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CHINA DAILY

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Xi: Education bridges key to China-US ties

Leader urges universities to cultivate more young ambassadors in his reply letter

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping has said that China-United States education exchanges and cooperation help promote mutual understanding and friendship between the people of the two countries, especially the youths, and this is a project for the future development of bilateral relations.

He made the remark in a recent reply letter to Lamont Repollet, president of Kean University in the US state of New Jersey, adding that China-US ties have a great bearing on the well-being of the two peoples as well as on the future of humanity.

In May 2006, under the care and facilitation of Xi, who was then secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhejiang Provincial Committee, Wenzhou University and Kean University formally signed an agreement to jointly establish Wenzhou-Kean University in the province.

In 2014, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, the new university was officially established.

Currently, Wenzhou-Kean University has about 4,500 students across its undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs, and over 3,300 have earned their undergraduate degrees over the past eight years.

Repollet recently wrote a letter to Xi, introducing the progress and achievements made in China-US education cooperation.

He also voiced his readiness to actively respond to Xi's initiative to help more young people from the US to come to China for exchanges and study, and promote further

communication between the younger generations of the two countries.

In his reply, Xi praised Repollet's pledge to deepen education cooperation between the two countries and encourage more US students to come to China for exchanges and study.

Recalling that he witnessed the signing ceremony for the two institutions' cooperation at Kean University in 2006, Xi wrote in his letter, "With the joint efforts of both sides, Wenzhou-Kean University has achieved remarkable results in its operation, and has become a hallmark program of China-US education cooperation, which is gratifying."

It is hoped that universities of the two countries "will strengthen exchanges and cooperation in various forms, cultivate young ambassadors who know both China and the US well, and build more bridges to boost China-US friendship", he added.

Xi also welcomed Repollet and other members of the US education community to make more visits to China, and asked Repollet to convey his greetings to Dawood Farahi, former president of Kean University.

Currently, Wenzhou-Kean University, Tianjin Juilliard School and Schwarzman College at Tsinghua University are among the signature programs of China-US education cooperation.

Observers noted that China-US cooperation in education has seen marked progress in areas ranging from student and academic exchanges to jointly running schools and collaborating on research.

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President hails signing of trilateral railway agreement

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping offered congratulations on the signing of an intergovernmental agreement on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project on Thursday, saying that China is committed to working with the Central Asian countries to complete the strategic corridor at an early date to benefit the three countries and the region.

Xi made the remarks as the trilateral intergovernmental agreement was signed in Beijing on Thursday. Xi, together with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev via video link, extended their congratulations on the pivotal agreement.

Xi said the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway is a strategic

project for China's connectivity with Central Asia, symbolizing the three nations' collaborative efforts under the Belt and Road Initiative.

The signing of the intergovernmental agreement lays a solid legal foundation for the construction of the railway project, he said, adding that this marks the transition of the railway project from a vision to a tangible reality, and also demonstrates the resolute determination of the three nations to work together for common development.

China is committed to working alongside Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to make necessary preparations for the initiation of the project, and to expedite the completion of the strategic corridor to benefit the three countries and their people and facilitate regional economic and social development, Xi said.

The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, starting from Kashgar in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, passing through Kyrgyzstan and entering Uzbekistan, will cover around 523 kilometers, with 213 kilometers running in China, according to the construction plan.

It has the potential to extend toward West Asia and South Asia in the future. Upon completion, it is expected to significantly enhance connectivity among the three countries, driving faster economic and social development in the region.

Japarov called the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway a flagship project in the joint building of the Belt and Road.

Once completed, it will serve as a new transportation route from Asia to Europe and the Gulf countries, holding significant importance in

enhancing connectivity and strengthening economic and trade relations among countries along the route and the entire region, he said.

Japarov expressed hope for the swift completion and operation of the railway to provide fresh impetus for advancing regional development and enhancing the well-being of people in all countries involved.

Mirziyoyev said the signing of the agreement holds great historic significance, representing a practical step forward in promoting regional connectivity.

The railway will help facilitate cooperation between countries in the region and China, and deepen country-to-country friendship, aligning with the long-term interests of all countries involved, he added.

Aiming high



High school students jump for good luck on Thursday before the national college entrance examination, known as the gaokao, in Hezhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. The little ritual of jumping represents the act of gaozhong, or "achieving high grades". The zongzi serves as a pun for zhong, or "right on target". LI HAOTU / FOR CHINA DAILY See more, page 3

Shining star



Beijing Winter Olympic champion skier Gu Ailing carries the Paris Olympic torch on Wednesday during the relay in Loire, France. The Paris Olympics will be held from July 26 to Aug 11. XIAO YAZHUO / XINHUA

Four pillars sustain iron-clad friendship

WORLD WATCH By Aleksandar Mitic

On the 25th anniversary of the NATO bombing the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, in which three Chinese journalists were killed, President Xi Jinping visited Serbia as part of his three-country visit to Europe in early May. He said that "the China-Serbia friendship, forged with the blood of our compatriots, will stay in the shared memory of the Chinese and Serbian peoples".

Some US scholars, such as Peter Gries, feel the impact of the embassy bombing on Chinese foreign policy was such that one could talk about a "post-Belgrade China". It is believed that the attack made Chinese officials change their view regarding the threat of US unilateral actions and "coalitions of the willing", including in the Asia-Pacific. As a war correspondent from the Serbian province of Kosovo, the epicenter of the attacks, I witnessed 192 civilian deaths in NATO attacks. No one from NATO has ever been investigated for those deaths, let alone put on trial. It was the height of the "US unipolar world".

Back in the 1930s, a young man named Vladimir moved to the city of Sarajevo, where he was instrumental in organizing the resistance movement. He would become known as "Valter", and was killed in the final days of the fight to liberate the city in 1945. Some 30 years later, Vladimir's story was recreated in the film *Valter defends*

Sarajevo. The film became one of the most popular foreign war movies in Chinese history, for most Chinese audiences it was their first insight into the history of the Balkan troubles with powerful occupying empires, as well as a powerful cultural bridge between Beijing and the Yugoslav/Serbian capital of Belgrade.

Indeed, the memory culture related to the resistance and suffering during World War II in the 1940s and the NATO aggression in the 1990s is one of the four cornerstones of China-Serbia "iron-clad friendship".

The second cornerstone is the political partnership, reflected in the mutual respect for territorial

integrity, and the specific position of Serbia in Europe, as a military neutral country that refuses to join NATO and to bow to Western pressure to impose sanctions against Russia and China. Beijing followed closely the development of events in Serbia following the NATO aggression. In the local elections in Taipei in 2000, it saw similarities in attempts to create conditions for the "unilateral declarations of independence" in the cases of Taiwan and the Serbian province of Kosovo, where a separatist Albanian majority was supported by the West.

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INBOUND TOURISM DRIVE SPARKS OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK

Visitor-friendly policies, visa-free entry, easier payments boost appeal for travelers

By YANG FEIYUE yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Last month, senior tour operator Iain Bell traveled from the United Kingdom to China at the invitation of Beijing tourism authorities to sample the capital city's cultural and historical charms. The three-day trip was one of a



large number of undertakings by central and local authorities to attract international visitors and promote the country's myriad attractions.

During his stay, Bell marveled at the grandeur of the Badaling section of the Great Wall, the Palace Museum's ancient complex and precious cultural relics, and the unique charm of the royal garden at the Summer Palace.

Bell said he was particularly impressed by his interactions with a tai chi master at the Temple of

Heaven and the "magic" of the traditional Chinese martial art.

"It was so different from my understanding of the country," Bell said, adding that he found China vibrant and was impressed by the country's internal and external harmony.

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TO OUR READERS

We wish our readers a happy Dragon Boat Festival. We will publish a special holiday edition on Monday, June 10. We will be back to our regular publication schedule on Tuesday, June 11.

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The Brit also said he greatly admired Beijing's clean and orderly urban environment, adding that what touched him most was the warmth and friendliness of ordinary Chinese people he met in streets and alleys or at famous historical sites.

"It was a very rewarding trip, and I gained a new understanding and deep appreciation of Chinese culture," he said.

'Wonderful experiences'

Bell said he would take his "wonderful experiences and feelings" back home to the UK, and encourage more Britons to visit Beijing to experience the "authentic and endearing China".

He was one of a dozen travel agency representatives from the UK whom the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism invited to join the trip. The aim of the visits was to offer firsthand information, help develop inbound tourism products for Beijing, and build a solid bridge for exchanges and cooperation between the tourism industries of the two countries, according to the bureau.

In addition to traditional scenic spots, Bell and the other UK representatives also took a nighttime boat tour along the Liangma River, and a tricycle ride through the labyrinthine *hutong* lanes.

Following in the footsteps of the UK visitors, more than 100 travel agency representatives from Australia, New Zealand, the US, Singapore, Italy, Germany, and Spain arrived in the capital city to attend the Beijing Inbound Tourism Development Conference. The gathering commenced on May 24 with the primary objective of fostering a platform for interaction, and enhancing collaboration between Chinese and international travel agencies.

Sima Hong, vice-mayor of Beijing, delivered a keynote address at the conference, expressing Beijing's aspirations to leverage the event to establish strong dialogue with global tourism industry experts.

The city is aiming to bolster resource-sharing, foster reciprocal visitor exchanges with international travel agencies, enhance cooperation, and facilitate knowledge exchanges to develop premium tourism routes, she said.

Sima said these initiatives would help transform the tourism landscape, enable the industry to better cater to enriching experiences, drive economic growth, and foster a deeper understanding of diverse civilizations.

These efforts will create shared opportunities in the tourism market, and ultimately help advance tourism development.

At the Beijing conference, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism awarded global strategic partner certificates to 10 travel agencies from major markets including the US, Canada, the UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, Japan, and Singapore. Under the partnership framework, both sides will actively promote the sale of Beijing tourism products overseas, acquire timely and accurate market feedback, and formulate more targeted overseas promotion plans, the authorities said.

Additionally, the Beijing bureau will facilitate greater cooperation between the overseas partners and high-quality tourism enterprises in China.

The meeting organizers said the event was an important measure to implement the central government's instructions on tourism work.

Howdy, partner

Terry Dale, president of the United States Tour Operators Association, said he was encouraged by the country's good faith and determination to welcome inbound travelers.

He joined the Beijing conference after the 14th China-US Tourism Leadership Summit, which opened on May 22 in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. Nearly 400 representatives from the governments, institutions, destinations, and enterprises of the two countries gathered in Xi'an.

The summit was organized to promote the recovery and development of China-US tourism cooperation and take it to a new level, according to authorities.

Dale said the ensuing cultural and tourism tours in Beijing and Xi'an had left a deep impression on him, and he will actively promote dialogue between both countries' tourism industries to build a bridge for China-US tourism exchanges and cooperation.



Tourists from the *Mein Schiff 5* cruise ship enjoy their visit to Shanghai on April 6. Visitors from European countries including Germany, Austria and Switzerland, are allowed visa-free entry. PHOTOS BY CHEN AIPING / XINHUA

Visitors: Unlocking China's hidden charms, warmth



Foreign tourists dressed in *hanfu*, the traditional attire of the Han ethnic group, visit the Palace Museum in Beijing in March. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

He also said he believes such events will encourage US travel companies to develop more inbound tourism products for China.

Zhang Kexiong, assistant general manager of Beijing-based CTG Travel, said that after the pandemic his company arranged tours for international travelers to experience popular new destinations across the city.

He said he is confident about the prospects for the inbound tourism business, as the country has an abundance of culture and history that has already proved a hit with international visitors. "We also have fresh air, hospitable people, and travel here is safe," Zhang said.

Favorable policies

China has rolled out a slew of favorable inbound travel policies in recent months.

In mid-May, it announced a policy allowing visa-free entry of foreign tour groups aboard cruise ships via all the country's cruise ship ports.

Foreign tour groups comprising two or more individuals and organized or received by domestic travel agencies can also enter the country visa-free through cruise ship ports in 13 cities and stay for up to 15 days, according to the National Immigration Administration.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other departments are also streamlining the inbound tourism process. Measures include optimizing visa and customs policies, improving tourism services, and enhancing the management of and shopping environment at cultural and tourism sites, according to the ministry.



Tourists from South Korea pose for a photo on a glass bridge in Zhangjiajie Scenic Area in Hunan province in May. CHEN ZHENHAI / XINHUA

In April, the ministry, the People's Bank of China, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange and the National Cultural Heritage Administration jointly issued a notice requiring all 5A- and 4A-rated tourist destinations, national and provincial tourist resorts, national tourist cultural streets, and three to five-star hotels to accept domestic and international bank cards.

Major cultural and tourism attractions should retain ticket booths and ticketing staff to accommodate visitors who prefer cash payment options, the notice said. It also called for efforts to actively set up foreign currency exchange outlets in venues with a large number of foreign tourists, and enhance mobile payment services and relevant product features.

Last November, visa-free policies were implemented for passport holders from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia.

In March, China announced it would grant visa-free entry on a trial basis to visitors from Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg.

According to the Foreign Ministry, from March 14 to Nov 30, passport holders from these six countries would be able to enter China without a visa for up to 15 days for business, tourism, family visits and transit purposes.

Right after the May Day holiday, the government decided to extend the visa-free policy for short-term visits for all 12 countries mentioned until the end of 2025.

Payments made easy

Led by the national policy, Beijing has taken a series of measures to improve international travel services this year, said Wei Rong, director of international exchanges and cooperation at the Beijing culture and tourism bureau.

A new portal website for the international community, available in nine languages, has been up and running since March. Inbound traveler payment demonstration sites have been established at the Beijing Capital International Airport and the Beijing Daxing International Airport, Wei said.

"Payment services in key areas such as dining, accommodation, transportation, tourism, shopping, entertainment, study and healthcare have been comprehensively optimized," Wei said.

Tourists from Southeast Asian countries can use their local apps to pay in China, as some of them have connections with the payment giant China UnionPay, said a staff member from the company at the Beijing conference.

"For long-haul tourists from Europe and the US, they can download UnionPay and use their local bank card to apply and deposit money onto a virtual card, before they can use UnionPay for purchase," the staff member said.

The positive measures have helped Beijing receive 790,000 inbound tourists from January to April, a year-on-year increase of 291 percent, and 70 percent of the pre-pandemic level in 2019, the Beijing bureau reported.

International flights between Beijing and outbound destinations including Seattle, Dublin and Madrid have resumed, and the frequency of flights to New York, Los Angeles, Munich, Seoul and Tokyo has been increased.

Daxing airport has also opened new international routes to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, and Jeju in South Korea.

As a result, Beijing's total air passenger throughput reached 37.54 million in the first four months, a year-on-year increase of 49.3 percent, and equal to 114 percent of the 2019 level for the same period.

The international and regional passenger throughput was 5.83 million, a year-on-year increase of 371.2 percent, reaching 65 percent of the 2019 level, according to the bureau.

So much to offer

Like the US tour operators' representative Dale, Laura Mandala from the United States was also invited to join the two tourism events last month.

Mandala runs a tour research firm in Alexandria, Virginia, and believes the promotion of remarkable attractions like China's UNESCO World Heritage Sites will encourage more US travelers to visit "because they cannot see them anywhere else".

She added that the easiest segments to target are travelers who have already visited China and those from Asia.

She said she was still mesmerized by her "wonderful" spa experience in mountain hot springs in Chongqing in 2019, when she also took a cruise trip along the Yangtze River.

"It was fantastic, and it's a trip I can sell to women travelers," she said.

Brian Linden, who has lived in Yunnan province for more than two decades and runs a hotel, said he was glad to join the events in Beijing and Xi'an.

"It's been exciting to see so many Americans and also other foreigners. Everyone discussing travel again makes me feel more optimistic," Linden said.

He said he hopes more similar meetings will be staged in the future in China.

A senior player in the industry who has received many inbound travelers over the years, Linden proposed associating China travel with the idea of being "cool". "I've been to more than 110 countries, but China has so many more scenic spots to offer and many of them are worth seeing," Linden said.

He also suggested the country further tap into its well-developed high-speed railway for inbound travelers.

"We should have a special pass for foreigners, a special pass that they could buy. So for two weeks or three weeks, they would be able to travel throughout China by train," he said.

"There's still a lot more about China that needs to be shared with global travelers," he added.

TOP NEWS

Dong Jun puts forward nation's views at forum

Minister speaks on Taiwan question, South China Sea issues during Singapore session

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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The Chinese military's participation in the Shangri-La Dialogue by sending delegations led by the Defense Minister over the years has helped the world gain a more comprehensive understanding of its positions on global issues, while also facilitating communication and understanding between the Chinese and United States militaries, experts said.

The 21st Shangri-La Dialogue was organized in Singapore last week by the British think tank the International Institute for Strategic Studies. It's one of the biggest and highest-level multilateral conferences on security in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Chinese military has participated in the security summit every year since 2007. This year, the Chinese delegation, led by Defense Minister Admiral Dong Jun, comprised 34 members, including 29 from the People's Liberation Army, according to the event guide provided by the organizer.

Inside Zhou Bo, a senior fellow at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy and a member of the delegation, said, "At present, the Chinese military has attracted much attention, but there are still some misunderstandings about it in the West. Therefore, the Shangri-La Dialogue serves as a major platform for the Chinese military to articulate its positions and showcase a positive image."

In his first appearance at the dialogue after assuming office, Defense Minister Dong Jun delivered a keynote speech on China's approach to global security, stressing that China will not allow any country or force to trigger war or chaos in the Asia-Pacific region.

Additionally, during the Q&A session, Dong elaborated on China's positions on the Taiwan question and South China Sea issues.

"Dong's speech was quite comprehensive," said Zhou, who has attended 10 Shangri-La Dialogues in all, at seven of which he was a PLA delegation member.

Zhou noted that, given the current situation, the Taiwan question and South China Sea issues are both pressing and realistic topics, making it understandable that Dong focused on these issues during the Q&A session.

In 2011, China sent its defense chief to the dialogue for the first time, with then-defense minister Liang Guanglie

delivering a keynote speech on the nation's international security cooperation. Since 2019, the Chinese defense minister has attended each Shangri-La Dialogue.

Military commentator Zhao Xiaozhuo who has also attended 10 Shangri-La Dialogues as a member of the Chinese military delegation, said that although the dialogue is a West-dominated forum, China's participation is crucial because it focuses on Asia-Pacific security issues.

"It is very important for the Chinese defense minister to use this opportunity every year to clarify China's positions and concepts to the international community and to highlight China's contributions to regional peace and stability," he said.

Last week, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr spoke about the Philippines' territorial claims in the South China Sea in his keynote address, while US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin gave a keynote speech emphasizing the US' leadership in the "Indo-Pacific" region.

Notably, after the speeches by the Philippine and US leaders, two members of the Chinese delegation, Major General Xu Hui and Senior Colonel Cao Yanzhong, posed questions, challenging the Philippines' actions' negative effect on ASEAN centrality and the US' attempts to introduce NATO into the Asia-Pacific region.

Military commentator Zhao said that, given the Western dominance of the dialogue, there were some baseless accusations against China. "The PLA's participation and voice serve as a balance to those voices, allowing the international community to make its own judgments."

During this year's dialogue, Dong held talks with senior security and defense officials from more than 10 countries and organizations, including the US, Japan, Australia, Singapore, Cambodia and the European Union. His meeting with Austin marked the first face-to-face meeting between Chinese and US defense chiefs in 18 months.

