

Culinary feat

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# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024

## Ascender lifts off with lunar samples

Historic Chang'e 6 mission to moon's far side completes most important task

By ZHAO LEI zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

China's Chang'e 6 robotic probe completed the most important part of its lunar adventure on Tuesday morning when its ascender, carrying samples collected over two days in a sealed container, lifted off from the moon's far side.

The ascender — one of the four major components of the unmanned spacecraft — started its ascent engine at 7:38 am and flew for about six minutes before reaching lunar orbit, according to the China National Space Administration.

The return of the ascender to lunar orbit marks the successful completion of the first sampling and liftoff operations on the moon's far side by any country, the space administration said.

The Chang'e 6 probe 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.

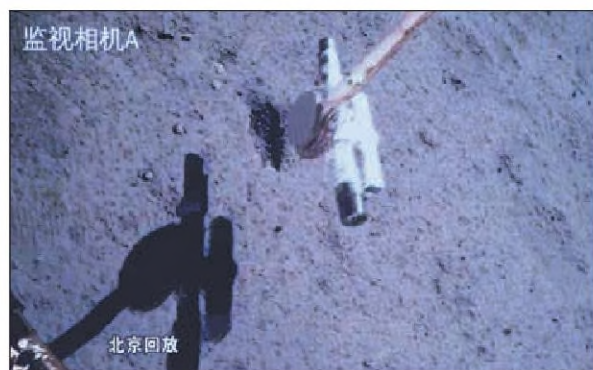
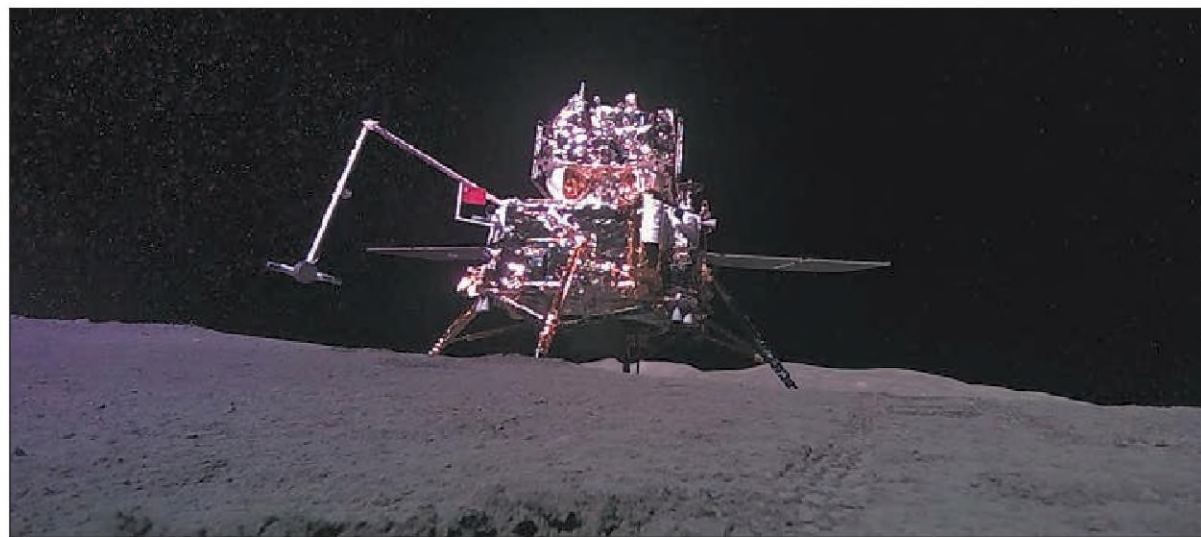
The 8.35-metric-ton spacecraft consists of an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a reentry capsule.

After a host of sophisticated maneuvers, the lander touched down on the moon's far side on Sunday morning. It soon started using a scoop to collect surface regolith, the loose material covering solid rock, and a drill to dig up subsurface material.

At the same time, several mission payloads, including a panoramic camera, a lunar mineralogical spectrometer and a lunar soil composition analytical instrument, were activated for operation on the moon.

The results of their survey will play significant roles in the measurement and study of the moon's landscapes, mineral compositions and shallow structures, according to the space administration.

Three European scientific apparatus carried by the Chang'e 6 lander — a radon-measuring instrument from France's national space agency, a dedicated negative ion instrument developed by the Swedish Institute of Space Physics with support from the European Space Agency, and a passive laser retroreflector from



Clockwise from top: The combination of Chang'e 6's lander and ascender is captured on Monday on the far side of the moon by a mobile camera. The photo was transmitted back to Earth by the camera, which was carried to the moon by Chang'e 6. CHINA NATIONAL SPACE ADMINISTRATION VIA XINHUA Hu Hao (left), chief designer of the Chang'e 6 mission, Li Dong (right), chief designer of the Long March 5 carrier rocket, and Wang Qiong (front), deputy chief designer of the Chang'e 6 mission, discuss the progress of the mission on Tuesday at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center. JI LIWANG / XINHUA A playback video shows the Chang'e 6 probe collecting rock and soil samples on the far side of the moon. The Chang'e 6 lifted off from the lunar surface with the collected samples on Tuesday. JI LIWANG / XINHUA

Italy's National Institute for Nuclear Physics — also worked on the lunar surface over the past two days.

In addition, a mini-rover carrying a special camera was released from the lander, and it moved around the lander to take pictures, the administration said.

In the next stage, the ascender will remain in lunar orbit for a certain period of time and then rendezvous and dock with the combination of orbiter and reentry capsule. It will transfer the sample-loaded container to the reentry capsule before undocking.

In the final leg of the 53-day mission, the orbiter-reentry capsule combination will fly away from the lunar orbit and return to Earth orbit, where the pair will break up. The reentry capsule will then conduct a host of complicated maneuvers to return, as planned, to the Siziwang Banner Landing Site in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Giuseppe Reibaldi, president and founder of the Moon Village Association, a Vienna-based NGO, and executive secretary of the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities, said this is the first time in human history that

samples have been collected from the moon's far side.

"The formation and composition of lunar materials have yet to be well understood, so to analyze samples from the far side will make a major contribution to related research," he said.

Yang Yuguang, a senior space industry observer and vice-chair of the International Astronautical Federation's Space Transportation Committee, said the lunar far side samples are of "unparalleled scientific value", because the history of the far side is very different from that of the near side.

Studying the Chang'e 6 samples will definitely help scientists unravel some long-standing mysteries about the moon, he said.

Yang noted that the ascender's liftoff from the lunar far side was a challenging task, because it needed precision planning to ensure the ascender reached a predetermined orbital position, and there was only the Queqiao 2 relay satellite capable of providing technical assistance.

The next challenge, he said, will be the execution of the rendezvous and docking maneuvers, as they will also require an extreme level of agility and accuracy.

## President Xi congratulates next leaders of Mexico and Iceland

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping has congratulated Claudia Sheinbaum, a climate scientist and former Mexico City mayor, on her election as Mexico's president, saying he is ready to work with the president-elect to boost bilateral ties.

In a congratulatory message sent to Sheinbaum on Tuesday, Xi noted that Mexico is a major country in Latin America and an important emerging market.

Calling China and Mexico comprehensive strategic partners, he said that the bilateral relations have maintained sound development, with their strategic, complementary and mutually beneficial nature becoming increasingly evident.

The China-Mexico relationship is at an important juncture of carrying on the past and ushering in the future, Xi said.

Saying that he attaches great importance to the development of China-Mexico relations, Xi expressed his willingness to strengthen strategic communication with Sheinbaum to guide the development of bilateral ties to new heights and better benefit the people of the two countries.

Sheinbaum, 61, won Sunday's presidential election as the candidate of the Let's Keep Making History coalition. She will become Mexico's first female president in more than 200 years of independence.

Xi also sent a congratulatory message on Tuesday to Halla Tomasdottir on her election as president of Iceland.

Xi said in the message that in recent years, China-Iceland relations have maintained good development momentum.

Cooperation in fields such as trade and investment, geothermal energy and environmental protection, culture and tourism has steadily progressed, with new achievements, he said.

Noting that he attaches great importance to the development of China-Iceland relations, Xi said he is willing to work with Tomasdottir to deepen political mutual trust between the two countries, expand mutually beneficial cooperation and promote China-Iceland relations to a new level.

Tomasdottir, 55, a businesswoman and investor, led her opponents with 34.3 percent of the vote during the election, which started on Saturday, followed by former prime minister Katrin Jakobsdottir, who came in second with 25.2 percent, data from Icelandic national broadcaster RUV showed on Sunday.

## AI'S RISE SPARKS NEW PROFESSIONS, RESHAPES EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

Meteoric growth of \$70b industry spawns fresh job opportunities

By LIU YUKUN liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn



Completing the jigsaw of artificial intelligence requires a helping hand from humans, which is creating innovative professions and reshaping the employment landscape in the digital age.

As China's AI industry continues its meteoric rise, it's not just technology that's evolving — new job opportunities are blossoming in tandem.

Last year, the market size of the industry reached nearly 509.7 billion yuan (\$70 billion), according to iResearch.

The soaring demand for jobs such as data annotators, virtual face designers and virtual architects highlights a crucial intersection

where human skills complement machine capabilities.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security received over 430 proposals last year for new occupations, more than double the number in 2021. About a quarter of these were closely tied to the digital economy, intelligent manufacturing, information technology and modern services. The newly recognized professions will be announced by the ministry in June.

See Jobs, page 2

## From peaceful coexistence to shared future: Exploring continuities in China's diplomacy

Seventy years ago, the world witnessed the birth of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, or Panchsheel, marking a significant milestone in international diplomacy. This year, as we celebrate its anniversary, we also mark the 11th year since China introduced the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind. The two initiatives, though originating from different contexts and regions, share a common aspiration for global harmony, cooperation and progress.

In 1954, China, India and Myanmar jointly proposed the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

Panchsheel emerged at a time when the world was grappling with Cold War tensions and the specter of nuclear conflict loomed large. It offered a ray of hope for peaceful resolution of disputes and fostering cooperation among nations.

Seventy years on, Panchsheel continues to resonate in global diplomatic discourse as a guiding framework for interstate relations. Its principles remain relevant in



navigating contemporary challenges, from perceptual disputes to economic cooperation and environmental conservation. As the world grapples with complex geopolitical dynamics and the rise of nationalism, the spirit of Panchsheel serves as a beacon for fostering understanding and cooperation among nations.

On the other hand, China's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, first articulated by President Xi Jinping in 2013, represents a modern approach to global governance and cooperation. It emphasizes the interconnection of nations in an increasingly globalized world and advocates for mutual respect, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. At its core, the concept seeks to address common challenges facing humanity, such as climate change, poverty and pandemics, through collective action and collaboration.

Over the past 11 years, this concept has been continuously

improved. The Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative proposed by China reflecting three major themes of human progress, constitute three pillars that support the overarching vision of a community with a shared future for mankind. China has actively promoted its vision of a shared future through initiatives which aim to enhance cooperation across regions. Through multilateral platforms like the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS, China has championed dialogue among nations.

As we reflect on these two milestones, it becomes evident that the principles of Panchsheel and the concept of a shared future are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. Both emphasize the importance of mutual respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence in fostering a more inclusive and sustainable world order.

India, through the enduring principles of Panchsheel and its ancient concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, continues to advocate for a *Vishwabhau* Bharat, or India as a friend of the world.

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www.chinadailyglobal.com Newsstand prices: US \$1, Canada C\$1, UK 1.6, EU 1.6, Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling, Asia Pacific: Thailand 120 baht, Philippines 120 php, Myanmar 2000 kyat, Japan 210 yen, Dubai 10 dirham, Pakistan 300 rupee

## PAGE TWO

## Jobs: Reducing repetitive mental labor

From page 1

"In the future, society will become increasingly virtual and digital," said Wang Youwei, a professor of information management and business intelligence at Fudan University in Shanghai. "The industrial revolution freed people from repetitive physical labor, and generative AI is expected to solve repetitive mental labor. This will inevitably create new job opportunities."

Wang elaborated on one example. "In content production-related jobs, such as document writing, and customer services that involve questions and answers, large models might eliminate some repetitive mental jobs. However, as these models can provide incorrect or illogical outputs, jobs involving judgment and monitoring of generated content will become more important."

**Digital 'gig' workers**

This "data annotation" was originally handled by software engineers and programmers. However, as data-cleaning demands grew, they became overwhelmed, giving rise to "digital gig workers" in the AI field.

Annotators identify specific words in text or speech, outline items in images or videos, and tag them. For instance, in synonym training, annotators determine if two text segments are semantically identical and mark "yes" or "no". These tasks don't require high academic or professional qualifications, but do demand understanding, discernment, and meticulousness.

Sun Danfeng, a stay-at-home mom from Zhoukou, Henan province, works as a data annotator. Despite having only a junior high school education and no knowledge of AI, she has become an AI trainer.

"There are four to five hundred data annotation projects on the platform I registered on. Some are simple, like selecting a different image from three pictures, and others are more difficult," she said, adding the job is flexible as annotators can choose what they do and when and where they work, as long as the task is completed on time.

"It's very hard for a housewife who has no decent background in education to have a part-time job in a city like Zhoukou, or any non-mega cities," she said.

"However, for stay-at-home moms, having nothing to do after the kids go to school is really boring, and asking for money from their husband is unpleasant."

Sun learned about data annotation from her college student brother, when she spoke to him about feeling disconnected from society after becoming a full-time housewife. She lacked financial independence and struggled to find a job due to her limited education and the county's tight job market.

"This data annotation job is perfect for me," she said.

"Now, I can earn some pocket money in my spare time. I earn 1,000 to 2,000 yuan per month and am quite satisfied. My husband works in another city, and we have debts, so earning some extra money for the kids is good," she added.

In 2020, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security included data annotators on the national occupational classification list, giving the job official recognition.

In recent years, the market size of data annotation has grown significantly, and is estimated to reach 20.43 billion yuan by 2029, up from 4.33 billion yuan in 2021, according to the Huaon Industrial Research Institute. This speedy growth has spurred ever greater demand for data annotators.

However, Sun Ping, an associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, expressed concerns about the rapidly expanding market.

"Data annotation companies, mainly outsourcing tasks and operating in a labor intensive mode with low entry barriers, pose a risk of easy replacement for their workers, earning them the moniker the 'Internet's Foxconn.' Annotators are both AI trainers and 'job gravediggers'.

When ultimate algorithms are developed, such a job may no longer be needed, leaving these workers once again unemployed," she said.

**Collaborative employment**

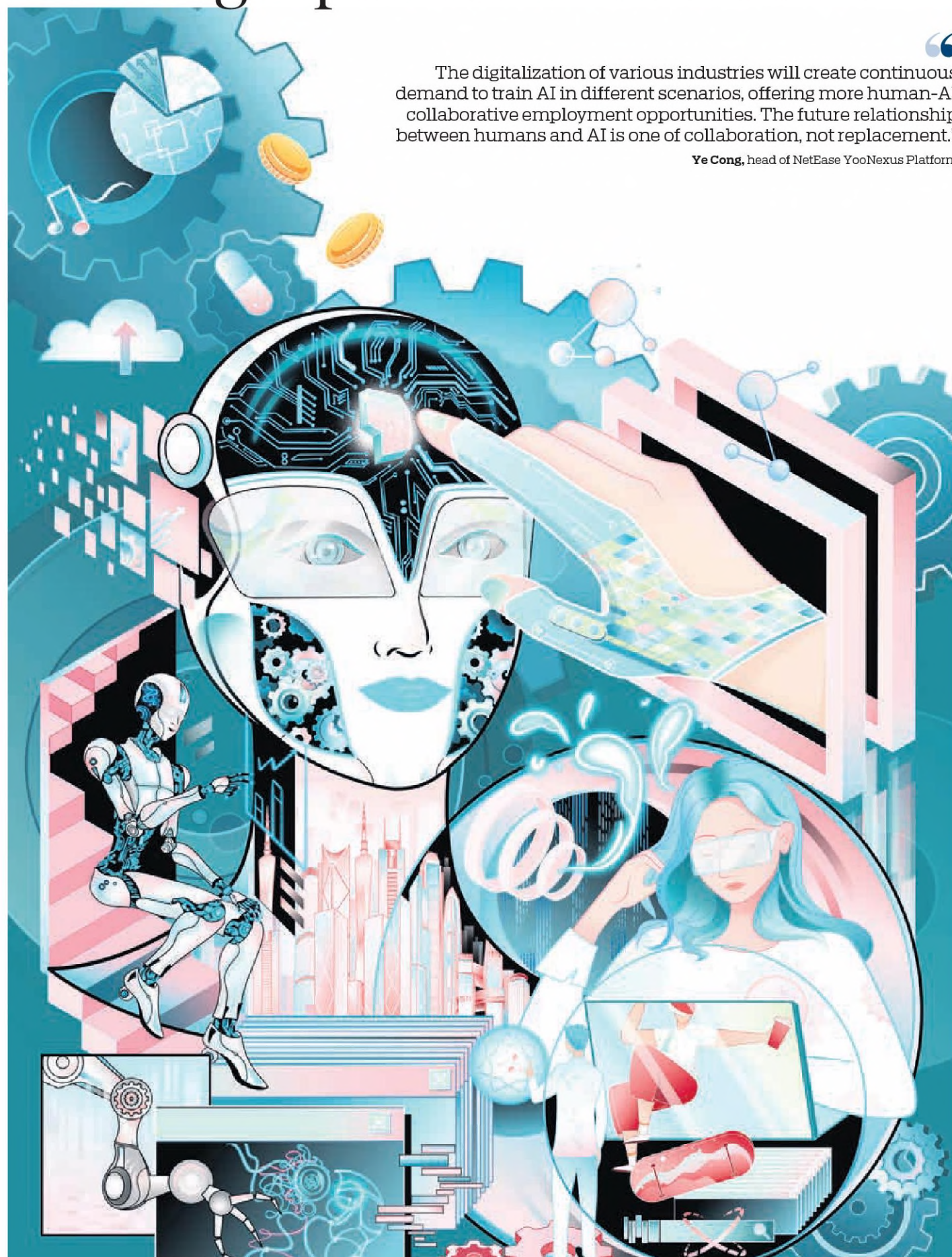
Ye Cong, head of NetEase YooNexus Platform, has a more positive outlook on AI job creation.

"The digitalization of various industries will create continuous demand to train AI in different scenarios, offering more human-AI collaborative employment opportunities. The future relationship between humans and AI is one of collaboration, not replacement," Ye said.

NetEase's new platform accepts data tasks from businesses and breaks them down into multiple minor projects. Users can earn points by completing the projects, which can be exchanged for wages.

In less than three years since its foundation, the platform has garnered over 1 million registered users, mainly from western and northeastern regions of China, with an even gender split, mostly aged 25 to 35 years. Monthly active users exceeded 15,000.

The platform has expanded data annotation from traditional scenarios such as AI



ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The digitalization of various industries will create continuous demand to train AI in different scenarios, offering more human-AI collaborative employment opportunities. The future relationship between humans and AI is one of collaboration, not replacement."

Ye Cong, head of NetEase YooNexus Platform

customer service, chatbots and image generators to physical projects in the engineering machinery industry, helping robots model tasks and providing more training scenarios and data for machine intelligence.

"We focus on excavators and loaders, helping them achieve precise smart operations in mines and ports," Ye said.

"We're now promoting collaboration with main engine manufacturers. The 'AI-ization' of physical industries ensures 24-hour excavator operation, greatly improving efficiency and addressing safety challenges in scenarios like underground mines," he said.

In these projects, manual "annotation-based" guidance for machines to learn tasks places greater demands on data annotators. "Most of them need to have industry experience and many are certified excavator operators," Ye said.

Beyond data annotators, new digital professions like face designers, motion capture artists, and virtual architects are also emerging. Instead of working at a company or platform, an increasing number of people are choosing to be self-employed.

College student Zhou Run is embarking on such a journey. He accepts orders on lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu to create virtual avatars that closely resemble real-life images.

For a fee of 50 yuan, clients can commission his work. However, to buy the rights to their avatar or obtain the numerical data of their avatar's features, they need to pay around 600 yuan.

"Today more gamers prefer the ability to

freely change their appearance and customize their characters to achieve a more realistic experience in the virtual world. The pre-designed faces in games no longer satisfy players' needs for personalization, leading to the emergence of the 'face sculptor' profession, which is what I'm doing."

Zhou has been in the business for just under six months and has already amassed several hundred followers on his Xiaohongshu account. During peak periods, he can earn 4,000 to 5,000 yuan a month.

As his order volume increases, he has transitioned from traditional modeling tools and face sculpting software to AI tools that allow for mass production.

**Voice animation**

VoiceAnimator is an AI-driven facial animation tool from NetEase Games AI Lab. This tool is capable of generating facial animations for virtual characters directly from inputted audio or text and audio files, that is suitable for hyper-realistic and anime-style virtual characters.

Such facial animations, which originally took 10 to 14 days to produce, can now be generated by AI in just two minutes. Based on the generated animations, artists can make further refinements.

"Creating vivid facial animations is indeed a complex, time-consuming, and costly endeavor. It requires understanding subtle facial muscle movements and variations, as well as smooth lip synchronization with speech. With the increasing prevalence of vir-

tual characters, there's a growing demand for efficient content production. We aim to facilitate this process," said Yin Xu, the technical manager of VoiceAnimator.

"As the AI industry flourishes, continuous learning is essential for those within the industry. Professional artists are also embracing AI knowledge. VoiceAnimator users not only need professional artistic skills but also need to learn AI-related tools to reduce repetitive tasks and unleash their creativity," Yin added.

In the approximately four years since its development, this tool has been continuously optimized for various usage scenarios, from in-game character animations to educational virtual language tutors and AI-driven news broadcasting.

**At home in the metaverse**

According to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the number of AI companies in China has surpassed 4,500. It has spawned new industries and business models while creating countless job opportunities, including new roles for those in traditional sectors. Professionals who can adeptly combine AI technology with traditional industry knowledge are becoming highly sought after in the market.

