

Time travel

Gaming technology enables visitors to explore ancient cave

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Ruling alliance expected to win again in India

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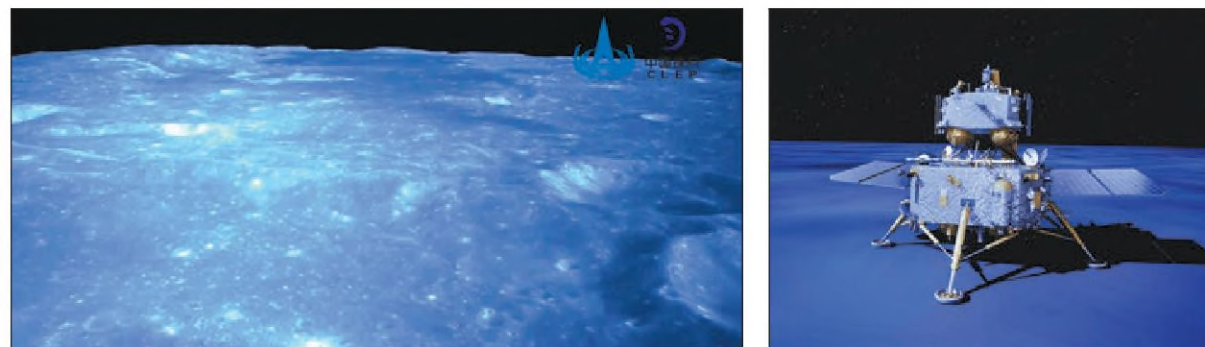
Advantage learning

Children at Xizang boarding school enjoy equal access to high-quality education

TOP NEWS, PAGE 3

# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2024



Clockwise from top: Staff members of the Beijing Aerospace Control Center check data collected by the Chang'e 6 lander and ascender combination on Sunday. JIN LIWANG / XINHUA A screenshot of a simulated animation playing at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center on Sunday shows the Chang'e 6 landing on the far side of the moon. The Chang'e 6 touched down on Sunday morning at a designated site in the South Pole-Aitken Basin. JIN LIWANG / XINHUA A screenshot of a footage captured by a camera of the Chang'e 6 during its landing process. The spacecraft is on a mission to collect soil and rock samples from the lunar far side. CHINA NATIONAL SPACE ADMINISTRATION

## Blueprint set for future of Sino-Arab ties

High hopes for 2026 summit mean great prospects for cooperation, expert says

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Over the past week, the world has seen packed diplomatic schedules producing fruitful outcomes, both at the 10th Ministerial Conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in Beijing and in the state visits made by leaders of four Arab nations.

Analysts said the series of statements issued and the cooperation documents signed set practical goals for the coming years, and have charted road maps for taking China-Arab ties and the construction of the Belt and Road to a higher level.

China has been the top trading partner of Arab countries for years, with annual China-Arab trade volume growing from \$36.7 billion in 2004 to \$398.1 billion last year. The two sides have carried out more than 200 large-scale Belt and Road cooperation projects, benefiting nearly 2 billion people.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the ministerial meeting on Thursday, President Xi Jinping outlined five frameworks for future two-way collaboration, covering innovation, investment and finance, energy, trade and people-to-people exchanges.

At its conclusion, the meeting adopted the Beijing Declaration and an action plan that covers the period from 2024 to 2026, including plans to further strengthen political, economic, social and development cooperation, particularly in the areas of investment, infrastructure, energy, science and technology, and culture.

Regarding the efforts of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum over the past 20 years, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, secretary-general of the League of Arab States, told Chinese media that the importance of the forum "is self-evident, as it covers an extremely wide range of topics and areas".

Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for ushering in "an even more glorious 20 years" of China-Arab cooperation, and said that "while the blueprint has been drawn, implementation is the key".

In addition, China and Arab countries issued a joint statement on the question of Palestine, stating that joint efforts should be made to facilitate a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip at an early date and to realize a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

Palestinian Ambassador to China Fariz Mehdawi said of Beijing's push for peace that "they understand us and know what's the solution for us, giving us more resilience".

In the past week, the visits to Chi-

na by the heads of state of four countries — Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates — yielded fruitful results as well.

Niu Xinchun, executive director of the China-Arab Research Institute at Ningxia University, said all the fresh areas of consensus and blueprints unveiled in Beijing "sent a clear signal that the two sides are committed and well prepared to foster the region's peace and make a greater contribution to world stability, while engaging more in economic cooperation to better benefit each other".

"Both sides represent a stabilizing force for development and peace for the globe," he said.

While the two sides have worked well in conventional areas such as trade, energy and infrastructure, Arab countries now seek to reindustrialize themselves and are looking more to cutting-edge technologies, and so is China, Niu said, adding that this has given two-way investment a new focus.

The first China-Arab Summit convened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2022. At the ministerial meeting last week, both sides welcomed the plan unveiled by President Xi to convene the second summit in China in 2026.

Experts said it is essential to further tap the leading role of the summit to speed up the construction of a China-Arab community with a shared future.

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said the summit is a further upgrade of the overarching China-Arab communication mechanism, as the summit can better consolidate consensus, and it is bound to "play a stronger leading role in detailed planning of future cooperation".

"The high hopes for the summit mean great prospects for cooperation between the two sides, and the summit also serves as a reminder of the long-term design and long-running considerations of China's diplomacy," she added.

Analysts said that behind the fruitful China-Arab cooperation is the fact that both sides represent developing countries, setting a great example of South-South cooperation.

One key area of common ground is that both sides support multilateralism and advance global governance reform, Su said.

"Over the past 20 years, the two sides have communicated in a way that accommodates each other's comfort without imposing strategic demands, and they have always emphasized that each country has the right to choose its own development path," Su said.

## Historic probe to gather lunar samples from far side

By ZHAO LEI zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

China's Chang'e 6 robotic mission reached a crucial moment in the nation's historic lunar odyssey on Sunday morning, when its landing craft successfully touched down on the moon's little-known far side.

With assistance from the Queqiao 2 relay satellite, the Chang'e 6 landing craft softly settled on the lunar surface at 6:23 am at a designated site inside the South Pole-Aitken Basin, the moon's largest, oldest and deepest basin.

### Inside

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The landing marked the arrival of China's, and the world's, second-ever spacecraft on the moon's far side, which scientists believe holds clues to many mysteries surrounding the moon as well as the solar system.

In the next two days, the craft is set to use a robotic arm and a drill to collect surface and underground substances and place them in a container that will be sealed before the materials are sent into lunar orbit for the journey to Earth.

If the mission goes according to plan, it will be the first time that dust and rocks from the lunar far side have been retrieved. The new samples will probably offer researchers around the globe useful keys for answering questions about the moon, and will likely bring a range of invaluable scientific payoffs.

According to the China National Space Administration, Chang'e 6's complex landing operation began on Thursday, when the landing craft separated from the combined orbiter and reentry capsule in preparation for the landing.

When everything was ready on Sunday morning, the landing craft began its descent at 6:09 am.

The craft continued making adjustments during the descent as its main engine worked to reduce the flying speed. Its special cameras took pictures of the selected destination and transmitted them to computers to determine the final landing point and also to identify possible hazards on the surface, such as large rocks, so that the craft could maneuver to avoid them.

See *Landing*, page 4

## Denying existence of Palestinians will not solve issues

Othering a people is as insidious as labeling them, if not more so. It can fuel misconceptions, discrimination and prejudice. It can justify massacres and genocide. If one considers others who are not like themselves to be subhuman or less deserving of even the most basic human rights, it makes it all the easier to justify their dispossession, impunity and mass murder.

"There was (and is) no such thing

### WORLD WATCH

By Busani Ngcaweni

as Palestinians." This infamous phrase uttered by Israel's fourth prime minister Golda Meir in 1969 was resurrected earlier this year in a session of the Israeli Knesset by the country's Minister of Settlements and National Missions Orit Strook, who said: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people... every cultured person in the world knows that this land is ours, for the Israeli people, and only for us." It would not be the first time, or likely the last. In 2023, Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Yoel Smotrich said during a visit to France that "there are no Palestinians because there aren't a Palestinian people".

See *Peace*, page 3

## COMPETITION RAISES THE BAR FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW SKILLS

Students encouraged to sharpen capabilities to deal with foreign-related legal cases

By CAO YIN caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

To participate in a nationwide international legal talent competition, Huang Jingmiao spent half a day traveling 1,500 kilometers from Xiangtan, Hunan province, to Beijing.

The 21-year-old first took a bus from Xiangtan to Changsha, the provincial capital of Hunan, on the afternoon of May 23, and then boarded a plane to Beijing. Due to a flight delay, she arrived at her destination early the next day.

Without taking a break, she locked herself in a hotel room to prepare for the competition, which was held by China University of Political

### In-depth

Science and Law on May 25 and 26.

After four rounds of the competition, the senior from Xiangtan University, along with two others, clinched the first prize. Each winner was awarded a scholarship worth 30,000 yuan (\$4,140).

"The hardship of the travel was worthwhile, and the outcome was fulfilling," said Huang, who is about to go to Shanghai for further studies in international law.

See *Law*, page 2

## Crucial dialogue



Defense Minister Dong Jun speaks on Sunday at the 21st Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. The three-day international forum on defense and security concluded on Sunday. EDGAR SU / REUTERS

See more, page 3

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## PAGE TWO

## Law: Students work across jurisdictions

From page 1

"The competition has ended, but my legal journey involving foreign affairs is just beginning," she added.

In order to respond to the national demands of the foreign-related rule of law strategy, CUPL started holding the competition — which is open to all law school students across the country and entirely in English — last year.

Besides moot arbitration and mock negotiation, which are frequently seen in other such contests, participants in the CUPL competition also need to provide legal advice to clients in line with simulated commercial disputes, and answer judges' questions after making presentations on hot legal issues.

"The richer content of the competition is made to comprehensively test participants' abilities in handling international legal matters," said Liu Fei, Chinese co-dean of the China-EU School of Law (CESL) with the CUPL, the organizer of the competition.

"We also want to promote law schools to focus on the cultivation of international legal talents, and encourage law students to become qualified international legal practitioners," Liu added.

**From theory to practice**

This year's competition involved 59 law students from 39 universities and colleges nationwide, and had as the judges government officials, lawyers, business representatives, and experts from home and abroad.

Ronald Montague Silley, European executive co-dean at the CESL, said the competition is meant to recognize and give awards to students that have shown great capability to become foreign-related legal professionals.

"But, even more importantly, it gives all the participants a chance to practice skills demanded in international legal affairs," said Silley, the primary designer of the competition.

The contest helps participants learn how to deal with counterparties in financial transactions, increase their legal knowledge to explain current topics such as legal risks regarding artificial intelligence, and also decide what dispute resolution method — mediation, arbitration or litigation — is preferred in different circumstances.

"Simply put, what we've done with the competition is incorporate various tasks to make it as realistic as possible, or to make it as close to real practice as possible," he said.

"In this way, students can get a taste for what is going to be expected of them in the future, but they can also practice the fundamental skills that are not always taught in law schools, which are focused more on theoretical and doctrinal learning," he added.

In the first round of the competition, for example, the contestants



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

The richer content of the competition is made to comprehensively test participants' abilities in handling international legal matters. ... We also want to promote law schools to focus on the cultivation of international legal talents, and encourage law students to become qualified international legal practitioners."

Liu Fei, Chinese co-dean of the China-EU School of Law with China University of Political Science and Law

ants were temporarily divided into five legal advisory groups. They were required to provide legal advice and solutions to the clients, who were played by the judges, based on disputes arising in different scenarios, such as an international sale of goods, overseas investment, and cross-border mergers and acquisitions.

Han Zhongyuan, a first-year CESL postgraduate student, said before the competition he did not have a good understanding of how

to give legal advice to enterprises.

"But through researching materials, collaborating with other contestants, and receiving feedback from the judges, I've been able to improve my ability in this area," he explained.

Silley said, "the competition tells law school students that they have to be dynamic and versatile enough to be able to deal with different foreign work," and stressed the importance of these valuable skills for someone who wants to be

a successful international legal professional.

**Innovation and challenges**

Meng Fanqin, a counsel from the Global Law Office who was invited to serve as a judge, regards the competition as an innovation in international legal talent education. He said the simulated commercial disputes and negotiation scenarios were similar to real cases he has tackled at his practice.

"It's a great practical experience

as well as a big challenge for participants," said Meng, who specializes in foreign-related legal cases including corporate mergers and acquisitions, investment funds and construction engineering.

While requiring students to understand legal issues, the competition also demands they express themselves clearly, communicate well, and demonstrate effective teamwork and strong logical thinking, he added.

Despite having years of law

research experience, and studying in Switzerland, Xiong Jun, a postgraduate student doing civil and commercial law at Renmin University of China, still felt under pressure during the competition.

"Presenting legal risks to clients in English within a short time, and building a temporary group with unfamiliar competitors to negotiate or arbitrate on business disputes are both very challenging," the 24-year-old said.

Unlike other tests that allow teachers to offer training in advance, the competition requires participants to prepare and solve all problems on their own, meaning many unforeseen situations may arise, she added.

Xiong said that she appreciated the challenge, "because the perspectives of other competitors and the feedback from the judges have broadened my view on international disputes and inspired me to think deeply about legal issues."

"In other words, the competition was a collision of different ideas, and also a process of realizing my shortcomings."

**Inspiration, guidance**

The competition also helped Xiong discover more areas involved in international legal affairs. "The better the understanding, the clearer future career planning will be," she said.

Han, the contestant from the CESL, was inspired by the competition. He said it's a platform for law students to exchange ideas and knowledge, "and also an opportunity for us to know what an international legal talent should be."

Zhang Qing, a law professor at CUPL, praised this year's participants' fluency in English and quick responses, saying this showed the "big progress" made by China in foreign-related legal talent education.

He said the shortcomings of students identified during the competition as well as the scholarships awarded, will motivate the participants to further research relevant legal issues and enhance their learning capabilities.

The legal experience and feedback shared by the judges, especially those from law firms and international enterprises, will help guide the young students' careers and further their studies, Zhang added.

"We hope more law students can improve their ability to analyze international legal problems and develop their English-language proficiency through the competition and our joint educational programs with Europe," said Liu, the Chinese co-dean of the CESL.

"We also hope to help strengthen their cross-cultural communication skills in more fields, such as commerce, the environment, intellectual property, taxation and employment," he added.

The CESL is the first law school approved by the Ministry of Education under the Sino-Foreign Schools Agreement. Since its establishment in 2008, it has cultivated over 1,400 Chinese foreign-related legal talents.

## Understanding languages, customs is key to global approach

By CAO YIN

When he was in high school, Wang Yizu enjoyed a course related to legal knowledge in daily life because it sparked his interest in using the law to solve disputes.

That interest later spurred him on to become a law student at East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai.

Even though his major is law, he has never given up learning English. During his college years,

he took part in numerous English-very excited," Wang added.

speaking competitions and At the end of May, he came to debates to practice his language Beijing to attend the nationwide international legal talent competition.

At that time, he did not know it held by the China University how the two disciplines, the law of Political Science and Law.

and English, could be combined He defeated a number of older until he started occasionally par-contestants with bachelor's degrees participating in a moot court.

in English, or who had studied over-

"The process that applies both seas, to secure second place.

legal and English skills to resolve As he turned 22 in April, and is international disputes is a situa-about to graduate from the tion where one plus one is greater ECUP, he considers the result a than two, which makes me feel precious gift.

"Standing out in the competition is inseparable from my interest in law and my persistence in English learning," he said.

"In addition, the experience accumulated in the previous mock arbitration and moot court has helped me build and develop a cross-cultural way of thinking in the face of global disputes, which, I believe, is more important for me going on to be an international legal talent," he said.

In Wang's view, foreign-related

legal work requires practitioners to not only be fluent in English and deeply understand domestic and overseas laws, but also to be familiar with the business culture and case settlement methods or styles of the countries involved in an international dispute.

"For example, drafting legal documents in Chinese is not the same as drafting them in English. Sometimes, the content that is formed in accordance with Chinese logic is confusing to native

English speakers," he explained.

He said that thinking with an "international perspective" should be constantly exercised, and he lauded the competition for providing an opportunity to improve this skill.

"Whether I become a foreign-related lawyer or a judge dealing with international commercial cases, that way of thinking, as well as the experience accumulated in the competition, are indispensable," he said.

## TOP NEWS

# China favors security for all in Asia-Pacific

Nation makes clear its stance on key issues, stressing divisions affect stability, prosperity

By **JIANG CHENGLONG** in Singapore  
jiangchenglong@chinadaily.com.cn

China will not allow any country or force to trigger war or chaos in the Asia-Pacific region, Minister of National Defense Dong Jun said on Sunday in Singapore, while making his debut at the Shangri-La Dialogue, an elite global security forum.

In his keynote speech, themed on China's approach to global security, Dong emphasized that the development, achievements and stability of the Asia-Pacific region have not come easily. "These are the results of the collective wisdom and joint efforts of the people in the region, and should be highly cherished," he said.

"We do not allow hegemonism and power politics to harm the Asia-Pacific region, we do not allow geopolitical conflicts or cold and hot wars in the region, and we do not allow any country or force to create war and chaos here," he stressed.

In the face of common security challenges, no country can remain unaffected, and there is no such thing as absolute security or exclusive security, Dong said, noting that there is a long-standing tradition of "helping neighbors in need".

Despite the ups and downs over the decades, common development and win-win cooperation have always been the mainstream trend, he said, emphasizing that decoupling and building "a small yard with high fences" have no takers in the Asia-Pacific region.

China seeks common security based on equality and respect, values openness and inclusiveness, and is determined to safeguard its core interests, he said.

The minister reiterated China's stance on issues related to the South China Sea and the Taiwan question. While the overall situation in the South China Sea remains stable, certain countries — incited by external forces — have abandoned bilateral agreements, violated their commitments, and deliberately provoked disputes and misled public opinion, he said.

"China has shown considerable restraint toward these provocative actions, but this restraint has its limits," he said, expressing the hope that the countries concerned will recognize the stakes involved and return to the path of dialogue and consultation.

Regarding the Taiwan question, Dong said that safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity is the sacred mission of the Chinese military.

The People's Liberation Army will take "timely, resolute and powerful actions" to thwart "Taiwan independence" separatist forces and activities, and ensure that such schemes never succeed, he said.

The defense minister is on a six-

**“We do not allow hegemonism and power politics to harm the Asia-Pacific region ...”**

**Dong Jun,**  
Minister of National Defense

day visit to Singapore, which concludes on Monday, and is holding talks with senior security and defense officials from more than 10 countries and organizations, including the United States, Japan, Australia, Singapore, Cambodia and the European Union.

On Saturday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin delivered a keynote speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, emphasizing his country's leadership in the "Indo-Pacific" region.

Zhang Chi, an associate professor at PLA National Defense University, said that Austin's speech focused only on the interests of "small circles and groups", whereas Dong's speech addressed significant security concerns of the entire Asia-Pacific region and the world, and offered a solution in the form of the Global Security Initiative.

The GSI is China's most important proposal for addressing global security differences and conflicts, Zhang said. "The key points of the initiative are to seek dialogue rather than confrontation, achieve win-win outcomes rather than zero-sum games, and forge partnerships rather than alliances," he said.

The expert pointed out that the US has established a series of alliances and partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as several mini-multilateral security mechanisms, including the trilateral security partnership among the US, the United Kingdom and Australia and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.

Zhang argued that these mechanisms are "closed and exclusive", which would harm the unity of the Asia-Pacific region. "They may create more divisions and conflicts in the region, ultimately affecting regional stability and prosperity."

He Lei, former deputy head of the PLA Academy of Military Science, said that Dong's speech reflected China's security vision, which advocates common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

The US establishing a series of alliance systems and security cooperation mechanisms is essentially aimed at introducing an Asia-Pacific version of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, fostering bloc confrontations to achieve leadership in the region, he said.

"That will not bring peace and stability to the region, but rather conflicts, contradictions and even war," he added.