In the talks, Dong told his US counterpart that the two militaries must adhere to the bottom line of no conflict and no confrontation.

Zhao noted that it's crucial for China and the US to maintain communication, especially because "the two countries have very different perspectives on issues."

"Therefore, both countries need to communicate to continuously reaffirm each other's bottom lines and consensus, such as crisis management," he said.



Nowhere is safe

Palestinians gather at a UN school that was hit during Israeli bombardment in central Gaza's Nuseirat camp on Thursday, amid the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The raid killed at least 40 people, mainly women and children. BASHAR TALEB / AFP

US tariff hikes criticized for hindering climate goals

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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The recent increase in tariffs imposed by United States President Joe Biden's administration on Chinese imports, particularly on clean energy products, has been criticized for potentially slowing the US' green transition and undermining its climate goals.

The Office of the US Trade Representative announced steep tariff hikes last month on a wide range of Chinese goods, including key components for clean energy technologies.

Experts warn that these tariffs will likely make clean energy products more expensive for US consumers and businesses, potentially slowing down the transition to renewable energy sources.

"The US doesn't have the domestic capacity to scale up production of clean energy products at a price that is attractive to consumers and businesses," Kyle Handley, an associate professor of economics and director of the Center for Commerce and Diplomacy at the University of California, San Diego, said.

"Chinese clean energy goods could have played a key role in green

transition for the US. That is now more cost-prohibitive and likely to slow down the adoption of clean energy technology and products."

In response to the ambiguity of the new policy, Handley has created the Biden Tariff Analyzer app. This tool allows users to identify the top global suppliers for products affected by the tariffs, enhancing their comprehension of potential price hikes.

He highlighted two prominent examples of how the tariffs would affect clean energy technologies. One is the batteries that power electric vehicles, and the other is solar cells.

"Even if the EVs are assembled in the US, the final vehicle will be more expensive. This is especially severe with EVs because the batteries make up a large share of the total cost of the car," he explained.

"The new tariffs on solar cells are similar. Even if the solar cells are assembled into panels or other arrays in the US, the final cost of the product will be higher. If you raise the price of solar power, fewer people will install solar panels on the roof, for example."

The White House said the tariff on lithium-ion EV batteries will

increase from 7.5 percent to 25 percent this year, while that on lithium-ion non-EV batteries will undergo a similar increase, but not until 2026. Additionally, the tariff on battery parts will increase from 7.5 percent to 25 percent this year.

Based on the calculations on Handley's app, China was the top supplier of lithium-ion batteries to the US last year, contributing 71.7 percent of the latter's annual imports. The second-largest supplier was South Korea, taking up only 10 percent of the US market.

The case is the same with lithium-ion batteries used for EVs. The app shows Chinese-made products accounted for 65.1 percent of US imports last year, far surpassing Poland, the second-largest supplier at 18.3 percent.

Adding to the challenges that businesses face is the ambiguity of the initial tariff announcement, Handley said.

"The specifics matter," he said, highlighting that there are more than 10,000 different tariff lines in the US.

Even broad terms such as EVs can be ambiguous, "because there are different tariffs based on the passenger capacity and whether the car

is a hybrid, plug-in hybrid or fully electric," he said.

"If you are managing a company with a complex supply chain, researching and adjusting to these changes is costly," Handley said, adding that he hopes his app can streamline information gathering for businesses impacted by the new tariffs.

Politicians have also weighed in, criticizing the tariffs for contradicting the Biden administration's climate priorities.

Colorado Governor Jared Polis said on X that the tariffs are "horrible news for American consumers and a major setback for clean energy."

Research by public policy research organization Cato Institute in Washington supports this view. A study by economist Erica York in April found that US tariffs imposed in 2018 and 2019 were almost entirely passed on to US consumers, resulting in higher prices and reduced export growth.

"They (tariffs) serve not the strategic interests of the nation, but the parochial interests of politicians who get to enrich preferred companies and workers by imposing diffuse and mostly hidden costs on the rest of the US economy," she said in the study.

Gaokao examinees gain help from zongzi

By LIANG SHUANG
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It's that time of the year again when preparations reach fever pitch for the all-important national college entrance examination, or *gaokao*, which is going to be conducted on Friday. To boost the morale of the young girls and boys appearing for the test, parents and teachers alike have been racking their brains to find ways to provide the all-important emotional support. Amid this frenzy of activity, the *zongzi*, a festive food associated with the upcoming

Dragon Boat Festival, has emerged as an unlikely good luck charm.

This year's *gaokao* begins on Friday and it will take two to four days to be completed around the country. The scores will determine a candidate's future in higher education — whether they would be able to make it to college and which colleges they will be eligible for.

Primarily made with glutinous rice and often wrapped in bamboo leaves, the triangular *zongzi* is a festive food made for the Dragon Boat Festival, which will be celebrated right after the exams on Monday this

year. Making the most of this happy coincidence, the triangular treat is being flaunted as a token of good luck and good grades.

On Tuesday in Wuhan, Hubei province, students of Wuhan No 23 Senior High School who are appearing for the test had a surprise in store as they walked into the canteen. They had to enter through a door decorated with strings of *zongzi*, as school leaders waited on the other side to give them a pep talk. Getting into the spirit of things, many of the students leaped into the air to hit the food packets with their

heads for good luck, Wuhan-based Jimu News reported.

The little ritual of jumping represents the act of *gaozhong*, or "achieving high grades." The *zongzi* serves as a pun for *zhong*, or "right on target."

"Through such creative activities, we hope to enhance their confidence so that they can have a more positive mindset for the exams," an unnamed school official told Jimu News.

Zongzi makers are making the most of the trend. Producers such as Zhang A Qing and Guangzhou Restaurant are rolling out specially packaged *zongzi* for the students, wishing them good luck.

A record 13.42 million students are appearing for this year's *gaokao*, an increase of 510,000 over last year.

Meeting across time

The United States World War II veteran Warren Morrison is greeted by a little girl on Wednesday during an American Airlines veterans parade in Sainte-Mere-Eglise, Normandy, France. World War II veterans from across the US, Britain and Canada gathered in Normandy this week to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day landings.

DANIEL COLE / AP



Youth: People welcome more exchanges

From page 1

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng said in a speech this year that the two countries "have established an all-dimensional, multi-tiered and all-sectoral education cooperation framework, nurturing mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples."

As part of the thriving China-US education exchanges and cooperation, there were nearly 290,000 Chinese studying in the US as of January, accounting for about

one-third of the total number of international students in the US, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

To further boost mutual understanding among young people, President Xi proposed an ambitious program in November in San Francisco to invite a total of 50,000 young people from the US to visit China for exchanges over the following five years.

Da Wei, a professor and director of the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua

University, recalled his recent visit to the US, noting that he always heard voices welcoming China-US people-to-people exchanges.

"There is actually no shortage of rational and moderate voices within the US. There is still great room for China to bolster cultural exchanges between the two countries," he said.

Despite some doubts and prejudices against China, the so-called "China threat" is not the primary concern of the majority of the general public in the US, he added.

Pillars: European countries need China

From page 1

In 2008, the US and the European Union masterminded "Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence", which was recognized by the majority of Western countries, but not by China, Russia, the remaining countries of BRICS and most of the Global South. Ever since, the West has tried to legalize the "unilateral independence of Kosovo" and thus legitimize the 1999 NATO aggression which paved the way for it. Under immense pressure from the West, Serbia has found in China an uncompromising partner, and has vowed the same regarding every issue related to China's territorial integrity.

The third cornerstone is the China-Serbia economic cooperation, which has dramatically improved under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, since President Xi's first visit to Serbia in 2016. China was the number one investor in Serbia in 2023, and the three top Serbian exporters are Chinese companies. These tremendous results are not surprising for anyone who has visited China recently.

I had such a chance during an outstanding seminar organized by the Center for International Knowledge on Development in Beijing and Xi'an. The visit to Beijing E-Town's High-Level Autonomous Driving

Demonstration Zone, the world's first, makes it clear that attempts to curb China's technological advances are doomed to failure. The impressive results of the German company Mercedes-Benz in E-Town expose in practice the illusion of "de-risking" strategies, aimed at reducing economic interconnectedness with China, as proposed by President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. European countries need China, as testified by the visit to Beijing of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, or the frequent meetings between President Xi and French President Emmanuel Macron. Just as they need the China-Europe Express Railway, whose starting point we visited in Xi'an, and whose annual transportation through the Russian Federation into Germany and 24 other European countries has risen from 80 trains in 2013 to 17,000 in 2023. The security and convenience of this Belt and Road project became particularly apparent following maritime transportation disturbances through the Suez Canal following the outbreak of the latest conflict in Gaza.

Finally, the fourth cornerstone is the common vision of the global geopolitical transition toward multipolarity. This means a world order based on international law and the United Nations Charter, and not a

"rules-based" system based on the Western interpretation of international agreements and resolutions, which has had destructive consequences for Serbian national interests from the end of the Cold War up to today.

Based on these four cornerstones, under the auspices of President Xi and his host, President Aleksandar Vucic, China and Serbia are elevating their relations from a comprehensive strategic partnership by working together to build a China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era.

In the years and decades ahead, we will remember Xi's second visit to Belgrade as a milestone. We will talk about the "China-Serbia community" as a strategically insightful and fundamental vision of a return to international law and multilateralism, as opposed to the Cold War rhetoric of expansion of military alliances, as well as the launchpad for more people-to-people exchanges. The announcements of new direct flights to Shanghai and Guangzhou are a right step in that direction.

The author is a research fellow at the Center for the Belt and Road Studies of the Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Clean ship technology recognized in Top 10

By YAN DONGJIE
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Clean and low-carbon ship technology led by Gao Xiang from Zhejiang University that significantly reduced polluting emissions from ships has been recognized as one of the 10 top scientific and technological advancements in China's ecological environment last year.

On Wednesday, which was World Environment Day, the China Association for Science and Technology's Ecological Environment Production and Education Consortium announced the 10 top advancements in Beijing, covering research achievements in areas such as water, air, soil, solid waste and oceans.

The clean and low-carbon ship technology has been applied on nearly 500 vessels from internationally renowned shipping companies worldwide.

"The pollutants and carbon dioxide emissions from ships are important factors causing atmospheric environmental issues in coastal areas and port cities, attracting a lot of attention from international maritime organizations," said Gao, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

"Due to the special operating environment of ships, applying emission reduction systems to ships is challenging. It requires highly efficient pollution absorption, broad adaptability, compact equipment volume, and safe and reliable operation."

Gao's research team developed an efficient system for reducing ship pollution that featured technological breakthroughs in the efficient purification of ship exhaust gases and carbon emission reduction. They have lowered the emissions of ships far below the requirements of international maritime organizations.

The team's research achievement has received certifications from nine major global classification societies, including ones in China, the United States and the United Kingdom. Since last year, it has been promoted on 496 vessels.

"In the first several months of this year, our team's ship emission purification system has secured 40 percent of global orders in the shipbuilding industry, making it the largest supplier of its kind globally," Gao said.

Gao said he is proud that the technology has not only driven the development of clean and low-carbon ship technology around the world but has also provided crucial technological support for China to become a leading nation in shipbuilding and green shipping.

The top 10 advancements also include the establishment of China's water quality standards theory and technical system, global mechanisms for extreme wildfires, research on functional characteristics of plant communities and their regulation mechanisms on ecosystem productivity, and the development and application of the Yangtze River simulator.

Tu Ruihe, the representative of the United Nations Environment Programme in China, said the top 10 advancements cover various aspects of the ecological environment field, representing cutting-edge development trends in China's environmental science and technology, providing a scientific basis and technological support for the country's green, low-carbon and sustainable development.

"We look forward to scientists and the business community bringing more innovative scientific and technological achievements, contributing Chinese solutions to global ecological environmental protection and sustainable development, and contributing the wisdom and strength of technology to achieve the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda," he said.

Victims remembered



People offer flowers and pay respects in Chongqing on Wednesday at a ceremony to commemorate victims of Japanese bombing during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45). From February 1938 to December 1944, the city was subjected to indiscriminate aerial attacks by Japanese forces that killed more than 30,000 people. HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

HK government blasts critics of city's prospects

Data shows robust economic growth, financial market strength and resilience

By GANG WEN in Hong Kong
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The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government hit back on Wednesday at critics challenging the city's prospects, releasing a wealth of data and facts demonstrating its development and competitiveness.

Hong Kong's resilience, flexibility and long-standing strengths under the "one country, two systems" principle are ready to steer the city through an uncertain global landscape, the government said in a statement issued late on Wednesday.

US economist Stephen Roach, who worked in Hong Kong for decades, had earlier repeated his grim forecast for the development of Hong Kong and China during a trip to the city, following his sensational claim that "Hong Kong is over" in February.

The Hong Kong government said it values pragmatic and constructive views of the community. However, as deliberate rumors and distortion of Hong Kong's situation are raised from time to time by external forces, the government believes it should promptly clarify and refute any deliberate slander or unfounded criticism, it said.

"We are duty-bound to present Hong Kong's strengths, achievements and opportunities and tell the truth about Hong Kong," the statement said.

It first outlined the city's major economic indicators, including the 3.3 percent economic growth recorded last year — compared with the average of 1.5 percent in advanced economies according to the International Monetary Fund.

The city also logged 2.7 percent year-on-year growth in the first quarter of this year, and full-year growth is forecast at 2.5 to 3.5 percent, it said.

As for the financial market, Hong Kong stock market capitalization has exceeded HK\$33 trillion (\$4.23 trillion), 10 times the amount in 1997 when the city returned to the motherland.

The Stock Connect — a mechanism that allows investors in Hong Kong and the mainland to access eligible shares in the other's stock markets — has recorded a cumulative northbound capital flow of more than 1.8 trillion yuan and a southbound capital flow of HK\$3.1 trillion.

The city's status as a wealth management hub also continues to shine as the scale of asset management in the city exceeds HK\$30.5 trillion.

The Hong Kong government has also been proactively attracting foreign investment, businesses and talent, with encouraging results.

By the end of last year, over 9,000 mainland and overseas companies had set up offices in Hong Kong, including some from Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore.

As of April, the city had received around 290,000 applications under various talent admissions programs, and around 180,000 had been approved.

The statement also highlighted the huge potential of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, saying Hong Kong can create synergy with other Bay Area cities to guide and support the country's economic development.

"Various data and facts not only reflect the performance of Hong Kong's economic and financial development, but highlight Hong Kong's unique advantages and strategic position under the principle of 'one country, two systems', as well as its resilience and flexibility in the face of global instability," the statement said.

Investors have cast a vote of confidence in the steady development and bright prospects of Hong Kong's market, it added.

Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po also expressed his confidence in Hong Kong's bright prospects.

In a social media post, Chan said that since the city's return to the motherland, some people have kept talking down Hong Kong, but none had deterred the city from getting better and better.

"Tomorrow's Hong Kong will certainly be different from today, because tomorrow will surely be better," Chan added.

On Wednesday, Mark Mobius, a veteran emerging markets fund manager and the founder of Mobius Capital Partners, said in his blog — titled Hong Kong: Far from over — that the fundamental spirit of Hong Kong's business environment is still "very much alive".

Citing a recent visit to Hong Kong, Mobius said he saw the city is experiencing a shift in its talent pool caused by changes on the political front and in population dynamics, but he said the shift could be an opportunity for Hong Kong to evolve and thrive in new ways.

"I believe Hong Kong would stand to benefit significantly by embracing technology and AI to align with China's ambitious plans and to solidify its role as China's bridge to the world," Mobius said.

Briefly

Border crossings to surge during festival

The National Immigration Administration is projecting a 32.5 percent year-on-year surge in border entries and exits during this weekend's Dragon Boat Festival break, with a daily average of 1.75 million crossings, it said on Thursday. The Dragon Boat Festival, one of China's major traditional holidays, falls on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, which is Monday this year. Major aviation hubs are expected to see a steady increase in passenger traffic, and arrivals and departures at Shanghai Pudong Airport are projected to average 89,000 a day. In response, immigration authorities have implemented measures to streamline clearance procedures and maintain operational efficiency and safety, aiming to keep waiting periods in immigration lines for Chinese citizens below 30 minutes.

China harvests 57% of its winter wheat

China had harvested 57 percent of its winter wheat by Wednesday, two to three days earlier than it took to reach the halfway mark last year and bolstering the country's food security. A total of 12.6 million hectares of winter wheat has been harvested, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said on Thursday. The wheat harvest in Southwest China's Sichuan province and Central China's Hubei province, two agricultural powerhouses, has concluded, while the harvest in Jiangsu, Shandong, Shanxi and Hebei provinces will soon get into full swing. Various forms of support are being provided to facilitate the wheat harvest, including the deployment of more big and efficient crop harvesters across the country, the ministry said.

Former Yulin mayor pleads guilty to bribery

Li Jinzhu, a former senior legislator in Shaanxi province, pleaded guilty on Thursday to taking bribes of more than 432 million yuan (\$59.6 million). Prosecutors told the Guangzhou Intermediate People's Court in Guangdong province that from 2004 to 2023, Li took advantage of various work posts in Shaanxi, including mayor of Yulin, vice-governor of the province and deputy head of the Standing Committee of the Shaanxi People's Congress, the province's top legislature, to seek profits for individuals and departments in matters such as business operation, project contracting and job promotion, and accepted bribes worth over 432 million yuan in return. The court said it would hand down Li's sentence later.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

Yangtze River Delta ramps up integration with megaprojects

By WANG YING
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The Yangtze River Delta region is set for a significant leap in integration this year, with a series of ambitious projects aimed at boosting connectivity, innovation and public services.

The plans, unveiled Thursday at a high-level forum in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, include adding 660 kilometers of railway lines and installing over 70,000 new public charging piles for electric vehicles, bringing the total to 600,000.

The projects are among 10 key initiatives announced at the forum, marking the sixth year of the Yangtze River Delta's development as a national strategy.

"Our focus is on achieving high-quality integration through technological and industrial innovation, further opening-up and strong synergy mechanisms," said Chen Jining, Party secretary of Shanghai, emphasizing the region's aspirations to compete with the world's leading city clusters.

Xin Changxing, Party secretary of Jiangsu province, highlighted the accelerated construction of landmark projects aimed at fostering "new

quality productive forces" within the region.

Other initiatives include establishing over 200 virtual service points for remote access to government services across 41 major cities, developing 300 new elderly care facilities, and creating an all-in-one card for visiting cultural and tourist attractions.

The plans extend to health-care, rural development and visa-free travel for eligible foreigners transiting through the region for up to 144 hours.

"The Yangtze River Delta's GDP surpassed 30 trillion yuan (\$4.1 trillion) in 2023, accounting for roughly 24.2 percent of the nation's total," said Yi Lianhong, Party secretary of Zhejiang province.

Yi also noted the region's economic momentum, fueled by its high research and development spending, which constitutes a third of the national total.

The forum witnessed further collaboration efforts, including the launch of a promotion association for Belt and Road Initiative activities, the establishment of 12 innovative consortia, and the signing of 10 major agreements in areas like rail transport, logistics, talent exchanges, finance and the digitalization of shipping and trade.