Bella Zheng, a former landscape designer, is transitioning to become a "city architect" in the metaverse and immersing herself in learning coding.

"I want to create cities in the virtual world," Zheng said. "Those who can do

urban planning often can't do metaverse, and vice versa. The new profession of metaverse city architect combines both skill sets."

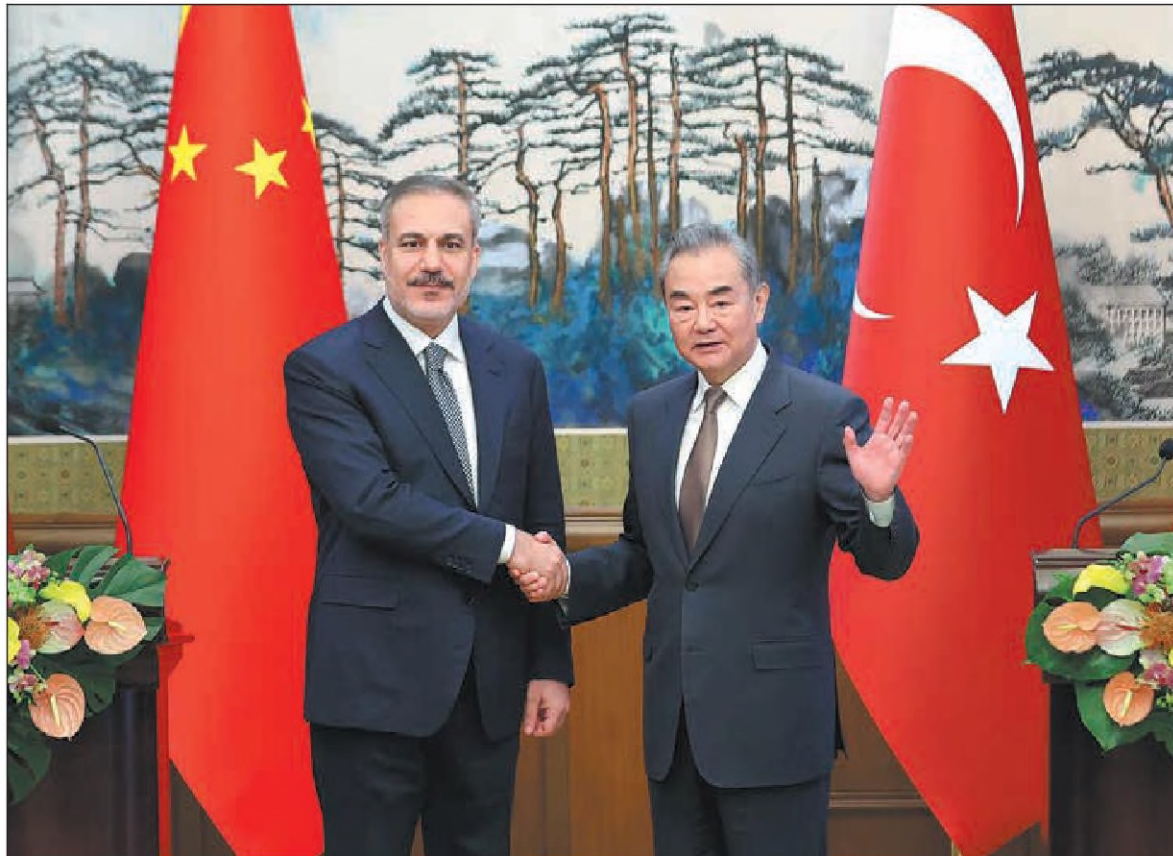
Many architects and space designers are joining the construction of the metaverse, freeing themselves from traditional constraints to creatively express unique works, according to Zheng. Renowned projects in the metaverse like Zaha Hadid Architects' "Liberland" are bringing this new architectural horizon into view.

This profession aligns with the childhood dream of Zheng, who is currently based in Los Angeles, California, of traveling the world. "I used to do part-time projects, visiting different cities for inspiration, including domestic and international cities, understanding their iconic features and feeling the atmosphere, and we would integrate that into our projects."

What attracts her most to this job is the infinite creative space. "In the metaverse, rules or restrictions like gravity, structural stability, climate, or physical laws don't apply. Architects can freely transcend existing conditions to create special environments and real artistic works," she said.

"Years ago, parents might not have understood my profession and would have preferred that I become an urban designer, like most of my classmates did. But now their mindset has changed. This is an emerging career, which more and more people deem promising," she said, adding there is an increasing recognition and acceptance, even from older people.

## TOP NEWS



Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets with Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Beijing on Tuesday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

## Ankara hails Beijing's global peace proposal

Diplomats of both countries voice shared objection to bloc-based confrontation and moves to suppress nation's development

By ZHANG YUNBI

zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Following the China-Turkiye foreign ministers' talks on Tuesday, Ankara highlighted the two countries' shared views on hot topics related to global peace, such as the recent six-point consensus put forward by China and Brazil for a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

"We speak highly of it," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said during a joint news conference with Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on Tuesday.

"I am pleased to see that Türkiye's and China's positions on ending the battles and promoting peace for the Ukraine crisis are fully aligned," Fidan added.

The consensus was issued on May 24 to prevent the tensions from spilling over or escalating, and to reject any attempt to fuel the crisis.

It also called for convening "an international peace conference recognized by Russia and Ukraine at an appropriate time, with the equal participation of all parties, and fair

discussion of all proposals for peace". Foreign Minister Wang said that, in just over a week, "45 countries from five continents have responded positively to the six-point consensus in different ways".

"Twenty-six of them have confirmed their subscription to it or are earnestly studying the way of subscribing to it," he added.

Wang confirmed that the two major stakeholders in the crisis — Russia and Ukraine — have also recognized the majority of the contents of the consensus, and China sincerely welcomes more countries to support and join it.

Beijing believes that as long as more countries support the proposal, "the closer the day of convening a real peace conference will be, and the brighter the prospects for peace will be," Wang said.

Last week, Beijing responded to Switzerland's preparation for the first peace summit on the Ukraine crisis, saying that the event's arrangements fall significantly short of China's requirements and the general expectations of the international

community, "making it difficult for China to participate".

On Tuesday, Wang followed up by saying that China attaches great importance to the work done by Switzerland in preparing for the summit and has "put forward constructive advice to Switzerland a number of times".

"Switzerland has consistently made positive comments on and expressed its gratitude for that," he said.

"There are many conferences in the world today, and China will decide on its own whether or not to participate in them and how to participate in them, based on its own position," he added.

Before his talks with Wang on Tuesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan met with Vice-President Han Zheng in Beijing.

Fidan told the Chinese side that Türkiye adheres to the one-China principle and brooks no activities sabotaging China's territorial integrity.

He added that his country opposes bloc-based confrontation and does not recognize or

support the wrongful moves of suppressing and coercing China's development.

Speaking to Fidan, Wang said China supports Türkiye's efforts to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests, and appreciates its support for China's legitimate position on the core interests involving China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

China has become Türkiye's largest trading partner in Asia and third-largest in the world. Annual trade between the two countries reached \$43.4 billion in 2023, up 13.5 percent year-on-year.

On Tuesday, both sides underscored the synergy of the Belt and Road Initiative and Türkiye's Middle Corridor vision, vowing to deepen collaboration in a wide range of areas, from trade to culture.

Analysts noted that China and Türkiye are both major emerging market countries and members of the Group of 20, and they have broad common interests in upholding international fairness and justice.

Wang told Fidan that the two countries should strengthen coordination and cooperation under multilateral frameworks, reject hegemony and power politics, and oppose a few countries' attempts to monopolize international affairs.

Fidan said Ankara highly appreciates Beijing's fair and just position on topics such as Ukraine and the Middle East, and looks forward to playing a constructive role together with China.

## Modi set to win third term in India elections

By APARAJIT CHAKRABORTY

in New Delhi and YANG RAN in Beijing

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to secure a third consecutive term in office with the ruling National Democratic Alliance, a coalition led by his Bharatiya Janata Party, heading for victory in the country's general election, but with a reduced majority.

Despite favorable exit poll predictions, Modi and his allies failed to achieve a landslide as the main opposition party, the Indian National Congress, surpassed expectations, gaining several more seats compared with the last general election in 2019.

The Lok Sabha, or the lower house of the Indian Parliament, has 543 seats. A party or coalition needs a simple majority of 272 to form the government, and the leader of the winning party or coalition has a decisive role in choosing the next head of state.

The trends by late evening clearly suggested that the BJP will fall short of a single-party majority and will have to cobble the magic number of 272 with the help of its allies. It is projected to win about 240 seats on its own. In 2019, the party had single-handedly wrested 303 seats, while the ruling alliance secured 353.

The ruling alliance has suffered a major upset in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, which is the country's most populous and politically significant state, having a total of 80 parliamentary constituencies.

While Modi faced a tight race in his home constituency of Varanasi, his party lost the key Ayodhya seat, from where Modi had kicked off his Hindutva campaign ahead of the 2014 general election. The ruling coalition is likely to win 40 seats in Uttar Pradesh, compared with over 60 in 2019.

"People were frustrated because of inflation, soaring food prices and unemployment. The BJP's Hindutva sentiment did not work this time," said Ramesh Jha, a resident of Ayodhya, where Modi inaugurated a Hindu temple in January in an attempt to garner votes.

The BJP also lost ground in the western states of Maharashtra and Rajasthan and the eastern state of West Bengal, where the opposition parties pulled off better-than-expected performances. Moreover, contrary to predictions of a southern sweep, the BJP could not gain ground in the states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Supporters shower Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with flowers as he arrives at the Bharatiya Janata Party headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. ADNAN ABIDI / REUTERS

In his 10 years in power, Modi has transformed India's political landscape, bringing Hindu nationalism, once a fringe ideology in the country, into the mainstream while leaving the nation deeply divided.

His supporters see him as a self-made, strong leader who has improved India's standing in the world. His critics and opponents say his Hindu-first politics have bred intolerance, while the Indian economy — the world's fifth-largest and one of the fastest-growing — has become more unequal. The Associated Press reported.

In his third term, the Modi-led government might shift its focus to domestic issues, prioritizing public welfare and fair distribution of growth benefits, and even adopting a softer stance on Hindu nationalism, according to analysts.

Qian Feng, director of the research department at Tsinghua University's National Strategy Institute, said that Modi's party underperformed in the election for two key reasons.

First, despite India's economic growth, the promised benefits didn't reach the masses, with the unemployment rate remaining high. Second, the BJP's push for Hindu nationalism may have alienated some voters who worry about the party's dominance threatening India's traditional political system, Qian said.

In his third term, Modi is likely to stay consistent with his foreign policy, Qian said, adding that the government could leverage global and regional shifts to boost India's political, economic and diplomatic strength, enhancing its international presence.

A total of 642 million people exercised their franchise in the six-week-long general election. The voter turnout was 66.3 percent, about one percentage point lower compared with 2019, according to the Election Commission.

At least seven exit polls released by major Indian news channels had predicted that the BJP and its allies would win 350-380 seats.

Aparajit Chakraborty is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Contact the writers at yangran1@chinadaily.com.cn

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## UN official praises China's COP15 leadership

By HOU LIQIANG

houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

China's contributions while holding the presidency of the COP15 have been praised by a senior United Nations official who said the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework reached by the concerned parties under China's leadership is comparable to the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement in the climate change realm.

China assumed the presidency of COP15, officially known as the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, in 2018 and was originally scheduled to retain it till 2020, said Inger Andersen, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

However, China held the presidency for six years because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

No country has held the presidency of a COP for so long, said Andersen, adding that "usually, it's one year or two years".

"So this six years was a heavy burden for China to carry for the world, I am sure. But China has served with distinction," she said.

Under China's presidency, the parties reached the Kunming-

Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022, which Andersen said was like the Paris Agreement of biodiversity.

China "has always played a big role in global environmental governance", she noted, adding that the nation played a huge role by "taking the presidency for a conference of parties at this very critical time, 2018 to 2024".

She highlighted the decision of parties under the Chinese presidency of COP15 to revisit subsidies and to ensure they are not nature-negative.

"Today, we estimate that we need about \$700 billion a year to keep nature in a good balance," she said. "But today about \$200 billion goes into biodiversity on an annual basis ... so we can say maybe \$500 billion is missing."

She said negative subsidies toward overuse of chemicals and fertilizers, as well as over deforestation and over fishing are still happening in many countries, harming the world's biodiversity resources.

"We estimate that the subsidies that are making negative impacts are 30 times higher than the money going in for positive impact," she said.

She underscored the importance of reducing subsidies with nature

negative impacts rather than only talking about the investment for biodiversity conservation around the globe.

"Trillions are going into nature negative. The first thing is to deal with the negative trillions rather than just putting money in billions. Because if we can take that out and re-purpose, it would be a very quick win," she stated.

She emphasized that "developed countries can do more to shift nature harming financial flows to nature healing flows".

Andersen also lauded the progress China has made at home in biodiversity conservation.

"China has made real efforts in conservation of forests, conservation of wetlands, and many other endeavors," she said, citing the red lines set for ecological conservation as an example.

The system of red lining, which is something that China pioneered, is precisely what can help achieve the biodiversity goal, she stressed.

China has drawn red lines for its crucial ecological conservation areas of 3.19 million square kilometers, which covers more than 90 percent of its typical types of ecosystems, according to Chinese authorities.

She said she is also impressed by

the progress China has made in protecting the giant panda. "We now can see that the population of wild pandas is growing so much so that IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) has moved the listing from endangered to vulnerable."

Andersen noted ecological civilization is "a powerful concept" from China that can help ensure that nature can continue to sustain civilizations.

She said that the ecological civilization construction is very meaningful. "And when leaders speak of lucid rivers and green mountains, that's a powerful notion that people can understand," she added.

She noted that she thinks these elements are important to help people imagine what's possible in terms of protecting nature.

For ecological civilization, the world needs to "treat nature with care and hand it over to the next generation in a good way so that nature can continue to sustain civilizations and those who are yet to be born and who will inherit the earth from us," she added.

"The kind of actions that China is taking at home are meaningful. They echo what we need the world to do as a collective community," she noted.

## Principles: Vision requires efforts from all nations

From page 1

Rooted in the belief that the world is one family, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* emphasizes the interconnection of all beings and the importance of fostering harmonious relations among nations.

However, realizing this vision requires collective commitment and concerted efforts from all nations. It necessitates transcending narrow national interests and embracing a broader sense of common humanity. By upholding the principles of *Panchsheel* and embracing the vision of a shared future, nations can work together to address pressing global challenges and build a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world for future generations. As we commemorate 70 years of *Panchsheel* and 11 years of China's shared future initiative, let us reaffirm our commitment to

these ideals and strive toward a better tomorrow for all mankind.

As India continues to champion the ideals of *Panchsheel* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, it reaffirms its commitment to building bridges of friendship and cooperation with nations around the world. By promoting dialogue, understanding and mutual respect, India seeks to contribute to the realization of a more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous world for all. In this journey toward a *Vishwabandhu* Bharat, India invites all nations to join hands in shaping a better future for humanity — one that reflects the timeless wisdom of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*: "The world is one family."

The writer is chairperson of the Confederation of Young Leaders of India and Director general of the Indian Institute of Governance and Leadership. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Taiwan temples evidence of cultural ties

Ancestral homes highlight cross-Strait connections despite efforts to deny them

By ZHANG YI

zhangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

The people of Taiwan are clearly aware of the intention of the United States to use the island as a "fist" to confront the Chinese mainland, and Taiwan should not become its tool, said Yang Du, former secretary-general of the Taiwan-based General Association of Chinese Culture.

Yang, a famous writer in Taiwan, said that to truly understand public opinion in Taiwan, especially in cross-Strait relations, it is important

to visit many local temples and engage in conversations.

Once, while chatting with an old man in a temple, he asked, "Now the US is making the Taiwan situation so tense, especially after the war in Ukraine. What do you think of this?"

The man responded with a saying in Taiwan dialect, "to beat a stone lion with the fists of other people", and said Taiwan should not become a "fist" in any fight.

"I suddenly realized the people of Taiwan are very clear about what the core of the problem is," Yang

said, adding that the US is using the island for its own benefits.

"The deep-rooted feelings of people in Taiwan island, especially those connected to ancestral homes on the mainland, still have a profound foundation," Yang said, adding that this is quite different from the manipulated narratives presented by the various political parties in Taiwan.

About 90 percent of Taiwan folk beliefs originate from the mainland, and Taiwan's folk beliefs involve hundreds of deities, with the majority originating as spiritual emanations from the mainland, where ancestral temples exist in the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, he said.

Following the opening of cross-Strait exchanges, numerous temples in Taiwan have organized group visits to pay respects to their ancestral temples on the mainland, he said, adding that when people from both sides meet, it is like they are relatives.

Cross-Strait cultural exchange activities can link the ancestral temples on the mainland with temples in various parts of Taiwan, he said.

Yang said that even though there are political efforts by Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan to sever cultural ties between the two sides, folk cultures on both sides of the Strait are interconnected.

While the DPP has been implementing curriculum reforms in the education sector to reduce the emphasis on classical Chinese literature, Yang said that parents are concerned because they want their children to study classical Chinese texts, poetry and traditional opera to establish a deeper cultural foundation.

In recent years, the internet has played a significant role in cross-Strait exchanges, as well as interactions between the two sides in popular culture, including television series and movies, and this has led to similar expressive habits in young people from both sides, he said.

## Briefly

## 6 dead after being hit by freight train

Six railway workers died after they were hit by a freight train in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province on Tuesday morning, China Railway Harbin Bureau Group said. The accident occurred around 1:55 am when the workers were on the track of a railway section on the outskirts of the city of Jiamusi, sources at the company said. Two died on the spot and four succumbed to their injuries after rescue efforts failed. The cause of the accident is not yet known and an investigation is continuing.

## Air route connects Shenzhen and Riyadh

A direct passenger air route linking Shenzhen, Guangdong province, and Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, was launched on Monday, becoming the fifth direct route from Shenzhen to the Middle East. The flight carried more than 200 passengers, with a load factor of over 80 percent. The flights, operated by China Southern Airlines Airbus A330 aircraft will depart every Monday and Friday, with a flight time of about nine and a half hours.

## Work begins on Asia's largest hangar

Construction has begun on a China Eastern Airlines international aviation maintenance services platform in the Yangshan special comprehensive bonded zone in Shanghai. The 1.5 billion yuan (\$211 million) platform will include three hangars and supporting workshops and facilities for accessory repair and refitting projects, covering a total area of over 110,000 square meters. Fang Zhaoya, president of China Eastern's technology company, said the platform's Hangar No 1 will be the largest hangar in Asia.

## Former Shenyang senior legislator jailed

A court on Monday sentenced Fu Zhongwei, former head of the standing committee of the municipal people's congress of Shenyang, Liaoning province, to 15 years in prison for accepting bribes. Between 2003 and 2022, Fu took advantage of his various positions to help others in matters concerning business operations, case handling and job transfers, and illegally accepted bribes worth 64.7 million yuan (\$9.1 million).

## Tunnel being built in Qinghai collapses

A tunnel under construction in Northwest China's Qinghai province collapsed on Tuesday afternoon, local authorities said. The collapse occurred at the Baixuxia Tunnel in the Huzhu Tu autonomous county in the city of Haidong, the city's emergency management bureau said. Rescue efforts are underway.

XINHUA

## Table tennis builds Sino-US friendship

By TAN YINGZI

and DENG RUI in Chongqing

As China and the United States celebrate the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, table tennis reconnected young people from both countries during a friendship tournament in Chongqing last weekend.

On Saturday, the China-US Amateur Table Tennis Club Friendship Tournament, a mixed-team competition, was held at Chongqing Sports Stadium — attracting five amateur athletes from the Maryland Table Tennis Center in the US state of Maryland, and five from the Chongqing Table Tennis United Team.

"Sports knows no boundaries," said Cheng Yinghua, general manager of the Maryland Table Tennis Center. "We hope to build a bridge for friendship and solidarity through the power of youth."

Cheng said the Maryland team members — three from the US plus one German and one Australian, with an average age of 19 — were visiting China for the first time.

"I really liked playing with the Chongqing players. They were all very skilled and I learned a lot," said 19-year-old Benicio Evans Nix, who plays at the Washington DC Table Tennis Club.

He said the team had also visited Chongqing's Fengmingshan High School — where the team members and the school players had lunch and a match.

"I think the sport is very good for international relations because it is a universal language that breaks down cultural barriers," he said. "I instantly had things in common with the other players even though I could barely speak with them."

Cheng said it had been "a warm, fruitful experience", add-

ing that the team had also walked around the municipality. A 19-year-old woman on the team who hails from the US even got up at 6 am five days in a row and had a good time playing table tennis with local residents at a nearby park.

Cheng, born in Chongqing's Yuzhong district 65 years ago, was a former professional table tennis player who won multiple national championships. He moved to the US in 1988 after retirement.

To promote table tennis and develop talent in the sport in the US, Cheng founded the Maryland Table Tennis Center — the first privately-owned table tennis club and one of the first full-time table tennis clubs in the US — early in 1992.

"Table tennis is quite popular in the US," Cheng said, with the North American Table Tennis Teams Tournament, held annually around Thanksgiving, attracting enthusiasts from all over the US and entrants from around the world.

"The scene of over 1,000 players playing on some 150 tables together at the venue for three days is truly impressive," Cheng said.

"The US and China are currently in a period with misunderstandings, so efforts to strengthen friendship at a grassroots level like ours are essential," he said, adding that the pingpong diplomacy has a deep historical background.

The pingpong diplomacy of the early 1970s opened the door to eventual diplomatic relations between the US and the People's Republic of China.

Cheng said he would like to invite players from clubs in Chongqing and neighboring Sichuan province to the US.

Contact the writers at dengrui@chinadaily.com.cn



Judges of the Bocuse d'Or 2024 China Selection taste and score the dishes cooked by contestants in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Monday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Macao chef wins championship in China selection culinary competition

By ZHENG CAIXIONG

in Guangzhou

zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Macao chef Oscar Wang won the championship in the Bocuse d'Or 2024 China Selection, which ended in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Monday.

