissions, which have 86 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide and can cause significant temperature increases within the next two decades.

As the world's two largest economies and energy consumers as well as the two largest food producers, China and the United States rank as the first and third-largest methane emitters, respectively. Both countries have substantial opportunities to reduce their methane emissions over the next decade.



Fan Shenggen



Zhang Yumei

Methane emissions from agri-food systems account for approximately 60 percent of the total methane emissions generated by human activities in 2021. However, the world currently has 735 million people living in hunger. Many of them depend on livestock and rice production (smallholder farmers in particular) and consumption (especially the undernourished population including millions of rice consumers in Asia). Livestock and rice production are major sources of methane emissions. Cutting down methane emissions while ensuring food security is an important development agenda for many countries in the world.

China and the US are the two top agricultural and food producing countries in the world. Their methane emissions from agri-food systems ranked the second and fourth, accounting for 10.9 percent and 5.1 percent of the global total respectively in 2021. China emitted 20.46 million tons of methane, of which rice cultivation, enteric fermentation and manure waste were important sources, accounting for 25.7 percent, 32.9 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively. Methane emissions in the US mainly come from livestock, of which 62.7 percent and 15 percent come from enteric fermentation and manure waste, respectively.

In the past decade, both China and the US have taken various measures to reduce methane emis-

sions, and successfully stopped the upward trend, even registering slight decreases. In the US, productivity growth in the livestock sector and reduced meat consumption have contributed to the reduction. The US released its US Methane Emissions Reduction Action Plan in 2021 and proposed to reduce overall methane emissions by 30 percent of the 2020 level by 2030. The US has increased research investment in methane reduction, focusing on the scientific measurement of methane emissions, research and development of livestock emissions reduction technologies, and rice field methane reduction. The US has also taken various practical measures to control methane emissions from livestock production, such as capturing methane emissions from livestock to use as renewable biogas fuel, spurring innovation in animal feed, and improving manure management processes.

For China, as early as 2015, the government proposed reducing fertilizer and pesticide use to control greenhouse gas emissions and increased the management and utilization of livestock and poultry manure. In 2023, the comprehensive utilization rate of livestock and poultry manure reached 78.3 percent. Reduced food loss and waste and improved management of animal manure have contributed to the emission reduction. More efficient use of fertilizer and water in rice field has led to reduced methane emissions. Equally important is increased livestock and rice productivity through breeding and other technological improvements that contributed to methane emission reduction per unit of agricultural and food production.

China launched even more ambitious Actions of Methane Control and Reduction in 2023, which proposed to promote the resource utilization of livestock and poultry manure to reach 85 percent in 2030, scientifically control methane emissions from enteric fermentation, and orderly promote methane emission control in rice fields as the starting point to promote methane emission control in the agricultural sector. China is also committed to take multiple technical measures to reduce methane emissions from rice paddies by optimizing water irrigation management, fertilization, organic material input and straw management.

In addition, China has begun to

implement programs in agriculture, management of waste and the introduction of a carbon trade market.

In 2021, China and the US issued the China-US Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s. In 2023, China and the US issued a joint statement in Sunnyvale to reaffirm the commitment of the Glasgow Declaration and proposed to set up a number of working groups including one on methane and other non-CO₂ GHG emissions. During the China-US working group meeting on Enhancing Climate Actions in the 2020s, both countries planned to host a second summit on methane and non-CO₂ gas emissions during the COP29 in 2024, and made the commitments to cooperate on methane control and reduction technologies, monitoring, reporting and verification systems. But more concrete steps must be taken.

First, China and the US can further strengthen cooperation on standards, methods and related systems to monitor, report and verify methane emissions from different sources in agri-food systems through more and regular online or in-person meetings, webinars and exchange of experts. Second, the two countries can collaborate in research and development on emission reduction technologies, for example utilization of animal manure, emission control through intestinal fermentation, and emission reduction in rice fields, to achieve the synergistic effects of productivity growth, pollution control and emissions reduction. Third, collaboration on education and training should also be initiated and expanded to share practices and promote the application of new technologies. Finally, experience and lessons from the US and China can be shared with other countries for reducing global methane emissions while also ensuring food security. The latter is especially important for developing countries.