Fishy farewell



Workers release a Chinese sturgeon into the Yangtze River in a park in Yibin, Sichuan province, on Thursday. More than 187,000 endangered fish were released in an effort to conserve their populations. ZHUANG GEER / FOR CHINA DAILY

Precipitation on Tibetan Plateau underestimated

By YAN DONGJIE
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Precipitation across the Tibetan Plateau, which is known as Asia's water tower, has been significantly underestimated, Chinese researchers said in a paper published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences late last month.

The researchers, from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, said the underestimation is caused by the underestimation of precipitation in the region, and called for a "redesigned precipitation observation strategy" to remedy it.

A substantial proportion of precipitation over the plateau falls as snow, often accompanied by strong winds.

The researchers said ground-based instrument monitoring is widely regarded as the primary and most reliable technique for acquiring precipitation data, but traditional ground-level precipitation gauges have a limited cross-section in the collection cylinder and a sealed bottom.

"This design results in the formation of upward supporting airflow under windy conditions, which in turn prevents raindrops or snowflakes from entering the gauge cylinder. Consequently, this leads to an underestimation of precipitation in this region," said Miao Chiyuan from Beijing Normal University, the first author of the study.

Miao said the instrument measurement error caused by strong

2 billion people

are supported by water from the Tibetan Plateau.

winds is the primary factor affecting the accuracy of precipitation measurements in high-altitude regions, with errors under extreme weather conditions potentially exceeding 100 percent.

Apart from the equipment, variations in altitude can cause mistakes in the data collected. Weather stations in the region are often placed in valleys or lower areas for convenience, which means they miss out on precipitation that occurs at higher elevations. Additionally, the limited number of stations and their uneven distribution can make the data even less accurate, according to the study.

The Tibetan Plateau, home to more than 100,000 square kilometers of glaciers and 1 million sq km of frozen soil, serves as the source of 10 major Asian river systems flowing into 10 countries, and supports the lives of about 2 billion people.

"In the context of accelerated warming, precipitation across the Tibetan Plateau plays a critical role in water cycles. Accordingly, obtaining reliable precipitation information... is a prerequisite for water cycle analysis, future climate projections, and water-related disaster risk assessments," said the institute's Li Xin, the corresponding author of the research.

WORLD

CHINA LINK

Editor's note: As the People's Republic of China celebrates the 75th anniversary of its founding this year, China Daily asked prominent international figures to reflect on their relationship with the country and to talk of the direction in which they see it going.



Following in Du Fu's footsteps

Poetry fuels British historian's fascination for Chinese culture

Michael Wood's passion for all things Chinese was first sparked by his discovery of ancient poetry when he was a teenager. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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Since the late 1970s, British historian, author and broadcaster Michael Wood has been traveling the world, sharing his passion for history and the stories of civilizations and kingdoms across the globe in a string of hugely successful series.

He has written more than 120 documentaries, which have been shown in 140 countries and territories, covering topics including Alexander the Great, the conquistadors, India and the life of William Shakespeare, but one of his most enduring fascinations, both professionally and personally, is with China.

In 2016, Wood presented a series called *The Story of China*, and just before the novel coronavirus pandemic, he made a film about the man who first inspired his love of the country, the 8th-century poet Du Fu.

The film, *Du Fu: China's Greatest Poet*, has now inspired a book, *In the Footsteps of Du Fu*, recounting Wood's travels while making it. He said it was a journey he was more than happy to retrace with viewers and readers, to enlighten them about his passion for Chinese culture.

"We know so little in general in our culture about China — it's not the only knowledge gap, but it's a particularly obvious one, and that's a real loss," he said. "The great sinologist Simon Leys wrote a fantastic passage that I often come back to, saying that China is the other pole of the human mind — until you know something about China, your knowledge of humanity is skewed — you won't be able to tell me what are our universal values and what are just Western idiosyncrasies."

For Wood, his portal to a lifelong love of things Chinese was a paperback book.

"In 1960s Manchester, China seemed distant and exotic, but my first serious encounter with Chinese culture was the New Penguin translation of *Poems of the Late Tang* by Arthur Graham. It was a brilliant book, I was captivated by it," he said.

Later, when he was doing his postgraduate studies at the University of Oxford, Wood shared a house with a sinologist who used to put books his way, which gave him a wider conversance with Chinese literature.

Once Wood talked to a house guest and asked him what he did. It turned out he was David Hawkes, who had been a professor of Chinese at Oxford but gave it up to translate what he called the novel of the millennium — *The Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin.

"He'd also produced a book called *A Little Primer of Du Fu*, which contained about 30 poems that you first saw in Chinese, then in transliteration, then literal translation, then a literary one, with an analysis of each, which was amazing.

"We all have encounters with books that open a window onto a world you never dreamed of, and that was one for me. I used to carry it around on foreign trips, and later I gave copies to other friends. It was a book I treasured."

Vital translation

Wood's passion for Chinese poetry does not stretch as far as being able to speak or read the language, but, now more than ever, he said, translators are essential.

"Of course, translation is an approximation of language — most of us receive foreign literature through translation, so it is vital and a central aspect

to dialogue between cultures," he said. "Translation is not only completely justifiable, but it's essential. If you look at the times we live in and the difficulties we have in the world, one of the biggest is the difficulty of understanding other cultures.

"There's a terrible danger with Chinese literature and culture that we think it's inaccessible to all but experts, because of the script and the language barrier. We need dialogue, which comes through translation, so I'm a firm believer in translations, in the same way a filmmaker should make popularizing films to help make one culture accessible to another."

In his Du Fu documentary, Wood said: "For the Chinese people, poets have been the ones who most truly express the feelings of the people."

China has the longest tradition of poetic writing in the world, with a timeline dating back before ancient Greek writers like Homer, and Wood said that it is this continuity and reverence that has helped keep the works of Du Fu, written 1,300 years ago, so relevant and so admired in the 21st century.

"All literate and educated Chinese people have a deep sense of the importance of that poetic tradition, and also a deep sense that historically, the poets are the truth speakers to power — they frame the great issues of the day for the ordinary people," he said. "Du Fu curated his own work carefully. Virtually nothing survives from when he was in his 30s, so you get the feeling that the works we have are what he would have wanted us to read."

"The majority of his work is from the period after the An Lushan Rebellion (755), which caused devastation when he was forced to take to the road with his family."

The eight-year turmoil during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) saw millions of people displaced or killed, and one of Du Fu's own children starved to death in an experience that Wood thinks left an imprint on his later works that these days would be called post-traumatic stress.

"He's not the only poet to live through catastrophes and write about them, but he's the first to become the voice of his time," he said. "He talks

about surviving natural disaster and war, and what it's like to be a refugee. He was writing about the sort of scenes we still see all around the world in the modern day because he'd lived them himself. He took the part of the ordinary people, that's a huge part of his story."

Honoring the memory

In the film, Wood visits the Thatched Cottage Museum on the outskirts of Chengdu, Sichuan province, where devotees honor the memory of Du Fu, and he speaks to many people to find out what it is about Du Fu's work that still has such an emotional pull.

"Lots of people go there, and talking to them you get a sense of how traditional Chinese people still value him hugely. They all say there are a great many qualities to his poetry, but his great strength is that

it's with the ordinary people that he really endures."

Wood's films have been screened in China, where he said audiences were intrigued and very receptive to see his outsider's view of their own culture and history.

"I'm trying to extend knowledge of China in a sympathetic way, so when we sat down to start planning *The Story of China*, I said to the team that the key thing was that there should be empathy — I wanted viewers all over the world to think that they would like to be there with us. That's the most important thing, everything else will just follow," he said.

"When it was shown in China, people were really happy that they were being shown so honestly because they're so used to China-bashing.

"I did a series of films for the 40th anniversary of the opening-up and managed to get some incredible interviews with people who had lived through it. In the first 24 hours on the Tencent website, just the promo for that series got 100 million hits. People really warmed to the fact that we were formally addressing what happened as a great event in world history."

The Du Fu film was a co-production with Chinese broadcaster CCTV, and Wood admitted it "must have been slightly weird to have a Westerner telling you the story of your greatest poet", but once again, the response was appreciative.

"We made comparisons that wouldn't have occurred to them, like with the World War I poets writing about the shattering of Western ideals and values in war, which was a new angle for the Chinese audience, and they really liked it," he said.

"Sometimes, with some of the comparisons, I had to check with people that I wasn't stretching them too far, but no, they understood that the films were made in a spirit of loving Chinese culture, and empathy for the Chinese people."

Future dreams

There was also one unexpected bonus reaction to the sight and sound of acclaimed English actor Ian McKellen reading Du Fu's poems.

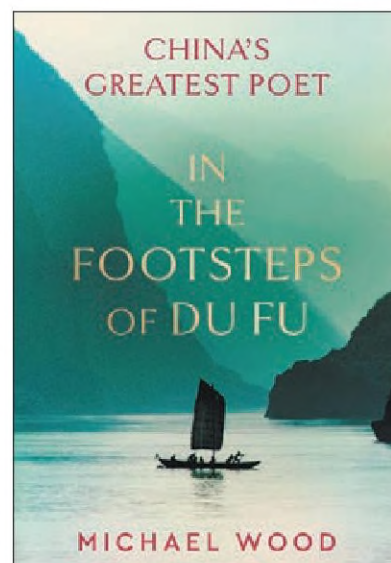
"We were slightly worried about whether it was appropriate having an English person reading a great Chinese poet, but not only did viewers think he was great, they also thought he looked just right for Du Fu," he said.

The book of Wood's pre-pandemic Du Fu journey has only been written in retrospect, and he said, had he planned it at the time, he would have kept a more detailed diary, rather than just travel notes, but he still has many China-related projects he would like to explore further.

"From a British point of view, I'd love to do something about Lord Macartney opening the first British embassy in China in 1793. It's such an incredible meeting of civilizations, with so much mutual misunderstanding out of which so many things that have shaped our modern world sprung, it would be fascinating," he said.

Wood added that the *Story of China* series only briefly touched on the 20th century, so he would also love to do something about the history of modern China.

"I've done literary festivals where I've spoken about Du Fu to rooms full of people who had never heard of him before, which is a great pleasure, and it's the same with filmmaking. It's a privilege to be invited in to do any kind of filming in any foreign culture, but there's always a special intrigue to filming about China."



Top: Michael Wood's book *In the Footsteps of Du Fu*. Above: In the film, Wood travels to Du Fu's Thatched Cottage and meets other enthusiasts.

WORLD

Diplomat calls for revival of nuke deal

VIENNA — A Chinese envoy said on Wednesday that confrontation will not solve the Iran nuclear issue, and the only correct solution is to revive the Iranian nuclear deal.

Li Song, China's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency, made the remarks after the agency's 35-nation board of governors passed a resolution earlier that day to pressure Iran on its nuclear issue.

The resolution was proposed by France, Britain and Germany. Among the 35 countries on the board, China and Russia voted against the resolution, while 12 other developing countries, including South Africa, India, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Türkiye, abstained.

"Facts have proved time and again that creating confrontation and exerting pressure will not solve the (Iran nuclear) issue, but will undermine the cooperation between the IAEA and Iran and further complicate the issue," Li said.

Li noted that IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi had a successful visit to Iran in early May and has maintained constructive exchanges with the Iranian side, and both sides have been committed to pushing forward the IAEA's safeguards work in Iran.

He also pointed out that Iran has just observed national mourning following the death of President Ebrahim Raisi and is set to hold a presidential election later this month. "In this special context, certain countries' move to provoke confrontation for political purposes is unconstructive for the political settlement of the Iran nuclear issue," Li said.

'Hasty and unwise'

Iran's mission to the United Nations said the decision to pass a resolution against Iran by the IAEA board of governors was "hasty and unwise," Iranian state TV reported on Wednesday.

"The decision of the Western countries was hasty and unwise, and it will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the process of diplomatic engagement and constructive cooperation (between Iran and the opposing parties)," Iran's mission to the UN was quoted by state TV as saying.

The Chinese envoy stressed the importance of returning to the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

The United States, as the JCPOA saboteur, should fully demonstrate its sincerity and work with all parties to restore the complete and effective implementation of the JCPOA, Li said.

China urges all parties to view the current situation in a calm and responsible manner, and take concrete action to support the strengthening of cooperation between the IAEA and Iran.

Iran signed the JCPOA with world powers in July 2015, agreeing to restrictions on its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. However, the US withdrew from the agreement in May 2018, reinstating sanctions and prompting Iran to scale back on some of its nuclear commitments.

XINHUA—AGENCIES



Solar panels power a rest station and provide power for electric vehicles along a highway on the outskirts of Jinan in East China's Shandong province on March 21. NG HAN GUAN / AP

Case made to welcome Chinese solar products

By HENG WEILI in New York
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Instead of doubling tariffs on Chinese solar products, the United States should embrace their affordability, according to one expert.

David Fickling, a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion who covers climate change and clean energy, wrote on Wednesday: "We are still not building enough solar and wind farms, nor enough factories for the components they'll use, to make the switch work. Yet President Joe Biden's justification for doubling tariffs on imported solar to 50 percent is that, to the contrary, the world has too many production lines for green tech."

In the article, Fickling noted that Chinese industrial policy caused the price of solar panels to fall from about 90 cents per watt in early 2012 to just over 10 cents per watt now.

"We should welcome that. Reducing the cost of green power is the single best thing the world can do if we're to escape catastrophic warming in our lifetimes," Fickling wrote. Biden contended last month that the low cost of China's solar panels are a result of "policy-driven overcapacity" in manufacturing, "flooding global markets with artificially cheap solar modules and panels."

The White House announced on May 14 that tariffs on solar cells and modules will increase from 25 percent to 50 percent in 2024.

Fickling said that Chinese clean technology isn't "artificially cheap"; it's just cheap.

In an appearance on *Bloomberg: The China Show* on Thursday, Fickling said that "we're (the US is) still well below the capacity we need."

"The amount of renewables waiting to get connected to the US grid is greater than the amount of generating capacity on the US grid as a whole at the moment. So there are these huge bottlenecks." He said "a lot" of it has to do with permitting and grid access, and some of it has to do with finance.

But Fickling said, "You can't ignore the tariffs issue. It's clearly something that's not going to change. It's an election year issue. It's not going to change imminently."

He said that the United States has installed about one-tenth of the renewable power that China has installed.

Fickling said that "it needs to really increase that rapidly" to achieve 2035 net zero emissions. Biden said he put the tariffs in place to protect the American solar industry and companies.

But Fickling said that all production lines are going to be needed if the US is to meet the target of decarbonizing its electricity grid by 2035.

He cited September's Group of 20 meeting, which called for a tripling of renewable power globally by 2030.

Fickling argued that by the end of this decade, the power grid will require about twice as many gigawatts of generators connected to it "as the current one we've spent more than a century building, and all of the net increase has to come from clean power."

A two-year US moratorium on tariffs on solar products from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam expired on Thursday.

A report released Thursday by the International Energy Agency (IEA) found that China installed almost 350 gigawatts (GW) of new renewable

capacity in 2023, more than half the global total, and if it maintains that pace, it will likely exceed its 2030 target this year.

Global investment in clean energy technology and infrastructure is set to hit \$2 trillion this year, the IEA's World Energy Investment report said. Total energy investment is expected to exceed \$3 trillion for the first time in 2024.

"For every dollar going to fossil fuels today, almost two dollars are invested in clean energy," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol.

China is set to account for the largest share of clean energy investment in 2024, with an estimated \$675 billion, while Europe will account for \$370 billion and the United States \$315 billion.

"The United States is now playing catch-up on a technology that has really matured in China, and it's going to be very difficult to recreate those supply chains in a short period of time at a low cost," Ilaria Mazzocco, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told Yahoo Finance. "It's entirely feasible, but it's going to be a long time horizon, and it's going to be far more costly."

The IEA report also cautioned that in 2024, the share of global clean energy investment in emerging markets and developing economies outside China is expected to remain around 15 percent of the total.

"Both in terms of volume and share, this is far below the amounts that are required to ensure full access to modern energy and to meet rising energy demand in a sustainable way, the report said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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Pakistani PM praises Beijing's development

By ZHAO JIA
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Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Thursday that Pakistan will learn from China's development experience and will write its own stories of success, while addressing a China-Pakistan Friendship and Business Reception in Beijing.

He is on a five-day official visit to China and Beijing is the second leg of the trip that had taken him to Shenzhen in Guangdong province. He will thereafter visit Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province.

"Ever since I have landed in this great country, I have been further emboldened by your success stories," he said.

Recalling the first time he came to China in 1981 as a member of an official delegation, the prime minister said it was from that time he had believed that China was experiencing success, not failure.

He mentioned an ancient Chinese fable, "the foolish old man who removed the mountains", saying it was "the greatest story of

struggle, hard work, untiring efforts, and blood and sweat", which has made China today a great country on the planet.

He called on the Pakistani people to accept challenges and learn from China. "If we follow the Chinese model, I have no doubt that Pakistan will regain its position and be respected like Chinese brothers and sisters," he said.

He lauded President Xi Jinping as one of the greatest visionary leaders around the globe, saying Xi has shown the entire world that common development is possible through cooperation and hard work.

Leading a delegation of around 80 local enterprises, Sharif is scheduled to meet with Chinese leaders on Friday and the two sides will have in-depth exchanges of views on bilateral relations and issues of common concern, and make plans for the future development of China-Pakistan relations.

This is the leader's first visit to China since the establishment of the new Pakistani government in March.

US updates ethnic data on Asian Americans

By BELINDA ROBINSON
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The US federal government has begun collecting more detailed race and ethnicity information to further understand the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population.

The directive from the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) — which oversees data collection across all federal agencies — was issued due to "large societal, political, economic and demographic shifts in the US".

The update will change the way that ethnicity data is recorded beyond just the six largest Asian population groups in the US: Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese.

It will have a major impact on services available, say advocates.

The update comes as the AAPI community ranks as the fastest-growing racial group in the US, with more than 20 different Asian ethnic groups. The community is expected to number over 40 million people by 2060, the US Department of Commerce said.

Karthick Ramakrishnan, founder and executive director of AAPI Data, a leading national research and policy organization, said in a statement: "We applaud the federal government for releasing these long-needed revisions for standards that more adequately recognize and honor the diversity, strength and needs of our communities."

The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), based in Washington, is a coalition of 41 organizations nationwide.

The NCAPA described the government's move as one that will "meaningfully help the communities we serve and enable improvements in policies, programs, and investments by government agencies, community-based organizations, and private industry partners alike".

All government agencies will have to update their forms to ensure that a person's ethnicity is more accurately reflected when applying for some thing such as a Social Security card.

The Asian category will be expanded to include Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Hmong, Pakistani and Afghan.

There will also be more choices under the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander such as Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, Tongan, Samoan, Chamorro, Fijian, Marshallese, Tahitian, Chuukese and Palauan.

Government agencies will be required to show how they plan to update their forms in 18 months' time. They will then have five years to complete the procedure.

An agency will be exempt from updating only if it can show that collecting the data will infringe on privacy or be too difficult to complete.

Quyen Dinh, executive director of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), said in a statement: "The revision marks progress

for more visibility of the Southeast Asian community, including identifying Vietnamese as one of the detailed communities for data collection, and adding Hmong as an example of another group within the Asian racial category."



Though Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities have been in the US for at least a century, we've only been recognized as a distinct racial group for the past 25 years."