# Experts praise equal access to education in Lhasa

By **ZHAO MANFENG** in Lhasa  
zhaomanfeng@chinadaily.com.cn

Boarding schools in the Xizang autonomous region have provided children with equal opportunities for access to education, while respecting the culture and language of the Tibetan ethnic group, according to a group of foreign experts.

The experts, including academics and media representatives from various countries such as France, Sweden, South Africa and India, commented after their recent visit to a boarding school in Lhasa, the regional capital.

During their tour in May of Lhasa No 8 Middle School's classrooms, dormitories and cafeteria, members of the delegation expressed admiration for the high-quality education provided to children in Xizang, emphasizing the importance of equal access to education.

At the school, students were offered a diverse range of subjects, including handicrafts, calligraphy, Tibetan language, Tibetan medi-

cine and artificial intelligence technology.

Lloyd Kuveya, assistant director of the Center for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, said: "We visited a lot of classrooms where students were doing their work. And we learned that they were learning in the Tibetan language as well as in Mandarin. Usually, you find that in certain countries, minority languages are not respected. But we saw in the schools that we visited that even minority languages are respected in China."

Kuveya said he was also surprised to learn that Xizang has a 15-year publicly funded education system, covering school meals, lodging and tuition from kindergarten to senior high school. This ensures equal educational opportunities for all children, he said.

Gyanendra Keshri, special correspondent for Indian newspaper the Deccan Herald, said: "Students are given training in the traditional language so that they can remain con-

nected to their roots, and at the same time, they are getting the opportunity to learn English and learn new technology."

Regarding criticism in some Western media about boarding schools in Xizang, Kwon Ki-sik, president of the Korea-China City Friendship Association, said such accusations "are unfair and not true".

"It's a kind of political attack supported by political power groups," Kwon said. "Media should write and report the real stories of Chinese ethnic policy and about the people's satisfaction and happy life."

Stephen Brawer, chairman of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden, said: "When you have a large part of Western institutions that choose not to allow the reality to be perceived, when they are deliberately misrepresentative, of course we have a certain responsibility to bring the reality and the truth of the situation forward."

Brawer said his trip to the board-

ing school was a good step in bringing the real story of Xizang to a broader audience.

With over 2,000 students, about 70 percent of whom are boarders, Lhasa No 8 Middle School provides free accommodations for its resident students, who return home on weekends.

In Xizang, where the population is spread thin and educational resources are dispersed across a vast expanse of land, people have a strong desire to be educated. Over the years, students who have studied in Xizang have made significant contributions to the development of Xizang and the country as a whole.

As the region celebrates the 65th anniversary of democratic reform, observers said the region is proud to note that education has become a fundamental right accessible to all.



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## Meeting the little stars

Rima Haddad (center), a Syrian girl, joins other youngsters performing Peking Opera on stage at a gala on Saturday to celebrate International Children's Day in Beijing. The event was jointly organized by the Foreign Ministry and the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation. About 400 foreign envoys and their children in Beijing were invited to watch special performances and experience diverse science and culture projects.  
ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

# Peace: Solidarity with people of Gaza is growing

From page 1

The Palestinians, who have and continue to endure untold suffering and historical injustice, are "a non-people" with no state and no history. How much easier then does it become for Israel, the self-proclaimed only democracy in the Middle East, to ethnically cleanse, dispossess and bomb to smithereens the peoples of the besieged Gaza Strip since the events of 7 October 2023? As the global "champions" of liberty turn a blind eye to the situation in Gaza, human rights are being treated as an a la carte menu.

This is the genealogy of hate and violence. The state of Israel, and its Zionist ideology, does not regard Palestinians to be human beings worthy of life. This is evidenced by the astonishing quantum of "collateral damage" since Israel's assault on Gaza began. Children, pregnant women, non-combatants, journalists, health workers, the elderly and the disabled have not been spared. Civilian infrastructure like hospitals and universities have been bombed and bulldozed. Water supplies have been cut off. Millions of people have been systematically displaced from the majority of the Gaza territory and forced into inhumane makeshift camps in the middle of nowhere. But they are, after all, by Meir's dictum, "a non-people", so there is a moral cover for these Euro-American sponsored atrocities.

What is happening to the Palestinians is manifestation of the systems of colonialism and imperialism whose defining logic is dismembering. It has its roots in early period of European colonialism which transformed into contemporary Euro-American imperialism to maintain Western hegemony. These forces dismember non-Americans from their humanity, relegating them to sub-

human status, alterity and statelessness, without nationhood, history, culture and feelings.

Israel as a settler colonizer perceives Palestine as an "empty land", empty of people, culture and history and a future. There are in fact striking similarities between Israel's ideology of racial subjugation by a "God-chosen people" and apartheid South Africa's belief in racial and religious superiority over an inferior black race.

The defining locus of war, concomitant with the strategic imperative of imperialism is to see the other as nonhuman. Once their humanity is stripped, the moral license to annihilate them is granted. Rachel Busbridge, a senior lecturer at the Australian Catholic University, writes that since the establishment of Israel in 1948, Palestinians have always regarded "Zionism as a colonial settler ideology that has sought to expel them from their land, with the expansionist aim to claim all of historic Palestine as a Jewish state". According to Busbridge, the difference between colonialism and settler colonialism is that the settler colonizer is guided by intention to eliminate the native, whereas the colonizer is mostly driven by and concerned with exploitation of natural resources.

It is for this reason that South Africa brought before the International Court of Justice a case of possible acts of genocide by Israel on the people of Palestine. Drawing from its three significant experiments at the altar of dismemberment in modern history, South Africa, as a proponent of peace and just world order, is rightfully mobilizing the global community to reinstate Palestine into humanity and the global community of nations.

We can assert, therefore, that South Africa's case at the ICJ is an act of "re-membering" the people of Palestine. It is a right course of

action as many countries join South Africa in rejecting coloniality and all forms of oppression anywhere in the world. This is a historical mission dating back to the founding of the African National Congress in 1912. The ANC committed democratic South Africa to be in solidarity with all those who continue to struggle. For his part, then ANC president, Chief Albert Lutuli, remarked in 1953 that "our interest in freedom is not confined to ourselves only. We are interested in the liberation of all oppressed people in the whole of Africa and in the world as a whole ... Our active interest in the extension of freedom to all people denied it makes us ally ourselves with freedom forces in the world". Democratic South Africa's founding father, Nelson Mandela, famously said, "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians."

What has been happening at the Hague since South Africa launched its humanist act replayed the scenes at the United Nations during the anti-apartheid struggle days, when the liberation movement and its supporters pleaded with the global community to intervene and end a crime against humanity. It was a long walk to freedom, leading to the isolation of the apartheid regime which ultimately crumbled through the sweat, blood and wisdom of peace-loving people in South Africa and around the world.

Palestine too shall be free. We do well to note that many other countries have joined the South African case at the ICJ where the plausibility of genocide has been established. To quote prominent legal academic and South Africa's former Public Protector advocate Thuli Madonsela: "The fog of war narrative Israel is trying to hide behind does not apply. The fog of war applies when opposing armies

exchange fire and accidentally hit civilians as collateral damage. In this case there are no two armies firing at each other. Only Israel is deliberately firing at residential areas where it sent civilians for safety. History will judge global leaders of our time harshly for this inhumanity."

In this connection, what is happening at university campuses across the world is yet another sign that whilst the Euro-American empire may choose indifference and the convenience of geostrategic considerations over human rights, solidarity with the people of Gaza is growing. China calls for a permanent cease-fire and for the creation of two states coexisting peacefully side by side.

The quest for justice for the Palestinian people will endure until their liberation is achieved, as was the case in apartheid South Africa. Acts of "re-membering" are not events but a continuous process until all forms of coloniality, colonialism and imperialism are dismantled and buried so as to never rear their ugly heads again. And yes, we believe that the state of Israel must exist, securely and peacefully, alongside the State of Palestine. The struggle is not against the Jewish people, but a government that is using disproportionate force of lethal power that defies the rules of war. The Jewish people deserve to be safe, as much as the Palestinians have a right to life and statehood. The May 23 decision of the ICJ should be welcomed by all. Finally, the spirit of accountability is prevailing.

*The author is a visiting professor at Fudan University and post-graduate student at the University of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He works as director-general of the National School of Government in South Africa. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## Disaster strikes again



Rohingya refugees look through the debris of their charred homes on Saturday at the Ukhiya camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Around 250 makeshift shelters were gutted in a blaze that left 1,200 people homeless. A fire had broken out at the same camp on May 24 as well. AFP

## CHINA



**Above:** Students from Hong Kong disembark from China Eastern Airlines' flight MU7192 at Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport on Saturday.  
**Left:** Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport welcomes the landing of the C919 jet from Hong Kong with a "water gate" ceremony on Saturday. PHOTOS BY TAO LEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## C919 debuts overseas service

Homegrown large jetliner makes round-trip flight from Shanghai to HK

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai  
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A C919 jet that is part of China Eastern Airlines' fleet launched its first overseas commercial chartered flight on Saturday, making the carrier the first to provide round-trip service between Shanghai and Hong Kong using a domestically made passenger aircraft, according to official sources.

China Eastern Airlines, the first international carrier to purchase a C919, operated the flight from Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport to Hong Kong International Airport on Saturday morning and made the return trip that aft-

ernoon, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The passengers on the return flight included over 120 Hong Kong students who are participating in a seven-week internship program in Shanghai, the airline said.

Chan Kwok-ki, chief secretary for administration of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, expressed support and gratitude to China Eastern for transporting the students.

A flight demonstration of the C919 was performed last year in Hong Kong, which inspired a wave of aviation passion and deeply impressed Hong Kong youth, said Chan, who made a speech during a

ceremony marking the flight's take-off at Hong Kong International Airport on Saturday.

The C919 flew over scenic Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong in December, giving visitors on the waterfront a glimpse of the aircraft. The jet celebrated the first anniversary of its commercial operation on Tuesday.

China Eastern, which is based in Shanghai, received its sixth C919 jet on May 27 from manufacturer Commercial Aircraft Corp of China, or COMAC.

Over the past year, its five other C919 jets have been used in 2,181 commercial flights and have accumulated a total of 6,090 hours of commercial operation, safely handling about 300,000 passenger trips as of May 27.

"As a new aircraft model, it has

taken quite a long time for the C919 to grow into a well-recognized and sophisticated one in the industry," said Qi Qi, an associate professor at Guangzhou Civil Aviation College.

"To reach the long-term goal of breaking the duopoly of Boeing and Airbus, the C919 needs to fly domestically and globally to win market recognition, develop its fleet, gain consumer confidence and strengthen its production and supply chain."

According to Zhu Rui, chief technology officer of aviation data and solution service provider Vari-Flight, C919 aircraft have flown to six major airports in cities on the Chinese mainland over the past year, including Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu in Sichuan province and Xi'an in Shaanxi province.

## Civil aviation bounces back from pandemic

By **LUO WANGSHU**  
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China's civil aviation industry rebounded significantly last year, showcasing steady growth across key metrics compared to the previous year, when the COVID-19 pandemic was coming to an end, according to a report released on Friday by the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

The report detailed progress in 12 key areas, including air transport, general aviation, efficiency, economic benefits, safety, service quality, education and technological innovation.

Passenger travel surged in 2023, with the industry handling close to 620 million passenger trips, up 146.1 percent year-on-year and approaching the nearly 660 million seen in 2019, before the pandemic.

Domestic routes comprised the bulk of passenger traffic last year, accounting for approximately 591 million trips, a 136.3 percent

increase from 2022. Travel to Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan accounted for 6.68 million passenger trips in 2023 — up 1,324.7 percent year-on-year.

International passenger trips totaled 29.05 million last year, up 1,461.7 percent year-on-year.

By the end of last year, the civil aviation industry boasted a fleet of 4,270 registered public transport aircraft, marking an increase of 105 from 2022. The industry also saw an expansion of its scheduled flight routes, operating 5,206 in total — 4,583 domestic and 623 international.

Five new airports opened on the Chinese mainland last year, taking the total to 259, with 38 each handling more than 10 million passenger trips in 2023.

Airports in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou collectively accounted for 20 percent of the total passenger throughput for all airports on the mainland and also handled 60.8 percent of international passenger traffic.

## Drone deliveries begin to take off in Shenzhen

By **ZHOU MO** in Shenzhen  
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People at a city library in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, can now have food delivered by drones following the launch of a low-altitude transport route.

The new service allows people to place orders at Shenzhen Library North, in the city's Longhua district, and receive their food within 10 minutes.

Few restaurants are allowed to operate near the library.

"Food delivery by drones has provided more convenience for us," Shenzhen resident Li Xiong said. "Within 10 minutes of placing an order, I received a message telling me that my order had arrived."

"The library has also set up a dining area for us near the drone landing site."

The Meituan online delivery platform, which offers the service, said that in addition to food vendors, retailers and other types of merchants are offering drone delivery of more than 1,000 types of products.

The development of China's low-altitude sector is gathering steam. The low-altitude economy, viewed as a strategic emerging industry and a new growth engine for the country, was included in the Government Work Report for the first time this year.

A report by market research firm CCID Consulting, a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said China's low-altitude economy was worth nearly 506 billion yuan (\$69.8 billion) last year, up 33.8 percent year-on-year, and its value is expected to surpass 1 trillion yuan by 2026.

Unmanned aerial vehicles are playing a significant role in driving the low-altitude economy. According to official statistics, the number of UAV enterprises in China reached over 19,000 by the end of last year, with annual economic output hitting 152 billion yuan.

Shenzhen is home to more than 1,730 enterprises in the drone industry chain, which generate revenue totaling 96 billion yuan a year.

## Qinghai-Tibet Plateau lakes expanding rapidly

By **PALDEN NYIMA**  
and **DAQIONG** in Lhasa

The area of lakes on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has expanded by over 10,000 square kilometers over the past 30 years according to researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Research Institute.

There are around 60,000 lakes on the plateau, covering an area of approximately 50,000 sq km. The latest research by scientists from the institute's environmental change and multisphere processes team, led by researcher Zhang Guoqing, predicts that by the end of this century, the lake area will expand by another 20,000 sq km under a low-emission scenario.

That would increase water levels by an estimated 10 meters, resulting in a 652-billion-metric-ton increase in water volume — four times the

increase over the past 50 years.

The research, published in the international academic journal Nature Geoscience on May 27, is poised to provide crucial scientific guidance for future planning on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

Described as the "Asian water tower", the plateau boasts the world's highest and most extensive plateau lake group, accounting for over 50 percent of China's total lake area.

Zhang said that despite a global trend of decreasing large lake volumes due to climate change and human activities, the lakes on the plateau have experienced rapid expansion as the climate becomes warmer and more humid.

"This expansion has heightened the risks of lake inundation disasters and impacted ecosystems such as grasslands, wetlands and biodiversity," he added.

Xu Fenglin, one of the authors of

the paper and a doctoral student at the institute, said the greatest expansion of lake area is being seen in the north of the plateau, and they could double in size under a high-emission scenario.

"By integrating field surveys and remote sensing observations, the team projected changes in lake area, water level and water volume from 2021 to 2100 under various scenarios," Xu said, adding the study also evaluated the implications of the lakes' changes on basin restructuring, infrastructure and ecosystems.

"The lakes in the central region of the plateau are projected to expand by over 50 percent, while lakes in the southern region, previously in a state of shrinkage, are anticipated to transition to expansion in the near future," Xu said.

"The expansion of lakes on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau will increase

lake-atmosphere exchanges, potentially leading to an increase in greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, thereby exacerbating global warming."

He said increased precipitation was the biggest contributor to the expansion of the lakes, with the melting of glaciers also playing a role.

The expansion of lakes on the plateau will have wide-ranging impacts, including the inundation of high-quality grasslands around the lakes, affecting grazing, animal husbandry and local economic development, he added.

"Taking the region's Serling Tso Lake as an example, over the past 50 years, the lake has increased by about 800 sq km, submerging around 20,000 hectares of grasslands and numerous roads," Xu said.

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## Paddle power



Crewmates raise their paddles in celebration after finishing a Dragon Boat race in Beijing's Haidian district on Sunday. This year's Dragon Boat Festival falls on June 10. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## Landing: European scientific apparatus carried by Chang'e 6 begin operation on moon

From page 1

On reaching an altitude of about 100 meters above the moon, the landing vessel suspended its descent and hovered for a short time to carry out accurate laser scanning of obstacles before continuing to descend at a slower and steady speed.

At the last moment of the challenging operation, when the craft was several meters above the surface, its main engine was stopped, and the craft activated a buffer system and touched down smoothly on the lunar surface. It thus became the second spacecraft to arrive on the

lunar far side after Chang'e 4, which achieved the feat five-and-a-half years ago.

Soon after the landing, the craft's solar panels and directional antennas unfolded and went through initial checks and setup, and then the collection devices began to gather samples.

Meanwhile, two European scientific apparatus carried by the Chang'e 6 landing craft — a radon-measuring instrument from France's national space agency and a dedicated negative ion instrument developed by the Swedish Institute of Space Physics with support from the European Space

Agency — have begun to operate on the lunar surface, according to the Chinese space administration.

The Chang'e 6 spacecraft, representing the world's first attempt to bring samples from the far side of the moon back to Earth, was launched by a Long March 5 heavy-lift carrier rocket on May 3 from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province. It entered lunar orbit on May 8.

Like all previous Chinese lunar probes, the 8.35-metric-ton Chang'e 6 spacecraft was designed and built by the Beijing-based China Academy of Space Technology, a subsidiary of China Aerospace Science and

Technology Corp. It consists of four major components — an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a reentry capsule.

By analyzing the physical and chemical characteristics of the samples from the moon's far side, scientists will be able to better understand the origins and evolution of the moon and the solar system, said Ge Ping, one of the senior space officials overseeing the nation's lunar programs.

He added that the Chang'e 6 will also help space mission planners to gain more experience for follow-up explorations on the lunar far side.

The lunar far side is the hemi-

sphere of the moon that permanently faces away from Earth due to tidal forces on the planet. As it is never visible from Earth, that region was once dubbed the "dark side of the moon", although it receives just as much sunlight as the near side.

The vast region had never been reached by any spacecraft until January 2019, when the Chang'e 4 probe landed in the South Pole-Aitken Basin. The Chang'e 4 surveyed the site but did not collect and send back samples.

Before the latest mission, China had fulfilled a lunar sample-return mission — the Chang'e 5 in the

winter of 2020, which landed on the moon's near side and gathered 1,731 grams of samples, the first lunar substances obtained since the Apollo era. It made China the third nation, after the United States and the former Soviet Union, to have collected lunar samples.

So far, Chang'e 5 lunar samples have enabled Chinese researchers to make a number of academic strides, including the discovery of the sixth new lunar mineral, named Changsite-(Y).

Changsite-(Y), which falls in the category of lunar merrillite, is the first lunar mineral discovered and identified by Chinese scientists.

VISUAL



Editor's Note: Using a blend of words and visuals, this series explores unique communities and reveals the heart of China through food, architecture, craftsmanship, landscapes and traditions.

# TRADITION AND FLAVOR UNITE

From patriotic poet to delicious dumplings, the appeal of the Dragon Boat Festival endures

By XU XIAODAN  
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The Dragon Boat Festival, also known as the Duanwu Festival, is a significant traditional Chinese celebration that falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. It is also the first Chinese festival to be included in the UNESCO world intangible cultural heritage list. One of the festival's enduring customs is eating zongzi — sweet or savory stuffed rice dumplings wrapped in plant leaves.

China's zongzi culture has a very long and time-honored history, and stories that have been told about it for thousands of years are known to every household.

During the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), a patriotic poet from the State of Chu named Qu Yuan threw himself into a river after the state was conquered. The people of Chu were deeply saddened, and they went to the river to mourn him. In order to protect his body from being eaten by fish and shrimp, people threw rice dumplings into the river every year on the anniversary of his death. The dumplings became known as zongzi.

In Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, there is another belief that people eat zongzi and watch dragon races to honor legendary military general Wu Zixu. Wu served during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC), and he helped the State of Wu flourish before King Fuchai ordered his death. Local people revered his bravery and loyalty, and he has been honored in later generations.

The ingredients used to make zongzi vary from region to region, so there are many differences in shape and taste.

Most are made with plain white glutinous rice. The northern varieties are usually sweet, with ingredients such as sugar, red bean paste and jujubes. On the other hand, southern zongzi are more savory — especially those from Jiaxing in Zhejiang.

Jiaxing zongzi are a renowned specialty in China's Jiangnan (south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River) and have a rich history. The city, historically known as the "granary of the nation", has been a significant rice-growing area in Chinese history. The area's abundant agricultural products have contributed to the development of various flavors of its zongzi.

Jiaxing's savory zongzi are filled with soy sauce, pork, water chestnuts and salted duck egg yolk. The combination of high-quality ingredients and traditional cooking methods results in a delectable treat that is enjoyed by people of all ages.

Loved by locals and tourists alike, Jiaxing zongzi have become a symbol of the area's culinary excellence and are often referred to as the "Eastern fast food" due to their portability. According to local market authorities, the production output of the city's zongzi industry amounted to 5 billion yuan (\$690.13 million) last year, making up about 50 percent of all zongzi produced in China.

During the Dragon Boat Festival, zongzi is not only enjoyed for its culinary appeal but also cherished for its cultural significance. Families and friends gather to make and share the delicious treat, strengthening bonds and fostering a sense of community.

Eating zongzi during the festival is believed to bring good luck and ward off evil spirits, making it an essential part of the celebrations.

**A**

**Glutinous rice**

Sticky rice White rice

First, pick out the impurities and moldy grains from the rice.

+4 hours

Rinse the rice and soak it in clean water, tickling it 1-2 times to soak it thoroughly, then strain it.

Drain the rice in a pan until the surface of the rice is relatively dry.

2 hours

Allow the rice to fully absorb the seasoning.

**C**

**Bamboo leaves**

Trim the roots and tails of dried bamboo leaves.

1 hour

Cook dried leaves in boiling water until rehydrated and cool with water at room temperature.

Clean both sides of the leaves with a brush to remove debris. Then place the leaves in the basket and cover with a towel to drain excess water.

**D**

**Cook and serve**

The last step is to cook the zongzi in a covered pot for 1 hour on high heat. Remove from the heat and simmer for 1 hour more.

2 hours

**B**

**Pork belly**

Wash the pork and cut the meat into small pieces and put them in a pot.

Trim the fat into cubes and add them to the pot.

Add seasonings such as salt, sugar and monosodium glutamate (MSG).

Marinate overnight and with extra salt.

**NORTHERN FLAVORS-SWEET**

**SOUTHERN FLAVORS-SAVORY**

There are different zongzi fillings depending on the place where it is prepared.

**FOLDING BAMBOO LEAVES**

Two leaves overlapped

Wrap it up

Add filling

Tie a knot

Pork is an ingredient used for savory southern style zongzi. Northern zongzi have sweeter fillings.

Dates

Red bean paste

Mung beans

Mung beans with skin on

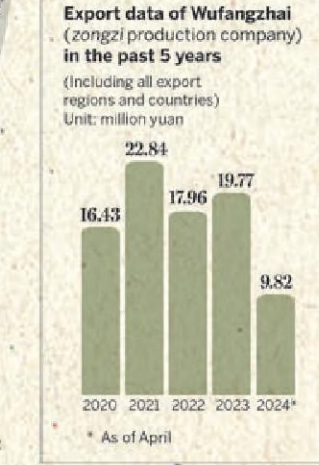
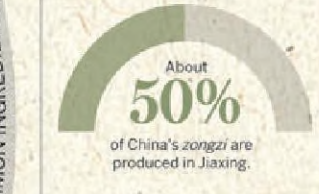
Dried shrimp

Salted duck egg yolk

Mushrooms

**JIAXING**

Jiaxing boasts of abundant pork, eggs and other unique items that provide favorable conditions for the production of Jiaxing zongzi.



The other zongzi origin story involves Wu Zixu, who served during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC). He helped the State of Wu flourish before King Fuchai ordered his death. Local people revered his bravery and loyalty. They honored him by eating zongzi.

Sources: Jiaxing Municipal Bureau of Commerce; Wu Fang Zhai; Taste of Asian Food site.

GRAPHIC BY JORGE CORTES, TIAN CHI / CHINA DAILY

## WORLD

# South Africa ruling party loses majority

Experts predict coalition as ANC gets 40% votes for first time in 30 years

By NDUMISO MLILO  
in Johannesburg  
For China Daily

South Africa's governing party African National Congress has for the first time in 30 years lost its political dominance in the country's elections.

South Africa conducted the national and provincial elections on Wednesday. With more than 99 percent of the votes counted as of Sunday morning, the ANC was said to have won 40.2 percent of the vote. The Democratic Alliance was said to have 21.78 percent, followed by the uMkhonto weSizwe party with 14.59 percent and Economic Freedom Fighters with 9.51 percent.

The final result is expected to be announced on Sunday evening by South Africa's Electoral Commission at an event to be attended by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The country is required by law to form a government 14 days after elections. It is expected that the parties will start negotiating after the final results have been released. It marks the first time the ruling party fell below the 50 percent needed to maintain its 30-year-old unchallenged majority in the National Assembly.

The ANC, which came to power in 1994 following the end of the apartheid, had secured majority votes in all the previous elections. It got 62 percent in 1994 and more than 57 percent in 2019.

The ANC remains respected for its progressive social welfare and black economic empowerment policies which are said to have helped millions of black families out of poverty, Agence France-Presse reported.

Gideon Chitanga, a researcher with the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Africa-China Studies, said the ANC will have to negotiate with other parties and form a coalition government. "It is a wake-up call for the ANC and we do not know what will happen in the next five years," said Chitanga.

"The ANC is committed to the formation of a government that reflects the will of the people, that is stable and that is able to govern effectively," Fikile Mbalula, secre-

tary-general of the ANC, said at a news briefing on Sunday.

The voters of South Africa have shown they expect the leaders of this country to work together in the interests of all, said Mbalula. "We wish to assure the people of South Africa that we have heard them. We have heard their concerns, their frustrations and their dissatisfaction."

The ANC has many options for coalition partners among other parties, including one with DA, The Associated Press reported.

## Open to engagement

"We'll talk to everybody," Mbalula said. "We are engaged and we are open to engagement. We need stability in this country."

Nearly 28 million South Africans were registered to vote, and turnout was expected to be around 60 percent, according to the electoral commission.

The ANC's national executive committee met on Friday to discuss their performance in the elections and the results of the meeting have not been communicated to the public.

Mbalula said the ANC's leadership would meet on Tuesday for discussions on the way forward.

UMkhonto weSizwe, led by former president Jacob Zuma, has slammed the door on the ANC by saying they won't go into coalition with them.

DA chairwoman Helen Zille said all options were on the table, including allowing the ANC to rule alone as a minority government.

Chitanga said the ANC has to "go to the drawing board," analyze where it went wrong and correct its mistakes. It remains to be seen how the ANC will respond if they will reshuffle the leadership or not, said Chitanga.

The African Union Election Observation Mission to South Africa's 2024 elections has disclosed that the elections were conducted in a peaceful manner despite a tense political environment.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

The author is a freelance writer for China Daily.



African National Congress' deputy secretary-general Nomvula Mokonyane (center) talks with daughter of former president Jacob Zuma, Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, in Johannesburg on Saturday. THEMBA HADEBE / ASSOCIATED PRESS



University of Chicago students walk out of the convocation ceremony in Chicago in support of Palestinians on Saturday. VINCENT ALBAN VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Israel, Hamas urged to accept truce plan

RAFAH/JERUSALEM — Qatari, Egyptian and US mediators called on Israel and Hamas on Saturday to "finalize" a truce deal as Israeli forces pounded Rafah in southern Gaza.

Fighting has raged in the besieged Gaza Strip since US President Joe Biden said Israel was offering a new road map toward a full cease-fire.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has since insisted his country would pursue the war until it has achieved all its aims.

An aide to Netanyahu said on Sunday that Israel had accepted the proposal, though he called it flawed.

In an interview with Britain's Sunday Times, Ophir Falk, chief foreign policy adviser to Netanyahu, said Biden's proposal was "a deal we agreed to — it's not a good deal but we dearly want the hostages released, all of them."

Hamas said it "views positively" the plan.

In a joint statement, Qatar, the United States and Egypt said that "as mediators in the ongoing discussions to secure a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of hostages and detainees," they "call on both Hamas and Israel to finalize the agreement" based on the principles of the US proposal.

Biden delivered a speech on Friday, in which he revealed a three-phase Israeli proposal that would lead to an end to the Gaza conflict and the release of all hostages.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "strongly hopes" the latest development "will lead to an agreement by the parties for lasting peace", a spokesman said.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, leaders of the two extreme-right parties in parliament, said they would leave the government if it endorses the truce proposal.

Israel sent tanks and troops into Rafah in early May, ignoring concerns for displaced Palestinian civilians sheltering in the city on the Egyptian border.

On Saturday, residents reported tank fire in the Tal al-Sultan neighborhood in west Rafah, while witnesses in the east and center described intense shelling.

Netanyahu has faced growing domestic and international pressure over the fate of hostages and the dealings in the conflict, with Israelis rallying again on Saturday near military headquarters in Tel Aviv.

Chile's President Gabriel Boric said on Saturday the country was joining South Africa in its case at the International Court of Justice, accusing Israel of "genocide" in the Gaza conflict.

Speaking to the National Congress, Boric decried the "catastrophic humanitarian situation" in Gaza and called for "a firm response from the international community."

## Growing protests

Dozens of students protesting the conflict walked out of the University of Chicago's commencement on Saturday as the school withheld the diplomas of four seniors over their involvement with a pro-Palestinian encampment.

US students have walked out of

commencements at Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other schools as protest camps have sprung up across the US and in Europe in recent weeks.

The students have demanded their universities stop doing business with Israel or companies they say support the conflict in Gaza.

Israel has launched a large-scale offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, killing at least 36,379 people, in retaliation to Hamas' attack on Oct 7, during which about 1,200 people were killed.

The Palestinian leadership emphasized on Saturday the necessity for the Israeli army to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and to open and hand over all Gaza border crossings to the Palestinian Authority.

It said that opening and handing over the crossings would enable the regular arrival of relief aid and all necessities for the people of Gaza.

Yemen's Houthi group said on Saturday night it had launched fresh attacks on the US aircraft carrier USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower*, another US warship and four commercial cargo vessels in the Red Sea and Arabian Sea.

That marks the group's second strike against *Dwight D. Eisenhower* in less than 24 hours, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said.

There was no immediate comment from the US Navy or the targeted shipping companies.

Sarea vowed further attacks until "Israel stops its war and blockade against the Palestinians in Gaza".

AGENCIES—XINHUA

XINHUA—AGENCIES

## Discussions on pandemic agreement extended

GENEVA — Member states of the World Health Organization agreed on Saturday to extend talks over an agreement on pandemics for another year, allowing for more time to finalize the landmark treaty to combat pandemics and improve preparedness.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Body, established in December 2021 to draft the agreement and guide the negotiation process, will continue its mandate to deliver the agreement by the next World Health Assembly next year or at a special session of the health assembly this year.

"There was a clear consensus among all member states on the need for a further instrument to help the world better fight a full-blown pandemic," the body's co-chair Precious Matsoso said.

This year's World Health Assembly also agreed on amendments to another international instrument, the International Health Regulations, introducing a definition of a pandemic emergency to ensure more effective international collaboration in response to a potential pandemic.

The amendments will bolster countries' ability to detect and respond to outbreaks and pandemics by strengthening their own national capacities and coordination between member states, on disease surveillance, information sharing and response, said the WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Strengthening of the regulations "provides powerful momentum to complete the pandemic agreement, which, once finalized, can help to prevent a repeat of the devastation to health, societies and economies caused by COVID-19," he said.

The WHO said countries have defined a pandemic emergency as a communicable disease that has a "wide geographical spread" or a high risk of one, and has exceeded or can exceed the ability of national health systems to respond.

Lawrence Gostin, a public health law expert at Georgetown University in Washington, hailed what he called a big win for health security, and said the move "will simplify negotiations for the pandemic agreement".

## Flood-hit Kenya to receive assistance from China

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya  
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Aid worth 370 million Kenyan shillings (\$2.8 million) from China is due to arrive in Kenya to assist in restoration from the recent floods that affected the East African country.

On Friday, Minister Counselor at the Chinese embassy in Kenya Zhang Zhizhong said two ships carrying 2,040 metric tons of aid are currently en route to Kenya's port city of Mombasa and will dock in the early weeks of June.

Zhang was speaking at an event where the Chinese embassy handed over more than \$38,000 to MCEDO Beijing School, in Mathare slums in Nairobi, to aid reconstruction following the devastating floods. The school was flooded when the nearby

Mathare River broke its banks in April.

"This gesture symbolizes the deep friendship between China and Kenya and reflects the compassion of the Chinese people for their Kenyan counterparts. We hope that the students here will excel in their studies and grow to become pillars of strength for their families and their country," Zhang said.

The donations will go toward the renovation of the school and the provision of desks, chairs, and books. In addition, every student will be given a new backpack to restart their studies.

The latest data released by the United Nations indicate that an estimated 291 people have been killed while more than 280,000 people in Kenya have been displaced since the

onset of heavy rains in March which continued into May.

In Nairobi, about 3,000 people have been sheltered in temporary evacuation centers while a majority of the 65,493 affected people had been integrated with the community as of mid-May.

Elijah Mungai, director of projects at Kenya's Ministry of Education, thanked China for the timely response to the humanitarian crisis.

"The floods caught us at a time when we were just about to open schools. Therefore, there was a need to give hope and when you join us in giving hope to those who were affected, we feel like you are meeting us at the place of need," Mungai said.

In addition to supporting the rebuilding of MCEDO Beijing

School, Mungai lauded the Chinese embassy in Kenya for continually offering scholarships to children from informal settlements.

"We want to appreciate that you chose Mathare, a slum area that requires to be empowered. When you empower them, you empower a very vulnerable part of our society. We will forever remember the People's Republic of China for the opportunities you have given to these children," Mungai said.

Zhang said 39 students from the MCEDO Beijing School are set to benefit from scholarships from the embassy this year.

The school has been supported by the Chinese embassy since 2007, helping thousands of students. It currently has an enrollment of more than 500 students.

## Boeing Starliner's crewed launch abruptly halted, again

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida — Boeing's second attempt at launching a crew aboard its troubled Starliner spaceship was aborted on Saturday with just minutes left on the countdown clock, yet another setback for a program that has faced years of delays.

Two NASA astronauts were strapped in the company's Starliner capsule when the countdown was automatically halted at 3 minutes and 50 seconds by the computer system that controls the final minutes before liftoff. There was no time to work on the latest problem, and the launch was called off.

Technicians raced to the pad to help astronauts Butch Wilmore and

Suni Williams out of the capsule atop the fully fueled Atlas V rocket at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. Within an hour of the launch abort the hatch was reopened.

The team could not get to the computers to troubleshoot the problem until the rocket was drained of all its fuel, said Tory Bruno, chief executive for the rocket maker, United Launch Alliance.

One of the three redundant computers located near the rocket at the pad was sluggish, and all three must work properly to proceed with a launch, he said.

Depending on what needs to be fixed, the next launch attempt could be as early as Wednesday. If it does

not blast off this coming week, that would be it until the middle of this month in order to move the rocket off the pad and replace the batteries.

"This is the business that we're in," Boeing's Mark Nappi said. "Everything's got to work perfectly."

It was the second launch attempt. The first try on May 6 was delayed for leak checks and rocket repairs.

## SpaceX journey canceled

The Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa said on Saturday that he has canceled his journey around the Moon on a SpaceX rocket, a voyage that had boasted an artist-filled crew, because of development delays.

Maezawa announced in 2018 the "dearMoon" lunar orbital mission, traveling on SpaceX's Starship rocket, which was due to take place by the end of last year.

However, the dearMoon website said in November that the project would be postponed "due to the ongoing development of Starship".

Maezawa said on Saturday that the mission had now been canceled.

SpaceX's two test flights of its mega-rocket last year ended in explosions minutes after liftoff. In a third test in March, its spacecraft was lost as it descended back to Earth.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## New innings



El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele salutes with his family during his inauguration at the National Palace in San Salvador on Saturday. He was sworn in for a second term. MARVIN RECINOS / AFP

## WORLD



Indians show their fingers marked with indelible ink after casting their vote, next to a portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh state, on Saturday. RAJESH KUMAR SINGH / AP

## Alliance led by Modi's party forecast to win

Marathon election ends after heatstroke in one state kills 33 polling personnel

By APARAJIT CHAKRABORTY  
in New Delhi  
For China Daily

The ruling party alliance of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is projected to win a large majority in the general election that concluded on Saturday, according to media exit polls, suggesting it would do better than most analysts had earlier predicted.

If the results, to be made public this week, confirm the exit polls, Modi would become only the second prime minister to win a third consecutive term in India after Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first premier after independence in 1947.

Dismissing the prediction, the opposition has termed the exit polls as "prefixed". Votes are due to be counted on Tuesday, and the results could be announced the same day or the next.

Voting in the seventh and final staggered round of the six-week poll was held in extremely hot weather across swaths of the country.

At least 33 polling staff members were reported to have died from heatstroke in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh alone, where temperatures reached 46.9 C, top election officials said.

"Monetary compensation of 1.5 million rupees (\$18,000) will be provided to the families of the deceased," said Navdeep Rinwa, chief electoral officer for Uttar Pradesh.

Votes cast will elect 543 seats for the lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha. A party or coalition needs

a simple majority of 272 to form government. As members of parliament choose the next prime minister, the leader of the winning party or coalition that holds the majority of seats in the parliament has a decisive role.

Two exit polls over the weekend projected the ruling National Democratic Alliance led by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party could win more than 350 seats in parliament. At least six exit polls projected the NDA could win between 355 and 380 seats.

The opposition INDIA alliance led by Rahul Gandhi's Congress party was projected to win between 125 and 182 seats, Reuters reported.

### Retaining strongholds

Many exit polls suggested that the NDA will retain many of its strongholds in northern and western India and draw enormous support from the east, while making significant gains in southern states.

The Election Commission of India said on social media: "Even as (the) seventh phase of polling in the general elections wraps up, (the) commission thanks all stakeholders: voters, polling personnel, security forces, media and political parties."

The commission announced the elections on March 16, and the first phase of polling took place on April 19. Nearly 1 billion people were eligible to vote.

Modi claimed victory in his first comments after voting concluded.

"A heartfelt thank you to all those who exercised their franchise. Their active participation is the corner-

stone of our democracy. Their commitment and dedication ensures that the democratic spirit thrives in our nation."

Indians had voted in record numbers to reelect his government, he said on X.

Modi came to power in 2014 after the BJP and its allies formed government and toppled an incumbent Congress-led coalition. Modi remains highly popular among the country's majority Hindu population.

In his 10 years in office he has laid stress on development and the country's growing international prominence, whereas during the election campaign opposition leaders highlighted inflation, including soaring food prices and unemployment.

Modi's government has set a goal for India to be a developed country by 2047, the centenary of independence from British rule.

Modi held about 200 rallies throughout the country over more than two months of campaigning and gave about 80 interviews to TV news channels and newspapers.

As he looked set to win a third term, his top opponent, Arvind Kejriwal, returned to jail on Sunday as the interim bail granted by the top court ended.

Kejriwal, chief minister of New Delhi and a key leader in an alliance formed to compete against Modi, was detained in March over a long-running corruption investigation but was given a limited release to allow him to campaign.

Agencies contributed to this story.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

## Envoy airs concern over Peninsula tension

By MINLU ZHANG  
at the United Nations  
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China's ambassador to the United Nations has voiced concerns over peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula amid the launch of a satellite by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the plan to start combined military exercises by the Republic of Korea, the United States and Japan.