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LIU YUANLING

Only real option

Climate diplomacy between China and the US is alive and well and will continue no matter who wins in November

The cooperation on climate change between China and the United States cannot be separated from the overall environment of China-US relations. The ups and downs of China-US relations over the past decade, especially the ongoing conflicts in the economic and trade fields, have had a strong negative impact on the development of China-US climate diplomacy, causing many people to worry that China-US climate cooperation is on the verge of collapse.



On May 14, US President Joe Biden announced steep tariff increases that will affect goods worth \$18 billion imported from China, with tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles increasing from the current 25 percent to 100 percent.

China's exploration and practice in the field of new energy electric vehicles undoubtedly contributes to the low-carbon transformation of the global transportation sector. According to the Global Electric Vehicle Outlook 2023 released by the International Energy Agency, it is estimated that under the established policy scenario, the global demand for new energy vehicles will exceed 40 million units by 2030, while in the publicly announced commitment scenario, the global demand for new energy vehicles will reach over 45 million units by 2030. In 2023, China's production of new energy vehicles was approximately 9.58 million units, with domestic sales of 8.29 million units and overseas exports of 1.20 million units. In 2023, among the top four global pure electric vehicle makers, Tesla ranked first with a market share of 19.9 percent, while BYD ranked second with a share of 17.1 percent. The success of the low-carbon transformation in the global transportation sector depends on the efforts and cooperation of all parties, and cooperation between China and the US on this issue is indispensable.

Currently, Chinese electric vehicles account for less than 2 percent of the US market. Nevertheless, the American Manufacturing Alliance claimed in an article that China's electric vehicles "may eventually become an extinction event for the American automotive industry". The fear of the US automotive industry, coupled with the encouragement of relevant interest groups, has cast a darker shadow over the future of China-US economic relations and trade. The

China's exploration and practice in the field of new energy electric vehicles undoubtedly contributes to the low-carbon transformation of the global transportation sector.

obstruction and stagnation of bilateral cultural exchanges have also made grassroots exchanges lose vitality, and the possibility of Donald Trump reentering the White House has deepened concerns about the future of China-US climate diplomacy.

In this context, it is easy to say that China-US climate diplomacy has no future or that the future is bleak.

However, this is not the only perspective from which to view the two countries' climate diplomacy, and there are at least three reasons to take a more optimistic view.

First, the advancement of global climate governance is still the trend, and climate cooperation between China and the US is an imperative. The global climate crisis is real and it will not simply disappear due to poor coordination among countries and poor international climate governance. The existence of this issue itself will call for a concerted response, as countries around the world, including China and the US, and the international community have a fundamental need to address what is an existential challenge.

The World Climate Conference will still be held, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is still in effect, and the Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change is still working. The US has also suffered economic losses and humanitarian disasters caused by the climate crisis, and both parties need to address the economic and social challenges caused by climate change. As the two largest carbon emitting countries in the world, both China and the US have realized that neither of them can face this challenge alone without the other and the rest of the international community. Therefore, cooperation is inescapable.

Second, the current communication channels at all levels of China-US climate cooperation are still smooth, which is a necessary con-

dition for the continued development of China-US climate cooperation. First, it is the attention and support from the highest political leaders of both sides, and is an important foundation for future cooperation between China and the US. On Nov 15, 2023, on the eve of the meeting between the leaders of China and the US in San Francisco, the two countries issued the "Sunshine Hometown Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation to Cope with the Climate Crisis", reaffirming their commitment to bilateral cooperation and working together with other countries to address the climate crisis. They pledged to accelerate a series of specific climate actions and launch practical cooperation plans and projects under the "2020s Enhanced Climate Action Working Group" before and after COP28. Second, in order to implement the San Francisco consensus of the heads of state of China and the US and the various actions of the Sunshine Hometown Declaration, and to continue the momentum of cooperation between the two sides, the new climate envoys of China and the US met for the first time in Washington in May.