Wang, who defeated seven other chefs in the China selection finals, will now represent the country in the Asia-Pacific division of the Bocuse d'Or competition, aiming to qualify for the global finals to be held in Lyon, France, next year.

"During the monthlong period from being told I had qualified for the finals to standing on the finals stage, the tense and challenging preparation process not only improved my cooking skills but also honed my willpower," said Wang from the Sheraton Grand Macao and St. Regis Macao.

Wang, 40, said he would continue to train hard and constantly improve to achieve a good result in the Asia-Pacific finals to bring glory to his motherland, and will also act

as a food ambassador to promote cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world.

In the finals of the China selection, Wang used water spinach, which is rarely found in Western cuisine, to make sauces paired with spices such as pepper oil, thyme and rosemary.

The prestigious Bocuse d'Or competition is sometimes called the "culinary Olympics".

Stefan Stiller, president of Bocuse d'Or Academy China, said it built a stage for chefs to demonstrate their cooking skills and exchange ideas and was a launchpad from which they could venture onto the international stage.

Jiang Guoyuan, deputy Party chief and general manager of the Guangzhou Lingnan Group, said this year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, and is also the China-France cultural and tourism year.

"The Bocuse d'Or 2024 China Selection will further promote the exchanges and mutual learning of

food and cultural industries between China and France and contribute to enhancing friendly relations between China and the European nation," he said.

As an important Sino-foreign cultural exchange activity, it would also inject strong momentum into Guangzhou's efforts to become a world-class tourist destination and an international consumer center, he said.

The Guangdong provincial capital has been dubbed one of China's "gastronomic capitals", he added.

In addition to a live broadcast of the competition, a live dialogue invited audience members, judges and chefs to interact and exchange views and share their experiences.

Feng Qi, secretary-general of the Guangzhou Western Food Association, said cooking is not only a skill, but also a culture, an art and an attitude toward life.

The Bocuse d'Or 2024 China Selection allowed more people to understand the charm of the cooking arts and better integrate culinary art into their daily lives, Feng said.

## Sea salad days



Fishermen sort wild sea cucumbers caught in the waters off Rongcheng, Shandong province, on Tuesday. The city is one of China's main sources of the marine delicacies.

LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Baobab trees' evolutionary challenges discovered

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and LI LEI

Chinese and African researchers have recently uncovered evolutionary insights about baobab trees that suggest the iconic trees' conservation status needs to be revised.

There are eight species of baobab trees, known for their distinctive swollen trunks, and they can be found in various parts of Madagascar, Africa and Australia. They have been dubbed the "tree of life" due to their cultural significance and various uses in traditional medicine and local cuisine, but not much is known about their evolutionary history.

Recent genomic and ecological analyses by scientists from institutions including the Sino-Africa Joint Research Center and Chinese Academy of Sciences' Wuhan Botanical Garden in Hubei province found that Madagascar — an island country off the southeastern coast of the African continent — is the cradle of

all other baobab species. The findings were published in the science journal Nature on May 15.

The researchers came to the conclusion after analyzing the genetic makeup of the eight existing baobab species — six of which are found exclusively in Madagascar.

They believe the trees originated in Madagascar and then spread to the African continent and Australia, with a mix of climate fluctuations, animal pollinators and sea level changes shaping the trees' environmental adaptations.

Wan Junnan, the lead author and a researcher at the botanical garden, said, "What we see about baobabs in Madagascar today was greatly influenced by both interspecies competition and the geological history of the island, especially changes in local sea levels."

Having a solid understanding of the impact of sea level changes and consequent habitat loss on Mala-



Baobab trees in Madagascar.

XINHUA

gasy baobab can provide insights into the potential challenges that other baobab species may encounter under similar circumstances, he said.

Funded by the Scientific Research Program of the Sino-Africa Joint Research Center and the National Natural Science Foundation of China, the study found that baobab trees have experienced a process of flourishing and decline, and some of them are now endangered.

Three baobab species are now classified as endangered or critically endangered on the red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Besides climate change and habitat loss, negative influences from other baobab species have been put forward as one of the factors threatening their survival.

The researchers called for a reassessment of their conservation status, believing the IUCN may have underestimated the actual state of endangerment faced by the baobab species in Madagascar.

Contact the writers at lilei@chinadaily.com.cn

## WORLD

## Australia remains popular choice for Chinese students

By **KARL WILSON** in Sydney and **XU WEIWEI** in Hong Kong

Australia remains one of the top places for Chinese students to study abroad, with Chinese students applying to Australian universities in record numbers.

As of end of March, 741,224 international students were enrolled in Australian universities — a 16 percent increase compared to the same period in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data from Australia's Federal Department of Education.

Chinese students make up 22 percent of Australia's international students, followed by Indian students as the second-largest group at 17 percent.

Stein Shum, who is studying sports science and nutrition at Deakin University in Melbourne, said he picked Australia for his studies abroad as it was closer to his home in Hong Kong.

He looked into schools in the United States and the United Kingdom, but Australia still came out on top.

"It's also a different experience, and I didn't want to follow the crowd and just go with the popular choices," he told China Daily.

Shum said he is enjoying doing his undergraduate studies in Australia.

"I put in effort to assimilate myself with the culture, so I could feel comfortable studying here among Australians," he said.

University education for international students is one of Australia's most successful exports.

International education was worth A\$36.4 billion (\$24 billion) to the Australian economy in 2022-23, with many Australian universities relying on international student fees to fund their research.

Most Chinese students tend to gravitate toward the so-called Group of Eight, or Go8, elite Australian universities — the University of Melbourne, Australian National University, University of Sydney, University of Queensland, University of Western Australia, University of Adelaide, Monash University, and the University of New South Wales.

Vicki Thomson, chief executive of Go8, told China Daily that Go8 was determined during the pandemic to maintain a strong relationship with its Chinese students and researchers, with support from the Chinese government.

"Our universities have a long history of education and research collaboration with China, built on many decades of mutual trust and respect," she said.

According to data from Go8, total enrollment in the top eight

universities is around 450,000, of which 160,000 are international students. Chinese students make up 113,000 of the international student total.

Thomson said Chinese student enrollments at Go8 are up 31 percent from 2019.

"Chinese students are attracted by the high quality of education and research on offer at the Go8," she said.

"All eight universities are ranked in the world's top 100 universities, with six in the top 50," she said, referring to the QS World University Rankings 2024.

"Go8 universities collectively undertake 70 percent of the nation's university research activity. It is also important to understand that the Go8 attracts nearly two-thirds of Chinese Higher Degree by Research students — around 4,400."

#### Learning experience

Zhuang Jia, who did his post-graduate studies in urban planning at the University of New South Wales a few years ago, said the learning experience in Australia has greatly enhanced his academic ability and enriched his personal life.

"Australian universities set very high academic standards, and through strict training, the students can master not only how to write quality papers in English, but also how to interpret them," he said.

"As an internationally renowned travel destination, studying in Australia offers the students a rare chance to reside in the country for a long time, so they should cherish it by traveling around, (visiting) different sites such as the Great Barrier Reef, to immerse themselves in the unique culture," he said.

Chen Shulin, who completed his PhD at the University of Technology Sydney, said it is easier for engineering students to get full scholarships in Australia than in the US.

"And the society is safer and more stable," Chen said.

"Compared with the UK, the cost of living is lower, and the local food may suit the Chinese students better."

Foreign students contribute around a fifth of all university funding and make up Australia's fourth-largest "export", after iron ore, coal and natural gas.

The US and UK are Australia's biggest competitors for international students, and they easily outrank Australia in prestigious international university rankings.

Contact the writers at [karlwilson@chinadaily.com](mailto:karlwilson@chinadaily.com).

## Flood survey



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visits flood-ravaged areas in Reichertshofen, southern Germany, on Monday. Heavy rains from May 31 have led to flooding across the states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria. At least four people have died in the floods. LUKAS BARTH / AFP

## Japan discharges toxic water despite protests

TEPCO disregards opposition at home and abroad with sixth round of release completed

By **JIANG XUEQING** in Tokyo

[jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn)

The operator of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan completed the sixth round of discharge of nuclear-contaminated water from the facility into the Pacific Ocean on Tuesday, persisting with the controversial dumping despite opposition from local residents, fishermen and the international community.

Approximately 7,800 metric tons of "treated" radioactive water was dumped in this round. Disregarding complaints, Tokyo Electric Power Company, or TEPCO, plans to discharge about 54,600 tons of nuclear-contaminated water in seven rounds during the fiscal year ending March 2025.

The Japanese government said the process of full discharge is estimated to take about 30 years, aiming for the decommissioning of the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi plant by 2051. However, in a report compiled in July 2020, the Atomic Energy Society of Japan projected that the time frame for the decommissioning ranges from several decades to several hundred years.

The prolonged release of nuclear-contaminated water and its environmental impact have not been fully considered by the Japanese government, said Toshihiro Inoue, a special committee member of the Japan Congress against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, also known as Gensuikin.

Unlike regular nuclear plants, Fukushima water is contaminated with more than 60 different radioactive substances, not just tritium. The long-term effects on the surrounding environment could be significant. Over decades, even trace amounts of radioactive substances could accumulate and cause environmental harm. This poses a risk not only to the ecosystem, but also potentially leads to misinformation spreading about the area, Inoue said.

Although the Japanese government



Japanese hold a rally to protest against the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea. March 11, 2024, is the 13th anniversary of a massive earthquake and tsunami that hit the country's northern coasts. ZHU CHENXI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

claims it is explaining the situation regarding the so-called treated water, Inoue noted that Tokyo is not adequately informing either the domestic or international community.

"The government seems to be pushing the narrative that it is safe to release Fukushima water into the sea because the authorities said so, which is problematic as the International Atomic Energy Agency is an agency promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We need to include more independent evaluations, not only from the IAEA, but also from third-party organizations," Inoue said.

#### Transparency sought

Transparency in the operations conducted by TEPCO and the Japanese government is essential for neighboring countries. If TEPCO and the government claim that the water is safe, they should accept stakeholders' requests for permission to send personnel to Fukushima to conduct independent monitoring of the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water, he said.

Masaaki Ogawa, a 73-year-old Tokyo resident, said it is ridiculous for TEPCO and the Japanese government to even consider releasing nuclear-contaminated water into the sea. On the contrary, they need to figure out how to contain the radiation in the contaminated water.

"I believe the reason why the Jap-

anese government does not listen to the people opposing the ocean discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is because the groups benefiting from nuclear power, those with interests in TEPCO or various nuclear power entities, have considerable influence on the government," said Ogawa, who is the administrative representative of the Association to Prevent the Eviction of Nuclear Disaster Evacuees from Their Homes.

It is not just a problem for Japan, he said, adding that he doubts whether the Japanese government can provide satisfactory explanations to all the countries in the Pacific region.

"Stakeholders like China and South Korea should be allowed to participate in a long-term international mechanism for the monitoring of the release of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea," Ogawa said.

The dumping of the Fukushima nuclear-contaminated water bears on the health of humanity, the global marine environment, and international public interests. China is a major stakeholder, and the Chinese government and people are highly concerned about this issue, Chinese Premier Li Qiang said during a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on May 26 in Seoul, on the sidelines of the 9th Trilateral Summit Meeting among China, Japan and South Korea.

## California university workers expand strikes

SACRAMENTO, California — The ongoing strike at the University of California further expanded to two more campuses on Monday, with thousands of academic workers demanding action for those facing criminal and discipline charges related to pro-Palestinian protests.

UC San Diego and UC Santa Barbara were officially on strike, announced the workers' union United Auto Workers Local 4811 in social media posts on Monday.

Holding signs such as "UAW on Strike" and "Unfair labor practice" while chanting slogans protesting the University of California's treatment of pro-Palestinian protesters, union members marched on the UC San Diego campus and rallied before the library, where several tents were set up to facilitate the strike, according to videos and photos posted online by local TV stations and the union.

In a statement on Monday, UC San Diego reiterated the UC system's stance that called the strike "illegal" as it violated the union's contract with the UC, in which both sides agree on "no strike" over nonlabor issues.

"This illegal strike hurts our students by disrupting typical class delivery, assignment grading and other learning activities during a critical time of year when students are diligently preparing for finals and completing final projects," the university said in the statement.

The union's members voted last month to authorize a strike to protest the university's controversial response to pro-Palestinian demonstrations on campus, which they said has caused unsafe work conditions and violated their free speech rights.

The first UC campus that stood up and withheld labor was UC Santa Cruz, where academic workers walked off the job on May 20. The walkout then spread to UC Los Angeles and UC Davis on May 28.

UC Irvine plans to join the strike on Wednesday. By then, the total number of strikers is expected to reach 31,500 at six of the UC system's 10 campuses, according to the union.

Meanwhile, police arrested dozens of pro-Palestinian demonstrators on Monday for trespassing after they occupied the lobby of a San Francisco building that houses the Israeli consulate.

Police zip-tied the hands of protesters, put them in police vans, and drove them away.

Officers arrested 69 people who refused to vacate the building, cited them, and released them from San Francisco County Jail, the San Francisco Police Department said in a statement. Another demonstrator was cited and released at the scene for the same charge, it said.

Demonstrators entered the building and occupied the lobby for several hours. The protesters posted signs on the front doors calling for an end to the conflict.

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## CHINA DAILY USA

## NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,  
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

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usa.chinadaily.com.cn

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## WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108

529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

## SAN FRANCISCO

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

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

## SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2858

## HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

## CANADA | TORONTO

471 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

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

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 — No.1347

## Italy experiences decade of growth marred by deepening inequality

ROME — While wealth in Italy grew over the last 15 years, the economic gap between high-income and medium-income families has also widened, a national report recently showed.

Italy is the third-largest economy in the European Union after Germany and France, and its total net wealth increased by about 14 percent between 2010 and 2023, according to the latest Bank of Italy's annual report.

However, the distribution of wealth was increasingly uneven and mostly benefited the wealthiest 10 percent of households, while middle-class families saw their relative share of wealth decrease.

In terms of wealth distribution, Italy's population can be divided into three groups — top, medium and bottom, the central bank said.

The top 10 percent of households accounted for 60 percent of

overall wealth last year, while the bottom 50 percent — the poorest families — accounted for only 7 percent.

Compared to 2010, the share of wealth held by the most affluent decile of households has increased by some 7 percentage points, mainly at the expense of the middle group of households, the Bank of Italy reported.

The overall 14 percent increase in net wealth at current prices

between 2010 and 2023 "was driven by very strong growth (an overall 29 percent) observed in the wealthiest 10th of households", the central bank explained.

#### Uneven distribution

The uneven distribution of wealth observed in the period was mainly due to disparities between high- and medium-income families in terms of assets they could put their money into.

Wealthy households could invest in a variety of instruments, largely in financial products, while medium-income families mainly invested in the domestic real estate market.

As such, the most wealthy benefited from "the positive performance of riskier financial instruments (such as shares and other equity, investment fund shares and life insurance products)", the Bank of Italy explained.

On the other hand, the economic decline suffered by the middle class (-4.8 percent) in the same period "was instead due to the fall in the value of the real estate, which was only slightly offset by the developments in riskier financial instruments".

As for Italy's poorest households, their net worth remained mainly stable.

"The level of inequality in Italy is currently in line with the eurozone and France, higher than in Spain and lower than in Germany," the central bank said.

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## WORLDUS

## Critics see peril in Ukraine's use of US weapons in Russia

By HENG WEILI  
in New York  
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

The Biden administration's policy shift to allow American weapons to be used by Ukraine against limited targets inside Russia is a dangerous escalation of the war, those opposed to the policy say.

US President Joe Biden's directive allows for US-supplied weapons to be used for "counterfire purposes in the Kharkiv region so Ukraine can hit back against Russian forces that are attacking them or preparing to attack them," said one of four US officials who spoke to The Associated Press.

The officials, who requested anonymity, said that the US policy calling on Ukraine not to use American ATACMS or long-range missiles and other munitions to strike inside Russia has not changed.

The news of the US policy shift was first reported by Politico on May 30, which said that it was a result of recent Russian military gains around Kharkiv. Politico said the policy change was made "secretly".

Several commentators on social media have speculated that the move was made while attention was focused on former US president Donald Trump's hush-money fraud trial in New York City.

"Domestic news may threaten to overshadow this very serious development, so timing is perhaps not accidental," wrote Aaron Kheriaty, a physician and writer to his 299,000 followers on X.

"There isn't much more US/European provocation that can occur before Russia begins hitting equivalent targets in NATO countries outside Ukraine, at which point NATO will potentially be compelled to formally declare and activate its collective defense articles.

"If that occurs, opinions differ a bit on how things play out, but at least one analyst with Russia ties has stated that upon NATO declaration of war, Russian nuclear doctrine dictates a full-out preemptive nuclear attack, the rationale being that given the weakness of western conventional forces, the conflict would escalate to the nuclear level eventually anyway," he wrote.

"While the Trump indictment overwhelms the news, sounds like a serious escalation that will force a potentially devastating counter move by Putin. Curious Timing," wrote Edward Dowd, founder of Phinance Technologies, to 288,000 followers on X.

"This is what they are distracting us from with the Trump verdict!" wrote "Winnie Schola," an architectural designer, on X. "Joe Biden gave PERMISSION to Ukraine to use US weapons INSIDE of Russia! This is WWII level bull--- right here!

"It is not sane or acceptable that any of this is happening. The empire knowingly provoked this war, and now it's getting more

casual about risking the life of everyone on this planet as its proxy runs out of lives to throw into its gears," wrote Australian independent journalist Caitlin Johnstone to 388,000 followers on X.

Michael Tracey, in an X post to his 322,000 followers, wrote on May 21: "The hubris in Congress toward nuclear escalation is jaw-dropping. Bipartisan coalition demands Biden authorize Ukraine to strike inside Russia with US intel/weapons."

David Morgan in the UK posted to 103,000 followers on X, "We are poking the bear and that bear is a nuclear power in the form of the Russian Federation. The US and NATO are taking us into World War 3, not Putin!"

On Monday, Ukrainian forces said they had struck a Russian S-300 missile system using Western-supplied weapons inside Russian territory, although the origin of the weapons was unclear.

"It burns beautifully. It's a Russian S-300. On Russian territory. The first days after permission to use Western weapons on enemy territory," Ukrainian government minister Iryna Vereshchuk posted on Facebook, with a picture purporting to show the strike.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Monday that the United States could face "fatal consequences" if it ignored Moscow's warnings not to let Ukraine use weapons provided by Washington to strike targets inside Russia.

"I would like to warn American leaders against miscalculations that could have fatal consequences. For unknown reasons, they underestimate the seriousness of the rebuff they may receive," state news agency RIA quoted Ryabkov as saying.

"I urge these figures (in the US) ... to spend some of their time, which they apparently spend on some kind of video games, judging by the lightness of their approach, on studying what was said in detail by Putin," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered "a very significant warning and it must be taken with the utmost seriousness," Ryabkov added.

US Vice-President Kamala Harris will travel to Switzerland for a Ukraine peace summit, officials said Monday, with Biden decided instead to attend an election fundraiser featuring actor George Clooney. Russia, however, will not attend the summit, saying it doesn't take Russia's interests into account.

China's Foreign Ministry has said that Beijing supports a conference that's accepted by both Russia and Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had been pushing for Biden to attend, with Kyiv looking for support as it tries to hold back a Russian offensive in Kharkiv.

The White House announced that the United States will be represented at the meeting in Lucerne on June 15 by Harris and national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

Agencies contributed to this story.



A group of migrants seeking asylum look for transportation options after being processed and released on Tuesday in San Diego. GREGORY BULL / AP

## Biden orders asylum restriction for border

By RENALI LI in Los Angeles  
renali@chinadailyusa.com

US President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed an executive order aimed at blocking migrants' access to the US asylum system during periods of high illegal border crossings. The move is seen as an effort to address one of his biggest vulnerabilities for reelection in November.

Democrats have expressed concern for months that a potential summer migration surge could overwhelm the Border Patrol and negatively impact Biden's chances against former president Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP presidential candidate.

Biden used executive authority to impose broad restrictions, which will be in effect if illegal entries remain above an average of 2,500 per day, according to The Washington Post.

During a White House press conference detailing the order on Tuesday, Biden said that asylum access would still be available to migrants who registered for an appointment using the CBP One mobile app or utilized other legal pathways instead of crossing illegally.

"This measure will aid us in gaining control of our border and reinstating order into the process," Biden said. "This ban will remain in effect until the number of individuals attempting to enter illegally is reduced to a level that our system can effectively manage."

In April, US border arrests averaged 4,300 per day, according to the latest available government statistics. The ban will be temporarily lifted when arrests

decrease below an average of 1,500 per day for three consecutive weeks. The last time crossings reached that level was during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in July 2020, coinciding with historic lows in global travel.

Since Biden took office, Mexican authorities have agreed to accept large numbers of non-Mexican border crossers deemed ineligible for US asylum. During Biden's administration, more than 6.4 million migrants have been apprehended while attempting to cross into the US illegally.

The Trump administration utilized the same regulation to implement bans on immigration and travel from several predominantly Muslim countries, as well as to prohibit migrants from seeking asylum if they were apprehended crossing into the US illegally. Those actions prompted accusations of racism.

White House officials stated that Tuesday's measures serve as a temporary solution due to the repeated failure of a bipartisan bill this year. The bill would have combined the asylum cap with additional funding for immigration enforcement, but it faced opposition from both parties.

Republicans, including Trump, were against the bill, citing concerns about its potential impact on the upcoming election year.

Senator John Cornyn of Texas and other Republicans criticized Biden's new policy as a political stratagem to appeal to voters before the presidential election.

"The simple fact of the matter is that the same laws that were in effect back when President

Trump was in office are still in effect, but the difference is the unwillingness of this White House and this administration simply to enforce the law," Cornyn stated.

California Senator Alex Padilla condemned the policy in a statement, accusing Biden of "reviving Trump's asylum ban."

The order is expected to encounter legal challenges if implemented as intended.

The order has the potential to curb the influx in San Diego, California.

San Diego County Supervisor Jim Desmond, who has been advocating for federal intervention to curb illegal crossings, described San Diego as "the new epicenter for migrants and illegal immigration."