The Korean Peninsula is right at China's doorstep, and no one is more concerned about the peace and stability of the peninsula than China is, Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said on Friday.

The current situation on the peninsula is highly tense, with escalating confrontation and opposition, he told a Security Council meeting on non-proliferation and the DPRK. "China is deeply concerned about this."

The DPRK's attempt to launch a military reconnaissance satellite failed on May 27, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

Fu said China had noted the recent satellite launch attempt by the DPRK and the reactions to it from all the relevant parties.

"We call on all parties to remain calm and restrained, avoiding any

actions or statements that could exacerbate tensions and conflicts. Together, we should work to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula and advance the political resolution process of the peninsula issue."

The Korean Peninsula issue is essentially a security issue, Fu said, adding the root cause lies in the remnants of the Cold War, the lack of a peace mechanism and the absence of mutual trust between the US and the DPRK.

### Missed opportunities

Historically, there have been moments of hope and opportunities for a political solution to the peninsula issue, he said. However, because of the failure of the relevant parties to keep their promises, these opportunities were ultimately missed.

Fu expressed his opposition to plans by the ROK and the US to conduct combined military drills in August. "This approach will only intensify the tense atmosphere, increase the risk of war and chaos on the peninsula and make the goal of long-term peace and stability more difficult to achieve," he said, adding that China opposes it.

Security is indivisible, and achieving universal, balanced and sustain-

able security is key to addressing challenges such as the Korean Peninsula issue, Fu said. Countries cannot ensure their own security by ignoring others' concerns or compromising others' security, he said.

In April, the US deployed the mid-range capability missile system, also known as Typhon, to Luzon, the Philippines, as part of their joint military exercise.

This is the first time that the US has deployed a land-based, ground-launched system after it withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, Fu said.

The fundamental purpose of such deployment "is to seek unilateral military advantage and provide more options for military blackmail and expansion," he said.

"It is worth noting that the US is not deploying these weapons on its own soil but in other countries, particularly at the doorsteps of its so-called competitors. Under the guise of military alliances, they are provoking military confrontation and pursuing geopolitical interests."

China urges the US to fulfill its obligations, respect the desire for stability and cooperation, stop its dangerous actions and abandon plans to deploy the midrange missiles in the Asia-Pacific region, he said.

## Norway eyes closer trade ties with China

By WANG XIN in Shanghai  
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Norway expects more economic and trade collaboration with China in various areas as the two countries strive to achieve common goals on environmental issues and with regards to healthy food, a Norwegian official says.

Over the 70 years since China-Norway diplomatic relations were established, there has been "great collaboration, and we are cooperating in a lot of ways," said Tore Sandvik, state secretary to the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries. He sees enormous potential for closer collaboration in the years to come, he said.

Norway, with 5.5 million people, has one of the longest coastlines in the world and is the second-biggest exporter of seafood after China.

"China is the largest shipbuilding nation in the world, and this creates opportunities for Norwegian maritime and shipping companies," Sandvik said. "Norwegian companies are leaders in developing innovative technologies, particularly in sectors such as renewable energy and electric transportation. Thus we see much in common and possible collaboration with China."

More than 160 Norwegian companies have a presence in China, according to a report published by the Norwegian consulate general

in Shanghai. Most of the respondents cited in the report said they were optimistic about the business outlook for their industries over the coming three years.

Among the industries that Norwegian businesses are involved in in China, maritime and shipping, consumer, machinery, seafood, green technology and renewable energy are the most prominent, the report said.

As China strives to cut carbon emissions, Norway is doing the same, and consciousness of environmental issues is particularly acute in industries such as maritime, renewable energy and electric vehicles.

"Norway and China have a lot in common and share the goal to become renewable in energy and more and more an electric country," Sandvik said. "Hydrogen and ammonia, battery technology, offshore wind and low-emissions shipping are among the areas that Norway currently focuses on. We think we have broad space for cooperation in green transformation."

In the Norwegian market, Chinese EVs are making a notable contribution to the country's efforts to protect the environment.

About 25 percent of all cars in Norway are electric, Sandvik said, and nearly 90 percent of new car market sales are electric vehicles.

"I can see a lot more Chinese EV brands on Norwegian roads now.

The Chinese EV market is rapidly increasing, and it is a fair competition in Norway. ... Norway is aiming to become the world's first nation to end the sale of gasoline and diesel cars by 2025, so Chinese EV brands have opportunities to compete well in the Norwegian market."

Another highlight of bilateral economic ties is the seafood industry. Led by salmon, Norwegian seafood exports to China reached 158,909 metric tons last year, with exports worth \$804 million, 18 percent more than in 2022 and accounting for 23 percent of the total value of its exports last year, the Norwegian Seafood Council says.

Christian Chramer, chief executive of the council, said that despite increasing competition from countries such as Chile and New Zealand, Norway has enjoyed steady growth in China based on the long-term relationship with Chinese retailers, importers, restaurants and hotels.

Norwegian businesses nurse strong ambitions to do well in China, he said, and more is being done to cater to the shopping preferences of Chinese, including their demand for healthy products.

China was the sixth-largest growth market for seafood from Norway last year, he said. "We see that the local consumers are young and very digital online shoppers. They are trendy, and they inspire each other."

## 'Big Bang' Zhang Zhilei boosts boxing in China with knockout

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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A heavyweight boxing contender from China is a rarity in the sport. Zhang Zhilei has not only made that a reality, but hopes to eventually fight for the undisputed title after a stunning victory over former champion Deontay Wilder on Saturday.

Zhang, 41, knocked out Wilder, 38, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, with two right-hand blows in the fifth round of their bout on Saturday at Kingdom Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Wilder had predicted before the fight that he would knock out Zhang.

Zhang redeemed himself after a disappointing decision loss to New Zealand's Joseph Parker three months ago at the same arena, even though he knocked down his opponent twice in that fight.

Zhang held China's national flag aloft after what was likely the biggest victory in his career.

"This is my mission," said Zhang, nicknamed "Big Bang", who is from Zhoukou, in Central China's Henan province. "No matter where I fight, I always want to raise the Chinese national flag. I would like to thank every friend who came here over the world and fans in China; it is midnight there and you are watching me."

Zhang's team said that he was a top trending topic on TikTok during his bout.

"The 'Big Bang' is back! The 'Big Bang' is here!" Zhang said in his post-fight interview.

"This was just another step on my road back to a championship bout. I am calm inside after this fight," Zhang posted on his social media account on Sunday morning, when his victory became a trending topic on multiple online platforms.

On X, "Chinese Bodybuilder" posted: "Maybe the most brutal KO I ever saw in my life. Love this guy. A 198cm bald uncle who won with sledgehammer fists. Nice guy and glad to be there."

"Hero" posted on X: "Chinese



China's Zhang Zhilei lands a punch on Deontay Wilder of the United States during their fight at Kingdom Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday. Zhang knocked out the former world heavyweight champion two minutes into the fifth round. REUTERS

power explodes in the world boxing ring!"

Wilder is 6-foot-7, and Zhang is 6-foot-6, but Zhang weighed 282 pounds for the fight while Wilder was only 214, and Zhang put that weight advantage to good use in the fight, delivering crushing blows.

Zhang (27-21, 22 KOs) is the No. 6-ranked heavyweight by ESPN and The Ring magazine, and Wilder (43-4-1, 42 KOs) entered the bout at No. 7. The loss could likely spell the end of Wilder's boxing career, as many on social media have speculated, as has Wilder himself.

Zhang became the interim World Boxing Council (WBC) champ in December. Wilder held the WBC title from 2010 to 2015.

Wilder fought another former champ, Tyson Fury of the UK, three times, losing twice, with one fight called a draw. Many boxing observers said that Wilder, known for his thunderous right-hand punch, was not the same after the fights with Fury.

"I successfully took his right hand away," Zhang said after Saturday's fight, through an interpreter. "I blocked a few punches, but hell yeah, he punches hard. I give a lot of respect to him; he's a hard puncher."

Fury also was the longtime WBC heavyweight champ but he lost a decision to Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk on May 18.

Usyk is now the undisputed heavyweight title holder, and Zhang is hoping for an eventual title shot against him, depending on how a few future fights in the division turn out.

While Usyk heads toward a championship rematch with Fury on Dec 21 in Riyadh, Zhang could perhaps seek a rematch with Parker, who was ringside for the Saturday fight.

Another option for Zhang could present itself in September, with a fight against Anthony Joshua at Wembley Stadium in London, though that opportunity could go to Daniel Dubois, who defeated Filip Hrgovic on Saturday on the undercard of the Zhang-vs-Wilder fight.

In February, Zhang told The Ring from his training venue in New Jersey, where he has lived for several years, "In 2008 I made the Olympics and I got the silver medal, that's when people started to recognize that there's a big Chinese heavyweight that can fight."

Sun Xiaochen contributed to this story.

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## BUSINESS

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

Trade-ins:  
Housing's  
latest hope  
in ChinaREPORTER'S  
LOG

By WANG YING

There was a time when "trade-in deals" referred to selling one's old home appliances or cars to buy new ones with subsidies. Now, it has become a buzz phrase in China's property industry.

Trade-in deals for homes represent an attempt to integrate transactions for new homes and pre-owned homes. Property industry experts see them as an innovative endeavor to digest home inventories and boost home transactions.

As of May 6, more than 50 cities, including Shanghai, had voiced support for trade-in deals for homes, according to data compiled by the China Index Academy.

Analysts and industry experts believe more cities will come up with their own trade-in policies to boost demand from potential homebuyers in the coming months.

The trade-in activities initiated by local governments are a response to the tone-setting meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on April 30, which called for digesting housing inventories and optimizing new demand, said analysts Ren Yingxue and Zhang Renyuan in an S&P Global China Ratings report.

The trade-in initiative will help trim home inventories, open up transactions for new homes and pre-owned homes, and activate overall market activity. But the ultimate effect may vary according to the model, mechanism and scale of the actual measures, said the S&P report.

The initiative aims to shorten the replacement cycle of selling one home and then buying another home, reducing homebuyers' concerns about daring to buy a new home before selling their existing home during the house exchange process, said Shaun Brodie, head of research on the China market at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

"By providing a one-stop service, the initiative can assist buyers in navigating various aspects of a residential real estate transaction, thus promoting the better circulation of pre-owned homes, increasing the sales activity in the pre-owned housing market, as well as finally driving sales activity in the new homes market."

On detailed methodologies, the S&P report categorized three major trade-in models: purchasing the old flat via a government-backed entity; offering subsidies or favorable conditions in home transactions; and real estate agencies giving priority to selling pre-owned homes.

Among the differentiated approaches, the ones that pose fewer requirements, introduced on a greater scale, will have a stronger effect, the report said.

Chen Zhixu, senior manager with CBRE China research, said she expects the trade-in initiatives to achieve multiple effects, like speeding up the destocking of commercial housing, improving the financial condition of real estate enterprises and accelerating the supply of affordable housing.

"The execution of the trade-in policies will require more affiliated policy support — and the factors of capital, profit, evaluation and pricing, and enterprises' willingness, should all be taken into consideration. After this (April 30) meeting, it is expected that more supportive policies will follow," said Chen.

"We expect the (trade-in) initiative will be first carried out in first- and second-tier cities; and lower-tier cities will likely follow suit once the market finds stability."

Chen Sheng, president of the China Real Estate Data Academy, said further observation is needed first before trade-in activities are accelerated.

Chen said the essence of trade-in deals is the exchange of old homes for new homes at some cost, where the value of the existing home becomes the main capital for the new purchase. Once the old homes are sold, transactions for new homes should be encouraged. Only then can destocking of market inventory be realized.

On May 10, Zhengzhou, capital of Henan province, announced property trade-in measures across the city, becoming the first city to have such a policy, said Yan Yuejin, director of Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution.

## Realty eyes stability and recovery

New property policies raise expectations of market turnaround and homebuyer happiness

By WANG YING in Shanghai  
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The recent wave of supportive policies for the beleaguered property industry will guide the real estate market toward stability and recovery, experts said.

The measures announced on May 17 both at the national and local levels vary from city to city to suit specific local conditions. Their intensity and scale are expected to help form a new real estate development model and facilitate the high-quality development of the property industry in China, they said.

Recent measures include lowering of down payment ratios, cuts to mortgage interest rates and efforts to digest home inventories, and came amid mounting market expectations for further measures to boost homebuyer confidence and ease liquidity pressures on property developers.

"We believe the worst is behind the property market," said Chen Sheng, president of the China Real Estate Data Academy.

"The recent real estate policies aim to stimulate market vitality and supplement liquidity needed to balance supply and demand," said Shaun Brodie, head of research on the China market at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

Brodie said the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, has issued three consecutive documents aimed at reducing the cost of buying a home and the threshold for homeownership, boosting confidence on the demand side.

"The policies also grant more flexibility to local governments and consolidate their primary responsibilities, requiring them to strike a balance between stabilizing the real estate market and avoiding financial risk,"

Pang Ming, chief economist for JLL China, said he believes the combined policy measures will have a positive effect.

"Abolishing the floor limit of commercial individual mortgage rates for first- and second-time homebuyers nationwide, cutting the loan rates of the individual housing provident fund, and lowering the minimum down payment ratios for individuals' commercial housing mortgages will help reduce down payment burden and costs for residents, and hence increase their ability and willingness to purchase houses," Pang said.

Pang also said the latest initiative will help foster a more favorable monetary and credit environment for the stabilization and recovery of the housing market from the demand side. In addition, it will boost residents' consumption capacity, effectively safeguarding and improving people's livelihoods, actively stimulating domestic demand, and harnessing consumption's fundamental role in driving economic growth.

While boosting demand by lowering costs, the country announced the establishment of a 300 billion yuan (\$41.4 billion) re-lending facility for affordable housing, to encourage and guide financial institutions to support local State-owned enterprises in acquiring unsold completed commercial housing at appropriate prices.

"The decision is expected to more directly



Top: A property construction site in Yantai, Shandong province. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY Above: Clients inquire about home loan procedures at a bank in Haiyan, Jiangsu province. XU JINGBAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

alleviate the liquidity risk of real estate enterprises and consolidate financial stability. Meantime, the government demand as an effective supplement to market demand will contribute to the long-term supply-side structural reform of the real estate market," said Chen Zhixu, senior manager with CBRE China research.

Chen said these measures will capture the spirit of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee meeting on April 30, which urged the implementation of policies from city to city, ensuring the delivery of property projects, and called for measures to digest property inventories and optimize new demand in a coordinated manner.

"Given its rich content and great intensity, this batch of policies has reflected the Chinese government's resolve to stabilize the real estate market and capabilities in policy planning and innovation. The policies are expected to have an extremely positive impact on the ongoing efforts for property market stabilization and timely home delivery. The sector's decline can be narrowed," Chen said.

Once the new policies are fine-tuned during the follow-up process, market activity and confidence will recover in first-tier cities, and gradually pass on to second-tier and other cities, said Chen Sheng, president of the China Real Estate Data Academy.

Zhang Ange, a white-collar worker at a private firm in Shanghai, said he just bought a 90-square-meter apartment in Jing'an district. "After living and working in the city for eight years, we (my wife and I) finally have a place that can be called home," said the 32-year-old Wuhan native, who became eligible to buy a home in Shanghai as a first-time homebuyer after the city eased homebuying requirements last September.

"I know the market adjustment may continue, but from a living perspective, market

ups and downs have little effect on the market for self-use homes," said Zhang.

Some Chinese cities responded to the national policies with an array of measures to shore up local property markets, which triggered speculation that more cities will likely follow suit.

Both of South China's Guangzhou and Shenzhen announced on May 28 they will loosen restrictions on home buying.

Shanghai removed more restrictions on homebuying on May 27 by allowing eligible single buyers to buy used homes in downtown. Families with more than one child can now buy an extra residential property.

A nine-item local notice that took effect in Shanghai on May 28 included adjustments to home purchase restrictions, support for reasonable home living requirements for families with more than one child, optimization of credit policies, encouragement for trade-in deals and improvements to land and housing supply.

Cities including Wuhan of Hubei province and Huzhou of Zhejiang province have reportedly lowered down payment ratios for first-home buyers to as low as 15 percent, said Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution.

Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Hefei in Anhui province also announced other supportive measures, like cutting interest rates on mortgages and housing provident fund.

Some commercial banks in Central China's Wuhan went further by lowering the first-home loan interest rate to as low as 3.25 percent, said Yan.

The list gets longer by the day. Experts said many more cities are expected to cut various minimum requirements to buy homes.

In fact, some 50 cities had already eased their respective restrictions on homebuying ahead of the May 17 announcements. And 23

cities, including Xi'an of Shaanxi province, Hangzhou of Zhejiang province and Chengdu of Sichuan province, had scrapped all limits with regards to home transactions, according to statistics from the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center.

Brodie said due to the continued impact of market factors like house price expectations, the stabilization of the residential real estate market will likely still take some more time to reach a positive growth recovery point.

"These new policies focus on reducing the cost of purchasing property and the threshold for homeownership, which may boost confidence on the demand side. The government may need to take measures to flexibly adjust land supply and precisely control the pace of new housing development to prevent any further imbalance between supply and demand."

The property data released on May 17 indicated that adjustments in the industry are continuing, said Liu Aihua, spokeswoman of the National Bureau of Statistics.

"Both market resumption and confidence recovery require time, and uncertainties remain in the forthcoming market stabilization process," said Chen of CBRE.

On creating a new real estate development model and promoting high-quality real estate development, she suggested structural adjustments on the supply side and more diversified measures to boost demand.

Pang said it is also essential to note that merely using monetary policies such as lowering down payment ratios and mortgage rates cannot completely, effectively and fundamentally solve the cyclical, structural and trend-related challenges facing the real estate market.

"At present, the real estate market is still in the process of determining the lowest point, continuing to make necessary adjustments. Accordingly, real estate regulation should steer clear of too simplistic and linear policy approaches aiming to stimulate an overly frigid market or restrict overheating," Pang said.

He suggested regulators should develop a deeper understanding of the changes in supply and demand, recognize the role of city-specific policies and adjust measures to local conditions, and consider both incremental and stock issues comprehensively.

Chinese cities reported deeper home price drops in April both in year-on-year and month-on-month terms, which indicated the property market remains in a process of adjustment, said Wang Zhonghua, an NBS statistician.

Price declines accelerated month-on-month in all the third-tier cities in both markets (for new homes and pre-owned properties), said Wang.

He attributed the big price drops to the evident increase in the number of homes available for transacting in the pre-owned home market and a weak market expectation. "The property industry should continue to adapt to the changes taking place as efforts are made jointly to build a new property development model," said Pang.

# BUSINESS



A construction site of an affordable housing project in Ganzhou, Jiangxi province, in December. ZHU HAIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Plan to aid cities looking to reduce property stock

Local govts with higher inventories urged to buy commercial housing

By WANG YING in Shanghai  
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A plan to permit local governments to purchase property stock and increase the quantity of affordable housing has offered cities an option to curtail their property inventories, and is one of the major tasks recognized by the central government in the real estate sector, said industry experts.

During a teleconference on property policies held in Beijing on May 17, Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng urged local governments that have more housing inventories than others to purchase some of the stock for use as government-subsidized housing, according to a report by Xinhua News Agency.

"As the supply-side destocking policies gradually intensify, local State-owned enterprises have entered an accelerated phase of 'purchasing and storing' residential real estate, provided that funding sources are secured," said Shaun Brodie, head of research on the China market at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

Brodie added this trend is conducive to achieving a balance of supply

“The transaction and leasing processes will effectively activate capital flow in the property sector, promote market activities, and form a benign cycle in the market.”

Chen Sheng, president of China Real Estate Data Academy

and demand in the property market.

Experts said policies may be rolled out to suit each city and fight the tough battle of solving unfinished commercial housing.

"We will solidly advance key tasks such as guaranteeing housing delivery and digesting commercial housing stock," He was quoted as saying at the meeting.