Estella Owomaha-Church, executive director of Empowering Pacific Islander Communities

It has been nearly 50 years since the government first developed standards on how federal agencies should report a person's race and ethnicity. A second update occurred in 1997. The latest directive was issued in March this year.

In the 1990s, the second update identified the categories "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander" as two separate race categories. The option to tick two boxes to better reflect a person's heritage also became available.

Estella Owomaha-Church, executive director of Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC), said in a statement: "Though Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities have been in the US for at least a century, we've only been recognized as a distinct racial group for the past 25 years."

"It continues to be imperative that self-determination is prioritized by providing racial categories beyond the six most populous groups in addition to a single combined race and ethnicity question, allowing for multiple responses."

The Asian American Foundation (IAFF), a nonprofit founded in 2021, has produced several reports aimed at delving into the AAPI experience on hate crimes, access to higher education, teaching history and several other topics.

Eugena Oh, TAAF New York regional director, told China Daily: "Data gaps limit both the resources that AAPIs receive and our understanding of the effectiveness of strategies deployed to meet the needs of the community."

She said she hopes that some of the grassroots efforts will result in "increased commitment" to including the AAPI community in other studies and information gathering benefiting the community.

Agencies contributed to this story.

China, India universities rise up in QS rankings

By EARLE GALE in London
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Western universities have continued to lose their grip on the QS World University Rankings, as institutions from China and India have improved quickly.

China had several universities in the top 100 of this year's rankings, which look at the achievements of the world's best 1,500 institutions in terms of academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty-student ratios, sustainability, employment outcomes and international research networks.

Peking University was China's best, in 14th place, up from last year's 17th. The University of Hong Kong rose to 17th from 26th last year, and Tsinghua University rose to 20th from last year's 25th.

India also had a very good year, with 91 percent of its 46 ranked universities either improving or remaining stable. In contrast, two-thirds of universities in the United States slipped down the QS rankings this year.

Ben Sowter, a senior vice-president at QS, said changes in the world order seem to be on the way. "If one were to tell a story of the last

two decades of global higher education, it would be of the US managing to remain preeminent ... amid intensifying ambition from Asia's great powers," he said. "This year offers the starkest signal yet that there is no guarantee whatsoever that the US' privileged position can withstand this ambition indefinitely."

Despite the pressure from Asian institutions, many long-established Western universities also had a good year.

Imperial College London overtook fellow British elite institutions the University of Oxford and the

University of Cambridge, rising to second place from last year's eighth.

Imperial, which specializes in business, engineering, medicine and science, improved largely because of its environmental work and now sits behind the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which has been in first place for 13 consecutive years.

The fact that Imperial is now rated higher than both Oxford and Cambridge will have been disappointing for them, given that they were rated first and second among UK universities throughout the rankings' 20-year existence.

Cambridge sits in fifth place, overall, after having been second last year and Oxford is in third. The US' Harvard University is the fourth.

GLOBAL LENS

GREEN LINKS

Equatorial Guinean park built with Chinese expertise highlights close ties

Equatorial Guinea's cooperation with China has been fruitful, with an upward momentum that can help the African country improve in all aspects and bring about more changes, an Equatorial Guinean official has said.

"Many of our infrastructure projects are undertaken by Chinese companies, and we are very reassured," said Alejandro Micha Nsue, director of the National Office of Project Planning and Monitoring of Equatorial Guinea.

China and Equatorial Guinea established diplomatic ties in 1970. Chinese enterprises have since constructed many infrastructure projects, serving as the foundation for the African country's development and progress.

Malabo National Park, constructed by China Road and Bridge Corporation and officially put into operation in 2016, is now one of the largest city parks in Central Africa. The construction of the park has brought numerous job opportunities for local people and enriched the cultural life of Equatorial Guinea.

In Nsue's view, the cooperation between China and Equatorial Guinea is sincere.

"The countries that colonized Africa exploited and plundered it, taking away all its resources and leaving the countries in ruins," he

said, adding that in contrast, "China's cooperation is different."

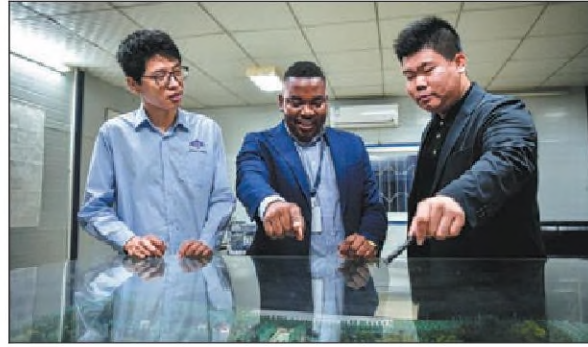
"With China's help, our national construction is displaying Equatorial Guinean features, which means closely linking national development with people's well-being," Nsue said.

China and Equatorial Guinea are good friends and partners, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on May 29 during his talks with Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, president of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in Beijing. The two countries decided to upgrade their bilateral relationship to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, as announced during the talks.

China has launched the Initiative on Supporting Africa's Industrialization, the Plan for China Supporting Africa's Agricultural Modernization and the Plan for China-Africa Cooperation on Talent Development, which are effective ways for African countries to address development challenges and can genuinely help African countries develop, Obiang said.

"I appreciate President Xi Jinping's initiative to help African countries," Obiang said.

"I believe it is the most effective way for Africa to overcome all the difficulties it faces today."



Clockwise from top left: A local worker communicates with Chinese counterparts from China Road and Bridge Corporation in an office at Malabo National Park in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on May 18. Visitors ride a tandem bike at the park on May 18. A view of Malabo National Park on May 19. The Chinese company built the park, which is one of the largest city parks in Central Africa. PHOTOS BY HAN XU / XINHUA

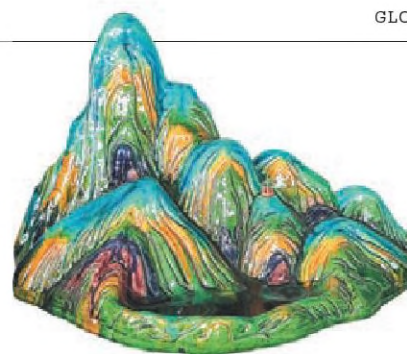
XINHUA



Clockwise from top: Visitors take a stroll at Malabo National Park on May 19. Visitors ride a carousel at the park on May 19. Visitors tour the park on a bus on May 19.



Left: A glazeware elephant statue made at the studio of the Su family. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Right: A glazeware artifact depicting a stylized landscape.



Glazeware artist firing new life into craft

Local inheritor in Shanxi brings modern innovations to ancient production techniques

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The deft hands of a master craftsman can breathe life into a piece of clay and firing it in high-temperatures can make that life eternal — that's what a master of glazeware in Shanxi province believes about this ancient art with a history of more than 1,000 years.

In Mazhuang Shantou village in Yingze district, Taiyuan, Su Yongjun busies himself every day designing and making glazeware items, and teaching apprentices in his studio called the "Shantou Kiln Site".

Su is the eighth-generation inheritor of Su's Glazeware, a local school of glazeware made with techniques passed down from the ancestors of the Su family for hundreds of years.

Although he is the recognized eighth generation in this family-run business, Su said the family tradition in making glazeware dates back about half a millennium. And he pointed out that the glazeware industry in Shanxi has an even longer history, with records pointing to the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-543).

Glazeware, or glazed pottery featuring a shiny, colorful surface, is called *luli* in Chinese. It is widely used in the construction industry as glazed tiles, rooftop decorations and screen walls in the residences of the royal family, the noble and rich, according to Su.

"The industry in Shanxi began in the Northern Wei Dynasty," Su said. "It reached its peak of development in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and this was when the Su family started to engage in the trade."

He explained that when his family members were building new kilns on an old site, they found a pottery mold with inscriptions of



Su Yongjun (center) holds a training session on glazeware making at his studio.

the family name "Su" and the year it was made. "That relic shows that our family business can date back to more than 500 years ago."

Su said there were four families in Shanxi known for their glazeware production business, and Su was one of them.

"According to historical records, the Zhao family — one of the top four — moved to Beijing in the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)," Su said. "The family's busi-

ness grew rapidly in the city and became a major supplier of glazed tiles to the Forbidden City and royal gardens."

As the demand for glazed tiles and other glazeware items from the royal family had far surpassed the supply, some Zhao family members requested that the Su family join in their business.

Since then, the Su family began to deliver their locally made glazed tiles to Beijing and they later built

kilns in Beijing and fired the tiles there. "That was the heyday of our family business," Su said. "And the business is still kept to this date."

In his Shantou Kiln Site studio, Su explained the secret behind the sustained business.

He picked up a piece of black clay, saying: "The selection of raw materials is crucial for glazeware production."

"This is a kind of clay with a low content of aluminum. It features

strong malleability and can help to keep a stable shape for the fired item in high temperatures."

He added that one unique technique in glazing is the use of wheat flour and vinegar, which can help to sustain the glaze colors.

"We also have unique formulas in making colored glaze," Su said. "For instance, we developed the 'Royal Yellow' glaze for the royal family and this was something other suppliers could not duplicate."

He added that the three glaze colors known as "peacock blue", "peacock green" and "peacock purple" were the most popular in the market a century ago. "But unfortunately the formulas for the three colors were lost for some unknown reasons," Su said.

He said since his grandfather, his family members have made great efforts to rescue the lost formulas and the endeavors paid off in recent years.

"By referring to our family's documents and collaborating with other glazeware masters outside our family, we successfully retrieved the formula for peacock blue," Su said, adding that they are now capable of producing dozens of glazeware varieties featuring peacock blue.

The glazeware production technique of the Su family was recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage item in 2008.

In addition to inheritance, Su said innovation is also crucial for passing down and developing this centuries-old art.

One innovative move is that Su and his colleagues are using electricity and natural gas to fire glazeware items. "Compared with the traditional firing technique using coal or timber, we found electric or gas firing can lead to greater stability and efficiency," he said.

Apart from glazed tiles and other construction components, Su has also extended the industry to new fields like artifacts, tea sets and stationery.

Su is also promoting the craft to the wider society. He and his family members are now operating a workshop for people from across Shanxi and the country to learn more about this form of art.

Xue Lin contributed to this story.

Artworks offer glimpse into the past

By YUAN SHENGGAO

An exhibition of Song (960-1279) and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties wall paintings and brick carvings was launched recently at the Shanxi Museum in Taiyuan, the North China province's capital city, giving visitors a glimpse into the past.

Organized by the Shanxi Museum and the Shanxi Archaeological Academy, the exhibition opened on May 1 and will continue to Oct 31. It features 89 wall paintings and brick-carving works unearthed in Shanxi.

The artworks were mostly excavated from ancient tombs some 800 years ago. Similar to those discovered in other regions in the country, ancient tomb wall paintings and brick-carving works were usually portraits of local family life. They express such themes as filial piety and family members' best wishes to their deceased loved ones.

One exhibition with such themes is a group of artworks from a Jin Dynasty tomb found in 2013 in the village of Haojiang in Jincheng city.

The tomb featured wall paintings and brick carvings in two caves that resemble the front and back courtyards of the "residence" of the deceased. The most symbolic part of the artworks is a brick-carved portrait of a woman opening the gate.

A gate-opening woman is a common theme in ancient tomb artworks. It could be interpreted as the family members' wish to welcome back their loved one as they believed a resurrection of the dead is possible. Another interpretation is that there is a door to the other world and the family graveyard is the final destination for all.

According to the epitaph, the tomb was built in 1175. Researchers said the wall paintings and brick carvings have offered reliable material evidence for studying the life, society, culture and religions of the Jin Dynasty.

Most of the Song and Jin dynasties tomb wall paintings and brick carvings are in the permanent collections of the Shanxi Museum.

During the six-month exhibition, a series of activities relating to the history and culture of the Song and Jin dynasties are planned to be held at the museum. These include lectures, symposiums, tea ceremonies and ancient garment shows.

the use of Lu silk as garments and decorations. Lu silk is a variety of product unique to Gaoping — which was called Lu'an in ancient times. With a history of more than 1,000 years, the handmade Lu silk products feature exquisite techniques, complicated patterns and rich colors. The silk-making techniques made the list of national intangible cultural heritage items in November 2014.

Unique goods promoted
Shanxi's characteristic products were exhibited in Beijing on May 31 at a promotional event organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Shanxi event is the first of a series of activities organized by the ministry this year to promote Chinese provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions to the international business community. The exhibits from Shanxi included local farm pro-

duce and ingredients like millet, daylily flower, beef and walnuts, as well as mature vinegar from Qingxu county, Fenjiu-branded white liquor from Fenyang city and yellow wine from Daixian county. Products in the category of intangible cultural heritage, like Lu silk from Gaoping city, paper-cuts from Zhongyang county and hand-polished lacquerware from Pingyao county, were also showcased at the event.

Replica exhibits praised
During the 20th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair held in Shenzhen in South China's Guangdong province, from May 23-27, cultural and creative products from Shanxi province garnered recognition and praise from visitors. Among the exhibits, the most eye-catching was a 3-meter-high, wood-carved replica of the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda, a famed structure built nearly 1,000 years ago in Yingxi-

an county. The replica was handmade using the ancient dovetail structuring technique, giving visitors a better understanding of how the oldest such wooden structure in the world was built during the Liao Dynasty (916-1125). Other exhibits, like mini replicas of screen walls in the Zhangbi ancient castle in Jinzhong city and stone lion statues from the renowned Buddhist mountain of Wutai, also attracted the attention of visitors.

Final touches to celebrations



To celebrate the Cultural and Natural Heritage Day, which falls on Saturday, and Dragon Boat Festival on Monday, Shanxi will hold a variety of folk culture shows to entertain residents. Above: Workers at a clothing factory in Wenxi county make cloth handicrafts for Dragon Boat Festival celebration. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Left: In Taigu district, Jinzhong city, an artist applies makeup ahead of a show of Taigu Yangge, a local heritage item featuring dance performances. SUN TAIYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



A gate-opening woman is a common theme in ancient tomb artworks. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Li Yao contributed to this story

Briefly

High-class debut

The 2024 Le Bal des Debutantes, a glittering event for socialites worldwide to be held in November in Paris, France, will feature Lu silk from Gaoping city in southeastern Shanxi province. Representatives from Gaoping signed an agreement with the event's organizers on May 30 for

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Economists expect realty bounce soon

Major cities recently cut mortgage rate minimums, down payment conditions

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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China is on the right track to deal with its property woes with a new round of policy easing measures recently issued, thus painting a rosy picture for gradual stabilization of a sector key to reviving the world's second-largest economy, said economists of two prominent foreign institutions.

They said China has made incremental progress in containing the potential risks in the housing sector, expecting to see more forceful policy efforts to rebalance the economy and digest housing inventories in the coming months.

Their comments came as policymakers have pivoted toward more aggressive rescue measures, including more direct government balance sheet support for resolving a housing "stock" supply problem, and a step-up in nationwide demand-side easing.

Last week, first-tier cities — including Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Shang-

hai — lowered mortgage rate minimums and down payment ratio requirements to boost homebuying enthusiasm.

"One of the major positives of the package is a clear focus on supporting inventory digestion rather than just completing ongoing projects," said Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley. "The demand boost also came as a surprise, with a nationwide cut in the down payment ratios to their lowest-ever rates."

On May 17, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, announced the establishment of a 300 billion yuan (\$41 billion) re-lending facility, providing funding for State-owned enterprises to buy completed commercial properties for repurposed affordable housing.

Xing said the successful implementation of ongoing policies will likely help gradually rein in the ongoing decline in the housing market.

"The announced policies, combined with potential further home purchase relaxations, should facilitate faster market clearing, support



Potential homebuyers look at a property model in Shanghai. YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

liquidity among developers, restore homebuying confidence and (with a lag) improve housing investment."

Xing further said he still expects the housing market to contract in 2024 amid continued price headwinds, followed by a milder decline in 2025.

For the January-April period, China's property investment fell 9.8 percent year-on-year while sales area of new properties slumped 20.2 percent, compared with 9.5 percent and 19.4 percent falls in the first three months, respectively, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

Xing highlighted the importance

of introducing more aggressive fiscal stimulus measures to rebalance the economy toward consumption and resolve elevated housing inventories, saying, "this could be through a decisive rise in social welfare spending to unwind the elevated precautionary savings, as well as a massive housing purchase plan to convert developers' unsold units into social housing, with faster implementation."

"We believe these measures, if implemented, would effectively increase disposable incomes of low-income families for consumption, and help improve homebuying sentiment.

"We believe Beijing is heading in the right direction with regard to ending the housing woes," said Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura. "We think markets need to exercise more patience when awaiting more measures."

Lu said the country has already pivoted from building public housing to ensuring the delivery of numerous presold homes to rebuild buyer confidence, marking a significant step toward stabilizing the property sector.

Looking ahead, Lu said the real focus is finishing sold and unfinished homes.

Align rules with global standards, GBA urged

By WANG KEJU
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The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area must take steps to align with high-standard international economic and trade rules, national political advisers said.

The economic zone should also aim to foster a unified, efficient and competitive market climate as well as fair, equitable and healthy legal safeguards for win-win cooperation, they said in remarks made at the seventh meeting of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body.

As countries navigate a complex and rapidly evolving global landscape, regional economic cooperation has gained in prominence, with a growing emphasis on establishing robust and consistent rules, they added.

The GBA should benchmark itself against the European Union in areas such as legal services, facilitation of Customs procedures, cross-border logistics, data flow and cross-border payments, said Jonathan Choi Koonshum, a member of the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee.

Doing so will enable the GBA to learn from the EU's advanced practices and incorporate them into its own policy framework, thus creating a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized, said Choi, who is also chairman of the Hong Kong-based China General Chamber of Commerce.

The unique strengths of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in institutions, markets, capital, law and talent should be particularly leveraged in the process of embracing international standards, Choi said.

With its international connections, strategic location, advanced infrastructure and robust financial sector, Hong Kong plays an irreplaceable role in facilitating the flow of goods, capital and talent between China and the rest of the world, Choi added.

Meanwhile, the integrated development of the Macao Special Administrative Region with Hengqin New Area situated in Zhuhai city of Guangdong province should be accelerated, with a special focus on boosting the growth of the digital economy, said Li Changjin, a member of the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee.

Efforts on this front will help promote economic diversification and create a more resilient and balanced economy in Macao, said Li, who is also former vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce.

Leveraging its institutional and geographical advantages, Macao has positioned itself as an ideal hub for developing digital trade and facilitating the secure and efficient movement of data between it and the mainland, Li said.

To enhance data exchange efficiency and create favorable infrastructure conditions for the development of the digital industry, the construction of a new channel for the secure and reliable transfer of data between the mainland and Macao and Hong Kong should be expedited, Li added.

Over the years, the GBA has rapidly advanced in both physical and digital connectivity, leading to significant improvements in cross-border financial services, information integration, industrial and supply chains, and legal and taxation frameworks, Choi said.

These developments are not only benefiting businesses within the GBA but also generating positive spillover effects. The GBA serves as a model for high-standard opening-up and inspires other regions on the mainland to adopt similar strategies to improve their business environment and attract foreign investment, Choi added.