It has been reported that for the first time in 25 years San Diego County has become the busiest corridor for illegal crossings along the US-Mexico border, as popular migration routes have continued to shift west from Arizona and Texas.

Pedro Rios, director of the American Friends Service Committee's US-Mexico Border Program, told the San Diego Union-Tribune that there is a notion that crossing through San Diego is "less risky."

"Human smugglers have identified California, particularly the San Diego border sector, as the path of least resistance for illegal immigration," Desmond said. "Border Patrol has inadvertently become the 'Uber' for migrants entering San Diego County, and the county is the travel agent."

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Stanford AI team accused of copying China model

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
liazhu@chinadailyusa.com

An artificial intelligence team from Stanford University has apologized for copying an open source language model developed by Tsinghua University and tech firm ModelBest in China.

Two members of the Stanford team issued an apology on social media site X on Monday, formerly Twitter, while waiting for a response from another member, Mustafa Aljadery.

Stanford University's Honor Code defines plagiarism as using another person's original work without giving proper credit to the author or source, including ideas and code.

"We apologize to the authors of miniCBM (a misspelling for miniCPM) for any inconvenience that we caused for not doing the full diligence to verify and peer review the novelty of this work," wrote Siddharth Sharma and Aksh Garg in the post.

Sharma said he and Garg posted the project Llama3V online, and Aljadery was the person who wrote the code. "Our role here was to help him promote the model on medium and twitter," he said.

"After seeing the twitter posts about this topic yesterday (June 2), we asked Mustafa about proof of originality for Llama3V and asked for the training code but we haven't seen any response so far. We were waiting for Mustafa to take the lead but instead we are releasing our own statement," he said.

He said all references to Llama3V have been taken down and promised that they will be "cautious and diligent" in the future.

Sharma and Garg are students of computer science at Stanford, according to their webpages; Aljadery, a graduate of computer science from the University of Southern California, is based in San Diego, according to his LinkedIn page. His account at X has been set as private and his website has been deleted.

China Daily sent emails to Sharma and Garg, requesting comments, but hadn't yet received a response.

The team's act was first discovered by Chinese internet users when the team announced its project online on May 29, according to the tech news website TechNode.

Chinese firm ModelBest confirmed on June 2 that the Stanford team's large model project Llama3-V, similar to their MiniCPM, is able to recognize Tsinghua Bamboo Slips, a collection of Chinese texts dating to the Warring States period (475-221 BC) and written in ink on slips of bamboo. The slips were donated to Tsinghua University in 2008.

The Stanford team's project not only replicates the Chinese model's newly developed recognition ability for those ancient Chinese texts but also keeps the mistakes consistent, according to the report.

The development of AI is inseparable from the open source sharing of global algorithms, data and models, Liu Zhiyuan, co-founder of Model Best, told the Yicai Global, an English-language Chinese news website.

However, what Stanford's Llama3-V team did seriously undermined the foundations of open source sharing, including adherence to open source protocols, trust in other contributors and respect for previous achievements, he said.

Stanford University's Honor Code defines plagiarism as using another person's original work without giving proper credit to the author or source, including ideas and code.

A recent research-misconduct scandal at Stanford involves its former president Marc Tessier-Lavigne, who resigned in August after an investigation found serious flaws in studies he had supervised going back decades.

## Prosecution in Hunter Biden trial details his drug issues

By AI HEPING in New York  
aiheping@chinadailyusa.com

Jurors in the felony gun trial of Hunter Biden on Tuesday heard the same words that prosecutors used last week to justify the prosecution of former US president Donald Trump, who was convicted of 34 felonies in New York City: "Nobody is above the law."

Then prosecutor Derek Hines told the jurors in his opening argument at a Wilmington, Delaware, courthouse: "Nobody is allowed to lie, not even Hunter Biden. It doesn't matter who you are or what your name is."

President Joe Biden's son has been charged with three felonies stemming from the purchase of a revolver in 2018 when he was, according to his memoir, addicted to crack cocaine. He has been accused of lying to a federally licensed gun dealer, making a false claim on the application by saying he

wasn't a drug user and illegally having the gun for 11 days.

The prosecution and defense disagreed about when he was using illegal drugs and whether the timeline affects the gun charges against him.

Hines said his drug abuse occurred before, during and after buying the gun in October 2018. He spent hours Tuesday on Biden's drug problem, using his own words and memoir to show the depth of the addiction.

He had FBI agent Erika Jensen, who has investigated the case, go through passages from Biden's memoir where he discusses his addiction and times that he had smoked crack.

Hines said that the salesman who helped with the purchase would testify that he saw Biden check a box on the federal form indicating he wasn't using drugs.

"He crossed the line when he chose to buy a gun and lied about a federal background check," Hines said. "We

would not be here today if he was just a drug addict. The defendant's choice to buy a gun is why we're here."

Defense attorney Abbe Lowell, one of Hunter Biden's lawyers, opened his argument by emphasizing the word "knowingly."

He suggested that prosecutors left out the word from the slide that described the charges to the jury.

Lowell said he would disprove the government's core contention that Biden "knowingly" broke the law by answering "no" on a question asking applicants whether they were using drugs at the time they sought to purchase a gun.

Biden "knowingly violated the law" is what prosecutors have to prove, Lowell said. He stressed that it is about what Biden thought at the time in 2018 and what his state of mind was when he walked into the gun store.

He told jurors that prosecutors

can't prove at the time Biden bought the gun that he believed himself to be addicted or an unlawful user of drugs.

Lowell said the form Biden signed asks whether you "are" a drug user. "It does not say 'have you ever been,'" and he suggested Biden didn't think of himself as someone with a drug problem when he purchased the gun.

Lowell argued that Biden was abusing alcohol and not drugs when he purchased the gun and when he said he was not a user, his understanding was that he was not at that point.

Lowell said that Biden had been in rehabilitation in California months before buying the gun and wasn't using drugs at the time of the gun purchase or in the preceding weeks.

He said much of the Justice Department's evidence of Biden's drug use comes from other periods of his life and has little relevance to the time period at issue in the indictment.

Biden, 54, is the first child of a

president facing criminal charges.

For a second day first lady Jill Biden and other members of the president's family looked on from the front row. She left after lunch to be in Washington.

Both the gun charges and the tax charges were to have been resolved through a deal with prosecutors last July.

But US District Judge Maryellen Noreika, who was nominated to the bench by Trump and is overseeing Biden's trial, questioned aspects of the deal.

The lawyers couldn't agree to a resolution on her questions, and the deal fell apart. Attorney General Merrick Garland then appointed a former US attorney for Delaware, David Weiss, as a special counsel in August, and a month later Biden was indicted.

Agencies contributed to this story.



From left: Xizang is now home to more than 300,000 Tibetan antelopes, compared to about 30,000 several decades ago. XIA WENCHUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY Farmers in Xizang harvest highland barley, a local grain crop featuring a rich content of nutritional substances. LIU YIXIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY The Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway greatly shortens the travel time between the two cities. JOGOD / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Xizang's development reaching new heights

Autonomous region thriving with slew of sustainable projects aimed at boosting overall growth

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The Xizang autonomous region in Southwest China has achieved all-around progress in multiple socio-economic sectors and blazed a new trail for high-quality development with characteristics of the plateau region, Xizang's officials announced at a recent news conference in Beijing.

Yan Jinhai, chairman of the autonomous region, and other officials from Xizang attended a news conference hosted by the Information Office of the State Council on May 23, sharing Xizang's progress to reporters with numbers, facts and vivid stories.

Yan said Xizang's regional GDP increased from 190 billion yuan (\$26.24 billion) in 2021 to 240 billion yuan in 2023 and its per capita GDP grew from 52,300 yuan to 60,000 yuan during the same period. He added that the growth rates in per capita incomes of urban and rural residents are among the highest in the country.

The official said that such rapid and sustained growth is the result of Xizang's strategy to promote the development of industries with local characteristics and local advantages. These industries include cultural tourism, farming with plateau characteristics, Tibetan medicine and the digital economy.

When talking about the cultural tourism industry, Yan said Xizang received 55.17 million tourist visits last year and its tourism revenue totaled 65.1 billion yuan, increasing 83.7 percent and 60 percent year-on-year respectively — both rates being local historical records.

## Welcoming back tourists

He added that Xizang began to welcome back overseas tourists since last year, after a three-year halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic starting at the end of 2019. The autonomous region received nearly 20,000 foreign tourists in 2023 and more than 4,300 in the first quarter of this year.

Yan said tourism has now become an important source of revenue for Xizang residents, especially for those in rural areas.

He said he took a research tour of Congo village in Kongpo'yada county in Nyingchi city in early May to learn about its development in rural tourism.

"I was told that this forest-surrounded village with 108 households and 438 residents used to have its economy relying on logging," Yan said. "And now the villagers have turned their forestry farms into scenic sites and tourism has become the major stream of income."

He said many families in the village are operating bed-and-breakfast businesses in their newly built two-story houses and some have made a fortune through the businesses.

He cited the villager Choyang as an example, saying that her family garnered a net income of 155,000 yuan last year and the contribution from her B&B business was more than 80,000 yuan.

Yan said the village's total tourism revenue was 2.36 million yuan last year and the villagers' per capita annual income was 27,000 yuan, 7,000 yuan more than the average per capita income of Xizang's rural residents.

When answering the question of a reporter from Venezuela on Xizang's tourism development, Xu Zhitao, vice-chairman of the autonomous region, said that Xizang has its unique appeal to tourists from all over the world and he is very optimistic about the future of local tourism.

"Xizang's tourism combines spectacular natural wonders and colorful



A wetland park in Xizang's Ngari prefecture. Xizang is home to 18.3 percent of the nation's wetland area. LOSANG TSULTRIM / FOR CHINA DAILY

ethnic cultures and showcases the harmonious coexistence of man and nature," Xu said. "This is where the strength of our tourism lies."

He estimated that the tourism industry can keep a double-digit increase this year and the momentum can be sustained in the years to come.

## Characteristic agriculture

When talking about the agricultural industry that includes farming and husbandry, Xizang Chairman Yan said he is proud that this industry achieved a year-on-year increase of 14.9 percent last year, a rate keeping it at the forefront of the nation.

In the agricultural industry, Xizang has highlighted such characteristic sectors as yak and highland barley farming.

"Strengthening research on these characteristic sectors and extending their industry chains are crucial in driving growth," Yan said.

He cited the example of Kelsangtang Modern Agriculture Demonstration Park in Lhasa's Lhundrub county, which is famous for modernized yak farming.

"During my tour of the park recently, local researchers told me that the traditional way of yak farming featured a long growth period and low economic efficiency," Yan said.

He said he got to learn that researchers in the park developed high-efficiency yak farming through the breeding of fast-growing varieties and boosting yaks' growth via nutrition enhancement. As a result, the yaks can grow mature in three to four years, compared with eight to 12 years with traditional farming. The shortened maturation period can lead to a substantial increase in economic returns.

Yan also talked about highland barley farming. Highland barley, also known as *qingke* among locals, is the staple food ingredient in Xizang. Researchers recently found that *qingke* has a rich content of nutritional substances beneficial to human health and that is why Tibetan people survived the harsh natural environment of a high-altitude plateau for thousands of years.

"In October 2023, a Chinese delegation won the championship during a bread-making competition in Germany, thanks to the use of *qingke* flour as the main ingredient," Yan said, adding that the award shows the recognition of Xizang's nutrition-rich *qingke* among consumers in the West.



From top: Xizang's officials introduce the region's development at a recent news conference. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY People of different ethnicities have a get-together in Lhasa. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY *Qingke* beer is produced at a local brewery. TANG BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

As a result of local agronomists' constant efforts in breeding research, the official said Xizang has seen steady growth in the output of *qingke*. Last year, the output reached 840,000 metric tons, increasing 6.1 percent from 2020.

"Currently, the annual consump-

tion of *qingke* in Xizang is about 700,000 tons, meaning that there is a surplus of 140,000 tons for making value-added products," Yan said. "We are now extending the *qingke* industry chain to such finished products as *qingke* wine and beer, biscuits, noodles and flour, allowing more con-

sumers in the world to enjoy the high-quality *qingke* products from Xizang, while helping our local farmers increase revenue."

## Significant niche products

Yan in particular mentioned one niche product series with local characteristics — pressure-enhancing cooking utensils.

"Because of the lower atmospheric pressure in higher-altitude regions, the boiling point of water is much lower than 100 C in Xizang, for instance, 82 C in Lhasa," he said. "This means that food like dumplings, noodles, rice and meat cannot be fully cooked, which is not good for people's health."

To tackle this problem, a company in Xizang joined hands with local research institutions to develop pressure-enhancing cooking utensils. The products under brand names of Snow Lotus and Kelsang Flower have gained 18 Chinese patents for their unique properties to suit plateau conditions.

"There were numerous pressure-enhancing cookers in the world, but none of them can fit well in plateau regions like Xizang, until the Snow Lotus and Kelsang Flower products were launched into the market two years ago," Yan said. He added that more than 840,000 units of the utensils were sold in Xizang and its neighboring regions, basically solving the cooking problem for many families in higher-altitude areas.

The official said the autonomous region has also shown its strength in the digital economy. Xizang has capitalized on its low-temperature, low-pressure and low-humidity environment and low-cost clean energy to develop the highest-altitude green data center in the world, with planned investment of 11.8 billion yuan.

Last year, the autonomous region reported more than 25 billion in the revenue of the digital economy, growing 19 percent from the previous year.

## Social progress

With the sustainable growth of the region's economy, Yan said Xizang is in a better position to boost social development in all fronts, including investing in basic infrastructure for livelihoods, improving the quality of life for residents and protecting the environment.

According to the official, all the 74 counties and districts in Xizang got access to the main electricity grids by

the end of 2020. In comparison, the number was 40 a decade ago.

He added that the total length of highways now surpasses 120,000 kilometers in Xizang, allowing paved roads to link all the administrative villages in the autonomous region. In addition, an expressway network of 1,105 km has linked five major cities in Xizang.

He took the travel between Lhasa and Nyingchi as an example to illustrate how the local transport sector has developed rapidly. "In the past, travel by car between the two cities — which are less than 500 km apart in a straight line — could take a whole week," Yan said. "After the operation of an expressway in 2019 and a railway in 2021, the travel time is now shortened to 3.5 hours."

With rapid economic development and improving infrastructure, Yan said local residents, especially those in the countryside, have seen substantial improvement in the quality of life.

In 2023, the per capita disposable income of rural residents was nearly 20,000 yuan, which represented a 36.5 percent increase from that in 2020.

Rural residents now have access to better housing, with per capita floor area reaching 41.32 square meters, growing 11.74 sq m from 2012. Many of the rural households now have access to tapped water, heat and gas, according to Yan.

## A pristine land

The official said one area that especially makes him, his colleagues and his fellow residents proud of is the protection of, and improvement in, ecological environment.

"Xizang is now on track to develop into 'a highland of ecological civilization' for the country and even the world, according to the requirements of the national authorities," Yan said. "This strategic positioning is aimed for Xizang to make a special contribution to the environmental well-being of the whole world."

He cited impressive figures to show that Xizang's sound ecological system is a valuable asset of the nation.

"Xizang now has more than 50 percent of its land dedicated to ecological protection and its nature reserves account for 36 percent of its total land area," Yan said. "It is home to 16.5 percent of water resources, 30 percent of grassland area, 41 percent of glacier area and 18.3 percent wetland area of the whole nation."

He said Xizang remains one of the regions with the best ecological environments in the world and improvement in this field is still going on.

Yan cited the growth in numbers of such wildlife species as the Tibetan antelope. "The lowest number of Tibetan antelopes in Xizang was 30,000 several decades ago," he said. "And now the number has surpassed 300,000."

Wang Xiaodong, head of the Xizang Bureau of Ecology and Environment, said at the news conference that the improving environment is also bringing tangible benefits to locals and tourists as well.

"The unique ecological environment of Xizang, featuring a pristine land with plentiful sunshine, blue skies, spectacular rivers and lakes and snow-covered mountains, proves to be the biggest draw to tourists," Wang said.

He added that environmental protection is also creating jobs and revenue streams for residents in Xizang. "The autonomous region has offered more than 400,000 environmental protection-related jobs for locals and more than 2.2 million rural residents are given subsidies for their efforts in environmental protection."

## BUSINESS

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## SOEs told to limit involvement in financial institutions

By ZHONG NAN  
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China's centrally administered State-owned enterprises will be prohibited from establishing, acquiring or taking new stakes in financial institutions, according to information released by the country's top State-owned assets regulator on Tuesday.

As part of efforts to enhance the regulatory framework governing their financial activities, central SOEs should refrain from participating in or increasing investments in financial institutions that offer minimal benefits to their core operations and present significant spillover risks, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council said in a statement.

They must strengthen their risk management and control strategies, increasingly leverage information technology for risk management and aim for prompt risk detection, early warning systems, immediate risk disclosure and swift resolution, the SASAC said.

Managers of central SOEs who cause substantial risk-related losses due to misconduct or negligence will be held accountable, it said.

Experts said that by limiting SOEs' involvement in financial institutions, the government aims to prevent financial risks from spilling over into the industrial, energy and infrastructure development sectors.

Financial businesses often face different risks — such as liquidity and credit risks, and market volatility — compared to nonfinancial enterprises. Separating these functions can help maintain stability within central SOEs, said Zhou Lisha, a researcher at the Institute for State-owned Enterprises of Tsinghua University.

By urging central SOEs to prioritize their primary industries over diversification into financial services, the policy ensures a focused allocation of resources and managerial efforts toward enhancing their core capabilities, said Zhou.

Liu Xingguo, a senior researcher from the China Enterprise Confederation in Beijing, said the latest move aligns with the broader goals of improving productivity and profitability within central SOEs.

Liu said that exporting high-end

industrial goods, such as liquefied natural gas carriers and energy storage equipment, embracing digital transformation and implementing green renovation have become new growth directions for China's SOEs.

For instance, a deal for building four containerships, each with a capacity of 11,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), was sealed between Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co Ltd and X-Press Feeders, a Singapore-headquartered container shipping group, in Shanghai last week.

Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding, a subsidiary of China State Shipbuilding Corp, independently designed these tailor-made vessels. They will be equipped with an additional methanol fuel power system for future adaptation, according to the contract.

The foreign trade of Chinese SOEs reached 2.21 trillion yuan (\$305 billion) in the first four months of this year, up 2 percent year-on-year, accounting for 16 percent of the country's total foreign trade value, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

The combined profits of China's SOEs grew by 3.8 percent year-on-year to more than 1.38 trillion yuan between January and April, according to the Ministry of Finance.

The SOEs saw their debt-to-asset ratio reach 64.9 percent by the end of April, up 0.1 percentage point from the previous year, according to the ministry.

The SASAC will support central SOEs to deeply implement the innovation-driven development strategy and closely work with private businesses, according to a guideline released by the administration's bureau of social responsibility on Tuesday.

Central SOEs will continuously optimize and adjust their industrial layout and structure, modernize traditional businesses and develop strategic emerging industries, as per the guideline.

The government will encourage collaborations between central SOEs and private companies across various sectors, including industry, capital, technology, procurement and bidding. This initiative aims to foster joint development among private and small to medium-sized businesses.

The government will encourage collaborations between central SOEs and private companies across various sectors, including industry, capital, technology, procurement and bidding. This initiative aims to foster joint development among private and small to medium-sized businesses.



An employee works on the production line of an all-solid-state battery maker in Chongqing.  
CUI JINGYIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## All-solid-state batteries rise in China's EV field

Disruptive tech seen giving nation edge with mass production likely by 2030

By CHENG YU  
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Accelerated efforts of both the Chinese government and the private sector are expected to lead to installation of all-solid-state batteries in electric vehicles by 2027 nationwide and mass production of such batteries by 2030 at the latest, said automotive industry insiders.

In China, all-solid-state batteries, especially sulfide-based ones, with an energy density of 400 Watt-hour per kilogram are finding favor now. Wh/kg is a reference unit that indicates the density of energy contained or storable in a body. All-solid-state batteries represent a disruptive EV technology, they said.

China will likely adopt a dual-track approach to the development of EV batteries. It will keep improving liquid lithium-ion batteries to "maintain advantages globally", while intensifying research and development of all-solid-state batteries, to "prevent disruption" by other countries, they said.

Zhou Anjian, a senior project manager at Shenlan Technology, a new energy vehicle technology company, and a former executive of automaker Changan Auto, said, "China's all-solid-state battery technology is nascent, but with the support of national projects, the sector will evolve rapidly to catch up with the levels of Japan and South Korea within three to five years."

"China is expected to achieve small-scale demonstration installations of all-solid-state batteries in vehicles by 2027, and mass production by 2030."

Polymer-based, oxide-based or sulfide-based EV batteries are three widely recognized varieties preferred by domestic automakers and battery makers, Zhou said.

Industry sources said the three varieties are in line with the country's goal to develop all-solid-state batter-

ies. Chinese battery makers are particularly upbeat about the potential of sulfide-based batteries with an energy density of 400 Wh/kg.

All-solid-state batteries offer higher theoretical energy density and safety, and entail lower costs than lithium-ion batteries that currently dominate the EV sector. Hence, many countries consider them a potentially game-changing technology.

Japan, which has been striving to develop all-solid-state batteries since 2018, currently has the highest number of related patent applications. In June 2023, Toyota, a Japanese carmaker, set a target for itself to commercialize such batteries by 2027.

At a conference held by the China Automotive Battery Innovation Alliance late last week, Ouyang Minggao, a renowned battery expert and an academician with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said that in China, the closest technical route to industrialization is the sulfide-based all-solid-state batteries. But the country is unlikely to bet on only one kind of battery.

Ouyang suggested that instead of producing only samples, China must strive to commercialize all-solid-state batteries with an energy density of more than 400 Wh/kg and 800 Wh/L before 2035.

"China must develop all-solid-state batteries, but the reason for such efforts should not be to subvert others, but to prevent other countries from subverting us. As long as all-solid-state batteries have a 1 percent market share in the market, the impact on us will be great," he said.