Third, climate cooperation between China and the US is attracting more participating entities, which will add more stability to the future of China-US climate cooperation. It is gratifying that on May 29 and 30, the high-level event on local climate action between China and the US will be held in Berkeley, California. This not only continues the positive development of climate diplomacy between China and the US, but also solidifies bilateral climate cooperation, which will drive more bilateral exchanges and cooperation.

Many people are worried that should Trump become president again, it would mean the death of China-US climate cooperation. The actual situation is not like this. Looking back at the specific actions and achievements of the US, especially California, in addressing climate issues during Trump's term, shows that such pessimism is understandable but not necessary. The momentum of China and the US in addressing the climate crisis will continue.

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WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

All about Gen Z

WEEKLY

More than just words

China's young speakers reflect on their experiences and learning from the International Public Speaking Competition in London, emphasizing the power of storytelling to unite diverse cultures and ideas.



Liu Baoxiang (back row, center) and Yang Zihan (front row, third from right) pose for a photo with contestants from different countries and regions at the International Public Speaking Competition, held in London, UK, from May 13 to 17. LI BOHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

By GUI QIAN
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From May 13 to 17, approximately 40 young speakers from over 30 countries and regions gathered in London, UK, for the International Public Speaking Competition (IPSC), the world's largest event of its kind.

These talented young speakers, aged between 16 and 20, presented their speeches in the semifinal and the grand final, addressing the themes "A great leader can change the world in an instant" and "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" respectively.

Among the contestants were two young people from the Chinese mainland: 19-year-old Liu Baoxiang from Beijing and 16-year-old Yang Zihan from Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province.

In their semifinal speeches, both of them chose to take a broader perspective and a higher analytical stance, going beyond discussions centered on a specific leader.

In Yang's speech titled "We Light Up", she told stories of how war correspondents draw public attention to wars and conflicts, emphasizing that the leaders of our era need to similarly ignite empathy in others. Liu, on the other hand, explored various types of leaders across different times and places, ultimately concluding that each of us has the potential to become a leader and contribute to world peace and stability.



“It's not just about sharing Chinese stories; it's about presenting them effectively.”

Liu Baoxiang, 19, a student at Peking University

The theme of the grand final, "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so", is a quote from William Shakespeare's tragedy, *Hamlet*, in which the Prince of Denmark uses it to express his internal suffering.

Although they didn't make it to the final, they had their speeches prepared, and both believed that a good way to elaborate on this theme was to draw from their personal experiences.

Yang, in a draft of her speech, shared her journey as an influencer of learning methods on the Chinese lifestyle app Xiaohongshu, where she encountered both praise and criticism. Through this experience,

Yang realized that the world is not simply divided into good and bad, love and hate, but is a place full of differences. She stressed the importance for the new generation to let go of their prejudices and learn to embrace diversity.

Liu wrote about his changing attitudes toward adversity from childhood to adulthood, evolving from a mindset of absolutism to one of introspection and personal growth.

Reflecting on his own and his fellow contestants' performances, Liu identified two key elements fundamental to delivering a compelling speech.

"What truly matters are the speaker's vision and emotional depth," he said. "I think this might be a distinguishing trait of Chinese contestants. While foreign speakers usually focus on personal anecdotes and stories about those around them, our speeches often reflect the Chinese philosophy of universal harmony and the idea of a unified world, a belief that has been ingrained in our culture for thousands of years."

The other key element, according to Liu, is the narrative, especially on the global stage. For example, using literary techniques such as foreshadowing and contrast can be effective.

"In addition to the content, the delivery is also crucial. We need more engaging storytelling techniques that can immediately grab the audience's attention," he said. "It's not just about sharing Chinese

stories; it's about presenting them effectively."

Yang believes that a unique stage presence can help contestants stand out. "In my opinion, the six finalists might not necessarily be the ones who gave the best speeches, but they certainly have the best stage presence," she said.

Yang was particularly captivated by the contestant from New Zealand. "Her voice was powerful, she smiled throughout her speech, and she radiated confidence and hope, giving off the impression that she was there to change the world," said Yang.