The total economic output of the GBA exceeded 14 trillion yuan (\$1.93 trillion) in 2023, achieving one-ninth of China's total despite having less than 0.6 percent of the national territorial area, local authorities have said.

Official: EU antisubsidy probe type of protectionism

By ZHONG NAN
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Restricting open competition in new energy products and technologies will lead to a regression in the European Union's green transition and dampen the confidence of Chinese companies in investing in the EU, said a senior Chinese commerce official in Poland.

During his meeting with a number of Polish government officials in Warsaw on Wednesday, Chinese Vice-Commerce Minister Ling Ji said the EU has recently not only initiated antisubsidy investigations against Chinese electric vehicles, but also launched probes into Chinese companies in the photovoltaics, wind power and rail equipment sectors, citing international procurement practices and foreign subsidy regulations.

Ling said that while these moves are purported to maintain fair competition, they essentially serve as protectionism, according to a statement released by the Ministry of Commerce on Thursday.

"Maintaining fair competition must be based on rules, yet the EU's investigations are completely inconsistent with multilateral rules. If the EU continues to make mistakes, China will firmly protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies through concrete actions," said Ling, who is also deputy China international trade representative.

Speaking at a weekly news conference in Beijing on Thursday, He Yadong, spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce, said China has repeatedly expressed its concerns and strong dissatisfaction, hoping that the EU will abandon protectionism and

resolve differences through dialogue and cooperation.

He said that China is willing to properly handle economic and trade frictions through dialogue and consultation with the EU, taking into account the legitimate concerns of both sides.

Noting that China and the EU are important economic and trade partners with a solid foundation for cooperation, He said that the decision by some Chinese automakers to build factories in Europe is a convincing illustration of mutual advantages and win-win cooperation between China and the EU.

This not only boosts the local economy and employment, but also promotes the development of the EU's new energy automotive industry, he added.

Echoing this sentiment, Chen Wenling, chief economist at the

Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said that Chinese companies have made significant contributions to the economic advancement of numerous European countries. However, the EU's protectionist measures toward Chinese companies and products will backfire on the EU's green transformation goals.

There is considerable potential for enhanced bilateral cooperation in sectors like trade in services, high-end manufacturing, green energy, healthcare and agricultural products, given their substantial complementarity, said Chen.

China-EU trade amounted to 1.75 trillion yuan (\$242 billion) between January and April, dropping 1.8 percent year-on-year and accounting for 12.7 percent of China's total foreign trade value during the peri-

od, said the General Administration of Customs.

Highlighting that stable and healthy China-EU businesses ties benefit companies from both sides, Lorenzo Riccardi, chairman of China-Italy Chamber of Commerce, said that China's economic growth rate has significantly outstripped that of Europe and even far surpasses the global GDP average.

"For instance, Suzhou, a city located in East China's Jiangsu province, has become a focal point for overseas investments from Italy's manufacturing sector," said Riccardi, adding that numerous Italian firms have joined forces to form substantial supply chain clusters in the city and the Yangtze River Delta region.

Attracted by China's improved business environment and well-developed industrial and supply chains, many Italian companies come to the country hoping to learn about the preferential policies available for European businesses, he added.

Briefly

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281 million) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's Bank of China said. A reverse repo is a process in which the PBOC purchases securities from commercial lenders through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

Renminbi weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese renminbi, also known as the yuan, weakened 11 pips to 7.1108 against the US dollar on Thursday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Experts see big role for biomass in energy

By LIU YUKUN
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Biomass is emerging as a rapidly developing clean energy with vast potential, experts said, and called for further efforts to diversify its application scenarios and utilization pathways.

Their remarks came after the State Council recently announced an action plan for energy conservation and carbon reduction for 2024-25. It relaxed requirements on new energy utilization in resource-rich areas from 95 percent to 90 percent.

This, China Galaxy Securities' estimates suggest, could potentially unlock 74 gigawatts of new energy capacity and benefit industries like wind, solar and biomass energy.

Biomass refers to material derived from living organisms that are utilized for bioenergy production. Examples include wood and wood residues, energy crops, agricultural by-products such as straw and organic waste from both industry and households.

"Biomass energy not only has a wide range of raw material sources but also comes in various forms, such as solid formed fuel, liquid

fuel and gas fuel. These characteristics make biomass energy a stable, continuous and easily operable new energy source," said Du Xiangwan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

Latest data from the Biomass Energy Industry Promotion Association showed that biomass power generation has grown rapidly in recent years. By the end of 2023, China's grid-connected biomass power reached 44.14 million kilowatts in installed capacity, a four-fold increase since 2013.

Non-electric biomass applications are also expanding, with significant developments in biogas, biomass heating and bio-liquid fuel industries, according to the association.

On Wednesday, China's domestically developed C919 aircraft successfully completed a test flight powered by bio-jet fuel developed by Sinopec. On the same day, the ARJ21 aircraft also completed a successful bio-jet fuel test flight in Shanghai. This marks the first time Chinese commercial aircraft have been powered by bio-jet fuel, processed from spent cooking oil.

Biomass energy is also gaining traction in the heating sector. With costs comparable to coal, biomass



A biomass transformation model on display during an expo in Zhengzhou, Henan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

heating is affordable for residents. By the end of 2023, biomass clean heating covered regions measured over 300 million cubic meters in China.

"China's annual biomass resource production is approximately 3.494 billion metric tons, with a potential energy utilization equivalent to 460 million tons of standard coal, indicating substantial development potential," Zhang Dayong, secretary-general of the association, said.

Zhang called for further measures to broaden the pathways to realize the environmental value of biomass energy. This includes establishing a green certification

mechanism for biomass energy products and encouraging the production of biogas, biodiesel and green thermal energy.

"The non-electric utilization of biomass energy will be a key development focus in the future, particularly in sectors that are challenging to achieve decarbonization through conventional methods," he said.

For instance, in the industrial sector, biogas can be used for high-temperature heating and raw material processing in steel and cement production. In the transportation sector, airlines can use bio-jet fuel to reduce carbon emissions.

BUSINESSFOCUS

Trilateral summit refocuses on cooperation

It heralds China, Japan, S.Korea's willingness to navigate through rough waters in regional landscape

SEOUL — Leaders of China, Japan and South Korea met in Seoul in late May for a trilateral summit, more than four years after it was last held in 2019.

The resumed gathering through the established framework among the three neighbors is significant, as it heralds the trio's willingness to redirect focus on dialogue and cooperation and navigate through rough waters in the regional landscape and beyond.

People of the three countries hope that the meeting will boost trilateral cooperation, deliver win-win results and help to promote regional prosperity and stability.

More necessary than ever

Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol attended the trilateral summit meeting, the trilateral business summit and other events.

It is generally believed that cooperation and solidarity among countries are desperately needed to address major challenges facing this region and the world, including protectionist trends, armed conflicts, supply chain restructuring and climate change.

In an ever-evolving global and regional landscape featuring economic uncertainty and geopolitical volatility, the three-way cooperative network in Northeast Asia, which was stalled due to geopolitical interference and the COVID-19 pandemic, is more necessary than ever.

Trilateral relations have been facing fluctuations for quite some time, but recent high-level interactions indicate that the trio is making an effort to fix them.

Liu Qing, vice-president of the China Institute of International Studies, said the resumption of the trilateral talks sent "a strong message" that the three countries are committed to resolving disputes through diplomatic means.

"It is hoped that the leaders of the three countries will discuss critical issues including rebuilding trust, expanding economic and trade cooperation as well as cultural exchanges, and strengthening current cooperation mechanisms," Liu said ahead of the summit.

Though it is still early to predict concrete results, the convening of the meeting "will be an accomplishment in its own right," said the Japan Times.

Lee Hee-sup, secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, said that the meeting "will serve as an opportunity to revive various cooperation projects and revitalize trilateral cooperation."

"The three countries need to share a clear perception that win-



Visitors browse the Japan and South Korea section during an import expo in Qingdao, Shandong province, in June 2023.

WANG HAIBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

win-win through cooperation, not confrontation and conflict, is the only way forward for national interests and the happiness of their peoples," Lee said.

Wide-ranging partnership

Twenty-five years after its inception, the trilateral meeting has grown from an economy-focused gathering aimed at countering financial crisis into a full-fledged, multi-tier mechanism that promotes cooperation in a spectrum of areas.

After a hiatus of more than four years, the ninth edition of the meeting focused on reestablishing and enhancing collaborative mechanisms.

The then Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that China stands ready to work with Japan and South Korea to implement the Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade and other important common understandings.

Wang was talking about the document released at the eighth summit in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in December 2019, which mapped out the route for trilateral cooperation. The trio agreed to expand cooperation in environmental protection, climate change, health, aging population, scientific and technological innovation, sports, youth and other fields.

Strengthening people-to-people exchanges was a palpable focus for this year's summit.

"Tourism, for example, continues to be a main driver in this regard. According to Ctrip, an online travel



People visit the Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul, South Korea, in May. YAO QILIN / XINHUA

agency in China, Japan ranked first among foreign countries in attracting Chinese tourists during the Golden Week holiday in May. Panda fever, meanwhile, has made panda-themed tours to China's Sichuan province a popular option for South Koreans.

Noting that the three neighbors share many cultural similarities, Lee said that the TCS, launched in 2011 to promote peace, prosperity and shared culture among the three nations, is ready to foster closer ties among their people.

The institution plans to expand

youth exchanges through projects such as a youth summit, youth ambassador program and youth speech contest this year.

Strengthening supply chain stability, expanding markets and increasing investment remained high on this year's agenda to boost economic integration and enhance regional economic resilience.

Hwang Jae-ho, director of the Seoul-based Institute for Global Strategy and Cooperation, said attention was also being paid to whether the three parties would be

able to speed up negotiations over the China-Japan-South Korea free trade agreement and enhance cooperation in supply chains.

Citing the semiconductor sector as an example, Liu said that despite pressure from the United States, China's industrial chain continues to benefit Japanese and South Korean companies.

While competition among the three countries remains a constant, the potential for cooperation is increasingly critical, as each of the three brings unique strengths to the table, Liu said.

“The three countries ... need to cooperate closely for the protection of free trade and the multilateral trade systems in a world where the free trade order is being threatened.”

Lee Hee-sup, secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

Pivotal role of Asia

The three countries have overcome economic, public health and other crises through mutual support, demonstrating the importance of trilateral cooperation as the frontrunner for the benefit of the region and the world.

As major economies in Asia, the trio accounted for 20 percent of the global population, 23.4 percent of the world's GDP, and 18.7 percent of the world's trade as of 2022, according to data from the TCS.

Highlighting Asia's burgeoning economic power, Liu said the collaboration within the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership not only fosters economic cohesion in Asia, but also enhances the region's role as a vital engine for global growth.

"As Asia strengthens its economic ties and continues on this trajectory, its influence on the world stage is expected to expand, cementing the 21st century as the era of Asian ascendancy," he said.

Despite ups and downs in ties among the three countries due to outside interference and their historical factors, Hwang emphasized: "the synergy that will be created if the three countries cooperate".

"Asia is reemerging as a pivot of world history," he said. "It is necessary to make pan-Asian discussions, in which Asians themselves can create visions and action plans for the future of Asia."

Lee noted the key role the three nations can play in safeguarding globalization and multilateralism.

"The three countries, which have achieved economic growth through free trade and globalization, need to cooperate closely for the protection of free trade and the multilateral trade systems in a world where the free trade order is being threatened," he said.

Liu said that by committing to regular dialogue and collaboration, the trio can address common challenges and leverage their collective strengths for mutual benefit.

"The renewed focus on cooperation sets a hopeful tone for the future, where Asia can become a cornerstone of peace and development in the global arena," Liu said.

XINHUA

Continent's vitality hinges on enhanced Northeast Asian joint growth

SEOUL — After a hiatus of more than four years, leaders from China, Japan and South Korea convened here for the ninth trilateral summit.

The restart of the trilateral meeting took place against the backdrop of rising protectionism, armed conflicts and supply chain restructuring. As major economies in Asia and leading economies in the world, the three countries carry a profound responsibility to articulate an unwavering commitment to bolstering trilateral cooperation.

Born amid the tumult of the Asian financial crisis in 1999, the three countries' cooperative framework stands out as an epitome of multilateral cooperation in East Asia, anchored by leaders' meetings and fortified by a network of ministerial gatherings, senior officials' assemblies and more than 70 working-level mechanisms.

The summit was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, challenges impeding a resumption were complicated by bilateral disputes and tensions. In addition, per-

sistent external interference has added to the instability of trilateral cooperation.

Restarting the trilateral cooperation mechanism is inevitable because the shared interests and benefits of cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea have made the renewal of dialogue and collaboration compelling.

After all, the three countries are neighbors, and Northeast Asia is the shared home of all three. The benefits of trilateral cooperation far outweigh the discord among the three close neighbors.

Deepening trilateral cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea serves the common interests of all three parties. In terms of trade and economy, China is the largest trading partner of the other two. The signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which includes China, Japan and South Korea, further accentuates the need to heighten economic integration among these key stakeholders.

This tripartite cooperation has

facilitated the advancement of the participating nations and yielded tangible benefits for the wider regional populace.

The combined population of China, Japan and South Korea accounts for one-fifth of the global total, and their combined GDP makes up about one-fourth of the global total. The three countries are undoubtedly the main economic engines in the region and beyond. Enhanced trilateral cooperation among the three will contribute positively to regional and global development.

In the Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade, a cooperation document released during the last trilateral summit meeting in 2019, the three countries pledged to work to develop a future-oriented cooperation model featuring peace, friendship and mutual benefit to make the trilateral cooperation a platform for peace, stability and regional cooperation and an important force for global development and prosperity.

The three countries should prioritize deeper cooperation across vari-

ous sectors, including but not limited to economy, trade, culture and technology. By leveraging their respective strengths and resources, they can bolster regional stability and prosperity while also fostering an environment conducive to peace and cooperation.

In recent years, Washington has played up ideological disparities and formed exclusive cliques, seeking to supplant cooperation and harmony with confrontation and discord to further its own geopolitical agenda.

By fanning division and animosity, such hegemonic tactics not only disrupt the stability and prosperity of the region, but also impair genuine cooperation and progress.

As major economies in Asia, China, Japan and South Korea hold a special responsibility to champion the inclusive values inherent to Asia. This entails nurturing a sense of strategic independence, preserving regional harmony and stability, and adamantly rejecting any revival of Cold War mentality.

In their inaugural joint declara-



People visit the China exhibition area at the Seoul International Travel Fair in Seoul in May. YAO QILIN / XINHUA

tion issued 21 years ago, the three countries committed to advancing development, enhancing regional cooperation, and safeguarding peace and prosperity both regionally and globally through their trilateral collaboration.

Let this pledge serve as a reminder of the vital role that China-Japan-South Korea trilateral cooperation plays in shaping the future of the region and beyond.

XINHUA

COMMENT

Editorials

Washington will not be able to make a jar big enough for the turtle to escape

At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on the weekend, Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun said that the People's Liberation Army is well-prepared to defeat the Taiwan island's secessionists and their patrons. "It will be as easy as catching a turtle in a jar, nothing to sweat about."

Yet that confident assertion seems to have fallen on deaf ears when it comes to its intended audience, who seem to think they can make the jar so deep that catching the turtle would be more by luck than design.

Less than five days after Dong reiterated Beijing's hard-line position on the Taiwan question in a face-to-face meeting with his US counterpart on the sidelines of the security forum, the Pentagon announced two new arms deals with the island worth a total of \$300 million.

The deals, which include standard and nonstandard spare and repair parts, components, consumables and accessories for F-16 aircraft, as well as other technical and logistics support services, will be the 14th US arms sale to the island since US President Joe Biden took office in 2021.

The first of their kind since the inauguration of the radical secessionist new leader of the island's administration, Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party, on May 20, the deals are widely considered to be reassurance that he has the US' "rock-solid commitment" to defend the island.

In a recent interview with Time, Biden said he

does not rule out the possibility of using military force to defend Taiwan if Beijing "unilaterally" tries to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. These remarks are in defiance of his consistent pledges to Beijing that the US has not changed its one-China policy and it does not seek to support Taiwan "independence".

That statement and the latest arms sales to Taiwan he approved, along with the visit of 27 US defense contractors to the island this week, belie the carefully worded congratulatory message to Lai from the US' top diplomat late last month, in which he tried to portray the US' ties with the island as nonofficial and economic.

The Biden administration should realize that the fundamental status quo across the Taiwan Strait is that both sides of the strait belong to one China with the central government in Beijing as its sole legitimate representative. Something recognized not only by the United Nations — the UN spokesperson recently reiterated that stance by calling Taiwan "a province" of China — but also by Washington as it is the inviolable foundation of Sino-US diplomatic relations.

If the US really does not seek to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, it should stop endorsing the secessionist-minded antics of the DPP, as an integral part of its China-containment strategy. The US should stop trying to butter both sides of the bread by saying one thing and doing another on the Taiwan question, and honor its legal commitments to uphold the one-China principle in good faith.

IAEA resolution confrontational not constructive

The International Atomic Energy Agency's decision on Wednesday to censure Iran for its failure to cooperate with the UN agency will neither help foster the necessary momentum for reviving the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal nor contribute to a fair, equitable environment for preventing nuclear proliferation.

The decision was apparently influenced by the UN nuclear watchdog's report a week ago, which said Iran has further increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels. The agency is now demanding Teheran provide answers to questions that are part of its long-running investigation and reverse its ban on several experienced UN inspectors carrying out on-site investigations.

It is an open secret that Teheran and the IAEA in recent years have clashed on how and where the agency can conduct probes into Iran's nuclear program. But that is something that should be settled through negotiations and dialogue. Adopting confrontational stances will only push the two sides further apart, shutting the door on any accommodation being reached.

The standoff between Iran and the UN watchdog stems from the Iranian nuclear issue, which would have been properly resolved long ago if the United States under the previous Donald Trump administration had not unilaterally torn apart the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal.

The reckless US move has left the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in limbo and undermined the international efforts made thus far to resolve the thorny issue. Since then, although the current US gov-

ernment says it seeks to return to the multilateral deal, on-and-off negotiations have not yielded enough positive progress to revive the deal.

Any meaningful decisions and discussions on the Iran nuclear issue cannot ignore this important background. Global efforts should ultimately focus on restarting talks for the US' return to the multilateral deal. Otherwise, it will simply be far-fetched to think a meaningful breakthrough can be made in the current impasse.

Despite the IAEA's recent censuring of Iran for noncooperation, Teheran has said it is still committed to the international deal despite the US' pull-out. In early May, IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi paid a successful visit to Iran and the agency has maintained constructive exchanges with the Iranian side, with both sides vowing to push forward the IAEA's safeguard work in Iran.

Under such a backdrop, China and Russia voted against the resolution against Iran at a meeting of the 35-member IAEA board, while 12 other countries, including South Africa, India, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Türkiye, abstained. Those countries share the common view that there is still room to resolve the IAEA's differences with Teheran through dialogue.

There is no doubt that the international community should go all out to build a nuclear-free world. After all, with conflicts raging in Europe and the Middle East, the global situation is highly volatile and it is imperative to keep a tight lid on nuclear weapons and their proliferation. That includes the nuclear-powered submarine cooperation among the AUKUS countries.

Peninsula instability serves no party's interests

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are rising markedly, with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea having upped the ante in their confrontation across the border.