Since the second quarter of this year, the development of all-solid-state batteries has accelerated in China. A batch of automakers and battery firms have announced solid progress has been made in that direction.

Battery maker Sunwoda told

China Daily that it has finished R&D of its all-solid-state battery with an energy density of more than 400 Wh/kg, and plans to mass-produce it by 2026, with an estimated production capacity of 1 gigawatt-hour. This is also the first time that the company disclosed momentum in its R&D of all-solid-state batteries.

Gotion High-Tech Co Ltd, another leading EV battery maker, also disclosed to China Daily that it aims to manufacture all-solid-state batteries in small quantities by 2027 and mass-produce them by 2030.

Ouyang said China, while developing all-solid-state batteries, should not abandon the current advantages in liquid lithium-ion batteries and needs to continue to optimize this type as China will rely on them for another 30 to 50 years.

Xu Yanhua, secretary of the China Automotive Battery Innovation Alliance, said that until 2030, the country's power battery industry will still be dominated by high-energy-density liquid batteries and lithium iron phosphate batteries. She cited a research report on the country's power battery development framework, released in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

"Around 2035, the proportion of lithium iron phosphate batteries will decline in the country and the proportion of solid-state batteries and sodium-ion batteries in vehicle applications is expected to increase to reach 10 percent or more," Xu predicted.

"Although the market share of China's power batteries is the largest, the level is not the highest. China faces great challenges in resource acquisition, technology, manufacturing, costs and applications globally."

Xu said China should focus on developing high-performance, low-cost power batteries and high-safety, long-cycle energy storage batteries, ensuring a stable supply of core battery resources, and boosting the capacity utilization rate to over 90 percent before 2035.

## Tutor firm chief not satisfied with unit

By FAN FEIFEI  
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Yu Minhong, founder and chairman of Chinese private tutoring company New Oriental Education and Technology Group, has expressed his dissatisfaction over East Buy, the livestreaming e-commerce arm of New Oriental. Industry experts said East Buy is facing mounting challenges in its transformation after its most influential livestreamer Dong Yuhui walked out of a broadcast room of the company.

The experts added that as livestreaming has become a key method widely adopted by merchants to attract users and boost sales revenue, more efforts are needed to strengthen supervision over the burgeoning e-commerce livestreaming segment and improve the professionalism and quality of livestreaming anchors.

During a recent livestreaming session with Zhang Wenzhong, founder of Chinese retailer Wumart Group, Yu described East Buy as "messed-up" currently and indicated his intention to distance himself from businesses and disputes to focus on his personal life.

His comments came after East Buy had seen a decline in both the number of followers on Chinese short-video platform Douyin and sales revenue, and a shift in its approach to live broadcasts, as livestreamers tend to adopt an exaggerated and commercialized style to promote products.

Yu once said he preferred introducing commodities in a calm way while disseminating related knowledge in a live broadcasting program, rather than the aggressive sales tactics that are widely used nowadays. Yu also added that he looked down on the "howling noises" that he said typify livestreaming-based e-commerce.

East Buy opened a new and exclusive livestreaming channel on Douyin in December for its top livestreamer Dong after a dispute that sparked an online debate at that time. The move was expected to attract Dong's fans into his new livestreaming room.

Dong, once an English language tutor at New Oriental, has gone viral and amassed a huge number of followers since June 2022 due to his eloquence and articulate speaking style.

Data from iiMedia Research showed that revenue of China's livestreaming e-commerce sector reached 1.7 trillion yuan (\$234.7 billion) last year, up 16 percent year-on-year. This figure is expected to reach 2.14 trillion yuan in 2025.

Jiang Han, a senior analyst at market consultancy Pangao, said, "As competition in the livestreaming e-commerce sector is heating up, livestreamers will no longer be limited to a certain online marketplace and choose different platforms to increase their exposure and rev up sales."

Jiang added that the authorities should formulate and improve relevant laws and regulations to better regulate the healthy development of the livestreaming e-commerce sector, as well as strengthen the supervision and testing of product quality, and protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers.

He also called for establishing a ranking system for livestreaming e-commerce and giving the assessments of anchors and merchants to improve the transparency and integrity of the industry.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said livestreaming e-commerce companies should make adjustments to reduce overreliance on top livestreaming anchors and nurture new ones, while strengthening management in supply chains and after-sales service.

## Briefly

## Banks see stable credit asset quality

China's commercial lenders saw their nonperforming loan ratio stand at 1.59 percent at the end of the first quarter, basically in line with the figure reported at the end of last year, said the National Financial Regulatory Administration. The nonperforming loan balance of commercial banks reached 3.4 trillion yuan (\$478.3 billion) at the end of March, 141.4 billion yuan more than that at the end of December. The data confirmed that the country's commercial banks had maintained generally stable credit asset quality.

## PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281.36 million) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Tuesday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, said the People's Bank of China. A reverse repo is a process by which the central bank purchases securities from commercial lenders through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA · CHINA DAILY

## GCL Tech eyes UAE for silicon project

By LIU YUKUN  
liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese solar power giant GCL Technology said on Monday it may launch its first granular silicon project in the United Arab Emirates, amid a growing trend that the Middle East is becoming a new hot spot for Chinese photovoltaic firms.

GCL said it is now in discussions with Mubadala Investment Co PJSC to explore potential cooperation, including the establishment of an integrated silicon ecosystem in the region, which GCL said may incubate the world's largest granular silicon research, development and manufacturing base.

In May, GCL's Suzhou branch signed a cooperation agreement

with MDC Power Holding Co LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Mubadala Investment, to develop the UAE's first polysilicon production facility.

"The UAE offers excellent solar conditions with an average of 3,000 to 4,000 hours of solar power generation per year, providing significant opportunities for large-scale photovoltaic power stations. The UAE's accelerated push toward new energy development, positioning it as a key pillar for sustainable development, has also been a compelling factor for us to invest," said Zhu Gongshan, chairman of GCL.

In the updated UAE Energy Strategy 2050, the government announced it will triple the share of renewable

energy and invest up to AED 200 billion (\$54 billion) by 2030 to meet the country's increasing demand for energy.

The moves followed China's recent announcement it will support Chinese energy companies and financial institutions in participating in renewable energy projects with a total installed capacity exceeding 3 million kilowatts in Arab countries.

Since last year, several Chinese solar firms, including GCL, TrinaSolar and Arctech have announced plans to invest in the Middle East for the production of polysilicon, silicon wafers, solar cells and auxiliary materials.

The strategic shift toward the Middle East highlights the region's growing importance in the global



A view of the booth of GCL during an expo in Shanghai.  
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

renewable energy landscape, due to its abundant natural resources and industry-friendly policies, and marks a significant step in China's efforts to expand its solar industry's global

footprint, especially amid growing trade frictions with Western countries, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

# BUSINESS



Visitors check out an eVTOL aircraft during the Expo Central China 2024 in Changsha, Hunan province, on Friday.  
GU PENGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Central China 'great' place for MNCs to invest

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

China's central regions offer vast opportunities for multinational companies to invest and do business, attendees to the Expo Central China 2024 said.

Held in Changsha, capital of Central China's Hunan province, the expo attracted more than 200 multinational firms, and over 1,000 businesses from 32 countries and regions, according to the organizers.

A total of 284 project deals worth over 250 billion yuan (\$34.5 billion) were inked at the expo, with eight of those projects involving foreign investment, official data showed.

China's central region, known for its agriculture, energy and equipment manufacturing industries, is speeding up the construction of a modern industrial system.

It is also coordinating the trans-

formation and upgrade of traditional industries, nurturing and developing emerging industries, and planning for future industrial development.

Chen Wen, vice-president of the Italy-China Chamber of Commerce, said China's central regions offer great opportunities for Italian enterprises.

Due to the growing consumer market and rising demand for high-quality products and services in the country, Italian companies can make good use of their expertise in manufacturing, design, fashion, automotive, food and beverages, Chen said.

"The cooperation and partnerships between Italian and Chinese businesses will bring mutual benefits. Italian companies have unique advantages in technology, design, and quality, while the central regions of China possess vast markets and superior geographical con-

ditions, offering tremendous potential for collaboration," he said.

Yang Yi, a director at Walmart (China) Investment Co Ltd, said the retail chain has opened 16 supermarkets, two membership stores and a logistics center across the province. Walmart entered Hunan in 2003.

Central China is a strategic market for the company and it wants to promote and strengthen cooperation with another five provinces, Yang said.

Hunan has a favorable geological position and good business environment, and the local government has greatly facilitated the company in opening and operating stores in the region, he added.

A total of 211 Fortune 500 companies have invested in Hunan as of last year. Meanwhile, the province is home to more than 2,900 foreign companies with annual business revenue reaching 376

billion yuan, according to the local government.

In 2018, the China headquarters of Zurich Insurance Group was established in Changsha.

Wang Xueli, head of its China branch, said the local business environment, infrastructure and economy have improved over the years.

The local government in Changsha has created an international community center for the company, hiring community workers with overseas work experience to service its foreign employees, Wang said.

China's central regions have abundant human resources, education resources, convenient transportation and great potential for economic growth, he said.

"We want to gain more opportunities for investment and cooperation by participating in the expo, so that we can settle down in central China, which is a place worth long-term commitment."

## Veolia bullish on growing green drive

French environmental solutions firm eyes closer ties with Chinese partners

By ZHENG XIN  
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

7,160

China's accelerated efforts to foster new quality productive forces will bring novel opportunities for multinational corporations like Veolia Group, and the French environmental solutions provider is committed to further investing in the decarbonization, depollution and regeneration of resources sectors in the country, said a top company official.

The country's efforts to foster new quality productive forces, including artificial intelligence and other high-tech innovations, present Veolia's business in China with a vast array of growth opportunities, paving the way for more sustainable and high-quality development, said Christophe Maquet, CEO of Veolia China.

"As the demand for green and sustainable energy solutions surges in China, Veolia's expertise in providing clean energy, energy efficiency and circular economy services will find greater market potential," said Maquet.

The cross-industry and cross-sectoral collaboration will also enable Veolia to forge closer partnerships with local Chinese companies, government agencies and international organizations to develop new projects and expand into new markets. Through continuous technological innovation and services enhancement, Veolia can strengthen its market competitiveness and better cater to China's burgeoning demand for efficient and environmentally friendly energy and environmental services, he said.

Maquet added that by applying its Smart Water solutions in drinking water services in Pudong, Shanghai, Veolia has optimized its monitoring of the water network and reduced water loss by 17.12 percent over the past decade, avoiding 4,758 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

Cooperation is already taking place in plastics recycling, EV battery recycling, decommissioned wind-power and photovoltaic equipment recycling, he said.

"As China is determined to drive the development of new quality productive forces, we expect China to be more open and have more initiatives to encourage innovation to accelerate the ecological transformation."

An analyst said China and France, both being influential global players, share a pursuit of green and decarbonization transformation, and their cooperation on green issues can set an example for the world.

The partnership between China and France will facilitate smoother and more frequent exchanges of technical knowledge and expertise, while joint investments in projects will enable both parties to

number of new foreign-invested firms set up across China during the first two months, according to the Commerce Ministry

collectively bear the risks and reap the rewards of development, said Zhu Yicong, senior analyst in fields of renewables and power research at global consultancy Rystad Energy.

Veolia recorded revenue growth last year despite difficulties in the industrial sector. It has secured new contracts such as providing industrial wastewater treatment and water reuse services for a renowned chemical enterprise in Hubei province, while signing a strategic cooperation agreement with Xinhui Industrial Park in Jiangmen, Guangdong province.

"China is one of the most important overseas markets for Veolia and we will continue strengthening business in renewable energy, energy optimization, emission reductions, pollution treatment and resource regeneration in the country," Maquet said.

Drawn by the improved business environment and vast market potential, more foreign companies are opting to establish their presence in China despite the rising tide of global protectionism. The Ministry of Commerce said that some 7,160 new foreign-invested firms were set up across China during the first two months, up 34.9 percent year-on-year, the biggest surge in nearly five years.

Maquet said the action plan comprising 24 specific pro-foreign investment measures unveiled by the State Council, China's Cabinet, in March will further enhance the appeal among foreign investors, foster a more level playing field and facilitate the flow of innovation factors.

"The action plan provides robust support and assurances for the long-term development of foreign companies, and I am deeply impressed by the Chinese government's unwavering efforts to continuously enhance the foreign investment environment, particularly in significantly improving policy transparency and predictability, as well as actively soliciting input from foreign-invested enterprises," he said.

"These positive developments will enable Veolia to plan and execute long-term strategies with greater precision and confidence. Moreover, we are pleased to see the clear commitment to national treatment for foreign-invested enterprises in the policy, signifying that companies will enjoy fairer treatment in the market and opening up broader opportunities for future growth."

## Deloitte senior exec: Nation 'too attractive to ignore'

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

China is a market that is "too big and too attractive to ignore" for multinational companies, said David Hill, CEO of Deloitte Asia Pacific.

"One of the things that people talk about is a decoupling with China. That is a false notion. As the world's second-largest economy and the number one trading partner of more than 120 countries, China remains fundamentally connected to the rest of the world," Hill said.

He made the remarks in an interview during the MNC Future Summit hosted by Deloitte in Shanghai late last month.

As the first of its kind inaugurated by the international professional services provider, the summit attracted over 200 attendees, most of whom were MNC senior executives and industry experts.

According to a consensus reached during the summit, China's advancements in infrastructure, technology and sector-specific

innovations are instrumental in fostering the growth of MNCs, both within China and the rest of the world.

Although foreign direct investment in China contracted by 8 percent last year, partly because of a supply chain concentration risk after the COVID-19 pandemic, FDI declined 18 percent on average globally last year due to the interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve, said Hill.

More important, China's FDI reached \$189 billion in 2022, a record high, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Although it fell last year, it was still "very high" by China standards, he said.

In addition, about 20 to 30 percent of the income of multinational companies is generated from China every year.

A large part of this income is reinvested in China for expansion, but not included in the calculation of FDI, said Li Jianning, chief strategy officer of Deloitte Consulting for China.

While MNCs have traditionally made more investments in the country's infrastructure, mergers and acquisitions, operations, and talent are their focus areas now, said Li.

MNCs' contribution to China's annual GDP reached 5 percent during the 1990s, but this has dropped to 1 to 2 percent currently. This is closely related to the rise of Chinese consumers, Hill said.

While the middle-income population has already reached 400 million in China, the largest in the world, this will further go up to 800 million in the next decade.

This indicates that consumption has overtaken investment to become the most important economic driver in China, as proven by consumption's 82.5 percent contribution to the country's GDP last year. This is one major reason why China's economy is less dependent on FDI now, he added.

"I would be optimistic about the long-term trend and what drives FDI in China," said Hill.

According to Hill, there are still many good reasons for MNCs to

enter the Chinese market, which is cost-competitive, sophisticated, innovative and fast-moving.

In terms of specific areas implying great growth potential, Hill believes it will be the green economy, which will be a major engine for global economic growth in future and which has already seen some serious planning in China.

About 40 percent of China's growth last year came from emerging green technology. Meanwhile, 40 percent of the world's hydrogen electrolyzers, 60 percent of the world's wind turbines, 64 percent of the world's electric vehicles and 80 percent of the world's solar panels are manufactured in China.

The outbound reach made by Chinese companies is also worth noting. Outbound investment from nonfinancial Chinese companies to the rest of the world grew by over 11 percent last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

"What we are seeing now is not just China for China on the inbound. We are seeing China for global," said Hill.

## Happy campers helping stimulate economic growth

By LIU ZIZHENG  
liuzizheng@chinadaily.com.cn

At a campsite in Deqing county, East China's Zhejiang province, outdoor enthusiasts enjoy the stunning mountain views and take a breather from their busy urban lives.

In recent years, camping has become a new trend in China's leisure industry, which not only offers city dwellers an opportunity to get closer to nature, but also injects fresh impetus into the country's economic growth.

Campsites have been set up across the country, especially in scenic rural areas, offering various types of services based on local characteristics.

Chayeli Campsite in Deqing, for example, is surrounded by beautiful mountains with tea terraces,

with the venue also serving brewed beverages.

The campsite has placed 12 tents amid the lofty terraces, which provide the best views for visitors, and idle land below is used for a parking lot that can accommodate more than 50 recreational vehicles (RVs).

Like Chayeli — which roughly translates to "tea terrace" in Chinese — most of the county's campsites rely heavily on a stable power supply to power up the RVs.

Against such a backdrop, State Grid Deqing Power Supply Co said it continues to add new public distribution transformers to local campsites, as well as modify old ones.

The company said efforts have also been made to regularly inspect the electrical equipment, upgrade transmission lines and remedy safety hazards.

The campsites in Deqing have

significantly contributed to local rural revitalization by accelerating the development of cultural and tourism industries and increasing local household incomes, the company added.

According to a report released by iMedia Research, a China-based business analysis firm, the size of China's camping market expanded 51.8 percent year-on-year to 113.47 billion yuan (\$15.66 billion) in 2022, and the figure is expected to reach nearly 250 billion yuan by 2025.

"The camping industry in China has entered a stage of rapid growth, which can help meet the increasingly personalized and diversified leisure needs of the public," said Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy.

Dai said the industry is expected to greatly boost domestic consumption and create more jobs, especially

for rural residents.

A series of new leisure products and business models have also emerged along with the industry's growth, thus ushering in a new era of development for China's smart and green tourism, Dai added.

Meanwhile, Zhu Di, a researcher at the Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said there still exists ample room for China's camping sector to further improve.

Zhu said support facilities for camping are inadequate and there is severe information asymmetry in the industry, which could have a negative impact on the camping experience.

Zhu said the country should advance the standardized development of the sector by cultivating more talent and equipping campsites with better amenities.

## Green move



A technician from State Grid Zhejiang Electric Power Co works on a substation in Huzhou, Zhejiang province. The local branch of the State electricity supplier is helping the city by slashing the emissions of sulfur hexafluoride gases by half. It can reduce the environmental impact of equipment at the transformer station and promote carbon reductions in the local power grid.  
DONG ZHENMAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

# BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## SOEs set roadmap for rapid transformation

Big domestic firms capitalize on R&D, sales networks, services to forge new growth paths

By ZHONG NAN  
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

At the Shanghai Haitong International Automotive Terminal in Waigaoqiao area in late May, nearly 2,000 electric vehicles were being driven onto a car carrier.

These vehicles, produced by State-owned carmakers SAIC Motor and Chang'an Automobile Co, are scheduled for delivery to dealers and consumers in South America this month.

With China's EV industry developing advantages of scale after more than a decade of growth, State-owned automakers, such as China FAW Group, Dongfeng Motor Corp, Guangzhou Automobile Group and Beijing Automotive Group, are reinforcing their positions in the fuel-powered vehicle market while aggressively expanding into the EV sector.

To stay competitive, they are capitalizing on their strengths in research and development, sales networks and services to continuously forge new paths for growth.

Zhu Huarong, board chairman of Chongqing-based Chang'an Automobile, said the global automotive market will enter a new era dominated by EVs, pushing Chinese brands to go global.

Chang'an Automobile plans to launch around 60 products by 2030, entering more countries, building overseas sales networks in 20 global locations and investing 4 billion yuan (\$552 million) in Thailand to build a global production base.

"Cars, initially just modes of transport, will transform into digital platforms, resembling connected and intelligent automotive robots," Zhu added.

While Guangzhou Automobile Group exports its products to more than 27 countries across the Middle East, the Americas, Africa and Southeast Asia, Beijing Automotive Group and SAIC Motor are collaborating with foreign partners or setting up factories and innovation centers overseas to broaden their global footprint.

Headquartered in Wuhan, Hubei province, Dongfeng Motor is also focusing on optimizing its business roadmap and has set a target of 3.2 million units in total sales and 300,000 units for exports this year.

Dongfeng Motor plans to launch 14 new models of self-branded passenger EVs and 10 commercial EVs from 2024 to 2025, as it continues to integrate research and development resources with investments exceeding 50 billion yuan over the next three years.

Automakers in China exported 1.83 million units of fuel and electric powered vehicles in the first four months of this year, up 33.4 percent from the same period of 2023, data



Workers operate at a production line of SAIC-GM-Wuling in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in May. JIN HAUYUAN / XINHUA

from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers show.

China's surging EV export volume has provided strong support for the growth in sales of domestic brands.

Chinese automakers launched 94 new models of new energy vehicles in 2023. This is 13 times the number introduced by joint venture brands in the same year, with domestic NEVs accounting for 80.6 percent.

Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of Beijing-based CAAM, said that the market share of domestic passenger cars has consistently risen, powered by the swift expansion of the EV sector and a significant surge in car exports, predominantly featuring domestic brands.

Moreover, domestic brands are undergoing rapid transformation, with leading domestic automakers moving toward electrification and smart technologies at a notably faster pace than foreign groups and their joint ventures, he said.

Echoing that sentiment, Yu De, managing director of SAIC Motor's international business unit, said that in addition to ordinary household users in many parts of the world, Chinese EVs are also favored by a large number of ride-hailing drivers in foreign countries, who generally perceive these vehicles as being of high quality and offering more value for money.

### Emerging fields

As China embraces a new era of growth driven by sustainability and



Visitors gather at a booth of GAC Group during an automotive show in Beijing in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

innovation, State-owned enterprises from other industries have deployed more resources and manpower in strategic emerging industries, including artificial intelligence, high-end manufacturing, new energy, new materials, "new infrastructure" and biotechnology to pursue transformative changes.

SOEs, including train manufacturer CRRC Corp, energy giant China National Offshore Oil Corp and telecommunications operator China Telecom Corp, are quickening efforts to develop new growth engines in the areas of strategic emerging industries.

For example, CRRC has devel-

oped 46 support policies to speed up the strategic layout of new industries, completed 118 new industrial research projects, and joined 11 innovation consortia established by multiple centrally administrated SOEs.

With China creating more favorable conditions to cultivate new quality productive forces, Sun Yongcai, board chairman of Beijing-headquartered CRRC, said that high-end manufactured products are crucial to the national economy and strategic security, serving as a key support for industrial upgrading and technological advancement.