She was also impressed by how the contestant from France was so good at using the space. "He gracefully moved around during his speech, making eye contact with the audience from all directions, creating a dynamic and engaging atmosphere," she said.

Liu also noted the "diverse and distinctive" styles of speeches in this international competition. "The contestant from Mauritius was particularly poetic. The Pakistani speaker was passionate, like a warrior. The Danish contestant surprised me the most. Her speech began quite casually, not immediately intriguing, but she gradually drew you in with her personal stories, leading you along at her own pace until you were completely absorbed," he recalled.

Apart from techniques and style, Yang and Liu also gained insights into the essence of public speaking



“However, through public speaking, by stepping onto bigger stages, we can amplify our voices and reach a wider audience.”

Yang Zihan, 16, a student at Shenzhen Middle School

during this one-week journey.

"I see public speaking as a way to let ideas fly. In our daily lives, our thoughts and perspectives are usually heard by only a limited number of people around us. However, through public speaking, by stepping onto bigger stages, we can amplify our voices and reach a wider audience," Yang said.

Liu, on the other hand, believes that the ultimate purpose of a speech is not just to deliver it, but to "touch hearts, offer advice, and unite people".

"A speech has the power to awak-

en the conscience within people and is a crucial step in transforming words into action. In today's international context, English speeches carry even more responsibilities," he said. "People use a common language to tell stories that reflect their unique national conditions, backgrounds, and cultures. Therefore, public speaking is not about promoting a single ideology but rather the integration of diverse cultures."

The exchange of ideas doesn't only happen within the competition but extends beyond the contest itself. Liu recalls his interactions with peers from various countries and regions, including discussing political theories with a contestant from Chile and the paths of national development with one from Poland.

"I noticed that many foreign participants are very interested in China and have an accepting attitude. As long as we are brave enough to share our stories and showcase the real, open, and inclusive China, we can establish a positive national image on the international stage and demonstrate the spirit of the new generation of Chinese youth," he said.

Yang was also moved by the supportive atmosphere among the participants.

"Throughout the competition, no one focused on rankings. Everyone sincerely congratulated the winners without any sense of regret or complaint because the journey itself provided us with much more than just winning a medal," she said.

Social Media Digest

Aquatic chic

What is the go-to footwear for this summer? More and more young people in China are opting for water shoes.

As the name suggests, water shoes are suitable for both water activities and land-based adventures. With their anti-slip rubber soles, durable mesh to keep out debris and insects, and drainage holes that keep them lightweight even when wet, they're a perfect fit for outdoor enthusiasts.

At first glance, they may not be the most stylish option, so why are they gaining such popularity



Water shoes are the chic footwear for this summer. TUCHONG

among young city commuters and office workers?

Well, firstly, water shoes allow your feet to breathe, so you won't feel stifled or sweaty while wearing them in the office. But more than that, they represent an attitude, a statement.

"It's about breaking the mold," wrote a Chinese netizen on the microblogging platform Sina Weibo. "While water shoes are office-appropriate, they subtly suggest that you're an outdoorsy person, as if your mind is already on the trail even though your body is still at work."

Meme icon's farewell

Kabosu, the beloved dog and the face behind the iconic "doge" meme, passed away on May 24 due to leukemia and liver disease.

Residing in Sakura, east Tokyo, Japan, Kabosu, a Shiba Inu, found



Kabosu, the face behind the iconic "doge" meme, passed away on May 24. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

a loving home when Atsuko Sato rescued her from a puppy mill in 2008, where she would have otherwise been euthanized. At the time of adoption, Sato estimated Kabosu's age to be around two years old. In 2010, Sato took a picture of

Kabosu crossing her paws on the sofa. She posted the image on her blog, and it took the internet by storm, evolving into a global meme phenomenon.

Later, the image was transformed into an NFT (non-fungible token) digital artwork that was sold for \$4 million and even inspired Dogecoin, the eighth-most valuable cryptocurrency with a market capitalization of \$23 billion.

Kabosu also captured the heart of Elon Musk, who briefly changed the logo of X to an image of Kabosu in April 2023.