The situation took a notable turn for the worse last week after the DPRK started sending hundreds of trash-carrying balloons to its southern neighbor, in what it claimed was a tit-for-tat response to the ROK's years-long practice of sending balloons with anti-Pyongyang leaflets.

ROK officials say they have no legal grounds to ban private citizens from flying balloons to the north, given the country's constitutional court last year already invalidated a law criminalizing such leafleting, on the ground that it violates free speech.

In reaction to Pyongyang's recent balloon campaign, the ROK has fully suspended a 2018 tension-easing agreement with the DPRK, allowing its troops to restart live-fire exercises and anti-Pyongyang propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts in the border area, actions that are certain to prompt the DPRK to take its own military steps as countermeasures.

Seemingly eager to add fuel to the fire, the United States on Wednesday flew a B-1B bomber over the Korean Peninsula for its first precision-guided bombing drill with the ROK in seven years.

Given the DPRK has previously responded to such flyovers of advanced US aircraft with missile

tests, there are growing worries that the Korean Peninsula will again be plunged into a vicious circle of tensions and confrontation, which will pose huge challenges to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Floating balloons across the border, no matter for what purpose, serves no strategic interests for either side on the peninsula. Rather, it will naturally be taken as an act of provocation by the targeted party and thus will only further aggravate the animosity between the two sides and undermine any attempts to build mutual trust. That is why sending anti-DPRK leaflets across the border has even been a controversial issue within the ROK, prompting at times clashes between activists and residents in the border areas fearing their life and business could be disrupted by increasing tensions.

Given the severe consequences intensified tensions on the peninsula will inevitably cause, the two sides need to exercise restraint, and speak and act prudently to prevent the situation from getting even worse.

It is the shared responsibility of relevant parties to make positive efforts for the political settlement of the Korean Peninsula issue. After all, maintaining peace, stability and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula is not only in the common interest of the DPRK and the ROK, it is also in the interest of all countries in the region.

Cao Yi



Opinion Line

Panda bonds gaining popularity, helping make RMB international

Following their record high issuance last year, the popularity of panda bonds, or renminbi-dominated bonds issued by overseas institutions in the Chinese onshore market, has caught high attention in the first quarter of this year.

Panda bonds have played an important role in introducing international issuers and investors, enriching the structure of China's bond market and expanding its opening-up to the outside world. In 2023, the annual issuance of panda bonds in China exceeded 150 billion yuan (\$20.70 billion), with the number of issuers and issuance scales both increasing by more than 80 percent year-on-year.

Given the low interest rates of the US dollar in the past, most international companies generally prefer to complete bond issuance in the US bond market and then convert the funds into renminbi to fund their subsidiaries in China. However, as the dollar interest rates

remain high, international companies now tend to issue renminbi bonds directly to meet their financing needs.

Cost advantage apart, institutional support is another major attraction for foreign issuers.

In December 2022, China's central bank and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange jointly issued a notice integrating the rules for the management of panda bond funds in the interbank bond market and the exchange bond market, further improving the financing convenience for overseas entities in the domestic bond market. In September 2023, the National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors issued a document promoting the discovery of bond prices, enriching the number and type of investors and enhancing secondary liquidity. These measures have provided a good institutional foundation for the vigorous development of the panda bond market.

The expanded issuance of panda bonds has not only strongly promoted the renminbi's internationalization, but also helped build an offshore RMB capital pool. At the same time, the cross-border use of the RMB will facilitate more foreign institutional investors to participate in China's bond market, further unblock the return channel for the currency, establish a closed loop for the international use of the RMB, and enhance the monetary liquidity of the RMB.

In recent years, China has steadily promoted the internationalization of the RMB, providing more diversified and convenient currency choices for domestic and foreign business entities. The stability, security, marketization and globalization of the RMB has not only enhanced international recognition of the RMB, but also promoted the steady march of the RMB toward a stronger currency.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

Why it still pays to get a good *gaokao* score

Thursday marks the start of the annual national college entrance examination, or *gaokao*, the score of which decides which domestic college a high school graduate will go to.

In an age when lifelong learning has become a dominant trend, the role of *gaokao* is becoming less important than it was decades ago. In 2023, 4.74 million college graduates sat for the national postgraduate entrance examination, almost a million more than the 3.77 million who sat for it in 2021. Considering that the total number of college graduates in 2023 was 10.47 million, that means more than one-third of the graduates strive for higher learning, which is considerably high.

True, although the *gaokao* still

decides which college one will go to, even without a good performance in the exams one can have a bright future, so it is no more "the decisive exam for one's fate" as it was two decades ago. Some have even gone to the extent of saying that the *gaokao* only decides which campus and with whom one is going to spend the next four years of their lives.

But it will be wrong to undervalue the *gaokao* so much. Which campus and with whom one spends those four years are crucial, too.

On social networking sites one will find many students complaining about lack of qualified academic resources on their campus. They also complain that unless they get into the best colleges, they don't get

quality faculty. Not every college creates an environment favorable for learning. There are many cases in which students feel isolated or are subject to campus violence, apart from leading an unhealthy academic life. That's why, it is important to make the effort to get into a college of one's choice.

According to 2023 data from a domestic salary statistics website, xinchou.cn, the average monthly salary for those graduating from the top 50 universities is almost 30 percent higher than for those graduating from universities ranking 50 to 100. That's one more reason to strive for a good score in the exams and get into a top university this autumn.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

US administration distances itself from Tel Aviv

The US House of Representatives passed legislation on Tuesday to sanction the International Criminal Court for it requesting arrest warrants last month for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials.

The 247-155 vote managed to attract only modest support from the Democrats, which observers say lessens its chances of passing the Senate. The White House opposes the legislation, calling it overreach. State Department spokesperson Matt Miller also made clear the administration's opposition to the bill.

"We don't think it is appropriate," he said, especially while there are ongoing investigations inside Israel looking at the very same questions.

He said that the administration is willing to work with Congress on a response, but it doesn't support sanctions.

Despite the Joe Biden administration's dogged support for Israel's war in Gaza, the remarks from the White House and State Department indicate that it is becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the war cabinet of Israel, whose brutal military campaign has undermined its attempt to fly the flag of US values on the moral high ground.

Biden said in an interview with Time on May 28 that there is "every reason" to think Netanyahu is prolonging Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza for political gain, pointing out that before the war, Netanyahu was facing blowback for wanting an overhaul of Israel's judicial system.

All the indications are the US is now pressing Tel Aviv to end the war at an early date before the US election campaigning gets into full swing, but Tel Aviv is sticking to its guns.

Biden's interview with Time also showed the US president and Israeli leader disagree on Gaza's post-war future. Biden hinted that while all regional countries, if not the US, insist Israel should pull out of Gaza and accept a two-state solution, Netanyahu is adamant that Israeli forces occupy Gaza to turn it into a buffer zone free of Hamas' existence.

Netanyahu should know that neither presidential candidate in the US wants to be tarred with the brush of being the accomplice of a baby killer.

It is Netanyahu's inability to end the war that has exhausted the world's sympathy for Israel as a victim of the Hamas-led attack on Oct 7. All signs show that the cogs of fate are turning against him and his bloodthirsty war cabinet.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Bai Jiayu

Manila should settle disputes through talks

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. delivered a speech at the 2024 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on May 31, claiming that some international legal procedures are the expression of "good faith", reiterating the validity of the 2016 South China Sea arbitration awards, and saying that Manila has enacted domestic legislation in accordance with the South China Sea arbitration awards.

According to Marcos Jr., the South China Sea arbitration procedure conformed to the principle of good faith. But this implication is groundless. The reality is that Manila has neither fulfilled its international obligations nor interpreted or applied the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in good faith.

First, the claim by the Philippines is devoid of any factual or legal basis, and thus violates the principle of good faith. Due to the Philippines' claim, the dispute was fragmented into various discrete pieces and brought under the jurisdiction of the Arbitral Tribunal by camouflaging them as mere disputes over maritime entitlements or activities at sea.

The territorial and maritime delimitation disputes are directly or indirectly related to the historical rights enjoyed by China, which is respected by, but not regulated under, UNCLOS. The claim of arbitration under UNCLOS, on the basis of provisions beyond the convention, is a violation of Article 300 of UNCLOS. The Phil-

The South China Sea arbitration exceeded its jurisdiction and misinterpreted the laws, which makes the arbitration awards invalid.

ippines' claim is neither based on the interpretation or application of the provisions of UNCLOS nor the interpretation or application of an international agreement related to the purposes of the convention, and these violate Articles 279 and 288 respectively of UNCLOS.

Second, the Philippines' unilateral initiation of arbitration infringed upon China's right as a state party to UNCLOS to choose on its own will the procedures and means for dispute settlement. In 2006, China excluded itself from the compulsory dispute settlement procedures of UNCLOS concerning, among other things, maritime delimitation, historical bays or titles, or military or law enforcement activities according to Article 298 of UNCLOS.

However, the Philippines deliberately packaged these disputes as simple disputes over maritime entitlements or activities at sea, which brought the disputes under the compulsory dispute settlement procedures under Annex VII of UNCLOS.

Third, the Philippines failed to meet the precondition for friendly consultations and negotiations, and initiated the South China Sea arbitration without admissibility. According to Article 280 and Article 281 of UNCLOS, the content of the consensus of bilateral and multilateral agreements reached on full consultation is binding on the Philippines.

More important, the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea is an agreement between the parties to the disputes. The Philippines has violated the consensus of the DOC that requires parties to settle disputes through friendly consultations and negotiations. It has also failed to fulfill its obligation under Article 283 of UNCLOS to exchange views with China on the settlement of the disputes.

Fourth, the entity awards in the South China Sea arbitration lack factual or legal basis. Above all, the Arbitral Tribunal wrongly dealt with the relationship between UNCLOS and the historical rights, and mistakenly denied China's historical rights in the South China Sea.

Furthermore, the tribunal improperly divided and isolated the legal status of the islands and reefs of China's Nansha Islands and Zhongsha Islands, and erroneously interpreted and applied laws, especially Article 121 of UNCLOS.

And fifth, the tribunal wrongly denied the legitimacy of China's activities in the South China Sea and unfairly concluded

that China's activities had "aggravated or expanded (the) disputes". Hence, the tribunal erred in terms of fact-finding, and interpretation and application of law. And the tribunal's awards on certain important issues failed to "state the reasons on which they were based".

Therefore, it is wrong on the part of Marcos Jr. to imply in his speech that the proceedings in the South China Sea arbitration conform to the principle of good faith. The South China Sea arbitration exceeded its jurisdiction and misinterpreted the laws, which makes the arbitration awards invalid.

Hopefully, the Philippines will honor its commitments, confine its activities to maritime territory demarcated by international treaties, fully and effectively implement the DOC, and try to settle maritime disputes and differences through dialogue and consultations. China is ready to continue to work with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including the Philippines, to maintain stability and peace in the South China Sea, and ensure it remains a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation.

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Chen Weihua

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EU elections to reflect growing public frustration

Citizens of the 27 European Union member states are casting their votes this week in elections that will influence the future direction of the bloc, which is being haunted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, rising living costs and the controversial migration policy, to name just a few.

The fact that so many Europeans, including young people, have been turning to far-right parties indicates a kind of despair among them. Extreme and far-right parties have already won elections in some countries and are expected to gain more seats in the next European Parliament.

There has been much talk about how to fight against those far-right parties or even outlaw them, but not enough discussions have been held on what exactly went wrong, causing such a seismic political shift in some countries.

On Wednesday, when I posed this question to a panel of youngsters discussing the coming elections, some pointed to the deep frustration caused by the rising living costs. Like all economies in the world, the EU, too, emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic hoping to expeditiously revive its battered economy. But the Russia-Ukraine conflict and geopolitics have largely derailed such efforts.

The multiple challenges the EU faces are a chain reaction of the bloc's many policy blunders in the past years.

The EU has imposed 13 rounds of sanction on Russia to "cripple" the latter's economy, and it has been discussing a 14th round of sanctions. But by imposing the sanctions, the EU has also shot itself in the foot — at least on the economic front.

The European Commission's 2024 Winter Economic Forecast says economic activity in 2023 increased by only 0.5 percent in both the EU and eurozone, and the growth forecast for this year has been revised down to 0.9 percent for the EU and 0.8 percent for the eurozone.

Studies show that the attempts to rid the EU of its dependence on Russian oil and gas has resulted in skyrocketing energy prices in many countries.

The EU policy and the sabotaging of the Nord Stream pipeline made the US the largest liquefied natural gas supplier to the EU in 2023 — LNG imports from the United States account for half of the EU's total LNG imports and at much higher prices than Russian gas. That has blunted the competitiveness of the EU's manufacturing industries, especially in countries such as Germany.

The decision to support and arm Ukraine against Russia means EU leaders are no longer paying enough attention to the concerns of ordinary citizens of the EU states. Now, how to boost the EU's defense industry has become a priority according to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

On Tuesday, von der Leyen posted on X (formerly Twitter) a message from her visit to Finland, where she praised the Nordic country for having more than 50,000 air raid shelters and said she would promote this in other member states during her second term.

While there is no guarantee that she will win a second term, the tweet reflects dangerous thinking: that the Ukraine crisis should continue as long as the last Ukrainian is standing. To me, such thinking is exactly why the Russia-Ukraine conflict has not ended but, instead, escalated. Worse, if you push for the de-escalation of hostilities through a cease-fire or diplomacy, you will be accused of appeasing Russia.

But how can the conflict be brought to an end and lasting peace restored without involving Russia? Unfortunately, the "peace conference" in Switzerland to find ways to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict is trying to do exactly that.

At the same time, some EU politicians have been heavily influenced by Washington which wants to use and abuse the EU in its geopolitical rivalry with Beijing in a bid to maintain its global hegemony by dividing the world into political blocs.

The multiple challenges the EU faces are a chain reaction of the bloc's many policy blunders in the past years. Hopefully, people in the EU will make their voices heard loud and clear in this week's elections to chart a new course.

Amakobe Sande

Young children deserve the best start in life

Imagine a 3-year-old girl growing up in rural China. Her parents want to give her the best start in life but lack the knowledge and skills to do so. Luckily, the family has plenty of support. A village health worker visits her regularly at home to ensure she's had her health check-ups, is eating nutritious food, and her development is on track. In the nearby town, there are regular early childhood development (ECD) care group activities, where she gets to play with other children, and her parents learn how to provide nurturing and responsive care. This girl can go on to achieve anything in life.

But without the support and care, the girl's chances in life could be limited. As a child, she might struggle with her physical and mental health, or with her ability to learn at school. After growing up, she might not be able to find a job. She would be less likely to achieve her full potential in life.

Early childhood, during the first six years of life, is a critical window of opportunity to shape the trajectory of a child's development and build a firm foundation for their future. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million neural connections are formed every second, a pace never repeated again. For young children to achieve their full potential, they need five scientifically proven things: good health; adequate nutrition; early learning and stimulation; safety and security; and responsive caregiving with parents or caregivers who love them. At UNICEF, we call this the nurturing care framework.

Let's take the example of responsive care-giving. This is about a parent's or caregiver's ability to notice, understand and respond to their child's signals. It starts with simple things like making eye contact, smiling, cuddling and giving praise. The caregiver can then start to notice the child's cues, such as signs of hunger, illness, emotional distress, or the desire to play. It's about finding everyday moments to communicate and play with children, such as during mealtimes and bedtime. The result is that parents can better respond to their child's needs, and that they both enjoy spending time together.

That is why early childhood development is one of UNICEF's priority areas of work in China, and why we recently launched a campaign, "Parent with Purpose, Nurture their Future", together with the Center for Women and Children's Health of the National Health Commission, China National Children's Center, China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption, and other partners.

We want all parents and caregivers to understand the critical importance of the early years of children, and learn how to



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY



This can provide children with the opportunity to grow and develop to their full potential. And as these children thrive, their communities grow, making a more sustainable future possible.

engage with their children during this time, in order to unleash their full cognitive, emotional and social potential. The campaign will therefore provide practical messages and materials about early childhood to caregivers nationwide.

We are also working on the ground across China to support vulnerable children and their families. For example,

UNICEF, the NHC and partners are scaling up a program in 30 provinces that provides integrated ECD services as part of primary healthcare. This includes screening for risk factors, counseling, care group activities and paying home visits to vulnerable children. We are also working with the All-China Women's Federation to set up early childhood development centers that support early learning and care for young children, and positive parenting sessions to prevent violent disciplining.

Another related issue in China is that of left-behind children. From UNICEF's experience, in many rural areas, most of the children who come to these care group activities live with their grandparents. In 2020, nearly four in every 10 children in China's rural areas were left-behind children, because their parents had migrated to cities for work. While our ECD programs are having a positive impact on these children, UNICEF is also calling for solutions to the underlying problems that lead to migrating parents leaving their children behind. Better services cannot replace the critical role of parents, especially during these vital early years.

UNICEF's recent report, "Reimagining

Social Policies to Support Families in China", makes recommendations for strengthening support to enable families throughout China to provide nurturing care. These include workplace policies, such as parental leave and flexible working, which make it easier for working parents to care for young children; child benefits such as tax breaks, and benefits for families with children. Taken together, these measures can help keep families together.

Every child has the right to get the best start in life, including good health, nutrition, learning, safety and responsive caregiving. This can provide children with the opportunity to grow and develop to their full potential. And as these children thrive, their communities grow, making a more sustainable future possible.

UNICEF will continue to support the Chinese government, businesses and other partners to build stronger systems that support caregivers to provide the loving and nurturing care that every child deserves, from her or his very first days of life.

The author is UNICEF representative to China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategy Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.

SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI

Non-Western Principles for a harmonious world order

Seventy years ago, a momentous event happened in the annals of international relations. India and China, later joined by other newly independent countries in Asia and Africa, collaborated to create a novel concept in world politics that stood apart from the supremacist belief and haughty behavior of imperialist powers in the West.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, or *Panchsheel* in Sanskrit, called upon all countries to commit themselves to the following in their foreign policy and practice — mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. It was not surprising that these enlightened principles were the crystallized form of the wisdom of two of the world's greatest and most ancient Asian civilizations. The roots of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence lie in the philosophies of China's Taoism and Confucianism, and Buddhism, which originated in India. While being distinct and unique, these philosophies converge at a common point of belief they affirm that diversity, an essential and integral part of human societies, should be respected, while, at the same time, harmony, cooperation and unity should be promoted within the manifold diversities. In Sanskrit, *panch* means five and *sheel* stands for virtuous conduct.

It was also not a coincidence indeed, there was a certain synchronicity that both India and China embraced these five wise principles around the same time and then embedded them in a bilateral agreement in 1954. The

India and China should fall back on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to reform the prevailing undemocratic and unfair global system of governance

extant global context was such that the human race had been pining for wisdom after it had come out of the cauldron of two horrendous world wars. Both wars were caused by the rapacious competition and conflict for global domination among Western colonial powers. India won independence in 1947 from the rule of the United Kingdom after 200 years of strenuous struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Two years later, China ended its "hundred years of humiliation" by imperialist powers with the triumph of the revolution under the leadership of Mao Zedong. As the two most populous nations in the world, India and China were expected to show a new path of harmonious coexistence to a world gone weary of wars and violence, while aspiring to prosper together in peace and cooperation.