New quality productive forces are productivity advances freed from

traditional economic growth modes and development paths, featuring high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and in line with the new development philosophy.

China's first high-power hydrogen energy-powered shunting locomotive, jointly developed by CRRC Zhuzhou Locomotive Co and CHN Energy Investment Group, completed a 10,000-metric ton loading test for the first time at the Sidaoliu station of the Xinshuo Railway in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in late April.

The train used hydrogen as energy for towing 105 rail vehicles for 2 kilometers at a constant speed. This marks a key breakthrough in the market-oriented application of high-power hydrogen energy power equipment for China's heavy-haul railways, CRRC said in a statement.

Apart from extracting crude oil and natural gas, detailed plans have also been formulated by CNOOC to advance the development of strategic new industries such as high-end manufacturing of marine oil and gas equipment, new energy and new materials in the coming years.

Pan Helin, a researcher specializing in digital economy at Zhejiang University's International Business School in Haining, Zhejiang province, said that the growth of SOEs in the field of AI can enhance national competitiveness, and sharpen technological discourse and initiative. Their abundant resources can

inject vitality into the industry. "At the same time, with the development of AI technology, SOEs can also achieve transformation and upgrading, as well as reinforce their earnings strength," said Pan.

Eager to maintain a key role for China in the global AI industry, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council earlier this year urged central SOEs to enhance demand-driven strategies, expedite support for key industries, establish high-quality multimodal data sets and foster a comprehensive industrial ecosystem. This approach would encompass infrastructure, algorithm tools, intelligent platforms and solutions.

Central SOEs have already accelerated their footprint in the field of AI.

For instance, China United Network Communications Group Co, a telecommunications operator, established an AI innovation center in Beijing in January.

The group views AI as a crucial strategic direction and is hastening its efforts to develop AI technologies.

The combined profits of SOEs grew by 2.8 percent year-on-year to 1.08 trillion yuan in the first quarter of this year, data from the Ministry of Finance showed.

These SOEs generated 19.81 trillion yuan in operating revenue during the three-month period, up 3.2 percent from a year earlier, according to the data.

## Chinese builder scores big in overseas infrastructure

By ZHONG NAN

In early May, at the construction site of the Kaphatenga-Benga Road rehabilitation project in Malawi, a prefabricated portal culvert section measuring 3.6 meters in length and 3 meters in height was accurately lifted and positioned.

State-owned China Railway 20th Bureau Group Corp, a subsidiary of Beijing-based China Railway Construction Corp Ltd, worked quickly and efficiently to recover time lost due to the rainy season — which typically lasts from February to early May — in the African country.

Along the roadside, 75 precast culverts were neatly aligned, and over 3,000 metric tons of stones were washed and readied. At the excavation site, after spraying water on the road, two road rollers started to firmly compact the subgrade.

Cheng Jun, the project manager at CR20G for the project, said the rainy season in Malawi concluded in early May, with temperatures averaging around 30 C. This provided an

ideal opportunity for the company to continue with construction.

"Our team is now working diligently to finish the road subgrade, which will serve as the foundation for the upcoming asphalt paving," said Cheng.

The 60-kilometer-long Kaphatenga-Benga Road is alongside Lake Malawi, posing additional challenges for construction. The rainy season lasts over three months, making the roadbed unstable and road surface unsafe.

In some sections, parts of the road had sunk, causing significant inconvenience to construction, he added.

Despite the absence of extensive construction on the roadbed during the rainy season, the project construction team, in collaboration with the owner and consultants, engaged in thorough discussions and finalized a plan to reinforce the roadbed foundation with boulders, ensuring its maximum stability.

Cheng said that the upgrading of the Kaphatenga-Benga Road has come with high expectations for the

development of agriculture, fishing and tourism in the villages and towns along its route. This road also serves as a main transportation artery in Malawi, garnering widespread attention from both the Malawian government and its people.

Since the commencement of this project, CR20G has completed the construction of ancillary facilities such as aggregate plants and temporary houses for living and working. With adequate preparation, the Chinese company aims to finish reconstruction work on a 30-kilometer stretch of the road by the end of this year.

Since entering the Malawian market in 2018, CR20G has undertaken over 10 construction projects, including roads, sports facilities, buildings and railroads. It has provided nearly 10,000 job opportunities and trained nearly 1,500 local residents in various fields such as management, logistics and construction.

With more than 17,000 employees, the Xi'an, Shaanxi province-

based CR20G has built a market presence in more than 20 countries, including Angola, Mozambique, Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

Aside from the design and construction of transportation infrastructure, CR20G's business scope includes real estate development, manufacturing, logistics and trade, railway transportation, environmental protection, engineering project inspection, design consulting and training.

Supported by well-developed industrial and supply chains in China, domestic companies have greater opportunities to diversify their market channels internationally, said Zhang Xiang, vice-president of the Beijing-based China International Contractors Association, which helps Chinese companies expand their footprint in overseas markets.

This is fueled by the rapid pace of globalization and the increasing demand from various economies to develop or upgrade their infrastructure facilities, she said.



Local and Chinese employees of China Railway 20th Bureau Group Corp work on a section of the rehabilitation project of Kaphatenga-Benga Road in Malawi in early May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment amounted to 343.47 billion yuan (\$47.41 billion) in the first four months of 2024, up 18.7 percent year-on-year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

Meanwhile, Chinese companies' nonfinancial outbound investment in countries and regions participating in the Belt and Road Initiative reached 77.77 billion yuan during

the same period, surging 20.4 percent year-on-year.

Chinese businesses' turnover of contracted projects overseas rose 8.8 percent on a yearly basis to 313.42 billion yuan between January and April, while the contract value of newly signed projects amounted to 444.39 billion yuan, growing 9.3 percent year-on-year, said the ministry.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Beijing's position on Ukraine crisis is unambiguous, brooks no manipulation

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made an unscheduled appearance at the Shangri-La defense forum in Singapore on the weekend. Given the mounting pressure on the battlefield, it is understandable that he should use the occasion to try and canvass more support for Kyiv at a summit in Switzerland later this month aimed at bringing an end to the conflict.

What isn't understandable is why he should unwarrantedly claim that China is trying to sabotage the upcoming peace talks.

While China announced last week that it will not attend the Summit on Peace in Ukraine organized by Switzerland, that does not mean China is trying to sabotage the summit or trying to pressure other countries not to participate, as Zelensky claimed.

Mao Ning, a spokeswoman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, made China's position clear, saying it has repeatedly stressed that the international peace conference needs to satisfy three important requirements, namely, recognition from both Russia and Ukraine, the equal participation of all parties, and fair discussion of all peace plans. As far as China is concerned, the meeting in Switzerland does not meet these three requirements and that is why it will not be taking part in the meeting.

True, it is not attending, but that does not mean it is not supporting Switzerland's peace initiative, for it remains in close communication with that country.

Unlike some countries which are attending but do not want the conflict to end, China has "never sat idly by or fueled the flames, still less profited from the conflict."

Trade between China and Russia is normal and above board. And unlike the NATO countries, China does not provide arms to the belligerents. The NATO countries have been supplying Ukraine with ever more sophisticated weapons systems, and it has been reported that more than 60 percent of the imported critical components in Russian weapons are coming from companies in the US and other Western countries.

It is common sense that a peace conference with the aim to resolve a conflict should involve the belligerent parties. But Russia has not been invited to the table. How then can the summit ensure that the views from different sides are taken into consideration.

Even Western media typically refer to the summit as being planned for months by Kyiv and its allies, so the likelihood of the summit being taken as nothing more than an opportunity to forge an even closer united front against Russia looms large.

Ukraine's deep reliance on the United States-led Western support should not blur its leader's sense of right and wrong, nor encourage him to make unfounded accusations against a friendly country.

The majority of countries want the protracted conflict in Ukraine to end. But a lasting settlement needs to be acceptable to both sides, otherwise any cessation of the fighting will only be a temporary respite.

Any NATO countries that are not genuinely seeking an end to the conflict, harboring the hope that the longer it continues, the more Russia will be weakened, are putting the world at risk of a more serious conflict by playing with fire, as Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

In his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun stressed that China is willing to work with all parties to protect the legitimate security interests of all countries.

It will therefore continue to support all efforts that are conducive to the peaceful settlement of the Ukraine conflict. To that end, it hopes that the summit will be taken as an opportunity to bridge the gap between the two sides, not a means to widen it. And it urges the participants not to turn it into a platform to create and fuel bloc confrontation, which will only exacerbate the volatile global situation.

## Opportune moment to reset relations

As neighbors and the two largest developing countries, China and India have more common interests than differences. Seeking common development and prosperity being common pursuits.

With India's parliamentary election result hopefully reducing the jingoism in India, there is no need for the territorial dispute in the border region between the two neighbors to be hyped up and allowed to define the overall bilateral ties.

The two countries should demonstrate they have the wisdom to settle the dispute through negotiations in good faith. To that purpose, while maintaining their close communication through diplomatic and military channels, they should not allow any external power to take advantage of their border dispute to sow discord between them.

Some Western countries have encouraged India to become a participant in their efforts to contain China during the past two terms of the Narendra Modi government, seeking to drive a wedge between New Delhi and Beijing.

Although the border dispute has flared up and the Indian government has been implementing protectionist measures targeting Chinese companies, investments and imports since 2020, the bilateral trade volume has remained sizable and stable, staying between \$120 billion and \$130 billion over the past three years. This should prompt New Delhi not to let its Western supplicants have its ear.

Relying heavily on China for raw materials for its services and manufacturing industries these years, India should realize that it is unrealistic to seek to decouple its economy from that of China.

It should also recognize that China's development does not represent risks, uncertainties or threats to India, but rather growth, development and opportunities, as is true vice versa. China should by no means be made the scapegoat for India's domestic problems, and neither nationalism nor jingoism should be permitted to hijack New Delhi's China policy.

Combined, the population of the two countries accounts for about 37.5 percent of the global population. The two neighbors should be open to each other's development and always make joint efforts to approach bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective. The strong complementarity between their economic structures and development stages makes them good partners; their historical cultural and people-to-people bonds make them good neighbors; and by upholding their strategic autonomy on the world stage, they can safeguard world peace and stability and promote a just and fair international order and multilateral global governance.

The two sides should support each other and contribute to each other's success, instead of viewing each other with suspicion and undermining one another. They should focus on improving their people's livelihoods and accelerating their national revitalization by broadening and deepening their cooperation wherever they can. For example, the two countries have much potential to tap through cooperation in the digital economy, innovation, industry, technology and green transition.

If India is to realize its ambition of being a leading power rather than a balancing or destabilizing power, it should not be drawn into Washington's geopolitical game. It should keep the regional picture in mind and show due vision, openness and foresight by keeping Sino-Indian ties developing on the right track.

It is expected that India can take the opportunity of its just-concluded parliamentary election to reset its past China policy to further tap into the potential of Sino-Indian relations.

## CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

## Contact us at:

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

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

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

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

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

## Cao Yi



## Opinion Line

## Energy saving and carbon reduction efforts to promote high-quality growth

The 2024-25 action plan for energy conservation and carbon reduction recently issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, will lubricate China's efforts to promote industrial upgrading and high-quality economic and social development.

Green and low-carbon development is one of China's major new development concepts and also an important task for promoting high-quality development. Given that the top authorities explicitly require the country to control total energy consumption and intensity, and especially control fossil energy consumption, the plan puts forward the goals and tasks of energy conservation and carbon reduction in the remaining two years of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, in a bid to develop green and low-carbon new quality productive forces, change the traditional extensive growth mode, and improve the total factor productivity, to promote high-quality economic development.

The plan focuses on promoting the transformation of China's energy supply

structure by optimizing its energy consumption structure, vowing greater efforts to boost clean energy consumption and raising the proportion of nonfossil energy consumption to about 18.9 percent and 20 percent of the country's total energy consumption by the end of 2024 and 2025 respectively. In order to achieve the target, it offers alternative actions to reduce fossil energy consumption.

On the supply side, the plan requires that the country increase the development of nonfossil energy, saying by the end of 2025, the proportion of nonfossil energy generation will be raised to about 39 percent. It also requires boosting the consumption capacity of renewable energy on the consumption side. To this end, systematic reforms should be carried out to unblock the circulation of nonfossil energy, including accelerating the construction of delivery channels for large-scale wind power and photovoltaic bases to improve cross-regional power transmission capacity.

The plan also requires improvement in

the electrification level of bus stations, railways, airports, etc, the strengthening of charging infrastructure construction, the gradual elimination of restrictions on the purchase of new energy vehicles, and the popularized electrification of vehicles in the public sector. It can be seen that the government hopes to promote the production and consumption of nonfossil energy by deepening the reform of the power system.

Energy saving and carbon reduction in various sectors is a process of eliminating backward production capacity and promoting industrial transformation and upgrading. Its combination with large-scale equipment renewal and the replacement of old consumer goods for new can promote relevant industries to invest in advanced technology and equipment, improve production efficiency, and drive investment and consumption, thus promoting China's high-quality economic development.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## Advantage Labour, but a lot could change

According to opinion polls conducted prior to the upcoming election in the United Kingdom by YouGov and Sky News, the Labour Party has a 47 percent approval rating, while the Conservative Party's is 20 percent. The BBC has been providing aggregate data from various polls, according to which, the Labour Party's approval rating was fluctuating between 40 and 50 percent and that of the Conservatives between 19 and 29 percent.

Clearly, if these trends continue, the Labour Party will wrest control from the Conservatives during the election in July. Actually, even without the polling data, the Conservatives are acutely aware of their situation and have been taking measures to reverse their low approval rate.

On May 26, the Conservative Party's manifesto promised to increase pre-tax income for pensioners, obviously trying to please senior citizens who are seen as their main support group. This also shows that the Conservatives lack appeal among younger voters. The Conservative Cabinet as a whole cannot address young voters' concerns on issues such as housing.

Unlike previous campaigns that focused on the economy and employment, this time the Labour Party is emphasizing increasing healthcare resources. Insufficient healthcare resources are reasons why elderly voters are most dissatisfied with the Conservative government's performance.

Although the Conservatives' decline in the polls is primarily because of economic

issues and high-level scandals, the Labour Party is also bothered with similar problems. That being said, since both parties have nothing to brag about, if the majority of dissatisfied voters choose to abstain rather than gamble on Labour, the Conservatives might still have a chance.

The Conservatives' biggest issue in recent years has been internal strife, but most of the defectors have joined the right-leaning Reform UK rather than the left-leaning Labour. If the Conservatives can reach some kind of understanding with Reform UK before the election and if internal conflicts arise within Labour Party, the Conservatives may still have a chance of winning the election.

— BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## 'Free world' graveyard for laws and rules-based order

Even a cursory perusal of the op-ed "America breaks global rules as it defends the free world", published by the Financial Times last week, will be enough for the reader to know that its author, Gideon Rachman, supports the United States' strategy to contain China.

In the piece, Rachman urges Washington to replace its claim to be defending the "rules-based international order" with the assertion it is safeguarding the "free world", as he argues that this better portrays its rules-bending actions as efforts to prevent the world from being controlled by "authoritarian" regimes.

That Rachman has pointed out some anti-China US moves, including the exorbitant tariffs it imposed on Chinese electric vehicles, break international laws and the "rules-based inter-

national order" it claims to defend, does not mean he is supporting China in the face of the US' lawbreaking suppression.

As exposed by his China-related argument, Rachman's Cold-War mentality is even stronger than that of some of the armchair strategists in Washington, whose unruly actions he is encouraging.

Fundamentally, he argues that China, along with most other non-Western countries, is not part of the "free world". The US should take advantage of its strengths to prevent them from acquiring the ability, power and influence to threaten the interests and values of those countries that are part of the "free world". Even international laws and the so-called rules-based international order are expendable for that purpose.

Given China's influence and national strength, he believes that trade-offs have to be made with some countries that are not part of the "free world", and that is unavoidable in the struggle against

"authoritarian" regimes.

That Rachman advises the US to resort to the "free world" discourse to justify its dogged support for Israel in the ongoing war in the Middle East lays bare his callous indifference to the consequences of the lawlessness he is promoting.

Not only does he regard those nations that are not part of the "free world" as being on a different "moral level" with their counterparts in the "free world", but also that the lives of their people are of less value than those living in the "free world".

It is ridiculous that some observers believe his article has exposed the hypocrisy of the US' China policy without realizing what poison Rachman has poured into the chalice he is offering Washington. He is by no means a defender of international laws or the rules-based international order but a gravedigger for them.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

Xu Wenhong

## China supports real peace progress in Ukraine

After more than two years of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Switzerland will host the "Summit on Peace in Ukraine" on June 15 and 16, hoping it would lay the groundwork for a peace process leading to the end of hostilities in Eurasia.

To prevent any more casualties and economic damage, and eventually restore peace in Ukraine, China is willing to participate in all peace processes. In fact, Li Hui, China's special envoy for Eurasian Affairs, has shuttled three times between countries in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. However, severe challenges persist in resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict and establishing lasting peace in the region.

As such, China attaches great importance to the peace meeting in Switzerland, and has maintained close communication with Switzerland and other countries since the beginning of this year.

However, it is imperative that both Russia and Ukraine take part in the peace meeting, because without their representatives, the "peace conference" would be meaningless. And global leaders should persuade Moscow and Kyiv to hold peace talks in order to resolve their disputes.

That's why while communicating with Switzerland and other stakeholders, China had been advocating that all international peace meetings should have a three-point criterion: recognition of both Russia and Ukraine as parties to the conflict, participation of all stakeholders, and holding of fair discussions on all peace proposals.

Surprisingly, Russia, despite being a direct party to the conflict, has not been invited to the so-called peace summit. If the peace conference is held without Russian participation, it would violate the basic principle of organizing a peace conference: presence of all parties to a conflict to negotiate peace.

With only one party to the conflict, Ukraine, participating the peace conference will become a trial in absentia of the other party, Russia, making it impossible to enforce any resolution passed by the conference. As a matter of fact, the peace conference will be seen as a gathering of certain countries to help one party and against the other party. The peace conference is doomed not to be peace, but further escalation of the conflict.

Surprisingly, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Singapore on June 1 to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue and deliver a speech, with the aim of inviting more individuals to the "peace summit".

Surprisingly, even the United States may not be represented at the peace meeting by President Joe Biden. Instead, some lower-level officials are likely to participate in the so-called peace summit.

So, although the organizers claim to have sent invitations to about 160 countries around the world, the number of countries actually participating in the

meeting has been decreasing. For example, the major regional powers such as Brazil, South Africa, Pakistan and other countries will not participate. Hence, the so-called peace summit will not have the authority to pass a binding resolution to achieve its goals.

The upcoming so-called peace summit has rejected the three-point criterion for the peace meeting, prompting China to say that the participants in the Switzerland meeting lack sincerity. China is a sovereign state and has its own cognition of facts, history and international relations. It is also fully aware of its international responsibilities. And it made its stance on the Ukraine crisis crystal clear, suggesting ways to help restore peace in Eurasia, in the position paper, "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukrainian Crisis", it released on Feb 24, 2023.

In the "Common Understanding between China and Brazil on the Political

Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis", which the two countries signed on May 23, 2024, China reiterated its position on finding a peaceful, political solution to the Ukraine crisis. Choosing to be on the right side of history, China supports real peace progress and is opposed to playing games such as pretending to treat all parties equally and in a fair manner but doing just the opposite — by holding a trial in absentia.

As for Ukraine, China respects its sovereignty and territorial integrity. With regard to Russia, China aims to develop a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era based on the principles of non-confrontation, non-alignment, and non-targeting of third parties.

Given its traditional status as a neutral country, Switzerland has been advocating neutrality and promoting peace. It is in this spirit that Switzerland organized the meeting to find ways to broker peace between Russia and Ukraine. China fully

understands and respects Switzerland's efforts to help resolve the conflict.

Although China refuses to participate in the Switzerland peace meeting, it does not mean it has given up its position on brokering peace and promoting negotiations. China has made it clear that it will continue to promote the peace process in its own way, maintain communication with all parties, and accumulate conditions for a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis.

China supports the efforts of parties, to peacefully settle the Russia-Ukraine conflict. But such peace summits are nothing but a mockery of international relations and farcical attempts to fool the world.

*The author is deputy secretary-general of the Center for Belt and Road, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Yang Xiaoping

## Three imbalances on road to India's economic rise

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is preparing for a third term in office, but the just-concluded general election was different from the previous ones in that the overall voter turnout was lower than the previous elections, leaders of some political parties showed "election fatigue" and many voters might have voted against Modi.

Second, this election has seen the resurgence of the opposition, because of the general discontent with the government over rising unemployment and inflation, especially in provinces such as Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

And third, religious fanaticism seems to be giving way to "bread and butter" problems in India, although young voters and farmer unions are more concerned about earning enough money and enjoying a share of India's development dividends in order to lead a decent life.

This election has not only exposed the problems of religion, caste, wealth gap, governance and corruption that have plagued India for decades, but also highlighted the urgency of correcting the "three imbalances". After all, the sustainable development of the Indian economy is a prerequisite for the country's strategic rise.

The first development imbalance India faces is the imbalance between manufacturing and services. In terms of industrial structure, India's manufacturing industry lags behind that of its service industry. India's services sector accounts for more than 50 percent of its GDP, while manufacturing accounts for only about 15 percent.

Although New Delhi proposed the "Make in India (2025)" initiative in 2014

**Whether India can achieve sustainable and inclusive development to lay the foundation for its strategic rise, contribute more to global economic growth and become a "global leader" depends on whether it can correct the three imbalances.**

to increase the share of manufacturing in GDP from 15 percent to 25 percent by 2025, according to the Reserve Bank of India (the country's central bank), the proportion of manufacturing in India's GDP declined from 18.7 percent in the 2021-22 fiscal year to about 17.7 percent in 2022-23.

Different from the traditional development path, India skipped the industrialization stage and shifted from agriculture-based to service-oriented development. This resulted in under-urbanization and the inability to create enough new jobs to take advantage of India's demographic dividend: a young workforce. If India's manufacturing industry continues to lag behind, it will hinder the upgrading of the service sector and aggravate the imbalance in India's economy in the long run.