In cities where commercial housing inventories are comparatively

large, local governments can place orders and purchase some of the commercial housing at reasonable prices to be used as affordable housing, He said.

Yan Yuejin, director of Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution, said purchasing housing stock and changing that into affordable housing are in line with the tone-setting meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held on April 30, which recognized digesting housing inventories and optimization of new demand as major tasks in the property sector.

"The innovative approach takes into consideration both the destocking of existing homes as well as the supply of affordable housing, which offers a new direction for local governments in dealing with their home inventories," Yan added.

"As many as 8.7 million units (rooms) of rental housing are planned to be added during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25). Some 5.73 million units (rooms) had been available as of the end of 2023, which means there is still a gap of 2.97 million units (rooms) of rental housing in the coming two years," said Chen Wenjing, director of research with the China Index Academy.

Transferring the home inventories into affordable housing will not only fulfill the national plan quickly, but also help curb unsold homes and promote the stabilization and recovery of the overall property market, Chen said.

In addition to acquiring existing housing stock, many cities have also implemented practices related to State-owned enterprises purchasing and storing unsold new homes for conversion into long-term rental housing.

"This will alleviate the current inventory pressure faced by the real estate market and will further improve affordability, which should lead to the creation of a more stable and sustainable residential real estate market," Brodie added.

"There used to be a certain number of housing units developed without clear target consumers or appropriate purposes. Using this approach, these projects can be rearranged into either affordable housing or meeting inelastic home living requirements," said Chen Sheng, president of China Real Estate Data Academy.

"The transaction and leasing processes will effectively activate capital flow in the property sector, promote market activities, and form a benign cycle in the market," Chen said.

## AI tech helping firms adopt 'new forces'

By XING YI in London  
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As artificial intelligence technologies continue to develop, Digital China Group Co, a Chinese IT solutions provider, has quickly capitalized on the trend by helping companies in traditional sectors adopt "new quality productive forces" to boost efficiency, making itself the latest case study for London Business School.

Guo Wei, chairman of the group, was in London in May to engage with a cohort of prospective global business leaders and researchers of management in the UK's top business school, sharing his company's practices, and a paper about how his company is harnessing the potential of data, cloud and AI was added to the school's case repositories in April. "The digital transformation of traditional sectors is the process of developing 'new quality productive forces,'" Guo said about his understanding of the current buzzword among Chinese entrepreneurs.

"A majority of companies are not born digital, and therefore they need a digital renovation," Guo said. "It's like during the Industrial Revolution, the British improved the spinning wheel and the steam engine, which eventually increased productivity immensely."

"In the traditional economy, land, labor, capital and technology are all critical factors of production, but in the digital age, data have become a new production factor ... We help companies digitize their business so they can integrate their operation with AI technology, which will unleash productivity immensely."

Digital China was founded in 2000 first as a distributor of IT devices and later evolved to provide services such as IT integration, smart cities, big data and cloud computing. Riding on the wave of China's rapid growth of the digital economy in the past decade, the company has become a partner for major businesses across sectors, helping them improve efficiency with IT technologies.

Listed on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, Digital China Group Co reported an annual turnover of 119.62 billion yuan (\$16.5 billion) in 2023, ranking 29th on the Forbes

2022 China Digital Economy 100 list.

Julian Birkinshaw, vice-dean of London Business School, and Liang-Hong Ke, the school's program director for executive education, co-authored the case study of Digital China about the metamorphosis of the company from an IT distributor to a leading digital transformation partner in the past 20 years.

In 2019, Birkinshaw wrote a case study about WeChat, the dominant all-in-one social networking app in China, and was impressed by the innovation and agility showcased by Chinese companies.

"It is so easy to get trapped in the thinking that Silicon Valley is where the exciting, innovative stuff happens. But this particular case study here is a really innovative, proactive company (Digital China) coming out of Beijing," Birkinshaw said about the intention behind writing the Chinese case studies.

"Chinese companies, because of the competitive threats and pressures within China, are very good at trying things out, experimenting and adapting their products to market quickly," he said, adding that the cases give students a window on what is practical.

"Specifically around Digital China, one can see how quickly they moved on to AI, harnessing generative AI and immediately rolling it into their products and services," said Birkinshaw.

After ChatGPT was launched in 2022 and a huge demand for AI offerings suddenly emerged, Digital China quickly recognized this as a tremendous technological leap and in 2023 introduced its AI model platform, SmartVision, which focuses on corporate use of generative AI to enhance productivity, championing its "model as a service" vision.

Guo said digital strategies have already been elevated to the status of corporate strategy for multinational corporations, and the amassing of data assets will be the pivotal lever for business innovation.

"We are exploring opportunities to provide some of our solutions and services in this area to overseas clients," he said, adding that the company has been in contact with companies and academia in Europe.



Guo Wei, chairman of Digital China Group Co, delivers a lecture at London Business School in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Hearts together,  
dreams come true

## BUSINESSINSIGHT



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

# US tariffs bound to fail on false 'overcapacity' claims

## EAGLE EYE

By Liu Ying

On May 14, the United States increased tariffs on Chinese goods worth approximately \$18 billion across sectors, including electric vehicles, solar cells and semiconductors.

The new tariff rates range from 25 percent to 100 percent, and are an attempt to stifle certain Chinese industries.

Previously, the US feigned to keep its commitment to the "San Francisco Vision" with visits to China by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. Yet both of them cited "overcapacity" as a so-called concern during their visits, which were only to lay the groundwork for the tariff hikes.

Despite a preponderance of evidence debunking overcapacity by Chinese and international economists, including those from the US, Washington has unrelentingly raised tariffs, using its Section 301 investigation report to seek justification on the global stage.

This is a clear example of trade protectionism, illustrating how the US generalizes the concept of national security and internationalizes its domestic partisan disputes.

Despite being prepared for such a scenario, it is important for China to thoroughly analyze and develop a response. Considering that the US is imposing tariffs as high as 100 percent on Chinese products, China must assess whether the competitiveness of China's affected industries will be significantly weakened, or if they will remain resilient, thus rendering the US move a futile exercise.

First of all, the US tariff hikes are a clear manifestation of unilateralism, trade protectionism and bullying tactics. Faced with diminishing competitiveness in sectors such as new energy, new energy vehicles and pharmaceuticals, the US has raised both tariff and nontariff barriers in an attempt to suppress Chinese enterprises and undermine the competitiveness of Chinese products, all in a bid to protect its own industries.

Yet, its imposition of additional tariffs more than five years ago, ranging from 5 percent to 25 percent on over \$250 billion worth of Chinese products — including steel and aluminum — failed to bolster the competitiveness of US industries. It failed to support US reindustrializa-

tion efforts, nor achieved the goal of bringing industrial and supply chains closer to the US or "friendly" nations.

The US has extensively politicized, weaponized and instrumentalized economic and trade matters. In a bid to secure an electoral victory, the Democratic Party in the US has pulled out all the stops. After Donald Trump's proclamation that he would levy a 60 percent tariff on Chinese exports if elected, the Biden administration eagerly played the China card, taking over the proactive and aggressive stance by also imposing high tariffs on China, under the guise of "overcapacity" issues and claiming that China had not met the terms of the Section 301 investigation report.

By linking industries and production capacity to political and national security concerns, the US aims to comprehensively suppress China through high tariffs. This tactic is also employed by Biden during the current campaign season, resorting to the China card when domestic strategies fall short during an election year.

Such deeds will rebound on the US. The world today is still interconnected and far from insularity, and no country can thrive in isolation. Any nation that seeks to suppress others will inevitably harm itself in the process.

Over the past five years, the additional tariffs that the US has levied on Chinese goods have ultimately been shouldered by US consumers. This has led to an unprecedented inflation rate as high as 9.1 percent in the country, a level which has not been seen for four decades, and it has even spilled over to Europe.

Unless the US takes drastic measures to reduce tariffs, it will be very difficult for it to contain inflation. Unchecked inflation makes it difficult to lower high interest rates, leading to a continuous build-up of debt and financial risks.

Moreover, the hype surrounding the issue of "overcapacity" as a pretext for pressuring China is not only ungrounded, but also detrimental to the US itself.

The US claims that China has "excessive capacity". Yet even Yellen, with her background as an economist, finds it a hard sell. During her visit to China, she was repeatedly badgered on the topic by the media. Each time, she appeared visibly uncomfortable, frowning and stumbling over her words. That spectacle clearly highlights the challenge of upholding a false narrative — one that even she seems unable to convince herself of, let alone others.

China does not face an issue of overcapacity in NEVs. The narrative

of overcapacity merely stems from the fact that China's NEVs are exceptionally competitive, outperforming peer industries in certain other countries, so are thus being labeled as being in a state of "overcapacity".

**China does not face an issue of overcapacity in NEVs. The narrative of overcapacity merely stems from the fact that China's NEVs are exceptionally competitive, outperforming peer industries in certain other countries, so are thus being labeled as being in a state of "overcapacity".**

In terms of international comparison, the export volume of China's NEVs accounts for less than 15 percent of total output. In contrast, 75 percent of vehicles produced in Germany are exported, while the corresponding figures for South Korea and Japan are 70 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

Within the automotive industry, in which the global division of labor is becoming increasingly intricate, discussing so-called issues of overcapacity in China's NEVs fundamentally contradicts economic principles and real circumstances. The actions based on the Section 301 investigation report to increase tariffs have long been deemed illegal by the World Trade Organization.

Such US tactics are reminiscent of past strategies, yet the outcome may be an altogether different reality. At its core, the US is attempting to replicate its trade war strategy against Japan decades ago to exert pressure on China.

Late last century, as Japan's economic power neared that of the US, the latter launched a trade war imposing 100 percent tariffs on select Japanese products. The US now appears eager to re-enact the "triumph" of the Japan-US trade war, hoping to replicate a lost decade, or even two or three, for China.

However, the US seems to overlook the fact that the times have changed. Beyond the stark differences in political systems and market scale between China and Japan, the global landscape is undergoing transformations not seen in a long time, with technological innovation racing ahead at a breakneck pace.

China stands as the top trading partner for over 120 countries, and the Belt and Road Initiative engages more than 150 economies and 30-plus international organizations. In an era of pervasive economic globalization, protectionism and unilateralism are bound to backfire.

Moreover, China is pursuing an innovation-driven growth strategy, spearheading industrial innovation with scientific breakthroughs and bolstering new quality productive forces. For over a decade, China has topped the list of global patent applications, with R&D investment surpassing 2.64 percent of GDP.

The US actions against China will likely hasten China's independent technological innovation, shifting the global trade paradigm toward "Chinese technology" plus a "global market".

From the perspective of game theory and comparative advantage, the US approach of decoupling and de-risking will only result in its own isolation, rather than achieving success through suppression of others.

Based on past experience, the US will persist in imposing additional tariffs on China. Yet, such measures will ultimately prove ineffective.

The US is never the primary target market for China's NEVs, and these actions will only accelerate US decline relative to China's trading partners.

The imposition of high tariffs may provoke comprehensive countermeasures from Chinese enterprises and industries, including legal action. Individual cases will be handled by legal instruments, while at the industry level, appeals and resolutions will be pursued through the WTO.

According to the WTO's official website, the US has been the defendant in more cases than almost all EU countries combined, and it has largely been on the losing side in these disputes.

As China rises, encountering such suppression is inevitable. In response to the US moves, our enterprises need to take proactive and effective measures.

In addition to further enhancing the competitiveness of their products, Chinese enterprises must also wield legal and trade instruments to protect their interests. It is essential for them to actively participate in the formulation of rules, regulations, management and standards.

*The writer is a researcher and director of the cooperative research department of the Chongqing Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## Policy rate cuts key to fattening 'wallets'

### MAIN STREET

By Zhang Bin

The most prominent problem facing the Chinese economy is low prices, which have made it difficult for enterprises to increase revenues and profits.

In the labor market, new jobs are limited, and the growth rate of residents' income is slow. If corporate profits and residents' labor income remain at low levels, then confidence in both consumption and investment would become weak.

Currently, the main problem is a lack of demand, not the supply side. Seen from another perspective, nominal, not real, variables — such as price, profit and wages — are the main problem facing the Chinese economy.

What has caused the lack of demand? Why do nominal variables perform poorly? Why is it difficult for incomes to increase?

The growth of these nominal variables originates from the growth of nominal purchasing power, which in turn mainly comes from the creation of broad credit, such as extension of loans or issuance of bonds, which will create corresponding financial assets, bringing about an increase in nominal purchasing power.

For example, if one borrows 5 million yuan (\$690,800) from a bank to purchase an apartment, the money would transform into new corporate and resident deposits, thus bringing about an increase in nominal purchasing power.

During the past decade, the growth of credit in China has mainly come from local government financing platforms and real estate-related loans. Therefore, when major problems in real estate occur and local financing platforms are tightly regulated, credit and demand will nose-dive.

The weakening credit growth will in turn lead to slowing growth of financial assets and nominal purchasing power, because financial assets here mainly refer to various debt-based financial assets, such as deposits and bonds. When the growth rate of these assets slows significantly, people will feel that they have less money on hand.

Some have argued that China already has a lot of money, and the lack of demand is not due to a lack of money. Statistics show that the financial assets of a Chinese household on average are valued at \$60,000. In comparison, the figure is more than \$1 million in the United States, and \$200,000 in Europe and Japan. Therefore, Chinese people's "wallets" are not big, and the slow growth of the "wallets" has led to a weakening of purchasing power in the past two years.

Others have argued that what counts is not the amount of money, but its distribution. Although there have been some changes to our income distribution during the past decade, it has been functioning quite stable and cannot lead to the sudden intensification of the lack of demand in recent years.

The main reason is still the slow growth of overall credit. The growth rate of total social financing has dropped from 12-13 percent in the past to 9-10 percent, and further down to 8 percent this year. In recent quarters, the growth of total social financing has continually declined to hit historical lows, unable to bolster the country's nominal purchasing power.

**Willingness to spend**  
The main solution to the problem of lack of demand does not lie in reform. The purpose of structural reform is to improve production efficiency, optimize resource

allocation and increase productivity. However, lack of demand does not reflect a problem of productivity but inadequate nominal purchasing power.

What we need to do is to make people have more money in their pockets and more willing to spend. We can solve the problem by making full use of standardized countercyclical policy tools.

In terms of monetary policy, the most effective, flexible and targeted policy is to significantly reduce the policy interest rate.

China currently has about 300 trillion yuan of debt. If the policy interest rate is reduced by 100 to 200 basis points, debtors would save 2-3 billion yuan a year in estimated debt interest payments. Meanwhile, it will add to financial assets worth at least 10 trillion yuan, which would help keep real estate prices stable.

By significantly reducing the policy interest rate, the entire residents' "wallets" would increase by tens of trillions of yuan, including savings on debt interest payments and increasing valuation of financial assets. It would also increase consumption propensities and reduce savings.

It would be the most flexible policy, with policy interest rate able to be adjusted any time. It would also be the most targeted policy.

Compared with other countercyclical policies, policy interest rate adjustment works by expanding the "wallets" of individuals and enterprises to optimize the relative price environment.

Some people are worried about the potential effect of the policy, in terms of reducing bank profits or affecting the renminbi exchange rate.

As the policy interest rate drops, however, the total demand and nominal income level would increase, the nonperforming loans ratio of financial institutions will decline significantly, and loans of banks would increase markedly, helping improve the balance sheets of financial institutions.

In terms of the exchange rate of the renminbi, its fundamental support comes not from unchanged interest rate differ-

entials, but a brisk economy, which would increase demand for renminbi assets. If reduction of interest rates can revitalize the Chinese economy and improve the prospects for corporate investment and profits, it would provide strong support for renminbi assets.

In terms of fiscal policy, the focus in the short term should be on ensuring that the budget is fully implemented. But the boosting effect of the fiscal policy on GDP growth is limited.

In the first quarter of this year, the combined growth of general public budget and government fund expenditures was a minus 1.5 percent, which was a drag on GDP growth. Government spending is important because it is equivalent to nongovernment sector revenues. Insufficient growth in government spending will have a significant impact on the incomes of businesses and residents.

Regarding local government debt, the tempo of local government debt reduction is very important. At a time when the private sector is unwilling to increase leverage, the government should be cautious in deleveraging; otherwise, it will create a vicious cycle leading to a spiraling decline in spending and incomes.

*The writer is deputy director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The article is a translated version of a speech by the writer at a meeting held by the China Macroeconomy Forum, a think tank. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Philippines will only be catalyst for crisis acting as a proxy for US' troublemaking

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr directly felt the backlash from his government's provocative moves in the South China Sea at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on the weekend.

In the question-and-answer session after his keynote address at the security forum on Friday, the great lengths Marcos went to in a bid to prevaricate on questions raised by the People's Liberation Army representatives regarding the nature of the South China Sea issue and the ugly role Manila is playing in stoking tensions in the waters vividly displayed the Philippine leader's guilty conscience.

In his speech, Marcos tried his best to portray the Philippines as a country upholding the rule of law in the face of China's "bullying, intimidation and threats".

In saying that the Philippines' policy in the South China Sea is built upon the "two touchstones" of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 2016 Arbitral Award, which he said provide a solid foundation for the peaceful resolution and management of disputes, Marcos laid bare the fact that the real touchstone for Manila is to convince itself that black is white to justify its actions.

If Manila really complied with the UNCLOS, which has clear definitions on the legal status of the territorial sea and islands, navigation freedom and the maritime dispute settlements, it would not be trying to make Chinese islands and waters its own, or taking "freedom of navigation" as an excuse to provoke China, or looking to the United States to support its territory grabbing efforts.

Calling for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' centrality to be upheld is only an excuse for Manila to cover up its intention of letting the US dictate regional affairs so it can steal from China.

Submitting the South China Sea island and reef disputes to the so-called International Arbitration Tribunal violated the relevant provisions of Article 4 of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and infringed on the rights that China should enjoy as a party to the UNCLOS. The so-called tribunal and its arbitration also violated international law and relevant rules.

China has always believed that international rules are not the "gang rules" imposed by a small clique of countries, but laws and regulations that reflect the interests and reasonable demands of the international community as a whole. China is an active participant, firm defender and model follower of these rules.

Marcos' speech shows that it is the Philippines and the US which are violating and undermining the rules, and which are flip-flopping right and wrong so they can smear and impugn Beijing's justified responses to their antics.

China also believes that all countries are equal, regardless of their size, wealth or strength. However, it has its bottom line and principles, and it will never condone the Philippines' claim jumping.

Reportedly, Manila is mulling over grounding ships on more Chinese islands and reefs under its control just as it did with China's Ren'ai Reef in 1999 in a bid to create a fait accompli to the world that these islands belong to the Philippines.

That move, if taken, will further escalate regional tensions and risk tensions in the South China Sea spiraling out of control. The South China Sea issue is to a large extent a fabrication of the US, which is seeking to sow seeds of discord to create turbulence in the neighborhood development environment for China. All regional countries should draw lessons from the ongoing crises in the Middle East and Ukraine, and be wary of Manila's willingness to act as a proxy of the US.

## No room for interfering in Taiwan question

Despite the discussions about the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, the main focus of attention of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore over the weekend was on the Asia-Pacific and what is perceived to be the most likely flashpoint for a potential conflict between China and the United States — the Taiwan question.

The concern about the escalating frictions sparking an explosive incident was given greater substance by some of the participants bringing their anti-China agenda to the meeting with a view to turning the occasion into an opportunity to fly the flag for their cause and rally Asian countries and international public opinion against Beijing.

In light of this, that the Chinese and United States defense chiefs had their first in-person meeting since 2022 was of great significance. The two militaries share an imperative need for open lines of communication.

Their face-to-face meeting was thus a welcome development to those hoping Beijing and Washington can defuse their relations, as was the news that the two sides are to resume conversations between their theater commanders.

Judging from what was heard in Singapore over the past few days, fears of the worst-case scenario are not far-fetched, despite all the talk about avoiding it.