There was also a third historical factor that necessitated the genesis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Immediately after the end of World War II, the global community was pushed into a new era of division and discord with the start of the Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union not only began a dangerous nuclear arms race, but also sought to polarize humanity into two rival blocks. This posed a new danger to world peace. It also threatened the independence and sovereignty of nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America that had liberated themselves from the clutches of colonialism. No less baneful was the fact that the Cold War shrank the opportunities for international cooperation, making it difficult for developing and least developed



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

countries to pursue rapid socioeconomic growth, fight poverty, and improve the living conditions of their people.

The seed of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was planted by two visionary leaders, former Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and former Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. During Zhou's maiden and historic visit to India, he and the Indian prime minister issued a joint statement on June 28, 1954, which presented to the world a new

vision of bilateral and multilateral interaction. This was subsequently incorporated into the declaration adopted by the conference of 29 African and Asian countries in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. It later received universal recognition when the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted it in 1957.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are no doubt of timeless relevance. Nevertheless, seven decades after they entered into the

lexicon of global diplomacy, we must ask ourselves dispassionately: Have they become the norm defining international relations in the 21st century? The answer, clearly, is no.

This is mainly because Western powers, led by the United States, are making a last-ditch effort to maintain their global domination. Even though their economic might is declining, their collective military might, combined with their control of global financial institutions and the media, is still formidable. Believing in the inherent superiority of their political system, they habitually interfere in the internal affairs of countries that follow a different model of governance and a different path of development. Even though they themselves have been the worst violators of human rights in modern history, they give sermons to other countries in this matter.

Western powers also sow seeds of conflict among developing countries and do not lose any opportunity to wage or aid wars of aggression and illegal occupation. They are conspiring to create a new anti-China military bloc in Asia, which, if it succeeds, would be ruinous. One of the starkest examples of their interference in the domestic affairs of other nations is their provocative attempt to prevent the peaceful reunification of the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

Clearly, the responsibility to reform the prevailing undemocratic and unfair global system of governance in the light of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence cannot be achieved without the active involvement of China and India, the original promoters of this noble

concept. Will New Delhi and Beijing heed the call of history? Briefly, here are three ideas we should put into action.

First, India and China will not be able to jointly make any meaningful contribution to the creation of a non-Western, democratic, peaceful and cooperative world order without improving their current strained bilateral relations. For this, they need to find a reasonable and permanent solution to the boundary dispute. This is not impossible if they rediscover the wisdom of their civilizations, which gave birth to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. This civilizational wisdom will enable them to play a big role in reshaping the history of Asia and the world.

Second, unlike seven decades ago, both China and India are today far more advanced in terms of both the economy and technology, and far more influential in global diplomacy. The two countries should work together on conflict resolution, reforming the global financial architecture, providing development assistance to needy countries, and strengthening the overall voice of the Global South.

Third, both India and China should, along with other members of the international community, make the UN an effective instrument for the implementation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. This will undoubtedly lead mankind toward development for all, justice for all and security for all.

The author is an advocate of India-China-Pakistan cooperation for a New South Asia and was an aide to India's former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. 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.

ZHANG BIN

Pay down time

The Chinese government still has ample policy space to deal with the country's debt problems

The scale of China's debt and its ratio to GDP have increased rapidly over the past decade. According to the Bank for International Settlements, the combined debt of Chinese enterprises, government and households reached 363 trillion yuan (\$50.13 trillion) as of 2023, with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 288 percent. Over 98 percent of this debt is from domestic stakeholders, with foreign debt

standing at a tiny proportion. It has become a top concern among policymakers and the academia how to view this rapidly rising debt and what response should be rolled out.

Over the past 20 years, the main debtors and the purposes of debt in China have undergone significant changes, a period that can be roughly divided into three stages.

The first stage was from 2004 to 2011, when China was at the peak of its industrialization, characterized by the rapid development of capital-intensive industries such as steel, chemicals, energy and equipment manufacturing. Capital-intensive industrial enterprises were the main debtors during this period, with limited borrowing by the government and households.

The second stage was from 2012 to 2019. After China's industrialization peaked, capital-intensive enterprises no longer borrowed heavily, and local government financing platforms and households became the main sources of new debts. Local government financing platforms mainly borrowed for infrastructure investment, but not primarily for electricity, heating and public transportation projects.

Instead, a large amount of the borrowing was invested in urban public facilities such as underground pipelines, urban greening and environmental protection, significantly changing the urban landscape in China. During this period, households also began to borrow a large amount of debt, mainly for home purchases. Some also borrowed for spending purposes.

The third stage has been from 2019 onwards. Under policies to rein in the hidden debts of local governments, the scale of borrowing by local government financing platforms dropped. China has adopted more government special bonds and treasury bonds to replace previous borrowing by local government financing platforms from commercial financial institutions, thus reducing debt interest costs and extending debt maturity structures. Meanwhile, household mortgages have dropped as a result of major changes in China's real estate sector. But China's policymakers have emphasized strongly the importance of creating a more favorable credit environment for small and micro enterprises, green finance and the manufacturing sector, leading to faster credit growth in these sectors in recent years.

The debtors and purposes behind China's debt expansion are roughly the same with high-income countries and regions at the same stage of development. During the peak of their industrialization, the borrowers in well-performing economies such as Germany, Japan and the Republic of Korea were enterprises, particularly industrial enterprises. After the peak of industrialization, the main borrowers shifted to the government and household sectors, with the proportion of government borrowing in total debt also on the rise.



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China has not overborrowed from the perspective of its total debt volume. The function of debts is to transform savings into investment, enable consumption smoothing, and create financial assets. All these functions indicate that creating too much debt leads to a lot of investment and consumption, strong purchasing power, and consequently inflation and currency depreciation. However, this has not been the case for China. Over the past decade, China has not faced inflationary pressure. Instead, the nation has been frequently confronted with lackluster demand. China's average annual consumer price index growth rate has been less than 2 percent during the period, and the nominal exchange rate of the yuan against a basket of currencies has appreciated by 15 percent. This indicates that China has not created excessive financial assets and purchasing power. The

nation's financial assets are mainly debt-based. China's creation of financial assets relative to GDP is not high considering its total debt-based and equity-based financial assets. The financial assets of the United States, Japan, China, and Germany are 13.4 times, 15.7 times, 3.6 times, and 3.7 times their GDP respectively. Therefore, China's financial assets, relative to GDP, are not prominent.

From a structural perspective, China needs to further optimize its debt structure. The nation's two main borrowers are faced with significant debt pressure. The first major borrower is local government financing platforms. Over the past decade, such platforms have borrowed heavily as they invested in projects such as urban roads and public infrastructure — projects with low commercial investment returns. Many local government financing platform operators are

struggling to cover their debt costs with their revenue. The second major borrower is real estate enterprises. Chinese real estate enterprises have high debt ratios, and in recent years, the sharp decline in home sales and the nosedive in financing from financial institutions have left many real estate companies unable to repay their debts.

China has ample policy space to address its structural debt issues. It requires the intervention from macroeconomic regulators and the support from government credit to solve the hidden debts faced by local governments and real estate debt problems. Whether the government can expand credit is not determined by how high the government's existing debt or its debt ratio is, but by the balance between private sector savings and invest-

ment. If private sector savings exceed investment, an increase in government borrowing and spending will not lead to inflation or threaten monetary credit, and thus the government can expand credit. If the demand for private sector savings is far outweighed by investment, and the economy is overheated with inflationary pressure, the government should not expand its credit scale, as it would lead to damage to monetary and government credibility. Currently, private sector savings far exceed investment in China, and there is no overheating or inflationary pressure in the nation, which provides ample policy space for the government to expand credit.

It is necessary for China to adopt more proactive measures to expand its debt. The most prominent macroeconomic problem facing China is insufficient demand, leading to low corporate profitability, fewer newly added jobs and weak investor expectations. The most common and effective policy tool to address insufficient demand is counter-cyclical policy, using lower interest rates and increased government borrowing to boost spending, in order to drive credit and spending growth across society. These policy tools are very helpful in reducing debt pressure and mitigating debt risks. International experience and China's past experience show that the reduction of the scale of debt makes it even more difficult for borrowers to repay their debts. This is because reducing the debt scale also greatly reduces income, which would also increase the debt ratio. By reducing the policy interest rate and expanding government spending, the government can reduce debt interest costs and raise income levels. Doing so would also improve the capacity to repay debts, mitigate debt risks, and reduce the debt leverage ratio.

The author is deputy director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. 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.



Roof decorations on Doan Mon, the southern gate of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long in Hanoi. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Decoding a soaring dragon

Former imperial site in Vietnam leaves an intriguing opportunity for cross-border cooperation, reports **Wang Kaihao** in Hanoi.



Roof decorations on Shenwumen (Gate of Divine Prowess), Forbidden City's north gate in Beijing. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

Describing his last decade's work at the Palace Museum in Beijing, Wu Wei says it was often like "archaeology on the roof."

The researcher, who has worked in the archaeology department of the museum, also known as the Forbidden City, cherishes his time walking along the eaves of the former royal structure.

The Forbidden City functioned as China's imperial palace from 1420 to 1911, during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, marking the apex of ancient Chinese palatial constructions. This UNESCO World Heritage Site in the heart of Beijing is also the world's largest surviving architectural complex with wooden structures.

From the perspective of archaeology, Wu also has "regrets." Due to limited excavations within the compound of the Palace Museum, it seemed that an imperial city from even earlier than the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) was probably buried beneath.

"But the Forbidden City is too perfect," he says, adding that it would be too difficult and damaging to the existing structure to dig.

Sometimes, however, the picture can seem clearer when viewed from afar.

Prototypes of the Forbidden City in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, and Fengyang county in Anhui province were constructed in the early Ming Dynasty before Beijing finally became its national capital, the focus of his studies.

Wu is concentrating on a new turf to get more inspiration. Another "Forbidden City", about 2,400 kilometers to the south of Beijing and beyond the national border, offers an intriguing horizon for his journey exploring the evolution of imperial palaces.

By invitation of the Imperial Citadel Studies of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Wu has conducted comparative studies since 2023 on the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long in Hanoi. This provided him with a rare chance to join Vietnamese colleagues and have a panoramic view of archaeological materials stretching back almost one millennium.

The citadel was the central seat of Vietnamese imperial power from the 11th century to the 18th century. It was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010 on the 1,000th anniversary of its construction.

Time as well as the dynastic rise and fall over history has greatly changed the appearance of this complex, especially after the 19th century when the capital was moved southward to Hue during the Nguyen Dynasty. Many royal constructions above the ground were gradually replaced by Western-style office buildings during the rule of the French.

Standing on the site, Wu still says he feels "familiar yet fresh", imagining the grandeur of that former Vietnamese royal palace. In his eyes, a system of architectural remains, foundations of palaces, and rich archaeological findings have told a lot about its past, including frequent communications with China.

Surely, even for a common visitor, it is difficult to stand in front of Doan Mon, the southern gate of the imperial citadel, without noticing the two Chinese characters revealing its name above its central doorway. The gate also has five doorways, just like the Forbidden City in Beijing.

This existing gate, one of the few intact structures within the citadel that is from the imperial period, dates back to the early Le So Dynasty (1428-1527), roughly around the same time when Beijing's Forbidden City arose.

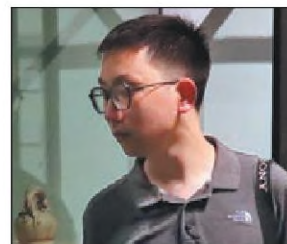
"There are close links between the unearthed relics of the Thang Long ruins and those from three early Ming Chinese palatial cities," Wu says. "We sometimes need a new perspective and a global context to



Doan Mon, the southern gate of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long in Hanoi. The citadel, the central seat of Vietnamese imperial power from the 11th century to the 18th century, was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

“Nowhere else gives me such strong feelings of emotional attachment.”

Wu Wei, archaeologist from the Palace Museum in Beijing



better understand the lineage and characteristics of Chinese palatial constructions.

"For example, as we see the exquisite constructional components of the Forbidden City in Beijing, we often wonder how they evolved into the current peak of techniques," he adds. "Thanks to the earlier relics spanning a much larger time spectrum, we may have crucial references on prototypes of the craftsmanship."

Comparable elements

Wu is the first Chinese archaeologist to have been stationed for a long-term study of unearthed materials from the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long. Though he came to Hanoi relatively late, he arrived just in time. The past 20-some years witnessed a boom period of archaeological findings on the site.

The archaeological site at 18 Hoang Dieu Street in the west of the imperial citadel yielded rich findings of constructional components throughout the history of Thang Long.

From 2011 to 2023, continuous excavations on the central sector of Thang Long further provided key clues to identify the layout of palaces and other spaces around Kinh Thien Palace, the highest-level building within the royal compound.

"Due to a lack of firsthand materials, there was a gap in our knowledge of the early-stage Vietnamese wooden structure," he says. "But many of the ancient architecture in Vietnam use craftsmanship and decorative patterns of Chinese traditions. Thanks to this precious

chance to approach the newest findings, I can draft a general picture of how these elements developed."

The dragon, the most recognizable royal totem in traditional Chinese culture, for example, also represents sacredness, power, and supreme authority in Vietnam. Thang Long means "a soaring dragon". Many motifs of the phoenix also appeared on the site to represent nobility.

"You will notice the difference between Chinese and Vietnamese dragon motifs," Wu explains. "Other cultural elements, like Champa (in present-day central Vietnam that was largely influenced by Hinduism), can also be seen to influence these Vietnamese patterns. That's the meaning of cultural exchange and mutual learning."

Influenced by Buddhist legend, the Bodhi tree leaf becomes a symbol of enlightenment, and it is often decorated with a dragon and phoenix in a harmonious and aesthetic combination in Thang Long.

"This motif also reminds us of the widely seen Buddhist totem of flames in China, which bears a similar shape," Wu says. "We may have different explanations for the same theme, but it at least demonstrates a close cultural link."

Mandarin duck-shaped roof decorations, made of pottery, also frequently appear in Thang Long. For example, in present-day Guangzhou, Guangdong province, the earliest Chinese architectural relics of such patterns also appeared in some architectural ruins of the 10th century, shortly before these bird patterns began to adorn the Thang Long palaces.

Speaking of construction methods, the *dougong*, the Chinese interlocking wooden brackets, also has a similar counterpart, *dau cung* in ancient Vietnam.

Glazed tiles, decorations such as clouds, and many other similarities existed in the ancient architecture of the two countries.

"It stunned me that white porcelain was used as tiles in Thang Long as early as the 11th century," Wu says. In contemporaneous China, only Xixia, a regional power ruled by the Tangut people across the northwest of the country, was known to adopt similar techniques, according to findings in their rulers' mausoleums.

"Where did such techniques originate? More clues await to unveil their possible connection," Wu adds. Wu and his Vietnamese colleagues often brainstorm in their workshop. With the three-dimensional model-



From top: Cultural relics found at the citadel, including a ceramic tubular tile with a dragon design, and a terracotta mandarin duck roof decoration. A Bodhi tree leaf on display at the Vietnam National Museum of History. The stairway, Dragon Steps, in front of the citadel's Kinh Thien Palace.

ing technology, which Wu often uses back in Beijing, bringing higher accuracy to his colleagues, he also learns the scrupulous attitudes in categorizing materials by his Vietnamese colleagues.

"(Wu) Wei gave us a lot of ideas on the world's architecture," Lam Anh, an archaeologist who has worked with Wu for eight months, says. "Then, when I dealt with the excavated materials, he inspired me to think more."

"You see a piece, you have to see more than a single relic, but a bigger picture in comparative studies," Anh adds. "My imagination thus becomes broader."

Echoing humanities

In 2022, the Palace Museum announced the launch of a long-term academic exchange project, known as the Taihe Visiting Scholar Fellowship Program, which is named after Taihe Dian (the Hall of Supreme Harmony), the highest-level architecture in the Forbidden City.

The program sponsors researchers of the museum to conduct their comparative studies abroad and overseas scholars to have their related projects in the Forbidden City. Wu is among the first scholars benefiting from the program and thus beginning his groundbreaking research in Hanoi.

According to Wang Xudong, director of the Palace Museum, the project aims to enhance cross-border cultural dialogue and mutual understanding by breeding talent with a global vision.

He then said: "Openness is a must in this fast-changing world, and the spread of culture cannot be unidirectional. It has to be reciprocal."

The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, where contacts between the two neighboring countries stretched across a millennium, looks like an ideal place to review the meaning of reciprocal communications.

"Like the Forbidden City in Beijing, it demonstrates shared traditional ethics and values of China and Vietnam through its architecture highlighting the importance of rituals," Peng Shituan, cultural counselor of the Chinese embassy in Vietnam, tells China Daily.

"It further represents a shared ideal to pursue benevolence in governance, a core value in Confucianism, which upholds people-oriented ideology," Peng, also a poet and expert on cultural history, adds.

"Once sitting on the throne, the ruler in ancient times took responsibility for the nation, ancestors, and

people. That is the bond connecting the cultures of the two countries."

Due to history and different geographic conditions, variations of decorative patterns exist between the architecture of the former imperial cities of Beijing and Hanoi, but many basic elements are similar, he adds.

For example, other than dragons and phoenixes, *qilin* (*key lan* in Vietnamese), representing benevolence and auspiciousness, and the tortoise, representing longevity, also influence people's lives in both countries.

"Mutual learning among different cultures is like looking in a mirror, and we can thus better see our own," Peng says. "Joint archaeological research at Imperial Citadel of Thang Long will help us more vividly understand the history, and lay a foundation for the friendship of the two countries in the future."

Near the imperial citadel, Van Mieu, or the Temple of Literature, is where people worship Confucius.

After work, Wu often wanders among such temples and many other key historical monuments that resonate with his familiar places back in China.

Later this year, an exhibition on the influence of Confucianism across the world is to be staged in the Palace Museum. Also as an exhibition curator, Wu thus plans to loan some Confucian relics from Thang Long to better explain their spiritual legacies.

He stayed in Hanoi for Spring Festival in February. In his spare time, he also attends classes to learn Vietnamese. "Nowhere else gives me such strong feelings of emotional attachment," says Wu, who had worked for joint research in several other countries. "The traditional festive celebrations remind me of my hometown when I was a kid. When protecting historical sites, such intangible heritages also need to be cherished amid fast urbanization."

More to expect

There have been many seeking closer ties between Thang Long and its counterparts in China. Last September, the Thang Long Heritage Conservation Center reached an agreement of cooperation with the Beijing Municipal Administration Center of Parks, which oversees World Heritage Sites like the Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven.

A monthlong photo exhibition on the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, Van Mieu and other key heritage sites across the Vietnamese capital kicked off in May at the Summer Palace. Another photo exhibition on Beijing sites will be staged in Thang Long later this year.

According to Nguyen Hong Chi, deputy director of the Thang Long Heritage Conservation Center, a key project is to restore the historical appearance of the central sector of the imperial citadel, including Kinh Thien Palace.

"Archaeology will strengthen people's understanding of the historical, cultural and scientific values of this heritage site," she said at a forum in Beijing, following the opening of the photo exhibition. "That will also give people a more complete visiting experience."

Chinese archaeologists like Wu thus expect to contribute their ideas and references to this historic program.