The second imbalance is that between industry and agriculture. Nearly two-thirds of India's over 1.4 billion people live in rural areas, but the government has been implementing industry-friendly policies, rather than agriculture-

friendly policies, to boost the economy.

For example, during the two terms of the Modi government, India focused on establishing new factories through heavy state subsidies, which do not benefit large parts of the population including farmers. In fact, Modi's high-handed, sweeping changes in the agriculture policy without public consultation sparked the biggest and longest farmers' protests in the world.

The third imbalance is that between the public and private sectors. India's growth has been driven mainly by heavy state-led infrastructure spending and investment, while small and medium-sized enterprises have been cautious about increasing investments to expand their businesses. Also, the number of preservation jobs in India do not experience increase during Modi's past 10 years' rule.

Correcting the three imbalances is necessary for India to make its "Make in India (2025)" initiative a success. But the other major problem is that India's workforce, in general, lacks the expertise to propel medium and high-end manufacturing.

Besides, India has not developed a manufacturing ecosystem to support its small and medium-sized enterprises. The relatively poor infrastructure and the less-supportive environment for foreign investment have prompted foreign investors to proceed cautiously when investing in India. As a matter of fact, in the 2022-23 fiscal year, gross foreign direct investment declined by 16.3 percent year-on-year — the first time in a decade — according to the Reserve Bank of India.

As such, India seems to lack the material basis for its strategic rise, and inclu-

sive and sustainable development, although the trade frictions between China and the United States-led West could somewhat benefit India, because the Western developed countries are trying to isolate China's industry and supply chains from those of the rest of the world.

In such circumstances, can India accelerate its rate of growth? That depends on whether India can create a big enough market for other countries, provide public goods in greater volume to developing countries, especially Global South countries, and implement rules conducive to developing emerging technologies.

The contrast between China and India becomes even more evident when we compare their imports. In terms of raw materials and primary products, China's imports account for 3.8 percent of the global GDP while India's account for 0.9 percent. And in terms of industrial products, China's imports and consumption account for 50-60 percent of global consumption of industrial commodities, while India's share is between 2 and 6 percent. This shows India has a long way to go to become the next growth engine for the global economy.

Whether India can achieve sustainable and inclusive development to lay the foundation for its strategic rise, contribute more to global economic growth and become a "global leader" depends on whether it can correct the three imbalances.

*The author is an associate professor at the National Institute of International Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Mushahid Hussain Sayed

## US' Taiwan card finds no takers in Global South

The second serving of stale food is always unpalatable. Similarly, by trying to once again use the "Taiwan card" — a tried and tested but failed formula — the United States is serving a doubly stale dish that has no takers in the Global South.

Periodically, as part of its "check-China-rise strategy" and its zero-sum-game mindset, fuelled by the US' military-industrial-complex, China hawks in Washington believe they have come up with new tactics in pursuit of their evil design.

In the past three decades since the Cold War was over, US politicians have openly said Americans and others may take extraordinary measures, including kindling separatism, to stop China's rise.

No wonder even in today's world, despite being a declining superpower, the US continues to fan the flames of "Taiwan independence". The reason: the US' mindset has not changed since the Cold War days.

Such a mindset, along with its irresponsible statements, is contrary to the pledges and commitments the US has made in the Three Joint Communiqués. On Oct 25, 1971, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously passed Resolution 2758, which unequivocally states "the representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China are the only lawful representatives of China to the United Nations".

Six months after the historic UN General Assembly resolution, in February 1972, to be precise, the US and China inked the Shanghai Communiqué which categorically states: "All Chinese, on either side of the Taiwan Strait, maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China."

Breaking solemn pledges and reneging on its international commitments are sadly a big part of the US' track record, especially in foreign policy, be it the Paris Agreement, which former president Donald Trump withdrew from and incumbent President Joe Biden rejoined, or the Iran nuclear deal, signed by the Barack Obama administration but unfortunately abandoned by Trump.

Reinforcing this track record is the US' obsession with "regime change". Documented evidence shows that during the Cold War, the US tried 72 times to change regimes and governments, especially in countries in the Global South, using such agencies as the CIA.

Why is the US' latest attempt to foment trouble in the Asia-Pacific region, by playing the "Taiwan card", doomed to failure? First, as many media outlets and scholars said, the Western-supported post World War II global order is coming apart, due to the widening chasm between what is professed and what is practiced.

For instance, the US talks of "human rights" in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region but is silent on Israel relentlessly pounding the Gaza Strip, which is a grave crime against humanity. But how can the US protect human rights of the Palestinian people when it has been supplying weapons and military equipment, and providing monetary aid and diplomatic support to Israel?

Second, the world is witnessing two contrasting pursuits: while China is making efforts to help democratize international relations through connectivity and cooperation, as exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative, which has seen \$1 trillion being invested in projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe over the past 10 years. In contrast, the US, since the Sept 11, 2001, terrorist attacks has been trying to militarize international relations, triggering confrontations and conflicts. Also, the US has squandered \$6.5 trillion of US taxpayers' money in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Somalia.

Third, the Global South, including large parts of the Asia-Pacific, is in no mood to return to the Cold War days. That's why there are no "buyers" for the US' recipe of confrontation or a new Cold War, which is supplemented by hundreds of its overseas military bases worldwide and new security alliances and blocs such as AUKUS and QUAD.

The "Taiwan card" is already well past its expiry date and the sooner US policymakers realize this, the better, although for them, especially in this year of presidential election, politics always takes precedence over principles.

*The author is the founding chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute, and chairman of the Senate Defence Committee, Pakistan. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



...the Global South, including large parts of the Asia-Pacific, is in no mood to return to the Cold War days.

# GLOBAL VIEWS

QIN HU

## For a Beautiful China

An integrated formula is needed for the Yellow River Basin to enhance watershed climate resilience

Over the past five decades, World Environment Day, which falls on June 5, has grown to become one of the largest global platforms for environmental outreach. This year, the Chinese Ministry of Ecology and Environment is celebrating it with a focus on "comprehensively promoting the development of a



Beautiful China", a national-level initiative that outlines a road-map for China's green transition.

The Yellow River Basin, a vast expanse covering nine Chinese provinces and autonomous regions and spanning nearly 800,000 square kilometers, is not just a geographical entity. It is the energy basin of China, a critical agricultural region for the entire nation, and a significant contributor to China's economic strength. Therefore, the green transition of the Yellow River Basin will not only ensure high-quality development of the region, but also serve as a model for the overall socioeconomic development of a Beautiful China in the long term.

However, pursuing high-quality development in the Yellow River Basin means overcoming numerous challenges, including water scarcity, fragile local ecosystems, and in the larger picture, climate change.

Specifically, energy production and consumption has a great impact on water resources. The Yellow River Basin is a crucial hub for energy production and consumption in China, which is predominantly reliant on coal. Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces, and Inner Mongolia and Ningxia Hui autonomous regions are key coal-producing areas in China that have facilitated the establishment of a relatively comprehensive fossil energy industry chain in the Yellow River Basin. These traditional industries often entail excessive energy consumption and have detrimental impacts on water resources and the ecologi-

cal environment.

Food production also has a substantial impact on water resources. Despite the provinces within the basin making adjustments based on the water resource allocation scheme since 1987, adequate assurance of water resources for downstream grain-producing areas still needs to be improved. In addition, agricultural development has caused soil erosion and non-point source pollution to some extent. The region's ecosystem is particularly vulnerable, often leading to competition for water and land resources among the agricultural and livestock production, industrial activities and ecosystems.

Because of climate change, ensuring water, energy, food and ecological security in the Yellow River Basin will encounter new challenges. Changes in precipitation introduce greater uncertainty regarding water resource availability, while extreme weather events like floods and droughts pose significant risks to food production. Consequently, the rational allocation of water resources has become an urgent issue within the Yellow River Basin.

By promoting a green and low-carbon transition within the Yellow River Basin, we can adapt to climate change and pave the way for more sustainable and high-quality development. Strengthening the integration between management practices related to water supply, energy, food and the ecosystem will not only establish a robust foundation for development, but also ensure its stability and sustainability. This is a path that holds immense promise for the future of the Yellow River Basin.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

To better exert the synergistic effect of policies, there are four potential solutions to lead the Yellow River Basin through a green transition.

First, to establish a climate-resilient mechanism for territorial space planning and implementation, with more consideration on water management and allocation scheme. By comprehensively utilizing various meteorological and water evaporation data, integrating spatial information on renewable energy, biomass energy, and energy

storage projects; systematically analyzing the impact of climate change on key factors such as water resources, energy, agriculture and ecology; and establishing a master plan and utilization adjustment mechanism of territorial space interconnected by water, energy, food and ecology with climate resilience in consideration, China will be able to maximize water use efficiency while tapping into the potential of renewable energy development and enhancing ecological value.

Second, to set up pilot zones for climate-smart agriculture. To ensure food security in the Yellow River Basin and nationwide, we must establish a robust monitoring system along with an early warning response mechanism for both short-term emergencies and medium-term planning scenarios. Additionally, making disaster reduction plans explicitly tailored for different crops under extreme climatic conditions will be essential alongside strengthening agricultural producers/operators' awareness of disaster prevention/reduction measures through technical training programs. Furthermore, coordinated management strategies encompassing water conservation practices and consumption/emission reductions within the agricultural sector should also be reinforced.

Third, to create a climate-resilient energy system and expedite the energy transition in the Yellow River Basin. The Yellow River Basin possesses abundant fossil energy resources and serves as a significant hub for renewable energies such as wind, solar and hydroelectric power in China, providing a solid foundation for energy transition. While transitioning to renewable energies, it is crucial to consider how these projects can effectively cope with extreme weather while achieving synergy between different energy sources and adapting to climate change. Furthermore, it is essential to strengthen synergies with climate risk management and optimize water resources management to ensure low-carbon development and energy security.

Fourth, to accelerate industrial low-carbon transition within the

Yellow River Basin while enhancing efficient land and water resource utilization. The renewable energy potential within this region accounts for approximately 40 percent of China's overall capacity. Therefore, it is imperative to develop an industrial system centered around new energies that can generate fresh productivity within the Yellow River basin. By fostering zero-carbon fuel production and chemical industries based on green hydrogen technology and related manufacturing sectors such as new energy equipment production, consumption of new energy power systems, hydrogen storage manufacturing facilities, etc., we can promote low-carbon development throughout this area while improving industry competitiveness. While advancing renewable energies' deployment, attention must also be paid to their impact on agriculture and ecology, and measures should be taken to mitigate any adverse effects on food production or ecological balance.

The Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem nexus in the Yellow River Basin presents significant challenges and tremendous opportunities for China to make a giant stride toward its low-carbon development goals. The basin needs to accelerate its transition while securing its role as a fundamental energy and food base. The integrated formula to build a climate-resilient Yellow River Basin will provide a solid boost to the overall development of the Beautiful China Initiative and, in the long run, contribute not only to China's carbon goals (achieving carbon peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060), but also to essential global climate targets.

The author is vice-president and chief representative of the China Representative Office of the Environmental Defense Fund. 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.

SHIVIN KOHLI

## Counting the cost

Natural capital accounting can spur action to safeguard the benefits nature provides us

World Environment Day is a poignant moment every year to take stock of the nature crisis and its place on the global agenda.

That we live in turbulent times is well documented. A range of global crises occupy our attention and demand action every day, from geopolitical upheaval and growing polarization to cost-of-living crises.

Global crises are visible, urgent, and easily understood, with measurable impacts. For example, cost-of-living pressures are acutely felt when prices rise faster than wages.

By contrast, nature loss receives far less attention. It doesn't typically feature at headline multilateral events such as the G20 or the UN General Assembly, and in national conversations on growth and trade. It is usually discussed at intergovernmental forums to address environmental crises, but even then, climate change and biodiversity loss are addressed at separate summits. The climate COP process generally receives greater attention and funding, according to many international experts. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, signed by 196 countries in December 2022 at UN CBD COP15, was heralded as the "Paris Agreement" for biodiversity, but hasn't quite received the ubiquitous international coverage that the climate agreement has received since 2015.

But why? Nature loss threatens over half of the global GDP. Billions of people suffer the increasingly devastating effects of nature loss every day, including those in agricultural communities, overheating cities, indigenous lands, and on vul-

nerable coastlines. By all accounts, climate change and nature loss are deeply connected, sharing common drivers — but decarbonization alone will not solve both challenges.

The challenge is that, despite nature loss being visible, it is not visible everywhere. Tropical forests, glaciers, and the ocean — major theaters of global nature loss — can feel far removed. Its impact is immediate — but often it isn't framed with urgency. In fact, experts across the international community view nature loss as a 10-year risk, generally agreeing that technology changes, economic uncertainty, and conflicts are more pressing issues. It's also measurable, but hard to understand how it impacts well-being and business. What should a department head or senior executive make of data on dwindling forest cover or declining fish stocks?

The good news? The ever-evolving "natural capital" approach can help address these challenges.

The natural capital approach extends the notion of capital to the environment, conceptualizing nature as assets worth restoring, maintaining, and enhancing for productive value. Think of "stocks" of natural resources — land, watersheds, forest cover, soils, various species — providing productive "flows" of ecosystem services such as food, fiber, protection from extreme weather, and cultural value, to name just a few. Many of these essential benefits are not captured in economic indicators such as GDP or in financial statements.

Natural capital accounting essentially is the process of recording changes in specific natural assets or resources over time, and by extension, the benefits nature provides us. Valuation takes this one step further and converts physical environmental accounts and flows of

benefits to decision-relevant metrics, including monetary terms. Together, accounting and valuation can give us a clearer picture of nature's benefits today and their future value.

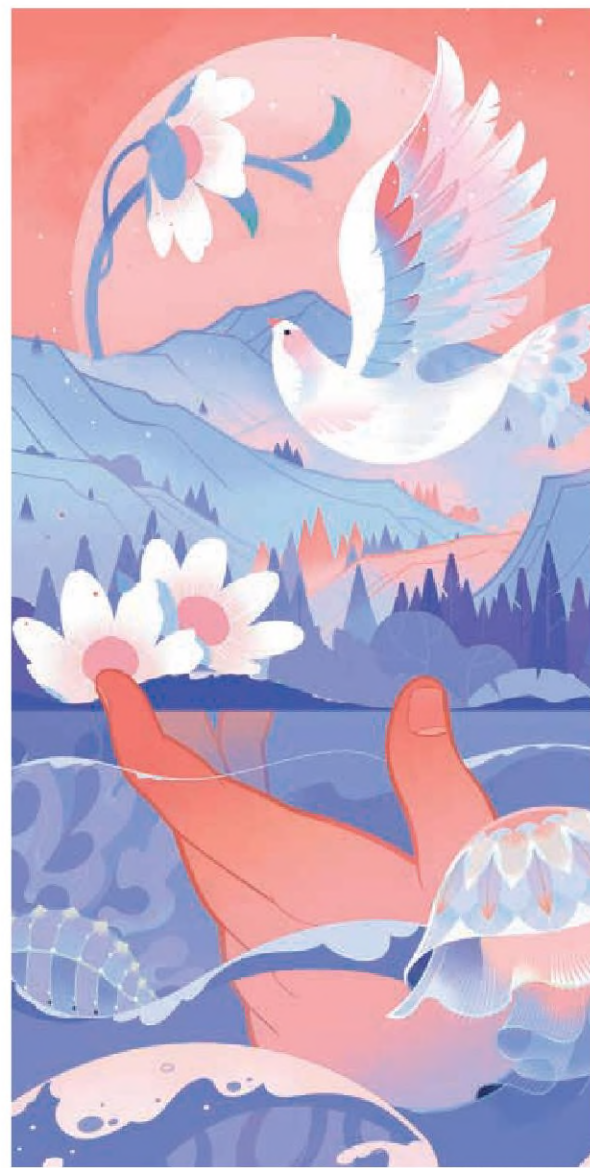
Such critical data can make decisions on nature far more accessible for policymakers and business leaders alike. If deployed at scale, it can help make the nature crisis and the need for action more evident.

First, nature loss can be made visible by translating it into actionable statistics. On a national or global scale, a balance sheet for nature may help evaluate trade-offs between nature and growth better. Natural capital per person — our global stock of natural resources — has declined by 40 percent from 1992 to 2014 (while GDP per capita more than doubled).

Second, if governments and businesses have to take immediate actions on disclosed accounting data, it would transform decision-making. To illustrate, Olam's Sunny Verghese in 2022 described Temasek's internal carbon price on its portfolio companies as crucial to making emissions reduction his "number one priority as CEO," as it affected half of their after-tax profits.

Third, the issue becomes understandable by consolidating data on various forms of nature loss and providing simple (even monetary) metrics to gauge performance. The worldwide degradation of land alone costs us up to \$10.6 trillion annually (around 17 percent of the global GDP in the year of valuation).

Natural capital accounting has gained traction among policymakers, business leaders, accountants, economists, civil society and academia alike. Many global initiatives now seek to increase the adoption of the natural capital approach. Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP)



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

is a standout example of this momentum. GEP, first developed in China in 2012, is among the leading tools available for governments at all levels to measure their ecological performance.

GEP is analogous to GDP. It uses market prices and economic techniques to calculate the value that

ecosystems provide to the economy each year, including production value (eg, agricultural produce), regulating services (eg, climate resilience), and cultural services (eg, scientific value). GEP can support environmental policymaking, form the basis for investments in conservation and restoration, and

help measure local officials' performance.

As of 2023, 17 provincial governments and 50 cities in China had issued guidelines to use GEP. Around 200 pilots have been launched, including in Guizhou province, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Qinghai province. As an example, a nature reserve in Deqing, Zhejiang province, had its GEP valued at 311 million yuan (\$43 million) in 2021 — and analysis based on this indicator directly influenced the choice of renewable energy projects approved in the reserve.

Encouragingly, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued guiding opinions on establishing the mechanism of realizing the values of GEP in 2021. Accounting standards for GEP were released in 2022 by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) in coordination with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). GEP pilots have or will soon be commissioned in countries such as India, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Sweden.

While not new, natural capital approaches are still not mainstream. Stakeholders across the global economy have an important role in elevating natural capital:

First, governments can begin exploring deploying natural capital accounting and valuation, aligning this with national and local development plans and biodiversity strategies, and evaluating the feasibility of requiring large businesses to use natural capital standards. Second, academics and standards bodies can work toward greater harmonization between competing standards and making methodologies more accessible for businesses. Third, corporates can begin evaluating their impacts and dependencies on nature via available standards, and prepare to adopt natural capital strategies. Fourth, international organizations enable multi-stakeholder collaboration to deepen the adoption of natural capital approaches.

The author is lead of Financing for Nature at the World Economic Forum. 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.

## LIFE

All about Gen Z

Z  
WEEKLYZhu Dunhua (left) and Wang Zongnan ride around the campus of Tsinghua University to find inspiration for their comedic sketch, *Free for Hometown Folks*. FAN YACHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Uniting through laughter

Two Gen Zers from across the Taiwan Strait unite to craft a humorous sketch blending mainland and Taiwan culture, highlighting the power of comedy to bridge divides through laughter.

By GUI QIAN  
guiqian@i21st.cn

Comedy has a unique way of bringing people together. This is a belief shared by many comedians, including Wang Zongnan and Zhu Dunhua, two Gen Zers from across the Taiwan Strait.

Wang, hailing from Chengdu in Southwest China's Sichuan province, is a graduate student at Tsinghua University and a devoted enthusiast of stand-up comedy. Zhu, originally from Taipei in China's Taiwan region and now also studying at THU, serves as the president of the THU Comedy Club.

In just seven days, the two collaborated to create a comedic sketch based on a topic related to Taiwan. Their performance on March 29 at THU's i-Center was met with resounding applause and laughter.

Their creative process is featured in the latest episode of China Daily's *Strait Forward*, a program that focuses on youth from both the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

Their show, titled *Free for Hometown Folks*, told a story set in a barber shop in Chiayi county, Taiwan, in 1999.

Wang portrayed the barber, a Sichuan native who had lived in Taiwan for over 40 years and decided to

offer free haircuts to his fellow Sichuanese. Zhu played a 25-year-old local woman who, in a humorous twist, attempted various schemes to pass herself off as a Sichuanese, setting the stage for a delightful farce.

Wang introduced the concept for this sketch, explaining, "For a sketch, we typically need a comedic premise, something absurdly funny. It could be a character quirk or a particular setting. The humor escalates as the sketch progresses."

Speaking about the elderly man in the Taiwan barbershop, Wang said, "He relocated from Sichuan. So, when he encounters someone from his hometown, he becomes nostalgic. He gets really excited and offers them a free haircut."

Zhu agreed with his idea. "I find it quite plausible," she said. "It resonates with the feelings of homesickness that mainlanders in Taiwan experienced during that time."

Zhu herself also identified with these sentiments. "My name, 'hua', was given to me by my father because he wanted me to remember my Chinese heritage," she explained. "My sister's name also contains 'hua' in it."

Now that Zhu's family has moved from Taiwan to Beijing, she aims to pursue her career there. "Beijing feels like my second home," she said.



“My name, 'hua', was given to me by my father because he wanted me to remember my Chinese heritage.”

Zhu Dunhua, a Taiwan student at Tsinghua University

Reflecting on her comedic journey, Zhu remembered listening to many mainland radio comedy programs during her childhood, such as *The Merry Teahouse* and *Laugh Your Way in the Wild West*, as well



“I feel like stand-up inherently carries a rebellious tone. The less support I get, the stronger my urge to rebel.”

Wang Zongnan, a Chinese mainland student at Tsinghua University

as traditional crosstalk, which significantly influenced her comedic personality.

Establishing the THU Comedy Club with a few schoolmates last year, Zhu has been organizing per-

formances and open mic nights for its members, while enhancing her own comedic skills at the same time.

She currently interns as a high school teacher, incorporating comedic techniques into her teaching methods. Even the topic of her graduation thesis is closely related to stand-up comedy.

For Wang, his introduction to comedy was accidental. In the summer of 2020, a friend who performed stand-up in the United States returned to China and participated in an open mic event in Chengdu, where Wang was asked to review his material.