On Taiwan, Washington and Beijing have made things sufficiently clear to each other — Beijing has no room to back off since it is a matter of sovereignty and territorial integrity; Washington has no intention of backing off as the island is a key tool of its strategy to contain China, being a means to put pressure on Beijing and solicit others to assist it in that cause.

Washington will therefore continue to hollow out its legal obligation to uphold the "one-China" principle as recognized in international law and carry on militarizing the island with arms sales and military assistance, seeking to embolden the separatists on the island in an attempt to distort the Taiwan question, mislead international public opinion and so intensify its efforts to contain China with the Taiwan question.

Beijing, as Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun said in Singapore, will oppose any interference in the Taiwan question, which is purely an internal affair of China, and it will decisively quash any attempt at Taiwan's "independence".

On the Taiwan question, the US' messaging provokes unrealistic fantasies in the "independence-minded" Democratic Progressive Party decision-makers who are stepping up their efforts to pursue "Taiwan independence" in an incremental way, by severing the social, historical and cultural links across the Taiwan Strait with the aim of realizing the "desinicization" of the island.

In his keynote speech at the meeting, Dong left no room for ambiguity about Beijing's position, saying that it has always been committed to peaceful reunification, but that this prospect is being undermined by "Taiwan independence" elements with the collusion of external forces.

Stating bluntly that the fanatical separatists are betraying the Chinese nation and their ancestors with their bid to cleave the island from the motherland, he said they will be nailed to the pillar of shame by history.

He also left no one in any doubt that should it prove necessary Beijing will not hesitate to use force to quash any bid to divide the nation. Calling the separatists' pursuit of "independence" an act of self-destruction, he stated unequivocally that "Whoever dares to sever Taiwan from China will be crushed".

The Taiwan question is China's fundamental core interest, and the fact that there is only one China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, of which the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate representative, is an established historical fact enshrined in historical treaties and United Nations resolutions.

It is the US' breaking of international law and its ill-judged and ill-intentioned emboldening of the separatists on the island that risk igniting the fuse in the Taiwan Strait.

Song Chen



## Opinion Line

## Tel Aviv's latest Gaza proposal sop to international pressure

US President Joe Biden on Friday invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to deliver an address at the US Capitol as part of the Biden administration's efforts to prevent the Netanyahu government from pulling back from the proposal.

In a response to Biden's call, Tel Aviv said that "the war will not end until all of its goals are achieved, including the return of all our abductees and the elimination of Hamas' military and governmental capabilities".

In saying that the "exact outline" proposed by Israel must be followed by Hamas, the Israeli side has made it clear that it reserves no space for any negotiation with the militant group. It also shuns the question on what role Hamas will play in its proposed future for Gaza.

So as Biden acknowledged, keeping the Israeli proposal on track will be difficult as there are a number of "details to negotiate" to move it forward.

Even to third parties, the proposal is fundamentally against the two-state solution of the Palestinian question, as Israel, if not the US, will have an absolute say over the rebuilding of Gaza. Not to mention that it makes Hamas' unconditional following of the proposal a prerequisite for Israel to allow certain amounts of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians it has besieged in Gaza.

A ceasefire negotiation should be carried out on an equal footing. The proposal is nothing but a wishful thinking of Tel Aviv that has been made public due to the domestic and international pressure it faces to end the war. But before the US stops providing weapons to Israel, all the "pro-peace" talk of Washington and Tel Aviv is just stuff and nonsense.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## Chang'e 6 brings moon's far side touch nearer

Supported by the Queqiao 2 relay satellite, the lander-ascender combination of the Chang'e 6 probe landed at the designated landing area on the far side of the moon early on Sunday morning.

Chang'e 6 consists of an orbiter, a returner, a lander and an ascender. Since its launch on May 3 this year, it has gone through various stages such as Earth-moon transfer, near-moon braking, lunar orbiting and landing descent. The lander-ascender combination separated from the orbiter-returner combination on May 30.

The Chang'e 6 mission is tasked with collecting and returning samples from the moon's far side, the first endeavor of its kind in the history of human lunar

exploration. It has achieved a breakthrough in the design and control technology of the lunar retrograde orbit and aims to realize key technologies of intelligent and rapid sampling, as well as take-off and ascent from the far side of the moon.

The landing site is the South Pole-Aitken basin, which was chosen for its potential scientific exploration value, as well as the conditions of the landing area, including communication and telemetry conditions and the flatness of the terrain. The terrain on the far side of the moon is more rugged than the near side, with fewer continuous flat areas. However, the basin is relatively flatter than other areas on the far side, which is conducive to landing.

After the landing, the probe is scheduled to complete sampling within two days. It will employ two methods of moon sampling, namely using a drill to collect subsurface samples and grabbing samples from the surface with a robotic arm.

Due to the moon's obstruction, the Earth-moon communication window period on the far side of the moon, even with the help of the Queqiao 2 relay satellite service, is still shorter than that on the near side. Therefore, the sampling time of Chang'e 6 will be reduced to about 14 hours, compared with the 22 hours of its predecessor Chang'e 5, which collected samples from the near side of the moon.

— XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

## What They Say

## Sanctions shine spotlight on chaos causer in Hong Kong

The US government on Friday expressed its deep concerns about the convictions of 14 lawbreakers in Hong Kong under the National Security Law of Hong Kong, saying it's taking steps to impose new visa restrictions on officials from both the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong who are responsible for the implementation of the legislation.

The United States' proposal to impose so-called visa restrictions is a despicable political move that blatantly interferes in China's internal affairs. It violates both international law and the basic norms of international relations.

In its ruling, the HK court clearly stated that the acts of the individuals were aimed at undermining, destroying or overthrowing the current political system and structure of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region established by the

Basic Law and the "one country, two systems" policy. Such criminal acts that endanger national security have nothing to do with a so-called struggle for democracy and human rights.

The law enforcement agencies of the Hong Kong SAR always take law enforcement actions in accordance with the law, regardless of the political stance, background or occupation of those suspected of committing a crime. That the US side advocates that some people should not be punished for their illegal acts, simply because of their "political stance", is equivalent to giving them the privilege of breaking the law with impunity, which is contrary to the spirit of the rule of law.

The Hong Kong court's conviction of the 14 individuals is based on an impartial weighing up of the evidence presented in court and the arguments provided by both sides. Its decision upholds the rule of law in the SAR.

The National Security Law of Hong Kong was introduced to safeguard national sovereignty and the nation's security interests, and to ensure Hong Kong's long-term peace, stability and prosperity.

After the implementation of the National Security Law of Hong Kong, the SAR's legislature is once again functional, social order has been restored, the rule of law has been enhanced, and the business environment has been ameliorated.

The unwarranted criticism and politically motivated sanctions of the US will only serve to allow the Hong Kong people to discern their true purpose.

The US government should abide by the principles of international law and the basic norms of international relations, earnestly respect the spirit of the rule of law, and cease maliciously interfering in Hong Kong affairs.

— CCTV NEWS

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## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

**Editor's note:** The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is one of the most open and prosperous areas in China with economic vitality. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Regina IP

# HK pearl of Greater Bay Area

Integration with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has been a top priority of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's government ever since the signing of the framework agreement for deepening cooperation between Guangdong province, and the Macao and Hong Kong SARs in July 2017.

True, the Hong Kong SAR government is pulling out all the stops to increase the city's attractiveness. But, apart from coping with daily pressures, the government ought to sit back and think strategically about what the GBA integration means to Hong Kong. It needs to think hard especially about three questions: How will the GBA integration transform Hong Kong? What challenges and opportunities the GBA integration brings? How can the government maximize the benefits of the GBA integration?

The GBA integration will have a long-term, transformational effect on Hong Kong. Under the government's "Northern Metropolis" development plan, three more railways will be built to connect Hong Kong's northern districts to the mainland. After the construction of the railways is completed, many among the estimated 2.5 million residents in the "Northern Metropolis" will find it more convenient to travel to the mainland than to the Hong Kong Island. As the GBA cities on the mainland become increasingly sophisticated, more Hong Kong residents might wish to move or live there, and commute to Hong Kong on a daily basis.

While some people may be worried about the "holing out" of Hong Kong, the migration of Hong Kong residents to the mainland is not a bad thing. For a long time, Hong Kong residents have been stuck in congested and expensive apartments because they are boxed in by Hong Kong's artificial boundary, and are unable to take advantage of better housing conditions in nearby suburbs. The improvement of transport links, coupled with better medical and schooling facilities in nearby GBA cities, would enable more Hong Kong residents to live comfortably in mainland cities just across the boundary.

Such pivoting to the GBA would require a radical rethink on the part of the SAR government of its population policy, and urban and social welfare planning. The private sector will also need to adjust its development plans to adapt to the new trends of living and spending.

With a population of 86 million and combined GDP of \$2 trillion, there is high hope that the GBA will become the world's most dynamic region. Given the barriers to the free movement of goods, services, people, capital and data because of Hong Kong's status as a separate customs and immigration area under "one country, two systems", Hong Kong needs to work out how to overcome these constraints to take advantage of the abundant resources of the mainland GBA cities. The process has not been easy, but the SAR government appears to have found ways to work around these constraints to achieve win-win solutions.

The key to unlocking the potential of the region lies in working out ways to complement Hong Kong and the mainland GBA cities in their development strategies. For example, Hong Kong lacks land to build residential



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care homes for the elderly. As such, Hong Kong as well as the GBA cities on the mainland stand to benefit by enabling more elderly people from Hong Kong to retire in any of the mainland GBA cities.

To enable more elderly people living on social security payments to retire in Guangdong or Fujian, the government relaxed the Hong Kong-residential period required under the Guangdong and Fujian retirement plans. The government has taken a further step forward by adding residential care homes jointly operated by Hong Kong and mainland service providers in Guangdong to serve as "recognized service providers" under the "Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong".

Two more such homes, in Foshan and Shenzhen, have been added this

month, bringing the total number of such homes to four. And the government is planning to bring residential care homes operated solely by mainland service providers under this program.

The SAR government also lacks land to provide residential quarters for retired junior members of the discipline services and other civil servants. As more junior civil servants are prepared to retire in nearby GBA cities, the government should explore the possibility of buying land or readily available housing units in mainland GBA cities to provide homes for those willing to shift to the mainland after retirement.

To relieve our acute labor shortage in many occupations, the government has relaxed labor import program to enable the Airport Authority Hong Kong, transport operators and the construction industries to invite workers from the mainland. The mainland GBA cities can help Hong Kong build innovation and technology hubs in the "Northern Metropolis" by sending us their tech talents, engineers, and tech enterprises which want to use Hong Kong as a launch pad for their international operations. These tech entrepreneurs can draw on

the deep pool of research in medical and life sciences and other disciplines in Hong Kong's top universities to enhance their competitiveness.

In return, Hong Kong can help the mainland GBA cities further develop their service economies, especially in financial, business and other professional sectors. The Shenzhen government reported in January that the city's "social and consumption expenditure" grew by 7.8 percent and topped 1 trillion yuan (\$138.40 billion) in 2023, with Fang Zhou, a leading scholar, saying Hong Kong consumers made healthy contributions to that growth.

Let Hong Kong, Shenzhen and other GBA cities grow together, complementing each other, helping each other to address their respective shortfalls and weaknesses. With their combined strengths, the GBA stands a good chance of becoming the nation's dynamo for growth.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Robert Chu

# GBA facilitates robust SMEs' development

In the five years since China's plan for the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area was published, the region's economic output has increased from 10 trillion yuan (\$1.38 trillion) to more than 13.6 trillion yuan, and is likely to exceed 14 trillion yuan by the end of this year. Comprising the Hong Kong and the Macao special administrative regions and nine major cities in the Pearl River Delta, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen, the GBA is rapidly becoming a global economic powerhouse.

From the "world's factory", the GBA has transformed into a world-class bay area and city cluster. The region has also witnessed continuous innovation in its supply chains, which has prompted logistics companies to capitalize on the opportunities that emerged as a result and helped small and medium-sized enterprises to achieve rapid growth.

The GBA's increasing market integration has been reinforcing the transportation infrastructure, strengthening its role as a top-tier bay area and international innovation hub. In the first quarter of this year, the Guangdong-Hong Kong trade volume reached 252.04 billion yuan, up 14.1 percent year-on-year, with Guangdong's exports to the SAR growing by 11.9 percent, furthering the development of the GBA.

However, to further enhance the region's core competitiveness and seize on the business opportunities, it is imperative to ensure efficient and streamlined customs clearance and cargo flow. In 2018, the Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao customs bureaus signed a memorandum on cooperative and mutually helpful arrangements for Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao bridge ports, with the aim of making customs clearance more convenient by establishing a liaison mechanism. Accordingly, the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Three-Places-One-Lock Scheme" was launched in March this year, enabling fast, automatic clearance at land ports through the use of e-locks and GPS technology. This will make the cargo clearance process more efficient at border crossings and reduce logistics costs for companies.

Also, easier access to the freight network will make it more convenient for SMEs to take advantage of the region's geography to operate in different locations and maximize their business values. But for that, logistics companies need to optimize the customs clearance process, strengthen infrastructure, and improve operational efficiency while complying with policies and meeting consumer demands.

Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong have been the primary development engines of the GBA, and are indispensable to FedEx's growth strategy for the region. Consumers can swiftly connect with the global market through FedEx. For example, the FedEx APAC Hub at the Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport operates more than 200 international flights and 700 trucks per week, connecting South China and Hong Kong.

The integration of the logistics and information technology industries has given rise to smart logistics and digital technology, encouraging an increasing number of SMEs to leverage smart logistics applications to venture into the global markets.

In November 2023, Guangdong province released the "Three-Year Action Plan for Digital Greater Bay Area Construction" in order to promote smart connectivity and logistics data-sharing within the GBA. As a pilot city for international smart ports, Guangzhou has further improved its smart logistics system, which will facilitate the development of intra-regional and cross-border trade based on digital operation and management, intelligent facilities and equipment, and regularized cross-border cooperation.

Today, an increasing number of logistics companies are leveraging digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and the internet of things to provide more efficient, stable and cost-effective cross-border logistics services. This will increase the transparency of the supply chains and improve operational efficiency, reducing the logistics costs for SMEs and paving the way for them to extend their operations to global markets.

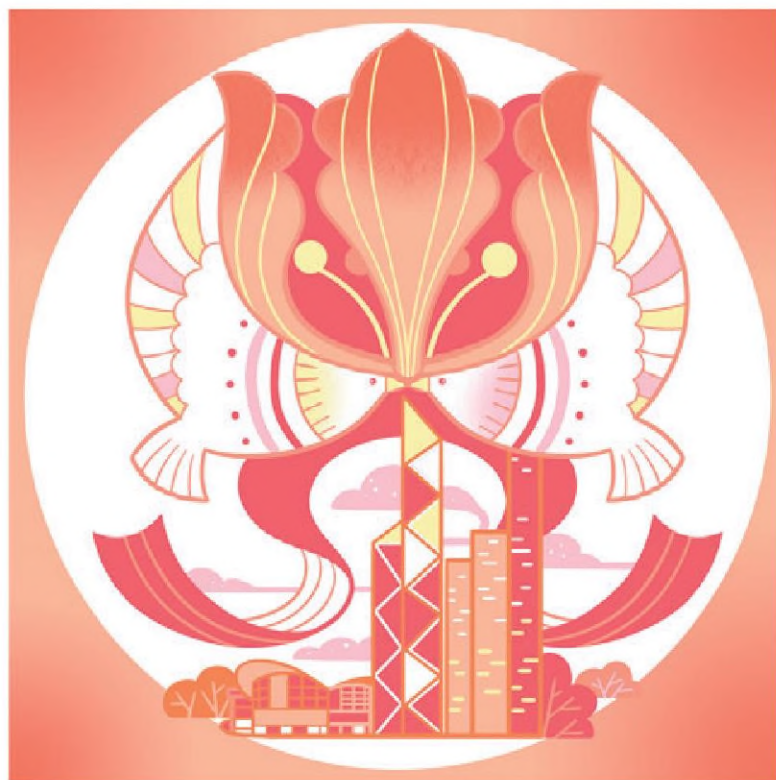
The GBA is becoming the leading driving force behind the digital transformation of global trade. The region has seen new forms of trade, including cross-border e-commerce.

As companies in the GBA are subject to different administrative regulations, they need not only standardized logistics services, but also customized logistics solutions so they can easily handle online orders and shipments, meet the needs for transporting special items and heavy cargo, and increase their logistics efficiency and transparency.

An increasing number of logistics service providers are aligning their services with e-commerce platforms to meet the growing needs of SMEs and consumers. By leveraging their extensive industrial experience and market insights, logistics companies can also provide local SMEs with insights into relevant laws and regulations, updates on market developments, analyses of emerging trade patterns in cross-border e-commerce and more, enabling them to seize the business opportunities.

As one of the most dynamic and promising bay areas, the GBA has attracted businesses of all sizes from home and abroad thanks to the lucrative business opportunities it offers. The logistics industry needs to establish close cooperation with these companies by providing more efficient, diverse and smart services, optimizing the region's integrated and high-quality development, so as to achieve sustainable growth.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

José Carlos Matias

# Macao bridges China, Portuguese-speaking nations

When the central government assigned the Macao Special Administrative Region to play the role of a Sino-Lusophone platform following the establishment of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and the Portuguese-Speaking Countries in 2003, it added a whole new dimension to the SAR's contribution to overall national development and the country's foreign relations. Since then, trade and investment have skyrocketed, people-to-people exchanges increased, and the cooperation agenda expanded, with the ministerial conferences being held in Macao, where the forum's permanent secretariat is located.

Over the past two decades, Macao has hosted countless exhibitions, seminars, conferences, trade shows, meetings, workshops, training programs and other events, bringing together tens of thousands of business leaders, professionals, officials and artists, thus making it the world's premier Sino-Lusophone people-to-people hub. However, expanding Macao's role as a Sino-Lusophone platform depends on the central government's regional and national development policies and projects for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the "Guang-



The author is director of Macau Business.

dong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone" in Hengqin play a pivotal role in this regard. By leveraging these opportunities, Macao can tap into a market of more than 80 million people with an economic output of 14 trillion yuan (\$1.93 trillion). This vision is mirrored in the 2019 Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which highlights Macao's "one center-one platform-one base" function within the GBA, with its Lusophone connection being a pivotal asset.

More recently, the 6th Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao in April approved the new "Strategic Plan for Economic and Trade Cooperation (2024-27)", expressing support for Macao's role as a platform within the GBA, with the focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, science and technology, tourism and culture, among other fields.

How can this potential be fully realized? How can Macao's role as a Sino-

Lusophone platform be strengthened?

The overall development policies outlined by the central authorities provide a solid foundation upon which further substantial progress could be built.

The joint development and integration of Hengqin can serve as a testing ground for Macao to play an enhanced role in the GBA. Attracting value-added companies from Lusophone countries to set up base in the cooperation zone is key to elevating the platform and maximizing customs arrangements. While Hengqin takes center stage, companies and business leaders from Lusophone countries may also find opportunities in other GBA locations such as Guangzhou's Nansha district or Qianhai in Shenzhen, alongside other cities in the GBA. As this is a two-way street, Macao's accumulated experience in interacting with Portuguese-speaking countries presents an opportunity to develop market expertise that can be used by mainland companies to expand their operations overseas.

Tourism, human resources training and other events spanning both Macao and Hengqin are key assets to be further developed. Additionally, forging new city-to-city cooperation arrangements in various fields can expand networks and common interests within the China-Portuguese-

speaking countries' "galaxy".