"We'd like to gain more experiences from Beijing to improve related infrastructure protecting those heritage sites," says Nguyen Quang Ngoc, vice-chairman of the Vietnam Association of Historical Sciences.

"Thang Long is more than those architectural foundations," he adds. "Scholars from the Palace Museum, the Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven may provide us support to resume the historical landscape and thus revitalize the grandeur of the imperial citadel and better tell its stories to the world."

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LIFESHANGHAI



Seventy-five years ago on May 27, the Chinese Liberation Army, led by the Communist Party of China, took over Shanghai amid cheers and applause from people lining the streets.

The day has been remembered as Shanghai Liberation Day and is celebrated each year. This year, Shanghai Media Group (SMG) Live kicked off a showcase of 40 musical and theater productions for the occasion from May to July.

"Shanghai is the birthplace of the Communist Party of China. The city witnessed the magnificent Chinese revolution, reform and development through the past decades," says Yu Rongjun, deputy director of SMG Live.

The city's music and theater scene has created several new productions featuring the Chinese revolution, which won critical acclaim and audience praise.

"We are bringing together a series of representative productions in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Shanghai and hope audiences will be inspired and empowered by the city's glorious history."

One of the most popular productions *The Eternal Wave* is a dance drama by the Shanghai Song and Dance Troupe, based on the true story of an undercover Communist telegrapher who worked in the shadows against opposing forces and was later murdered on the eve of Shanghai's liberation.

The performance has gained great popularity with audiences, with highlights performed at the CCTV Chinese New Year Gala in 2020. Since its premiere in 2018, the show has toured more than 50 cities across China, presenting 614 performances in total, according to Wang Yan, head of the company.

"We kept on revising and improving the production and promoting it to the wider public," she says.

The latest effort was a movie edition of the show, which was projected at the Majestic Theatre in Shanghai on May 27. It will continue to be shown in cinemas all over the nation and the company will present a new round of live performances of the show at the Majestic Theatre from June 26 to July 1.

"We hope lovers of the theater production will find new perspectives to appreciate the dances in the movie, and moviegoers will be attracted to attend the live performance too," she says.

In the past few years, many dancers in the company have taken on different life paths, says Wang Jiajun, the lead dancer who plays the hero in the show. Some left the stage to become teachers and some had babies, he says.

The movie "recorded these dancers in their prime and their most beautiful performances," he says. "It's a gift for the dancers as well as audiences and it is also a tribute to the city's revolutionary history."

Outstanding theater productions such as *The Eternal Wave* have played an important role

Theatrical productions celebrate liberation

As the birthplace of the CPC, city witnessed historical revolution and development, **Zhang Kun** reports.



From top: Two scenes from the acrobat show *Battle of Shanghai*. A scene from the movie about the dance production *The Eternal Wave*. Zhu Jiejing (left) and Wang Jiajun pictured in front of the audience at the movie projection of *The Eternal Wave* at the Majestic Theatre on May 27.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

in the prosperity of Shanghai's live performance market, says Wang Yan, director of the company. The success of *The Eternal Wave* has encouraged theater companies in Shanghai to "keep pushing forward and create new shows with the revolutionary theme".

Another production of the series is the *Battle of Shanghai*, an acrobatic show produced by the Shanghai Acrobat Troupe. It was performed at the Shanghai Culture Square on May 19 to 21, and a second round will take place on July 1 to 2 at Theatre Young.

The production, performing since 2019, will celebrate its 200th performance later this year, says Liang Hongjun, head of the company.

The show combines acrobatic stunts with innovative storytelling about the battles at a power plant on the eve of Shanghai's liberation. *Battle of Shanghai* "is a milestone in the creative development of acrobatics in China", Liang says.

A most important repertoire of the company, it has witnessed the development of new acrobatic talents.

"We are receiving young graduates from the Shanghai Acrobatic School. At the tender age of 16, they are participating in the upcoming performance, taking on the roles of young soldiers," he says.

With support from the China National Arts Fund, the production will kick off a new round of tours nationwide this year.

Zhang Huiqing, general manager of the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center, says the company will present, from June 27 to July 1, *The Age of Awakening*, a play about China's patriotic intellectuals in the early 20th century struggling for a better future.

The Shanghai Puppet Theatre will present *Sound of the Paperboy* about the newsboys during the Liberation War in the 1940s at the Ciro Puppets Show Center on June 29 and 30.

The showcase also includes a series of concerts and folk opera shows by the Shanghai Light Music Troupe, Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra and the Shanghai Farce Troupe.

The concert at the Shanghai Grand Theatre on May 27 featured the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, playing under the baton of Zhang Liang, deputy director of the company. Three Chinese composers' works were performed — Lyu Qiming, Jin Fuzai and Xi Qiming. *Ode to the Red Flag*, a symphony piece by Lyu, featured pianist Kong Xiangdong.

One of the most celebrated symphony compositions by a Chinese artist, *Ode to the Red Flag* has been widely performed since its publication in 1965.

Through the past decades, eight different versions of the piece have been recorded, the latest featuring a children's chorus, says Gao Feng, director of the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra. A complete collection of all eight versions will be released on vinyl later this year, he says.

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Breaking hops from the streets to Olympic Games

By ZHANG KUN

Breaking will debut as one of the competitive events at the Paris Olympics this year, the first time a dance sport has ever been included in the Olympic Games.

In celebration of this addition, the Shanghai International Dance Center held its first French Breaking Season, showcasing three innovative contemporary breaking productions from France from May 24 to Monday.

Compared to some other dance genres, breaking was born on the street and is relatively easier to master, according to Chen Li, deputy general manager and project director of the Shanghai International Dance Center Theater.

"It is very capable of expressing contemporary ideas on the professional stage while evoking a strong resonance among young audiences.

"We hope the French Breaking Season will attract more young people to the theater through the language of hip-hop to learn about the diversity of contemporary dance," she says.

France may be the country with the most breaking competitions, with one or two competitions going on every weekend, according to Julien Saint-Maximin, also known as BEE D. He is the breakdancer and choreographer of *Dos Au Mur*, the first production of the French Breaking Season, performed at the Shanghai International Dance Center Theater on May 24 and 25.

Breakdancers, known as B-boys and B-girls, compete as a group known as a "crew" in the competition and at the end of the year, the crews compete for the national title as well as the opportunity to compete in the international competition.

Saint-Maximin has won several titles including French Champion, European Champion and the 4th place in the World Breakdance Championships.

In 2012, he founded the Yeah Yellow company with Regneault Camille, also known as Kami, and, with a team, they competed in numerous international battles. He and Camille won with the French team at the Outbreak Europe in Slovakia in 2016.

Ever since its birth in New York in the 1970s, breakdancing has been an important part of the hip-hop culture. The past 10 years or so saw the emergence of many professional breakdancers from France and other parts of the world, says Saint-Maximin.

Unlike gymnastic competitions, breakdancers don't compete with a prepared routine. They have to improvise without knowing in advance what music the DJ will play.

"In competition, we try to be efficient, more creative and physical and focus on the music to take the audience and the jury in a very short time, usually in one minute," he tells China Daily.

The Olympics will be "almost the same thing as what we do in battle everywhere", he says. "We don't know the music or know what we will do. We just know who the opponents are."



Julien Saint-Maximin (right), aka BEE D, and Chinese dancer Zhang Yan, during rehearsals for their performance of *Dos Au Mur* at Shanghai International Dance Center Theater, on May 23. BY HU YIFAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

A breakdancer will practice their signature moves, something special and individual, and build from it as large as possible a vocabulary for their performance. But in the limited time of a battle, "we have to think really fast and choose immediately what we want to show, what is the best for the moment and the music", he says.

Creating a theatrical show allows the artists to be in full control of the props, music and costumes, as well as give sufficient time to showcase their technical strengths and build a narrative while keeping some improvisation.

Dos Au Mur originates from fencing: when a fencer steps back too much to avoid danger, he ends up with his "back to the wall", without another choice than having to move forward to fight his opponent. The walls were also useful props as they provided a new vertical surface for dancers to present the signature floor movements of breaking in a different perspective, Camille explains.



It (breaking dance) is very capable of expressing contemporary ideas on the professional stage while evoking a strong resonance among young audiences."

Chen Li, project director of the Shanghai International Dance Center Theater

Weeks before the performance in Shanghai, Camille suffered a shoulder injury during practice and Zhang Yan, a Chinese dancer from the Xie Xin Modern Dance Theater, filled in for her in the Shanghai performance.

Zhang, who trained professionally in Chinese and contemporary dance, tells China Daily that breaking has a different vibe from contemporary or Chinese dance, and "it is all about confidence and self-expression, very much part of the street culture". Breakdancing brought her a feeling never experienced with any other dance.

The second piece *Exit*, performed on May 31 and Saturday, was created by the Art Movement Concept Company, which is known for its original style mixing hip-hop techniques with a contemporary fluidity and sensitivity through movement. The work is a fusion of circus, mime and modern dance, and displays the beauty of breakdancing — its strong rhythm and many technical movements such as "freeze" and "air flair".

The third production *We Are Monchichi* will be shown on Sunday and Monday. It tells a story about the connections and antagonism between people, in which the two dancers Shihya Peng and Marco Di Nardo transform themselves into two distorted mirrors — exposing more about ourselves than we thought we knew.

LIFE

Youth festival boosts China-Africa ties

Participants from a number of countries on the continent find opportunities to take home from event held in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, **Xing Wen** reports.

In a bustling self-service restaurant, the atmosphere pulsates with energy as African youth and Chinese volunteers sway to the rhythm of music, their colorful and diverse attire creating a kaleidoscope of hues.

Amid the joyful ambience, the air is filled with a symphony of greetings spoken in languages ranging from the melodious tones of Mandarin, the crisp articulation of English, the elegant flow of French, and the richness of the African tongue.

This lively moment encapsulates the essence of the 8th China-Africa Youth Festival.

The event, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation and the provincial government of Zhejiang, brought together 64 young representatives from various African countries on a trip from May 19 to 26 to Beijing and Jinhua, Zhejiang province.

During the trip, participants experienced traditional Chinese culture, engaged with Chinese government departments, took part in China-Africa youth dialogues and visited historical and cultural sites.

One of their stops in Beijing was the Former Residence of Soong Ching Ling in Xicheng district. Soong, a notable Chinese political figure and wife of Sun Yat-sen, a pioneer of China's democratic revolution, lived and worked there.

The residence preserves the vivid scenes of her daily life — artifacts and photographs displayed at the residence narrate her significant contributions to China's revolution and her advocacy for women's rights and children's welfare.

Mariama Bah from Sierra Leone, one of the African youth representatives, was among the group. She is the station manager of Rise Radio FM 96.3, a community service media organization that aims to amplify the voices of women, girls and young people on critical issues affecting them and promote human rights.

She says she was inspired by Soong's dedication to the welfare of women and children and by the foundation's initiatives aimed at ensuring women's rights and youth health. "We have to leave a legacy behind," she says.

She plans to network with the foundation to explore potential collaborations on women's empowerment and improving children's welfare.

Ahmed Hassan Wehlie, an online influencer from Somalia, says that their visit to the residence was enriched by young volunteers who shared anecdotes and lesser-known stories about Soong's life. "We were deeply moved by their dedication and hospitality. Their enthusiasm made our visit informative and underscored the importance of preserving and sharing historical heritage," he says.

Throughout the journey, as they traveled by bus and high-speed train, attended parties and watched



Clockwise from top: A group of young representatives from various African countries participate in cultural workshops during the 8th China-Africa Youth Festival, gaining hands-on experience in traditional Chinese crafts. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY PARTICIPANTS learn pottery-making in Jinhua, Zhejiang province. Young people from different African countries dance at a party held during the event.

PHOTOS BY XING WEN / CHINA DAILY

performances and interacted with local Chinese people, Wehlie recorded videos to share on social media platforms.

"The videos will show China's development to the people in Somalia and how the Chinese government creates opportunities for the younger generation," he says.

The 28-year-old holds a bachelor's degree in information technology and a master's degree in mass media communication.

After graduation, he initiated an NGO that promoted peace-building in Somalia by empowering and training youth from diverse backgrounds in mediation and negotiation skills.

"We also hold monthly seminars attended by government and industry leaders, giving young people a chance to engage in conversations with them," he says.

In 2021, sponsored by the government, he cofounded Dawan TV, a private media outlet that brings together young people from various backgrounds to produce educational

video content for Somali audiences.

Through the media and activities organized by the NGO, he states, "We want to gather a youth community that shares the same goal of making Somalia a better country."

He believes that improving young people's lives and enabling their active participation in society both online and offline is crucial for building sustainable peace and development in Somalia.

He also hopes that through actively sharing on his social media accounts and encouraging other young people to do the same, they can change the stereotypes about Somalia.

"Many people still think Somalia is in the midst of conflict, but we are now a peaceful country. We want to unite young people to dispel these stereotypes, attract investment and encourage travelers to come for vacation," he says.

As someone deeply invested in youth issues and peace-building, Wehlie has expressed his long-standing desire to visit China to deepen his understanding of its politics and

democratic development. He credits the China-Africa Youth Festival for granting him the chance to experience China for the first time.

The festival was established following the agreement reached by the delegations during the 2015 summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Its objective is to foster youth exchanges between China and Africa, uphold the long-standing friendship between the two regions and nurture future leaders for the advancement of China-Africa relations.

The program also provided Adama Cabaly Sallah, who works for Gambia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with her first trip to China.

"This experience has broadened my perspective on China and deepened my understanding of the relationship between China and Gambia. When I compile my report and offer my recommendations, it will offer my colleagues who haven't yet visited China a clearer understanding," she says.

"After everything I've explored,

my recommendations will speak louder to my ministry. Hopefully, this will lead to more collaborations between China and Gambia."

She will possibly return to China for the upcoming summit of the FOCAC to be held this autumn in Beijing.

In recent years, Zhejiang province has consistently ranked as one of China's top destinations for trade with Africa. Within Zhejiang, Jinhua city has particularly stood out.

Last year, Jinhua's trade with Africa reached 116.85 billion yuan (\$16.46 billion), making up 30.8 percent of Zhejiang's total trade volume with Africa.

Zhang Jiming, secretary-general of the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, emphasizes that the China-Africa Youth Festival aims to give African youth representatives a firsthand experience of Zhejiang's remarkable transformation, to foster a deeper understanding of the friendship between the people of Zhejiang and Africa and lay a solid foundation for comprehensive exchanges and coop-

eration between them.

"Zhejiang will continue to focus on promoting economic and trade cooperation, enhancing cultural exchanges and strengthening the friendship between China and Africa, further advancing friendly cooperation with Africa," Zhang states.

During their time in Jinhua, the representatives' itinerary included visits to an electric vehicle manufacturer, the Yiwu International Trade Market, Hengdian World Studios and the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University.

As they arrived at the Yiwu International Trade Market, one of the world's largest wholesale markets, Abdul-Jabbar Hashim Kolo from Nigeria wasted no time diving in to search for business opportunities.

"I'm looking for products I can wholesale from Yiwu to sell in Nigeria," he says, expressing interest in solar energy products, electronic locks and agricultural tools. He has collected contact information from numerous shop owners.

With a bachelor's degree in law from the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom, the 29-year-old now operates the Ateef Law Firm in Nigeria.

Specializing in transaction advisory services for the energy and natural resources sectors, he explains, "We typically offer legal consulting services to foreigners interested in investing in Nigeria."

He met several potential clients throughout the journey in Jinhua.

"I've had the opportunity to meet many Chinese individuals keen on venturing into businesses involving electric vehicles and solar products in Africa. They are seeking new markets," he says.

Reflecting on the trip, he says, "I've observed many similarities between the people here and those in Africa, particularly in terms of arts and crafts."

Additionally, he's also identified valuable lessons in China's development for Nigeria.

"One challenge we face in Nigeria is the mass urban migration from rural areas, placing pressure on social services and urban infrastructure. However, I've witnessed considerable investment in agriculture in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, which I think is very important," he says.

"Before coming to China, I heard a lot about the country's remarkable achievements in science, technology, economic development and improving people's livelihoods. I've been looking forward to visiting China for many years. This journey exposed me to several opportunities," he says.

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Tianjin Juilliard brings melodies to more audiences

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai
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Music lovers in Shanghai will be able to attend more live music performances from the students and faculty of the Tianjin Juilliard School. On May 26, a chamber concert at Zikawei Library announced the continual communications between the prestigious music institute and Xuhui district in Shanghai.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students of Tianjin Juilliard played works composed by Chopin, Ravel, Brahms and Messiaen in the basilica lobby of the library.

The concert marked the beginning of the long-term collaboration between Tianjin Juilliard and Xuhui district. "In the coming music season, Tianjin Juilliard will present colorful performances in different art spaces around Xuhui district," says He Wei, CEO and artistic director of the Tianjin Juilliard School, the only overseas campus of the renowned Juilliard School at Lincoln Center, New York, in the United States.

Juilliard415, the school's princi-

pal period-instrument ensemble, is expected to give an innovative performance in Shanghai later this year, he says.

Joseph W. Polisi, president emeritus and chief China officer of the Juilliard School, donated his book *Beacon to the World: A History of Lincoln Center* to the Zikawei Library.

The Lincoln Center was "the first art center in which various performing arts ensembles are put together in one place. It was a new idea," Polisi tells China Daily. "It created a powerful vehicle through which the performing arts can be experienced, and its concept has been replicated around the world."

Polisi led the Juilliard School in New York for 34 years and after leaving office in 2018, he assumed the role of CEO of Tianjin Juilliard, overseeing and guiding various aspects of the school's development ever since.

Last year he was given the Lifetime Honorary Award of the inaugural Orchid Envoy, an international cultural accolade established by the China Foreign



Left: Joseph W. Polisi, president emeritus and chief China officer of the Tianjin Juilliard School, donates his book *Beacon to the World: A History of Lincoln Center* to Fang Yunfang, director of the Zikawei Library in Shanghai. **Right:** Students of Tianjin Juilliard stage a concert in the lobby of Zikawei Library. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Languages Bureau, and he donated the 300,000 yuan (\$42,274) prize money to establish a fund to support student and faculty activities at Tianjin Juilliard. "I felt it was important that this award be connected to the Tianjin Juilliard School ... and we are actively fun-

draising now for student and faculty support, special programs and more. I thought this gift could be very helpful," he says.

Polisi strongly believes in artists' activities in the community and involvement with society. During the 34 years he worked as presi-

dent of the Juilliard School in New York, he started programs that sent students to play in hospitals, nursing homes and hospices. "I realized that it benefits the audiences in these nontraditional venues and the positive impact it has on the students. It allows them

to perform outside their comfort zone and see how these audiences are enriched by their music. This allows our students to have a sense of communication, which is ultimately what any performer needs."

These activities in Shanghai have also benefited students at the Tianjin Juilliard School. "These young artists can understand the power of music and are becoming more entrepreneurial," Polisi says. "They start thinking about where they can perform, what they should perform and they also learn to speak about the music when they are talking to the audiences, which is very useful."

Polisi also found that "China has a very vibrant and exciting music scene. Millions of children are studying instruments and the public seems to be very enamored with Western music."

In many ways, he says, "the enthusiasm for Western classical music is much stronger in China than the United States. ... It's an environment that allows this special genre of music to flourish. It's wonderful to work here!"