Sato, along with Own the Doge,

a crypto organization dedicated to the "doge" meme, has generously donated substantial sums to international charities, including more than \$1 million to Save the Children, a nonprofit charity organization for children, leaving a lasting impact beyond mere visual entertainment for the world.

"She quietly passed away as if asleep while I caressed her. I believe Kabosu was the happiest dog in the world. And I was the happiest owner," wrote Sato on her blog.

LI XINRAN

LIFE

The rise of modern ceremonies

Young adults are embracing creative and personalized celebrations to inject a sense of ceremony into their daily lives, **Meng Wenjie** reports.

On March 13, Liu Jiaxian, a reporter working in Beijing, celebrated her 29th birthday with friends at a McDonald's-themed birthday party — a party dedicated solely to her.

Despite making a reservation three days in advance, Liu found that the McDonald's locations popular for birthday parties in Beijing were already fully booked. "The staff told us that more people in their 20s are choosing McDonald's birthday celebrations over kids nowadays," she said.

After finally securing a spot, Liu selected the theme "Best Friends Forever".

During the 90-minute event, the staff arranged games that allowed them to reconnect with their inner child. Liu believes that many young adults still hold this spirit but often suppress it in their daily lives. Celebrating birthdays this way gives them a chance to express themselves freely.

"I felt like I wasn't just celebrating another year of life but also rediscovering the pure joy of playing with friends from my childhood. I truly enjoyed the 'sense of ceremony' this party brought," she said.

On the eve of International Children's Day, which falls on Saturday, these young adults want to demonstrate that celebrations are not just for kids. Instead, the concept of a "sense of ceremony" has become essential in the lives of many young people, enabling them to express their individuality and showcase their personalities.

According to a survey conducted by China Youth Daily's Social Survey Center in June 2023, involving 1,334 young participants, 90.9 percent actively incorporate a sense of ceremony into their daily lives, with 57 percent stating that embracing celebrations reflects a person's passion for life.

Li Xinran is one of these individuals. In May, she celebrated her 27th birthday with friends, introducing a unique dress code: guests were requested to dress according to their Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality types.

"The MBTI personalities align with our true characters and how we interact with one another, so everyone was very excited during the preparations," she explained.

This dress code tradition in the group began last October. Due to their



“Life is more than just surviving. The small surprises from a simple ceremony make our daily existence brighter.”

Hu Mengdi, 25, a party planner



“For individuals, a sense of ceremony plays a crucial role in terms of self-identity and personal fulfillment.”

Ren Danhua, 24, a graduate student at Wuhan University



“I felt like I wasn't just celebrating another year of life but also rediscovering the pure joy of playing with friends from my childhood.”

Liu Jiaxian, 29, a reporter

busy schedules, Li and her friends struggled to find time to socialize, so they decided to plan a specific activity for their gatherings. "The dress code makes us look more like a team. We use this approach to celebrate our time together and create more memorable experiences," Li said.

While many young people enjoy organizing their own celebrations, some prefer to delegate the task to professionals, leading to the rise of "party planners" as a growing industry in recent years.

Hu Mengdi, 25, started learning about balloon party planning in Chengdu, the capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, in May 2023. After completing her training, Hu established her own business.

"Most people in this industry are young, born in the 1990s," she observed.

Since then, Hu has organized nearly 200 themed balloon parties within just one year in her hometown of Xichang, a smaller city in Sichuan.

One of her most cherished events was for five elderly women who wanted to celebrate Father's Day for their husbands. While 80 percent of Hu's clients are young adults in their 20s and 30s, these women allowed her to see

that romance knows no age limits.

"Life is more than just surviving. The small surprises from a simple ceremony make our daily existence brighter," Hu said.

Modern rituals

According to Ren Danhua, a 24-year-old sociology graduate student at Wuhan University, Central China's Hubei province, the concept of ceremony originally stemmed from religious rituals. However, as society progressed, ceremonies evolved from religious contexts to everyday human interactions, giving rise to what is now commonly known as a "sense of ceremony" in daily life.