After reading it, Wang jokingly said, "If you can perform this, then so can I."

This experience prompted Wang to join a comedy club, delve into comedy books and videos, and start crafting jokes and sketches.

Wang even created an English musical stand-up routine titled *I Don't Wanna Speak English*, playfully mocking his study abroad experience in Sweden.

His talent caught the attention of renowned comedian Joe Wong, who invited Wang to be a guest performer on his show.

However, Wang's parents weren't too supportive of his comic career initially, as they believed he should

pursue "a more refined form of art."

In the face of this, Wang doubled down on his comedy pursuits. "There's a study that says comedy is a stress reliever," he said.

"I feel like stand-up inherently carries a rebellious tone. The less support I get, the stronger my urge to rebel."

He recalled a touching moment when he felt his father's acknowledgment. One night as he was brushing his teeth, he kept hearing something playing in his father's room and soon realized it was his stand-up song.

"I deliberately brushed my teeth for a long time, and I heard that song playing on repeat three times," he said.

"My dad rarely directly expresses appreciation for my comedy, so I was pretty moved."

When asked why young people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait are drawn to comedy, Wang and Zhu responded in unison, "Who doesn't love to laugh?"

Wang added, "I think for those who like comedy, if they get the same punchline, they hold similar values and views of life."

Zhu concurred, "If I appreciate your comedy, it somewhat means I appreciate you."

## Social Media Digest

## Blooming grad

How do you plan to dress for your graduation photo? Many of this year's graduates in China would probably say, "In traditional Chinese attire."

This style often includes a graduation cap embellished with *xanhua*, a traditional floral headdress, and *yanjian*, a decorative shawl draped over the shoulder. Some would also opt to wear the *hanfu* underneath their graduation gown and hold props such as oilpaper umbrellas and moon-shaped fans.

According to Taobao, an e-commerce platform in China, sales of *yanjian* have surged by 250 percent, while sales of *xanhua* caps have increased by 336 percent by early April.

Not only have sales risen, but many Gen Zers have also decided to DIY these caps and gift them to their graduating friends.

"Dressing in traditional Chinese attire makes me feel like I've transcended time. Wearing a *xanhua*-adorned cap in my graduation photo symbolizes that my future will be in bloom," a graduate from Wenzhou-Kean University in East China's Zhejiang province told the Wenzhou Evening News.



Chinese student Tang Fan decorate her graduation gown in traditional Chinese style when she graduate from Syracuse University, United States, in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Unboxing emotions

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW), observed from May 13 to 19 this year in the United Kingdom, McDonald's locations in the UK have removed their iconic smile from Happy Meal boxes and replaced it with messages such as "It's okay not to feel happy all the time."

According to a news release by McDonald's published on May 13, their research indicates that 48 percent of UK children feel pressured to be happy all the time, even when they may not feel that way.

"To help get families talking, millions of limited-edition boxes will be available in McDonald's restaurants during MHAW along with emotive stickers to help children illustrate their feelings," stated the news release.

McDonald's research highlighted that 74 percent of parents believe that it is crucial to stop their children from experiencing negative emotions.

McDonald's has also partnered with BBC Children in Need, a charity dedicated to changing the lives of disadvantaged children and young people across the UK. Together, they have provided families with



McDonald's UK has removed the iconic smiley face from its Happy Meal boxes for its Mental Health Awareness Week campaign. vcc

access to a specialized hub of resources aimed at encouraging candid conversations about emotional well-being with children. The hub has been available via QR code on the boxes, as well as on McDonald's website and social media channels.

LI XINRAN

## LIFE

# Sowing seeds of understanding

International students from diverse backgrounds explore rural Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, learning about China's rich agricultural heritage and vibrant tea culture.

By MENG WENJIE  
mengwenjie@121st.cn

On May 18-19, over 130 students and teachers from 19 universities in East China's Jiangsu province embarked on a two-day trip to Zhenjiang, a city in Jiangsu. These students hailed from 31 countries, including the UK, Russia, Spain, France, Vietnam, Australia, and China.

During the two-day event, they immersed themselves in China's agricultural history and learned about its modern farming techniques.

For Anne Lauren Beer, a 22-year-old UK student at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in Suzhou, the trip provided a glimpse into the charm of contemporary rural China. At a "smart" mushroom planting base, Beer witnessed how 5G technology enables the automated control of optimal mushroom-growing conditions.

The students were also invited to pick and cook mushrooms on-site, savoring the flavor when it was at its freshest. "I'm not usually a fan of mushrooms and sometimes find them unappealing, but these ones were so good. It was hard not to love them," Beer said.

As an environmental science student, Beer observed that modern agriculture in China retains the benefits of traditional practices while emphasizing environmental conservation. At an organic farm, she saw how local farmers had adapted traditions to incorporate sustainable practices, such as avoiding pesticides and ensuring crop health through diverse seeds and technical methods.

"It's a great way to preserve cultural heritage and sustain agriculture as an occupation. This is also good for the environment," she said.

Angelina Lisovenko, a 20-year-old Russian student at Jiangsu University, gained new insights into Chinese agricultural traditions, and she pointed out the significance of agriculture in both Russian and Chinese cultures and economies.

"China has adopted modern agricultural technologies, including precision farming and biotechnology, more rapidly than Russia," she said.

Koffi Paul Arnaud Yao, a 24-year-old pharmacy student from Ivory Coast studying at Changzhou University, noted that both his home country and China cultivate a variety of crops. "In Ivory Coast, we mainly grow export crops such as cocoa and coffee, while China places a high priority on food security,

emphasizing crops like rice and wheat," he explained.

In addition to learning about modern agricultural technology, international students also explored a unique aspect of Chinese agricultural civilization: tea culture.

During the trip, they had the opportunity to engage in tea leaf picking and observe the entire tea production process.

Yao was impressed by the art of tea processing. Before this trip, he was unaware of the steps involved in transforming tea from freshly picked leaves to the final product available in stores. "Learning all those steps was truly fascinating to me," he said.

For Raul Sanchez Sanchez, a 20-year-old Spanish student at

Nanjing Polytechnic Institute, this hands-on experience greatly deepened his understanding of Chinese tea culture, which he had previously known only through his culture classes. "I realized that you learn more from firsthand experiences than by attending class," he said.

Sanchez was also moved by the locals' dedication and enthusiasm in sharing their tea culture with international visitors. "They conveyed their love and pride for their culture," he said. "I believe that a passionate person can teach better than anyone else."

Of all the steps in the tea production process, fixation, or *shaqing* — which literally means "to kill green" — stood out as particularly captivating for these young people. During this process, fresh tea

leaves are placed in a high-temperature wok and manually stirred to reduce moisture content, halting fermentation, and preserving the tea's essence.

"The temperature in the wok was very high, but the professional used his bare hands, stirring quickly and precisely. It was truly impressive," said Ngo Luu Ngoc Lanh, a 25-year-old Vietnamese student at Jiangsu University.

To Chinese students, who are accustomed to tea being an integral part of their culture, the reactions of international students to tea production seemed to be more intriguing than the process itself. According to Luo Linpeng, 24, a Chinese student at Jiangsu University, he and his Chinese peers frequently asked the international

students whether tea was popular in their countries.

For example, Lanh shared with Luo that Vietnam, the world's fifth-largest tea producer and exporter, has significant sales of green tea and oolong tea in Southeast Asia. "Vietnamese people also love drinking tea, and we have a long-standing tea culture. However, unlike the Chinese habit of drinking hot tea, many Vietnamese prefer it cold," she explained.

Lisovenko said that tea was introduced to Russia from China in the 17th century and quickly became a popular beverage. She observed that both cultures value the social aspect of tea drinking, but their preferences differ.

"Russians typically drink black tea, while Chinese people drink a wider variety of teas, including green tea, white tea, and oolong tea," she said. "Additionally, Russians often add sugar or honey to their tea, while Chinese people typically drink their tea plain."

These young individuals also organized an evening event where they recited Chinese poems about agriculture. The event took place at a local farm. Luo observed that many farmers, having finished their day's work in the fields, brought their families to join the audience.

"It was truly a beautiful scene: people of all ages, from different cultural backgrounds and various identities, immersing themselves in China's thousands of years of agricultural civilization," he said.

This is probably why Sanchez believes that these exchange activities are so important. "They helped us understand China, its culture, its way of thinking, and how the locals express themselves. More importantly, they taught us how to learn from and respect other cultures," he said.



Above: International students pick mushrooms at a "smart" mushroom planting base in Jurong, Zhenjiang, East China's Jiangsu province, on May 18. Below: (from left to right) International students try tea leaf picking, processing, and tasting at a tea cultural garden in Jurong on May 19. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## YOUTHFUL INSIGHTS

On May 15, Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, targeted five Taiwan commentators who had been spreading false and negative information about the Chinese mainland. This misinformation included claims such as mainland people being unable to afford tea eggs and mainland high-speed trains lacking backrests. Chen emphasized that such statements "fueled hostility and opposition between both sides of the Strait, and harmed the feelings of compatriots". He announced that the mainland would implement sanctions against the five individuals and their families.

The actions of these Taiwan commentators are not due to a lack of knowledge but are deliberate provocations aimed at misleading Taiwan citizens and deepening misunderstandings and divisions between the two sides.

## Youth's role in bridging cross-Strait relations

The claim about tea eggs is not just a ridiculous rumor but a severe misconception and belittling of the living standards of people on the mainland. I've lived in Wuhan for a long time. The variety and unique flavors of the food there are impressive and affordable, representing a microcosm of the mainland's food culture.

The statement about the high-speed trains is even more absurd. The seats on mainland high-speed trains actually feature adjustable backrests designed to conform to ergonomic principles.

These trains are not just a means of transportation but also stand as symbols of modernization, efficiency, safety, and comfort. They have significantly reduced travel time between cities, covering over a thousand kilometers in just a few hours. They also offer all kinds of facilities onboard: free Wi-Fi, power outlets, clean restrooms, and dining services, all designed to enhance the passenger experience.

I hope more people in Taiwan can come and experience the mainland's culinary delights and high-speed train services, not just to dispel misunderstandings but to appreciate the tremendous achievements in the mainland's modernization efforts.

Only through genuine understanding and experience can we eliminate biases, enhance mutual trust, and jointly promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations.

The truth is that the mainland has been developing rapidly, with significant achievements in various fields. In terms of technology, the mainland is at the forefront in 5G technology, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and other areas.

For example, Huawei's breakthroughs in 5G technology, Alibaba's innovations in e-commerce, and Tencent's accomplishments in social media and digital content all showcase the mainland's strong capabilities in technological innovation.

The infrastructural achievements in the mainland are also remarkable.

Besides the world-leading high-speed train system, the mainland has built an extensive highway network and modern airports. Beijing Daxing International Airport, hailed by British media as one of the "New Seven Wonders of the World", exemplifies the mainland's excellence in engineering technology and architectural design.

In enhancing mutual understanding between people on both sides, I think the

youth play a crucial role and bear significant responsibilities and missions.

Firstly, young people are the inheritors of history and culture.

On both sides, they share common cultural roots and historical memory, which is not only the bond of cross-Strait relations but also an important force for promoting peaceful development.

Today's younger generation is also the bridge of information and cognition. Their proficiency with new technologies and media allows them to easily access and disseminate information.

By personally experiencing and visiting the mainland, Taiwan youth can obtain objective and real information, fully understand its advanced infrastructure, rapidly developing economy, rich cultural life, and the friendliness and warmth of its residents, breaking down prejudices and stereotypes.

Secondly, youth are the driving force of economic and social development.

Cross-Strait cooperation and exchange in the economic field can lead to technological innovation and industrial upgrades, promoting mutual economic development.

Young people also have a keener sense of

social issues and innovative solutions. By conducting joint research and practice, both sides can find more consensus and cooperation points in areas such as environmental protection, education, and technology, contributing to social progress.

Youth are the guardians of peace and stability. History tells us that peace and stability are prerequisites for development, and we should actively advocate and participate in peaceful dialogue, reducing hostility and confrontation through various forms of exchange and cooperation, promoting peaceful development, and contributing wisdom to the long-term stability of cross-Strait relations.

Written by Chen Simo, a 20-year-old Taiwan student at Shanghai International Studies University, who is currently participating in an exchange program at the University of Alicante in Spain.



Chen Simo, a Taiwan student.

LIFE

# Saving endangered tree frog

Wang Ningjing's film documents her journey to find and protect the endangered Chinese immaculate tree frog, highlighting the fragile interdependence between humans and nature.

By XU WANYANG and MENG WENJIE

On May 22, this year's International Day for Biological Diversity was celebrated under the theme "Be part of the Plan", urging action to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity in support of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, also known as The Biodiversity Plan.

Wang Ningjing, a 29-year-old Chinese wildlife filmmaker, is actively involved in this plan. Her 15-minute short film, *Immaculate*, was showcased at the 47th International Wildlife Film Festival in Montana, United States, in April.

The documentary follows Wang's journey to find the Chinese immaculate tree frog, or *Dryophytes immaculatus*, a species native to China that is now on the brink of extinction. It was listed as threatened on the 2004 Red List of Threatened Species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Wang's passion for wildlife emerged at a young age. As a child, she was captivated by nature documentaries, often visiting wildlife parks and spending hours observing tadpoles by ponds.

This love for nature led Wang to study ecology at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province, and later environmental health sciences at Yale University in the United States.

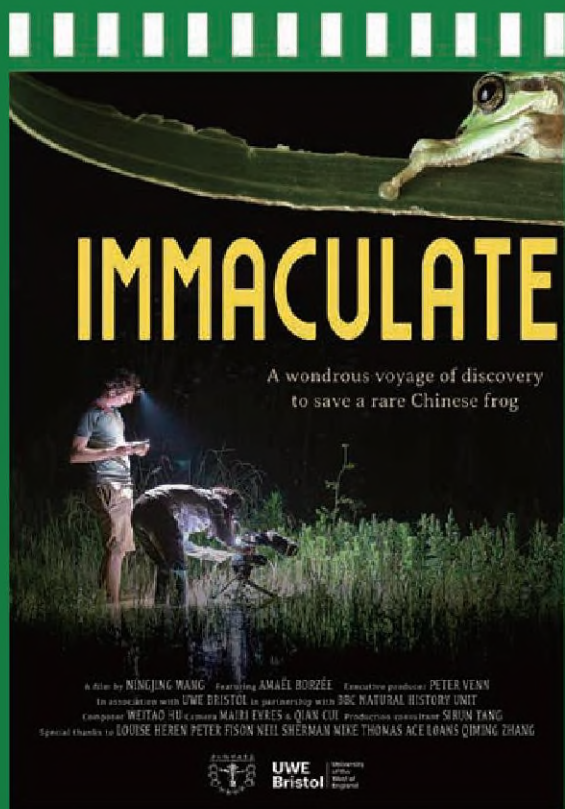
During her field studies and travels, she discovered the power of the camera in capturing the intricate relationships between species and their habitats, as well as the fleeting animal behaviors often overlooked by the human eye.

"I see myself as a chronicler of the relationship between humans and nature," Wang said. "Even if I cannot change the current status of these species, at least I have documented the evidence of their existence."

Wang shares her wildlife photography and related knowledge on social media. As her following grew, she realized the potential of nature photography to attract public attention and promote conservation efforts.

"I believe China boasts incredibly rich biodiversity and is home to dedicated conservationists," she said. "Through my films, I hope to spotlight these stories."

With this mission, Wang became the first Chinese mainland student to enroll in the wildlife filmmaking program at the University of the West of



Clockwise from top left: Poster of Wang Ningjing's short film, *Immaculate*. A Chinese immaculate tree frog on Wang's hair when she was filming in Anhui in June 2023. Wang during filming. A Chinese immaculate tree frog. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



off insects.

"We were a feast for mosquitoes," Wang joked. Despite returning to the hotel covered in bites, she had no regrets.

After more than 10 days of searching and overcoming numerous obstacles, Wang finally discovered a mating pair of Chinese immaculate tree frogs in a village in Anhui on the very last day of filming, when she was considering giving up.

The team carefully transported the frogs to Borzee's laboratory, where they laid around 70 eggs. Borzee then released the couple back into the rice field where they were found.

The fertilized eggs soon developed into lively tadpoles. Some of them were nurtured in Borzee's laboratory and would eventually be released into their natural habitat once they matured into frogs. Another group was relocated to a conservation center in Shanghai, where they were raised in a semi-natural setting, awaiting reintroduction into their native environment.

One of the reasons Wang chose the Chinese immaculate tree frog for her documentary was to raise awareness about lesser-known species.

She noted that amphibians like the Chinese immaculate tree frog are often overlooked compared to larger, more charismatic wild animals. However, these amphibians are more vulnerable to climate change and have closer relationships with humans, as we are more likely to encounter them in our daily lives.

"In this film, the stories of humans and animals are interconnected through the seemingly inconspicuous tree frogs. In fact, it could be any other animal, plant, or microorganism," said Wang.

The Chinese title of this documentary is *Yu Wa*, which translates to "with the frogs." Through this title, Wang aims to convey that human existence and survival are closely intertwined with our environment and the species that coexist with us.

"As long as you are willing to spend some time observing them, you will discover that our connection with nature is far deeper than we might imagine," she said.

Contact the writers at mengwenjie@21st.cn



Online Watch the video by scanning the code.

England, UK, in 2022. This program, conducted in collaboration with the BBC Natural History Unit, offers a professional approach to natural documentary filmmaking.

Wang's project, *Immaculate*, was her graduation piece for this program, marking her debut as a filmmaker directing and starring in her own work.

In this documentary, Wang partnered with Amael Borzee, an IUCN ecologist, and a professor at Nanjing Forestry University in East China's Jiangsu province, to venture into the remote rural

areas of Jiangsu and its neighboring province, Anhui, in search of the elusive Chinese immaculate tree frog.

The journey began with a rescue mission in June 2023 when Wang observed that despite Shanghai being one of the frog's original habitats, the species had not been sighted in the past decade.

Borzee informed Wang that animal conservation organizations were considering reintroducing the tree frogs to their former habitat in Shanghai, but the first step was to find tree

frogs in "amplexus" — a mating position in which male frogs clasp onto females for fertilization.

Wang's hometown of Taizhou in Jiangsu is also one of the few remaining habitats of the Chinese immaculate tree frog, but she had never encountered one during her childhood. Instead, she learned about it through stories passed down by her elders.

"I'm eager to revisit my hometown and uncover the truth about the tree frogs," she said.

However, locating these frogs presented significant challenges.

According to Wang, these creatures rely on healthy rice fields for survival, but unfortunately, factors like climate change have disrupted their habitats, leaving many drier than before.

Since the frogs' breeding season coincided with the mosquito-infested summer season in the humid southern regions, during filming sessions, concerned about the frogs' delicate skin, Wang avoided using mosquito repellents that could harm them. Instead, she and her team opted for protective clothing like long sleeves and pants to ward

## Step by step: Wang Guihong's path to academic success

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and LIXINRAN

If life is like a long hike for everyone, then Wang Guihong has encountered a few "bumps" at the starting line.

Wang, 23, comes from a farming family in Sihé village, Laifeng county in Enshi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture, Central China's Hubei province. At the age of 3, she lost her right leg in a traffic accident.

Even after the amputation, Wang wasn't completely out of danger. Several hospitals issued critical illness notices, but her mother never gave up hope. "If it weren't for my mother, I wouldn't be standing here today," Wang said.

Wang's father hired a carpenter to make crutches for her because she needed a new

pair almost every month. This was just the beginning of her many challenges. During her second year of high school, Wang was diagnosed with severe hydronephrosis. Opting for a conservative and temporary measure, she used a renal drainage bag until after her college entrance exam, when she had the diseased kidney removed.

Despite facing health challenges, Wang was admitted to the School of Foreign Languages of Wuhan University of Biotechnology in 2019 to pursue an associate degree in Business English. Even while using crutches, she enjoyed a vibrant school life, encountering warmth and kindness.

"My classmates genuinely respected me, treating me like they treated everybody else. Sometimes I even forgot that I

was different," said Wang. Wang ran for the position of psychological commissar in her class. Her speech and positive energy deeply impressed Wang Keyun, who later became one of her closest friends. "She never complains about the challenges she faces or is sensitive about her disability. She simply walks at a slower pace than most people," said Wang Keyun.

The prolonged use of crutches caused Wang to develop scoliosis. During high school, one of Wang's classmates got a prosthetic leg, which sparked hope in her. However, the price tag of over 100,000 yuan was astronomical for her family at the time.

Her parents saved, borrowed, and finally raised the funds needed.

After getting the prosthetic

leg, a period of adaptation and practice followed. Wang lost count of the falls and scars accumulated in the first six months before saying goodbye to the crutches she had relied on for the past 19 years.



Left: Wang Guihong participated in a torch relay as part of the graduation celebration held at Wuhan University of Biotechnology on June 15, 2022. Right: Wang graduated with a bachelor's degree this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"The prosthetic leg company offered to coat the metal in flesh-colored paint, but I declined. This is the real me, a part of me," said Wang.

The school administration and staff have also gone the

extra mile to enhance Wang's college experience and ease financial burdens. They relocated her to a sunnier dorm due to her rheumatism condition, and helped her apply for various programs and scholarships.

Even with her condition, Wang has been dedicated to volunteering work, assisting the village committee during summer and winter breaks, tutoring elementary and middle school students on weekends, and actively engaging in activities such as campus sanitation and greening initiatives. So far, she has accumulated over 400 hours of volunteer service.

"I've received so much help along the way, and I want to give back," said Wang.

Wang also excelled academically. Although she initially

enrolled in a junior college course, known as *zhuanke* in Chinese, she eventually graduated with a bachelor's degree and successfully passed the postgraduate entrance exam.

Wang decided to pursue her graduate studies in Marxism at Hubei Minzu University. "As a member of the Communist Party of China, my experience of volunteering at the grassroots level has shown me that this major can help me better serve society and realize my value in the future," explained Wang.

"So far, I have overcome many obstacles and challenges in life. With all the support and companionship I have, I face the unknown journey ahead without fear."

Contact the writers at lixinran@21st.cn