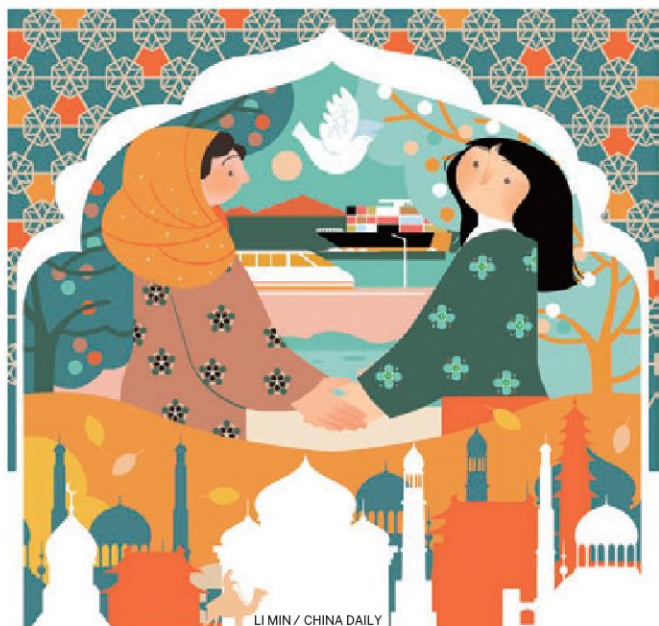
Deeper mutual understanding of different cultures, societies and specific development contexts of the Portuguese-speaking countries and the Greater Bay Area, greater focus on small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups, and working together to address global issues such as combating climate change and realizing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals constitute a cornerstone of a "high-quality cooperation model". It is a model grounded in pragmatism, shared interests, human capital mobility, a flexible and market-oriented approach, and concrete, ambitious — yet realistic — aims. This is important to avoid capabilities-expectations gaps.

Besides, it is important to stay focused on the cooperation agenda and ward off third-party actors who might want to weaken the platform and affect the growing ties between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries.

For the Macao SAR, celebrating the 25th anniversary of its return to China this year, it's about rolling up the sleeves, rising to the challenges, seizing the opportunities, and opening more doors.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

YU ZIRONG

## Future oriented

China and the Arab states are seeking to build on the achievements of the past two decades of cooperation

The past 20 years since the first China-Arab States Cooperation Forum have witnessed the rapid development of relations between China and the Arab states, and the two sides have been working hand in hand for peace and development. China and the Arab states will continue to build on existing cooperation outcomes, further deepen and broaden their cooperation, and promote



the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future.

Established in 2004, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum has become a platform for collective dialogue and practical cooperation between China and the Arab countries. The forum has made significant contributions to the advancement of China-Arab relations and set a stellar example of solidarity and collaboration among developing countries and South-South cooperation.

To start with, in the political domain, leaders from both sides have guided the way forward through head-of-state diplomacy.

The two decades since the forum's establishment has seen the most active high-level exchanges between China and Arab countries. In particular, over the past 10 years, Chinese President Xi Jinping has guided the development of bilateral relations on the fast track of accelerated upgrading.

In 2014, President Xi proposed to build a China-Arab community of common interests and a community with a shared future; in 2022, leaders from both sides agreed unanimously to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era. Upholding the principle of mutual respect and treating each other as equals, China and Arab states have been deepening political mutual trust, firmly supporting each other on issues that bear on their respective core interests and are of major concern to them, and working together to maintain regional and world peace and stability.

Second, in economy and trade, practical cooperation between China and Arab states has yielded fruitful outcomes.

Since the establishment of the forum in 2004, China and the Arab states have continuously enriched the content of the forum in key areas such as the economy and trade, energy, science and technology, and finance.

China has been the biggest trading partner of the Arab states for many consecutive years, with bilateral trade surging from \$36.7 billion in 2004 to \$398 billion in 2023. China has signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with all 22 Arab states and the Arab League; over 200 cooperation projects have been implemented by China and the Arab states under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative; the stock of direct

investment between China and Arab countries has exceeded \$30 billion.

From trade in goods and connectivity projects, to green and low-carbon growth and resource census, and then to information communication and space satellites, China-Arab practical cooperation has been expanding and extending from the earth to the sky, thus injecting strong impetus into economic and social development of both sides and building a road to development that benefits the people of both sides.

Third, in terms of people-to-people exchanges, the forum has promoted mutual learning and amity between the Chinese and Arab peoples.

The Chinese civilization and Arab civilization each have their own systems and characteristics, but both sides have always treated each other with an open and inclusive mindset and replaced conflict and confrontation with dialogue and exchange, thus becoming a stellar example of harmonious coexistence between countries with different social systems, beliefs and cultural traditions.

Since the establishment of the forum two decades ago, China and the Arab states have vigorously held various art festivals, symposiums on China-Arab civilization dialogue and other activities, and jointly launched specific projects such as the China-Arab Think Tank Alliance and the Sino-Arab Program of Mutual Translation and Publication of Ancient Books, to enhance mutual understanding and renew the China-Arab traditional friendship.

In addition to the Confucius Institutes jointly launched by China and the Arab countries, Arab countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Tunisia have voluntarily included the Chinese language in their national education systems. The establishment and development of the forum has not only promoted the all-round development of China-Arab relations, but also made significant contributions to peace and development in the region and the world at large.

In the process of advancing China-Arab cooperation, the two sides have not only enriched the content of building a community with a shared future for mankind, but also provided the international community with a brand-new model of cooperation and development concepts. Through the forum, China and the Arab states have jointly deepened and substantiated Belt and Road cooperation. The forum is also an important platform for strengthening South-South cooperation, providing a reference for other developing countries by sharing successful experience and development concepts.

Looking ahead, China should stand in solidarity with the Arab states to give full play to the forum's role in advancing China-Arab cooperation, and promote the development of

China-Arab relations.

To start with, China and the Arab states should continue to strengthen high-level exchanges, adhere to the right direction of building a China-Arab community with a shared future, inject new impetus into South-South cooperation, and work together to maintain a peaceful and stable environment necessary for the development and prosperity of both sides.

The two sides can organize various meetings and forums on a regular basis to exchange views on international and regional issues of common concern, to enhance mutual understanding and trust and lay a more solid foundation for deepening cooperation in other areas.

Second, China and the Arab states should consolidate and deepen cooperation in traditional areas such as trade, energy and infrastructure, while exploring new potential for cooperation in emerging areas such as the digital economy and artificial intelligence, to realize higher-quality mutual benefits and win-win results and higher-level coordinated development.

In particular, under the framework of the forum, China and the Arab states can set up working groups on economic and trade cooperation in accordance with different development stages, market requirements and cooperation demands of major subregions including West Asia and North Africa. In this way, the two sides can focus on specific issues such as high-quality development of trade and investment, alignment and integration of industrial and supply chains, and sustainable international development cooperation. They can tailor-make and improve the design of economic and trade cooperation policies based on actual circumstances to advance economic growth of both sides for mutual benefits and win-win outcomes.

Finally, China and Arab states should continue to develop rich and diverse cooperation in such areas as youth, journalism, education, culture, healthcare and radio and television broadcasting, to strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between the two civilizations.

Young people are the inheritors and drivers of China-Arab traditional friendship. China and the Arab countries should attach top priority to enhancing mutual understanding and affinity between young people from both sides and improve their capability to make them a reliable force driving the future development of bilateral cooperation.

The author is vice-president of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

BAINAN

## Closer China-Arab ties expected

Forum will enhance people-to-people bonds, mutual understanding and consensus between the two entities to build a community with a shared future for the new era

The 10th China-Arab Cooperation Forum was held in Beijing on May 30 and this year marked the 20th anniversary of the forum. Over the past two decades, China-Arab ties have continued to reach new heights, from new-type partnership and strategic cooperative relations to strategic partnerships, and then to jointly building a China-Arab community with a shared future. The forum has made crucial contributions to that.



Looking back, the forum has become an important channel for China and Arab countries to enhance political mutual trust, which is the cornerstone of stable and far-reaching China-Arab relations. Its political dialogue mechanism supports each other's core interests and major concerns.

Among them, China firmly supports the establishment of an independent state of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty based on the 1967 border and with East Jerusalem as its capital, and supports the state to become an official member of the United Nations; China stands up for the Middle East peace process, supports Arab states in choosing their own development path, and opposes linking terrorism with specific ethnic groups or religions. The Arab states uphold the one-China principle; they support China's efforts to maintain national security and further prosper democracy in Hong Kong under the framework of "one country, two systems"; they take a stand against religious extremists, ethnic separatists, and terrorist forces engaging in anti-China separatist activities; they also object to some Western countries' attempts to contain China by slapping economic sanctions and weaponizing trade.

The forum has become an important platform for China and Arab countries to hold extensive consultations and jointly contribute to the Belt and Road Initiative, which offers sustained vitality to China-Arab cooperation. Its 19 regular exchange mechanisms, including the entrepreneurs' conference and the energy cooperation conference, have effectively promoted the mutual development of complementarity in economy and trade between the two sides. Since the establishment of the forum 20 years ago, the trade volume between China and Arab countries has increased from \$36.7 billion in 2004 to \$398 billion in 2023, an increase of about 11 times. China has signed cooperation documents on the BRI with all 22 Arab countries and the Arab League, achieving full coverage in the Arab world. Within this framework, the two sides have implemented more than 200 large projects, and the

fruits of cooperation have benefited about 2 billion people.

The forum has built a bridge for cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries. Over the past 20 years, people-to-people exchanges between the two sides have become increasingly frequent, with various cultural exchange mechanisms such as the Arabic Arts Festival, the Arab Women's Forum, and the China-Arab health cooperation forum making remarkable achievements.

In March 2023, China, as a mediator, successfully facilitated the restoration of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran, advancing the peace process in the Gulf region. In May 2024, China hosted a reconciliation conference between the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) for the first time, striving to promote peace between Palestine and Israel. Looking ahead, the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative will inject new vitality into China-Arab cooperation.

First, the forum should work together with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to implement the Global Security Initiative. The Middle East region is not only a pivotal node of China's peripheral diplomacy, but also has a bearing on China's energy and economic cooperation zones, and is also a defense for China to combat the "three forces" of terrorism, separatism and extremism and maintain stability of China's western border. Faced with the sheer momentum of hi-tech development in the Gulf region and the urgent demand for cooperation with China's high-end industrial chain, the Middle East has gradually become a pivot of the United States' strategy to contain China. This can be seen in its "India-Israel-United Arab Emirates-US" (I2U2) mechanism aimed at hedging the BRI. The Middle East and Central Asia are adjacent to each other, and it is a consensus for all parties to jointly get out of an awkward situation and pursue prosperity and peace in order to avoid development obstacles and ethnic ideologies being intertwined there through mixing and fermenting religious and cultural factors. As a multilateral platform for dialogue and cooperation, the forum can collaborate with the SCO, which focuses on regional security and stability, to achieve higher-level coordination and complementarity; jointly promote the construction of a security architecture in the Middle East; establish a "security cooperation seminar" mechanism; seek interaction and cooperation between China and Arab countries in resolving

regional conflicts, opposing terrorism, maintaining maritime security and other security fields; and jointly create an environment for regional peace and stable development.

Second, the forum should join hands with BRICS to promote the Global Development Initiative. At present, Arab countries show an unprecedentedly strong desire for peace, security, and stability, with its strategic autonomy enhanced and a strategic shift toward "looking East"; oil producing countries in the Gulf region are also competing for a first-mover advantage in the fourth industrial revolution to ensure sustainable economic growth. The energy cooperation between China and Arab countries has expanded to various fields such as renewable and alternative energy, peaceful use of nuclear energy, and technology transfer. As an effective carrier for promoting the scale and effectiveness of China-Arab economic and trade cooperation, the forum collaborates with BRICS that focuses on the regional economy, supports the modernization of Arab countries, promotes collective development through regional growth, and drives the construction of a shared community of development through a community of shared interests.

Third, the Global Civilization Initiative should be implemented on the basis of mutual learning among civilizations. Over the past decade, China's exchanges with Middle Eastern countries in finance, investment, technology, arms sales, politics, security and other fields have been increasing, developing from the low end of the industrial chain to the high end. This has brought about competition between China and the US in the economic and trade field in the region, while reminding us of the so-called clash of civilizations. Dialogue among civilizations should be an effective way to reverse and regulate the conflicting reality. The forum will be committed to creating a broader pattern of people-to-people exchanges, setting up the China-Arab Center for the Global Civilization Initiative with the Arab side, and accelerating the construction of platforms such as the Think Tank Alliance, the Youth Development Forum, the University Alliance, and the Cultural and Tourism Cooperation Research Center. Therefore, the people-to-people bonds will be enhanced, mutual understanding and consensus will be promoted through dialogue among civilizations, and a China-Arab community with a shared future for the new era will be built with utmost efforts.

The author is deputy director of the China-Arab Research Institute at Ningxia University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

# Gaming technology enables worldwide culture sharing

English and French versions of Dunhuang's Digital Library Cave give 'tourists' new experience, **Fang Aiqing** reports.

The potential of gaming technology facilitating cultural exchanges is increasing, exemplified in the English and French versions of a gamelike program, the Digital Library Cave, as it enables an expansive user base in taking a virtual tour of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Northwest China's Gansu province.

Available on the Digital Dunhuang website since April 8, the global versions save foreign users the long and arduous journey to the grottoes, while enabling them to virtually witness and experience the rise and fall of the Library Cave that spanned more than a millennium.

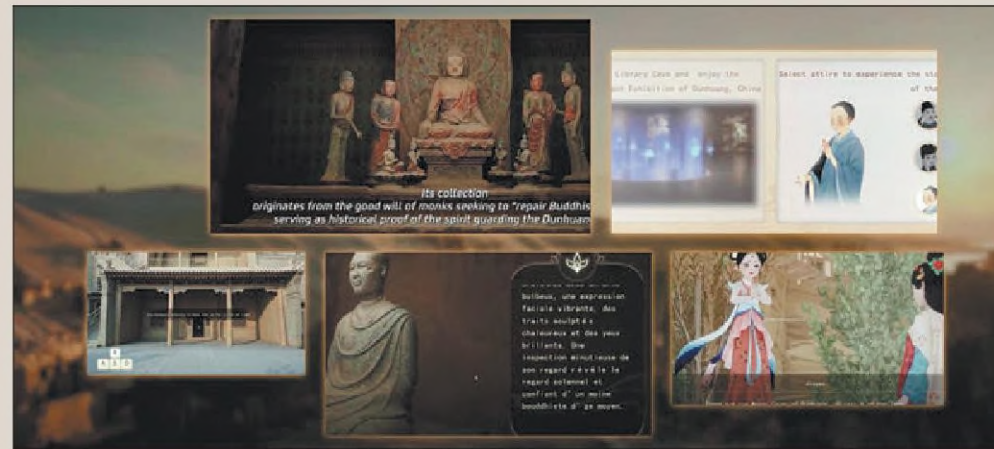
The Library Cave, or Cave 17, is a wonder itself, not only because of the precious ancient documents found inside it. It also beholds the mystery of it remaining out of sight for almost 1,000 years and the twists and turns it went through after being accidentally discovered by Taoist priest Wang Yuanlu in 1900.

The once sand-buried treasure trove of more than 60,000 Buddhist manuscripts, government and socioeconomic documents, silk paintings, embroidery and sacred articles is among the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century.

By playing the role of a time-traveling explorer, users get to "participate" in a thousand years of history, from the time when the cave was built in the mid-9th century to when it was sealed and rediscovered. They also "experience" how the relics were lost or scattered, as a lot of them are now kept overseas.

A joint effort between Dunhuang Academy and technology company Tencent, the Digital Library Cave has reproduced, with a millimeter-level accuracy, the external cliff face of the Mogao Caves, its 16th and 17th caves, as well as the murals, statues and relics housed there.

It applies three-dimensional laser scanning, modeling and reconstruction technologies, as well as technological solutions and visual styles frequently



Snapshots of the English version of the gamelike Digital Library Cave program, through which users can play the role of a time-traveling explorer of a millennium's twists and turns at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Northwest China's Gansu province.

used in digital games, such as physically based rendering and global dynamic lighting.

Users will interact with eight real historical figures appearing as non-player characters and can zoom in on 21 documents discovered in the Library Cave in a 3D exhibition hall.

According to Tencent, the week following the release of the Digital Library Cave in April last year saw 14 million users visit the game via the WeChat mini-program, Cloud Museum of Dunhuang Caves.

In September, the project won the "Star of Outstanding" title at the 2023 Global Awards for World Heritage Education Innovative Cases, given by the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO.

Xue Xiaoli, product designer of the Digital Library Cave, says the project's global editions aim to provide scholars of Dunhuang studies and aficionados of Dunhuang culture from around the world alternative digital access to the



Diego Monteiro, senior lecturer of computer science at the Paris-based Ecole Supérieure d'Informatique, Electronique, Automatique, shares the Digital Library Cave program to show gaming tech's user-friendly functions in London in April.

artifacts found in the Library Cave.

With a cover of a "game" targeting a wider audience, the program tells Dunhuang's history in a more direct, vivid and immersive way to audiences with different cultural backgrounds and age groups, Xue adds.

"Gaming technology is now extending into many more fields," says Diego Monteiro, senior lecturer of computer science at Paris-based Ecole Supérieure d'Informatique, Electronique, Automatique. "As technology continues to evolve, the increasingly refined audiovisual effects, more immersive storytelling experiences, and convenience across multiple platforms and devices are progressively altering how people perceive the world."

He says the Digital Library Cave, an application of gaming technology for cultural promotion, showcases these capabilities at an impressive level, allowing more people to appreciate Chinese culture. Monteiro says that he's looking forward to seeing more such works that will enable people around

the world to experience the charm of each other's cultures.

A young historian from Mexico named Diana says the program is a great way to learn and that she would be intrigued to have such technology for museums and cultures to get to know what is inside the many pyramids in her home country, including the Kukulkan Pyramid in the city of Chichen Itza that is well-protected but inaccessible.

She tested the interactive program for a video by YChina, or Foreigner Research Institute, which features foreigners' experiences and understanding of Chinese culture, entertainment and technology through short videos.

Su Bomin, director of the Dunhuang Academy, says that the Digital Library Cave reunites, reshapes and re-presents the unearthed cultural relics at home and abroad and makes them reborn in a fresh way. This opens up a new model for the transformation and presentation of traditional culture, showing active exploration in global digital sharing.

He addressed a sub-forum at the World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit in Zhejiang province in November, where it was announced that the two foreign language versions were under preparation.

According to Su, the academy has been digitalizing the frescoes, murals and painted sculptures for more than three decades, and in recent years, investing greater efforts to promote the culture around the world.

"We adapt to changes in people's means of obtaining information as a result of the development in internet technologies, such as increased time spent on phones," he says.

He adds that with programs like the Digital Library Cave, or other virtual tours and multimedia products, as well as a database featuring Dunhuang's arts and literature, the popularization of Dunhuang culture is going better than expected.

Contact the writer at [fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn)



Left: In the Digital Library Cave program, users can interact with eight non-player characters, all based on real historical figures, including Wang Yuanlu, the Taoist priest who discovered the Library Cave in 1900. The cave had remained out of sight for almost 1,000 years. Right: The digital program has reproduced the 1,600-meter-long external cliff face of the Mogao Caves that is accurate to the millimeter. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



What's on

Whispers of creatures

Ink artist Yu Fe'an (1889-1959) was born into a well-connected family with an extensive collection of classical art and ancient texts, which nourished his mind and soul from childhood, and prompted him to commit to the ink art tradition. Yu developed a keen interest in the paintings of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), known for their vivid detail and elegant colors, and specialized in the flower-and-bird genre, which he was able to render in the Song style. Yu's mastery at portraying nature advanced with his enthusiasm for growing fruits, vegetables and plants, and feeding fishes and birds. His lifestyle allowed him to make close, intimate observations of life, and his landscape paintings on display demonstrate an alternative understanding of nature. *Listening to the Whisper in Silence*, an ongoing exhibition in Shenzhen,



Guangdong province, is a display of ink paintings from the collection of Beijing Fine Art Academy, where Yu was deputy director in the 1950s. The show is being held at the He Xiangning Art Museum until Aug 4. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 9013 Shennan Dadao, Nanshan district, Shenzhen, Guangdong province. 0755-2660-4540.