"For individuals, a sense of ceremony plays a crucial role in terms of self-identity and personal fulfillment," Ren explained.

She pointed out that traditional ceremonies were typically initiated by authorities or social institutions, such as school graduation ceremonies or church services. In contrast, contemporary ceremonies among young people are more personal and closely connected to their daily experiences.

She also highlighted how the two key elements of traditional ceremonies — interaction with people and physical

location — have been challenged by societal changes and the rise of social media.

"A sense of ceremony can be achieved without interacting with others. For example, if I were to celebrate my birthday alone, I might treat myself to a birthday cake. This simple act is also a form of ceremony," Ren explained.

Ceremonies can now take place online instead of in person. Liu, for instance, arranged online birthday parties for friends who are away on business trips. They would create videos with heartfelt messages or play emoji-based games in WeChat group chats. "Even if we can't meet in person, these creative virtual gatherings can still foster a sense of togetherness," said Liu.

For today's youth, everything can be celebrated. Li, an enthusiast of scripted murder games, known as *jubensha* in Chinese, recently marked her completion of 200 different scripted murder games. To her, these games provided a platform to experience various roles in a short period of time.

"Despite being in my 20s, I've already lived through 200 different lives in these games," Li said. "Also, the bonds that I've formed with my friends

through these 'lives' are special and worth celebrating."

Even events traditionally seen in a negative light can be a reason for celebration.

Last summer, Hu worked with a client who wanted to throw a divorce party for her friend, celebrating her stepping out of an unhealthy marriage and wishing her well as she embraced a fresh start.

"Divorce isn't typically celebrated in eras that prioritize tradition and stability," said Ren. She explained that as modern society undergoes rapid changes and uncertainties, young people are more inclined to embrace events traditionally seen as negative; they tend to accept and redefine these events in a positive way through personalized ceremonies.

"These ceremonies mirror contemporary social values and influence the structure of modern life," Ren said.

However, while the sense of ceremony has become more integrated into the daily lives of young people, Li noted that life shouldn't be confined to these festivities. She stressed the importance of staying focused on the purpose of celebrations: whether one engages in the ceremony merely for show or for the joy and fulfillment it brings by breaking the monotony of daily routines.

For example, Li and her friends take pleasure in dressing up, but they encourage choosing clothes from their existing wardrobes or buying items that can be worn on a regular basis. They also respect the wishes of friends who prefer not to have elaborate birthday celebrations.

"Life should not be bound by the sense of ceremony, nor should it become a burden, whether in terms of finances or time," Li said.

Hu, despite working as a party planner, also believes that ceremonies don't necessarily have to be grand affairs. They can be as simple as a delicious breakfast, a bouquet of flowers, Chinese New Year decorations, or a new school bag for a child on their first day of school.

"A ceremony is not about how much money you spend or how extravagant the event is; it's about showing respect and love for life," Hu said.

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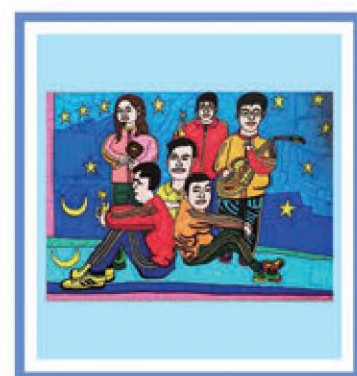
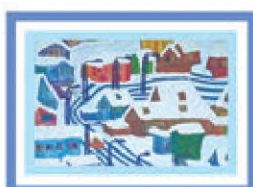
At her 27th birthday celebration in May, Li Xinran (third from right) and her friends dress in accordance with their MBTI personality types. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



LIFE

A different child of the stars

Zhu Yuchen, diagnosed with autism at a young age, finds expression and connection through painting and music.



The paintings of Zhu Yuchen, a 24-year-old with autism, draw inspiration from his daily life. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and LI XINRAN

At the age of three, Zhu Yuchen, now 24, began displaying symptoms of autism, including intellectual challenges and a lack of speech.

For his parents, the most difficult period was when Zhu received his initial diagnosis, leaving them bewildered and unsure of how to proceed.

"We were constantly shuttling between the hospital and home, dedicating time to his care and trying to figure out the best way to support him," said Zhu's father, Zhu Dunfei.

While most people have a wide range of interests and are constantly exploring new ones, autistic individuals often need a stroke of luck to discover their passion, which tends to be narrow and fixed.

However, when they do discover something they are passionate about, they can become deeply engrossed in it, according to Cheng Zhenyu, founder of Lezaixingkong, a public welfare center teaching music to individuals with autism. The center is located in Wuhan, the capital city of Central China's Hubei province.

"Like anyone else, with time and



“One of my happiest memories was performing on a beautiful stage. It was unforgettable, and we were thrilled to perform together.”

Zhu Yuchen, 24, an artist with autism

effort, they can excel in that area," said Cheng.

For Zhu, that area is painting.

"He started repetitively drawing circles at the age of five. At first, we didn't think much of it. By the time he turned 12, we decided to send him to drawing classes," said Zhu Dunfei.

Zhu finds inspiration in his daily life. He has painted his parents, natural landscapes, and his music band at the Lezaixingkong center. "The one I'm most satisfied with is the train statue near home because I often go there to play," Zhu said.

For Zhu's parents, the most fulfilling moments come when Zhu completes a painting. It now typically takes him about four hours to finish one piece, and last year, he had his first solo exhibition.

"There were about a dozen of my paintings at the exhibition. I hope to hold another one in the future," said Zhu.

In April, Zhu created five paintings of cats for the "Painters From the Stars" event to commemorate World Autism Awareness Day on April 2. The event was organized by Jiema, a platform dedicated to improving the living conditions of stray cats.

"Cats are cute; I like them very much," said Zhu.

In the annotations for his paintings, he mentioned that while cats don't smile outwardly, they might be happy on the inside, smiling in their own world.

Cheng has known Zhu for over seven years and has witnessed significant progress in his development despite the challenges of autism.

"At first, he struggled to answer

my questions logically. However, now, even though his responses may be brief and simple, they are reasonable. For example, when asked if he is happy, he confidently replies, 'Yes, I am happy.' This consistency in his responses sets him apart from others who may not respond to questions at all," Cheng explained.

With a background in music, Cheng founded the Lezaixingkong center to support autistic children and adults.

He believes that art is a powerful tool for individuals with autism to express themselves and connect with the world.

"Art is a universal language for humans. It allows autistic individuals to connect with others in a unique way. I have observed that since they started engaging with music, they tend to laugh more and become calmer," Cheng noted.

According to Zhu's parents, he has been learning to play the guitar for about seven years. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, he used to attend band practice at the center every week.

"One of my happiest memories was performing on a beautiful stage. It was unforgettable, and we were thrilled to perform together," Zhu said.

Zhu now leads the band as the singer, although Cheng mentioned

that he can only sing at his own pace.

"Each band member exhibits different types and levels of symptoms, making it challenging for them to communicate with each other. I must encourage them to practice diligently to master their parts so they can keep up with Zhu's tempo during rehearsals," Cheng said.

According to Cheng, children with autism usually begin showing symptoms around the age of two or three, often due to genetic factors. Those with acquired autism may exhibit signs at five or six years old. They make up about 2 percent of the population, with a male-to-female ratio of approximately 4:1.

He explained that the common stereotype about autistic individuals being geniuses likely stems from the portrayal of autistic characters in movies and novels, who often have savant syndrome — a rare condition within the autism spectrum that only affects 0.5 to 10 percent of the autistic community.

In reality, most autistic individuals have intelligence levels similar to that of a six-year-old, according to Cheng, though it varies from person to person.

"One young man who comes to our center can take the subway here by himself, while Zhu needs

to be dropped off by his parents. Some are sensitive and easily irritated by noises, while others are soothed by music. I've also met autistic individuals who would eat all the rice but leave the side dishes in a lunchbox," Cheng said.

In China, autistic children are often referred to as "children of the stars" because, although they may be physically close to us, their minds seem distant, as if they are on another planet. Zhu relies heavily on his parents compared to many other autistic individuals, even though their communication lacks emotional exchanges.

"He communicates his basic needs to his parents, such as thirst, hunger, or fatigue," Cheng explained. "This is quite remarkable, as many of them struggle to express such needs or act on their desires independently."

Cheng pointed out that autistic individuals pose no threat to society. While many may not be able to hold traditional jobs, they typically exhibit gentle and easygoing dispositions.

"Autism is a spectrum of characteristics, not a disease. They are people living on this planet. Just like everyone else, they are unique individuals," he said.

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Global Insights

Finding harmony in Mandarin melodies

The reason I love singing in Mandarin is quite simple: it combines two things that I love — Chinese and music.

Music is my passion. In China, one thing I enjoy is KTV. It's very popular here and all over Asia, but not so much back home in Brazil. Whenever I have the chance, I gather my friends for a KTV session — it's easily one of my favorite activities.

My Chinese friends are always surprised when I start singing Chinese songs. They get excited to see a Brazilian guy singing in Mandarin.

Before I came to Shanghai University in 2019, I studied Chinese for a year at Soochow University in Suzhou, East China's Jiangsu province, and I fell in love with the language. I am a person who likes to learn languages in general. Besides my native language, Portuguese, I also speak English, Chinese, Spanish, and French.

For me, learning Chinese has been an interesting journey because it is so different from Portuguese;

everything about it is new, which makes the learning process an exciting adventure.

In 2018, I took part in the "2018 Shared Joy in Jiangsu" Foreigner Singing and Talent Competition, co-hosted by the Information Office of Jiangsu Provincial People's Government and Jiangsu Broadcasting Corporation. Alongside another foreign student, I performed the theme song from the 2005 Chinese movie, *The Myth*. It was my debut on Chinese television, and an unforgettable experience.

Then, in 2019, I won second place in the "2019 Shared Joy in Jiangsu" Chinese Speech Contest. In my speech, I passionately expressed my love for Chinese calligraphy, an art form that deeply resonates with me.

I also attribute this to my habit of singing Chinese songs, which is not just enjoyable but also a linguistic exercise, helping me expand my Chinese vocabulary, especially when it comes to poetic expressions. When I'm learning a song, for example, I

review previously learned words and acquire new ones, which further aids my language learning.

In terms of music, it's been a huge part of my life since I was little. Around the age of five, I started singing at church. I learned to play the piano as my main instrument, and I also play a bit of guitar. I listen to music every day. I'm keen on learning everything about music, including its theory and harmony.

To me, music is the most beautiful way to express oneself. Although you can't see it, you can definitely feel it.

At Shanghai University, I've been actively involved in music. I take pride in leading the tenor section in the foreign students' choir. Our teacher, Professor Xu Yan, has taught us valuable lessons about singing, such as how to refine our tones, dynamics, and resonance. Our weekly rehearsals are not only productive but also fun. We are often invited to perform both on and off campus. As a team, we also

engage in activities outside the university, fostering even stronger bonds among us.

This year, I participated in the Top Ten Singers Competition, an annual event at Shanghai University open to both local and international students. Starting from the preliminary rounds in December 2023, I sang songs in Chinese, English, and Italian, and ultimately won the championship during the final on March 31.

It was a great experience and a valuable learning opportunity, pushing me to work harder on my skills in dynamics, emotional expression, and vocal range.

These days, every time I sing, I find myself devoting more attention to every little detail, all thanks to the lessons learned from the competition.

Music isn't just a passion for me; it's a way of life. Throughout my musical journey, I've grown not only as a singer but also as a person. Similarly, Chinese has opened up a whole



Mateus Felipe Sousa Pereira holds his Chinese calligraphy work at the "2019 Shared Joy in Jiangsu" Chinese Speech Contest. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

new world for me, one that is so different from my home country. In my lifelong journey of learning music and Chinese, I aspire to continue experiencing new adventures and exploring more uncharted territories.

Written by Mateus Felipe Sousa Pereira, a 26-year-old Brazilian student majoring in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language at Shanghai University. He is passionate about both music and the Chinese language.