Bell ring echoes

Hailing from Guangdong province, the great ink artist Guan Shanyue (1912-2000) stood in awe of the magnificent wild landscapes of northwestern China, which are quite unlike those of southern China. He first visited the region in the early 1940s, when the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) forced many to flee to southwestern China. Among the refugees were artists who journeyed even further westward to are-

as inhabited by a variety of ethnic groups, where they captured enthralling landscapes and cultures. *Great Bells Beyond the Great Wall*, a long-term exhibition ongoing at the Xinjiang Art Museum, in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, reviews Guan's westward voyage, during which he painted the northwest and its people, and copied the murals at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Gansu province. The exhibition was originally mounted in 2020 by the Guan Shanyue Art Museum in Shenzhen,



Guangdong province, in collaboration with the Dunhuang Academy. The current exhibition in Urumqi also includes paintings Guan made of Xinjiang during his visits in the 1970s. 11 am-6:30 pm, closed on Mondays. 167 Youhao Beilu, Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. 0991-5515-752.

Art and value

*Absence and Encore*, a show now underway at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Yinchuan in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, investigates the complicated relationship between those who make art, and those who purchase it. Gathering dozens of artworks by 62 figures from the contemporary art scene, the exhibition explores the qualities that not only impress viewers, but also lead some of them to purchase pieces, and lend their col-



lections to exhibitions. The show raises the questions of how a link between art, artists and collectors is created, and how this connection can be maintained in a healthy manner to promote the creation of art and bring fine work to the attention of a wider group of people. The exhibition runs until July 3. 10 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 12 Hele Lu, Xingqing district, Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region. 0951-8426-111.

## LIFE

Tourists looking to explore Yibin in Southwest China's Sichuan province will be surprised by the diverse ancient architecture, natural beauty, cultural history and historical figures found all around the region.

For first-time visitors who stay in a hotel in the center of Yibin, one of the first things they will pass is an impressive ancient building.

The spectacular 260-year-old Dagan Tower, meaning "grand view" tower in Chinese, looks so unusual at first sight and reminds visitors of China's imperial past, says Jia Yuan, a young visitor from Beijing.

Known as the first city along the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, Yibin boasts many ancient buildings that appeal to history buffs.

The city is situated at the confluence of three major rivers and one popular tourist destination is a large platform in the city center where visitors can see how the Jinsha and Minjiang rivers converge into the Yangtze River.

Standing on the platform, visitors can raise their heads and see an ancient white pagoda in the White Pagoda Mountain Park.

The eight-floor brick pagoda with a height of 35.8 meters was built in 1569 for local religious people, men of letters and scholars to store their classics, according to an illustration in the park.

In January 2001, the Cuiqing district government of Yibin built a sight-viewing platform around the pagoda. Ever since, it has been an optimal site for appreciating both the city and river scenes below.

Yibin is a well-lit city and the night scene below the platform is breathtaking, Jia says.

With an area of 5.4 square kilometers and 80 percent of its territory covered with trees and plants, the park draws visitors with its pagoda, helping visitors to forget the hustle and bustle of metropolises like Beijing, he says.

About 3.5 km from the pagoda is the famed Lübei Pond Park. Lübei means "flowing cup" in Chinese.

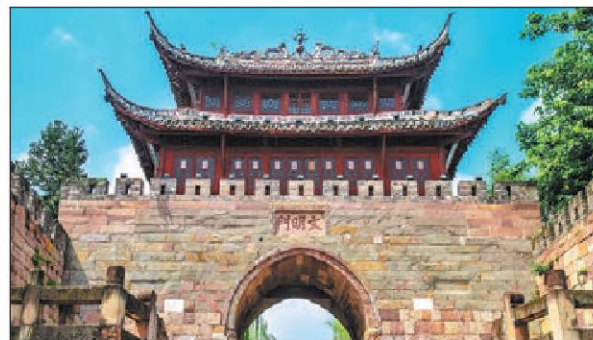
The park is a must for literature lovers because of Huang Tingjian, a poet from East China's Jiangxi province of the Northern Song period (960-1127) whose three-year stay in Yibin had him reciting and writing poems with friends beside the pond.

The pond is in a zigzag shape with nine curves. It is said that Huang and his friends had to drink the liquor in a cup and pen a poem whenever the flowing cup stopped near one of them.

High on both sides of the pond are imposing odd rocks on which are 128 ancient inscriptions by famous ancient men.

The mention of liquor reminds visitors of Wuliangye, one of China's best-known liquor brands in Yibin, which has an over 4,000-year history of production. Wuliangye Group is a mega-sized State-owned enterprise with liquor as its primary business.

With rich biodiversity, Yibin boasts the perfect environment for the microorganisms used for liquor-making to live and reproduce, accredited by UNESCO and UNFAO as one of the most suitable



Left: A city tower and gate first built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in the Nanxi district of Yibin, Sichuan province. Right: The "first bend" of the Yangtze River, which passes through Nanxi district. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



# Yibin has much appeal for history buffs

Sichuan tourist destination holds a variety of cultural surprises, Huang Zhiling and Peng Chao report.

areas for the production of high-quality pure distilled liquor.

Made from sorghum, rice, glutinous rice, wheat and corn with ancient recipes, Wuliangye is one of the world's earliest spirits. It is produced with five grains, and represents China's strong aroma style of liquor. It has been enlisted into the first batch of products protected under the landmark China-EU Agreement on Geographical Indications.

With a planned size of 18 sq km, its industrial park is accredited as a National AAAA-rated scenic spot open to visitors free of charge.

In the park that is of the size of an awe-inspiring small city, visitors who enjoy ancient buildings are mostly attracted by the Changfasheng distillery located on a tranquil street within walking distance from where the Jinsha and Minjiang rivers converge into the Yangtze River.

Workers still toil inside the ancient building of Changfasheng, which has fermenting pits dating back to the Ming Dynasty. Inside, the distillery still resembles what it was hundreds of years ago.

The company has a large number of pits for continuous fermentation and uninterrupted use. Its fermentation pits have an uninterrupted production time of up to 656 years.

One cellar's mud with the microbial community from Changfasheng dating back to the early Ming Dynasty is part of the permanent collection of the National Museum of China and is the only "living cultural relic" in the collection of the museum, says Sun Yiling, a member of the integrated media center of Wuliangye Group, which is in charge of the company's publicity.

In a 30-minute taxi ride from Changfasheng, visitors find them-



Top: The Changfasheng distillery has the oldest of Wuliangye's fermentation pits, built during the Ming Dynasty. Above: A Ming-era pagoda in Yibin. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

troops started an all-out invasion of China.

To take refuge, people from important Chinese institutions such as the Central Research Institute and preparatory office of the Central Museum in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, which was the seat of the Kuomintang government, and other institutions of higher learning like the National Tongji University — today's Tongji University in Shanghai — stayed in Lizhuang from 1940 to 1946.

After their campus in Shanghai was destroyed by Japanese warplanes, the teachers and students of the National Tongji University passed through nine Chinese provinces and Vietnam, traveling more than 11,000 km before settling down in Lizhuang, which was beyond the range of the Japanese military, in 1940, thanks to the help of Qian Zining, a graduate of the university who was the boss of a papermaking factory in Yibin.

Lizhuang, which covered an area of 1 sq km, had 3,000 inhabitants at the time. To accommodate 12,000 students and scholars, locals provided them with homes and temples as teaching buildings and residences, according to Fan Wangna, a town guide.

As the Japanese army never entered Sichuan, the National Tongji University continued enrolling students in Lizhuang and the institutions that relocated staff were able to continue working.

Adhering to the belief of saving the country with science and serving the country with academics at a time marked by a shortage of materials and the struggle against poverty, scholars never stopped learning or researching.

Forty-three people who worked or studied in Lizhuang in the

selves at Lizhuang, one of China's historically and culturally famous towns.

Sitting on the southern bank of the Yangtze River and 27 km from Yibin Airport, Lizhuang has a history of 1,478 years, with well-preserved ancient streets and lanes.

In the Yuwang Temple, visitors can marvel at one 200-year-old stone carving of nine dragons, which looks quite similar to that of the Palace Museum in Beijing.

On the 24 window bars of the main hall of Zhang's Ancestral Temple built in 1839 and covering 4,000 square meters, there are 48 carved cranes around which are hollowed-out cloud patterns.

The crane figurines have 48 different postures, either spreading their wings, flying or looking for food.

In addition to ancient architecture, Lizhuang is best known as an academic refuge during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

After the Lugou Bridge Incident in Beijing on July 7, 1937, Japanese

1940s later became academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, says Li Chun, head of the Lizhuang Ancient Town Administrative Committee.

One of them is Wu Mengchao (1922-2021), who studied at the National Tongji University's medical college.

Known as "the father of hepatobiliary surgery" in China, Wu had saved or extended the lives of more than 14,000 patients before he passed away at the age of 99 in 2021.

In 2011, the International Astronomical Union named a minor planet No 17606, discovered by the Beijing Schmidt CCD Asteroid Program, after Wu, in recognition of his achievements.

Wu revisited Lizhuang three times. A photo of him sitting leisurely in a bamboo chair on Mat Street in Lizhuang in 2012 is kept in a showroom in the National Tongji University's medical college.

In 2016, Wu operated on a patient at the Tongji Lizhuang Hospital to mark its opening, the hospital's first operation, where Wu served as the lifelong honorary president of the hospital set up with assistance from Tongji University in Shanghai.

Bordering Lizhuang is Yibin's Nanxi district. Lizhuang was once under the administration of Nanxi, then a county, until 1983 when it became part of the city of Yibin, says Guo Zhanchun, head of the Nanxi district integrated media center.

What impresses many first-time visitors to Nanxi most is its 1,109-meter-long city wall built between 1457 and 1464 consisting of three city gates, three towers and wharves, the vast expanse of the Yangtze River and the green mountains.

There are more than 30 km of well-paved and well-shaded roads along the Yangtze River for visitors to view the magnificent scene along the banks.

After dinner, many residents flock to the roads to exercise or run, says Chen Yuan, executive director of the publicity department of the Nanxi district committee of the Communist Party of China.

On May 19, over 3,000 people from different areas of China participated in the first leg of the 5th National Harmonious Rural Health Run held in Nanxi.

The run was guided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, supported by the General Administration of Sport of China and hosted by the China Farmer Physical Culture Association, the Sichuan Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Yibin government.

Organizers say one reason why Nanxi has been chosen as the site for the run is that it has a fabulous natural environment.

Wei Peijun, a middle-aged farmer from Puyang, Central China's Henan province, says that he enjoyed his run in Nanxi.

"The bucolic scenery of mountains and the river (Yangtze River) on the way is terrific," he says.

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## Forum: AI will enhance but not replace human interpreters

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai  
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Ian Phillips, director of the news and media division of the Department of Global Communications at the United Nations, recently stated at a conference, "I would encourage people to continue to seek excellence in their fields, but to use machine technology and innovation to enhance what they do."

"Maybe over time, humans and machines will come together in any industry that allows each to do a little bit of the work, but I don't think machines will replace humans altogether," he said in an interview during the conference themed "Reshaping the Translation and Interpretation Paradigm: Openness and Integration".

The 2024 CIUTI International Conference was held at Shanghai International Studies University from Tuesday to Friday. CIUTI is a Belgium-based international association of university institutes with translation and interpretation programs.

Specific topics of the conference include graduate employment, translation education in the con-

text of AI, translation education and online platforms, and translation studies and intercultural communication.

Artificial intelligence should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat to existing jobs, including translation and interpretation posts, Phillips said.

The increasingly non-negligible AI technology is here to enhance people's daily work, complement what they do, and perform some functions that allow individuals to focus more in-depth on other things instead of removing humans from the production process, he says.

Phillips says that in their everyday work, they use AI tools to look at UN reports to try to distill them into languages that the general public may better understand. Their view is to experiment with it in a cautious, slow approach. And there is always a human editor to check it and verify it.

"There is nothing quite as good as a human interpreter who is highly trained. Machines don't pick up on body language. There are some subtle nuances that machines don't pick up on. It allows for something



The opening ceremony of the 2024 CIUTI International Conference at Shanghai International Studies University on Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

machines will never be able to replicate," he says.

Peter Dawkins, chief of the Web services section of the Department of Global Communications at the UN, echoes that while tools and technologies are speculated to be more applicable in less formal circumstances, such as using translation devices when traveling,

machines will not take over anytime soon in the highly professional need for interpretation.

"Such scenarios include interpretation with government officials or important businesspeople where there is much more subtlety in tone of voice or body language, and also in high stakes with finances, economics, international diplomacy,

peace and security," he says.

Having tried various tools to do a live transcription, which follows a meeting and puts the language into text, they have never found one tool that is 100 percent accurate, says Dawkins.

Such situations are easy to understand particularly with English, as people from different backgrounds may have been trained with different ways of speaking.

"Machines make obvious transcription errors, especially when it's a non-native English speaker. Such mistakes could lead to devastating communication misunderstandings," says Dawkins.

Li Zhengren, dean of the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation at Shanghai International Studies University, says that when facing new situations, particularly those posed by AI technology, a good translator and interpreter at present and in the future must be someone who can make full use of machines to reduce work intensity and increase efficiency, correct and polish machine translation, and be at a high level

in both Chinese and English.

"Excellent translation talent will continue to play an important role as globalization increases and the country further deepens reform and opening-up," says Li.

He points out that machine translation has a fatal weakness — its quality cannot be guaranteed. The basis of machine learning is big data and massive open content is part of it, resulting in average quality.

"For example, if there is a mistake in content with a relatively high number of clicks by online users, the content will be more represented in the content for big data. Also, there can be uncorrected mistakes and outdated expressions. They cannot be erased," says Li.

Issues regarding legal liability and confidentiality are among other reasons that make human translators more reliable, he says.

"However, AI shouldn't be seen as an enemy. For the progress and development of society as a whole, it is a great thing that general, repetitive and plain conversations no longer need to be translated by costly human resources," Li says.

## CULTURE

## Artisans build more complete picture of China

Crafters want Westerners to see full range of talents, **Zheng Wanyin** reports in London.

Sitting in her office in central London surrounded by exquisite traditional Chinese dresses known as *qipao*, round fans and repurposed porcelain plates, Zhang Jie laments: "It's a bit regrettable that when people think of Chinese things, their first impression remains as cheap and low quality."

"They still think we Chinese people are not able to create things, while actually, we are far beyond that. We do create, and there are many highly skilled craftsmen in China who dedicate their entire lives to mastering a craft."

For six years, Zhang and her partner Xiao Yueqi have been facilitating the global expansion of Chinese artists as the co-founders of China Garden, a London-based commercial platform that introduces and sells the works of Chinese artisans in the United Kingdom.

While admitting the challenge of breaking the stereotypes surrounding "made-in-China" products, she has also observed an encouraging trend: a growing number of Chinese people are experiencing increased cultural confidence, and are committed to making their voices heard by promoting their culture globally.

And somehow, surprisingly, a significant portion of these unofficial cultural exchange ambassadors are young people, with many of them having spent time living or studying in the West, Zhang said.

"Stepping out often makes it easier for us to reflect on our cultural background and roots," she said.

At this year's London Craft Week, China Garden staged an exhibition showcasing the talents of eight esteemed makers and artists in ceramics, textiles and silverware, and was by no means the only Chinese contributor to the event.

The 10th edition of London Craft Week, held from May 13 to May 19, witnessed the largest-ever participation from Chinese artists, with a total of four organizations involved, supported by the Cultural Section of China's Embassy in the UK.

**Plenty of surprises**

Some 108 pieces, crafted by around 70 artisans and encompassing ceramics, lacquerware, stone carving, embroidery, and more were gathered together to offer people a glimpse of the latest developments and achievements in contemporary Chinese crafts.

"China always brings something surprising," said Guy Salter, chairman and founder of London Craft Week. "Part of the role of London Craft Week, from the beginning, has been to bring people together. So, I wanted to make sure that at the very first event, we had an exhibition from China, given its ancient and time-honored civilization."

As the increasingly large number of home-grown designers enter the field, Salter noted that the budding community is putting a singular spin on traditional craftsmanship by embracing contemporary aesthetics, blending Eastern and Western techniques, and adopting sustainable practices, all while referencing their traditions.



**Clockwise from top left:** Li Liyan (second from left), minister counselor for cultural affairs at China's Embassy in the UK, and Guy Salter (right), chairman and founder of London Craft Week, tour the *Chinese Design: Harmony in Diversity* exhibition on May 13 in London during the 10th London Craft Week; A Portuguese student wears a Chinese-style floral headdress, known as a *zanhua*, on May 18. The headdress style originates from Quanzhou, East China's Fujian province; A visitor explores the *Maritime Echoes: The Story of Stone* exhibition at the Quanzhou Pavilion on May 15 during London Craft Week; Miao ethnic designer Yang Chunlin and his mother, Yang Shiyong, an inheritor of Miao embroidery skills, showcase a representation of the London landmark Big Ben during the exhibition titled *Chinese Design: Harmony in Diversity*.



I was struck by the blend of traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics, demonstrating skills honed over centuries but seeming totally modern."

**Victoria Broackes,**  
director of  
the London Design Biennale

Victoria Broackes, director of the London Design Biennale, echoed Salter, saying: "I was struck by the blend of traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics, demonstrating skills honed over centuries but seeming totally modern."

For example, Yang Chunlin, a designer from the Miao ethnic group and the founder of the fashion brand Gu Axin, incorporates Miao embroidery into modern garments, keeping the intricate technique alive within today's fashion industry.

Additionally, at an exhibition organized by the Quanzhou Pavilion with a theme centered around stones, there was a dedicated area spotlighting how young Chinese artists from the port city in East China's Fujian province that is renowned for its stone sculpture, stone architecture, and stone exports, repurpose industrial stone waste into aesthetically pleasing furniture and home ornaments.

Innovations reintroduce centuries-old craftsmanship into modern daily lives, thereby providing economic support to the crafters.

As Yang's fashion brand gains significant attention on Chinese social media, boasting more than 5 million followers and maintaining a stable sales volume through e-commerce,

the Miao designer can now bring his 60-year-old mother, Yang Shiyong, an inheritor of Miao embroidery traditions, out of their small village in Southwest China's Guizhou province, to showcase the ethnic culture in cities including London, Paris, Milan and Budapest.

Meanwhile, the embroidery artisans in Yang's hometown can earn bigger incomes, thanks to increased sales, according to Yang Chunlin.

**Diversity highlighted**

Traditional handicrafts in China inject new energy into rural revitalization and poverty alleviation, said Minister of China's Embassy in the UK Zhao Fei.

More than 6,700 intangible cultural heritage workshops have been established across the country, with at least 2,100 located in impoverished areas, he said.

In addition to the modern interpretation of traditional crafts, Salter was also amazed by the emphasis placed by Chinese organizations on the diversity and multiplicity of Chinese culture.

"This time, I think, what is so special is to see the diversity," he said. "People from different parts of China who are raised in different traditions come together."

Lu Chuan, curator of the exhibition held at the Quanzhou Pavilion, pointed out that China cannot be perceived as a singular cultural entity because each region within its vast territory possesses unique characteristics.

"This is why she said she hopes the world can pay attention to Quanzhou, and she believes that dialogues between cities connected by water and ports, such as Quanzhou and London, can build empathy among people."

"What matters to us in this exhibition is seeing the world from a local perspective and the local from a global perspective," she said.

Young artisans who took part share the idea that the world needs to have a correct understanding of China and its often-overlooked creativity and long-lasting craftsmanship.

"I feel compelled to speak up, not only for my country but ultimately for myself because I am Chinese," Zhang explained.

"So, when others admire China, I sense they are also admiring me. If they appreciate Chinese culture, I feel proud because of my heritage."

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**Above from left:** An exhibition titled *Beyond the Mountain: Ceramic, Textile and Silver* at China Garden, a London-based platform showcasing Chinese crafts, during the 10th London Craft Week from May 13 to May 19, features a *qipao* featuring phoenix motifs. A branch draped in lace, a *qipao* made with recycled PET fabric simulating silk texture, and round fans that blend the techniques of Chinese and French embroidery are also on display. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY